

Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka

Told in Slow Motion

[Entirely Based on the Classics Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali,
Geetawali, Adhyatma Ramayan & Anand Ramayan]

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram, and surely also to Lord Hanuman who was very dear to the Lord, with this humble little prayer that comes to my lips: 'Lord God; Glorious and Blessed be Thy Name. I yield Thee my most hearty thanks and reverential gratitude that Thou hast given me the honour and the privilege and the opportunity to serve Thee and fulfil Thy desire to spread Thine Good Word for the good and welfare of the human kind through the Books Thou hast got written through these humble hands of mine. And for that mercy and graciousness of Thee, I shall ever and for ever remain Thine grateful and thankful and obliged.'

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this wonderful story narrated straight away from masterpieces of classical Indian scriptural texts.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
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Preface

This is a most fascinating and charming story of Ravana, the Great King of the Demon Race. It was Ravana for whom the Supreme Lord of the World, Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, had to come down here on earth as a human being, in the form of Lord Ram, the prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya.

The Story of Ravana is intertwined with and inseparable from the divine Story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, because the Lord had to come down to earth expressly due to Ravana, for the latter had become so extremely demonic in his behaviour, breaking all boundaries of tolerance and tormenting everyone so much that mother earth and the gods had found it impossible to bear the burden any longer. So they ultimately prayed to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of this world, to do something to eliminate this scourge, at which the Lord promised them that there is only one way to do it, and it is that he would have to personally deal with the matter by manifesting himself as a human being in the person of a great prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and in this form he would be known by the name of Lord Ram.

The Lord selected the household of the king of Ayodhya, named Dasrath, to reveal himself in the form of 'Sri Ram' for a specific reason, and it is that Dasrath had done severe penance in his previous birth as king Manu, along with his queen Satrupa, and had at that time sought the boon of having the privilege of being able to enjoy the feeling of supreme happiness, thrill and ecstasy that one would feel when loving and showing affection to the Lord of the World in a physical way just like ordinary parents do with respect to their beloved and dearest son.

Now, this grand and magnificent story has been immortalised in the form of the well-known epic called 'The Ramayana', of which there are many versions and renderings in many languages. The 'Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka' is an integral part of this story of Lord Ram. But since all the versions and renderings of the Ramayan are centred around the main character or hero of the story, i.e. Lord Ram, Ravana is side-lined; Ravana's central role in the story as being the primary cause of Lord Ram's birth and the events that followed that made the wonderful story of the 'Ramayan' so famous and of epic proportions is almost forgotten and neglected—for it is an undisputed matter-of-fact that neither would have Lord Vishnu revealed himself as Lord Ram, nor would we have the classic known as the Ramayan if there was no Ravana and his clan of ferocious and vicious demons who lived in Lanka.

Our present Book titled “The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka” is a unique journey of discovery and exploration because we would be reading this wondrous and magnificent Story with an analytical mind by closely examining each and every development that comes our way just like adventurers and explorers would do look around carefully, with a lot of interest, zeal and enthusiasm, to watch out for any new things they may discover, things not hitherto paid attention to or described by anyone but which are of exceptional interest and value, while walking on a path not traversed earlier by others.

Our Book and its Story therefore are not a routine re-telling of the classic Ramayan; it is an exciting and thrilling and adventurous journey along a new path not traveled, not explored and not discovered afore-time. This being the case, as with all explorations and discoveries, we shall be moving slowly in our narration and the reading of this grand and fascinating Story, observing closely and analytically, as best as we can, all the events and episodes as they unfold before us.

For the purpose of the narration of this magnificent and wondrous ‘Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka’ from different perspectives, to make it multi-disciplinary in its approach, to give it a Kaleidoscopic effect, and to make it as interesting, absorbing, diverse and colourful as possible, we shall draw our narrative from different sources—such as all the classics of Tulsidas that describe this story, i.e. Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali and Geetawali, and from Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, as well as from Anand Ramayan of Valmiki. This will give us a very comprehensive narration and present the story from different angles and perspectives as described in all these books, for each has its own beauty, and a combination of them all would be a classical narrative in its own right.

A blend of prose and poetry as represented respectively by Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan and Anand Ramayan on the one hand, and by Geetawali Ramayan and Kavitawali Ramayan on the other hand, makes for a wonderfully delightful reading of this Story, and adds flavour to the narrative as each of these classical books have their own style of narration that is unique to each of them. So while the narration from the first three books, viz. Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan and Anand Ramayan tell the Story in a continuous stream of events linked one to another, the other two books, viz. Geetawali and Kavitawali are more focused on describing single events selected from the Story, using different classical styles of poetic composition to narrate one event in different ways.

This unique approach of blending all these books together to tell one Single Story serves an excellent purpose: the reader first reads the Story as it is told in the first three books (Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan and Anand Ramayan) in a continuous flow of narration of events, and then at certain intervals he pauses to rewind and read verses from the other two books (Geetawali Ramayan and Kavitawali Ramayan) in a virtual ‘slow motion’ mode to focus his attention on certain developments that need closer examination and enjoyed more thoroughly as was envisioned by their composer Tulsidas when he penned these two books as independent narratives of the Story of the Ramayan in addition to Ram Charit Manas which describes the Story in a continuous flow of narrative like the usual pattern of telling a tale. The pause thus created by the insertion of Geetawali and Kavitawali in

the general flow of the narration of this Story gives a closer, ring-side and focused view of certain singular events to the reader as they need special attention, a pattern he would thoroughly enjoy and relish in his mind as he reads along. It also helps to add colour of different hues to the Story just like a 'big picture' that is made from a mosaic of different colours and pieces fitted together and arranged in a perfect manner.

The Anand Ramayan tells us that the Ravana whom the world feared so much, and who was regarded as being the strongest and the bravest warrior in the creation, one who could not be challenged, one who was deemed to be invincible and inviolable by all accounts, was in reality a weakling, someone who only boasted of his immense powers and strength in front of those who were gullible and could be cowed down by his boisterous claims, for it is a fact that he had been defeated repeatedly and subjected to severe humiliation many a times but he never learnt a lesson or felt ashamed at the abject insults and outright rebukes heaped on him, pretending on the contrary that nothing had happened and continuing with his recklessness.

He had been blessed by some truly extraordinary boons which would have ordinarily made him actually unconquerable in this creation so much so that not even the God of Death could have harmed him, but his own sinful and pervert deeds and his over-confidence in his abilities created situations that led to some severe curses being cast upon him that created holes in the defensive armour provided by the boons he had acquired, curses which virtually neutralized the benefit he had from these boons, resulting ultimately into his fall and death. We read these in the narrative of the Anand Ramayan very succinctly.

But a time came when he realized the folly of all this, but it was too late by then to make amends. He realized that his soul was doomed if he was not careful even at that late hour and does not devise a device by which his salvation and emancipation can be somehow arranged. It was this grave realization, albeit late yet sincere and convincing, that made Ravana manoeuvre things in such a delicate way that he could be killed by the Supreme Lord himself, because he correctly judged that if the Supreme Lord himself comes to kill him, which means to free his soul from the evil body in which it dwelled, then it would be sure and certain that his soul would find redemption—because the merciful and compassionate Lord who loves all would not allow anything to the contrary to happen, as it was his vow and reputation that he provides deliverance to the fallen and the sinful!

It ought to be expressly noted here in the context of the observations made above that, in all sooth and without any doubt, this was the singular reason why Ravana voluntarily invited the wrath of Lord Ram, who was a human incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, by abducting his wife Sita, who was actually goddess Laxmi, so that the Lord would willingly and certainly liberate his soul from the cage of his evil body by 'killing him' in the epic war of Lanka! This fact is explicitly said in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 120-125, (b) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23, and (c) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 59-60; Uttar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 29-42, 54-59.

Ravana's character is a study in contrast however: he was born a Brahmin, had a great pedigree because he had an illustrious sage named Visrawa as his father and another great sage Pulastya as his grandfather, was well-versed in the scriptures by the grace of his learned father and grandfather, was in the earlier stages of his life an honourable young man who abhorred anything deemed to be incorrect and immoral, but who by the fiat of fate had gradually made a U-turn to become one of the most vile, sinful, pervert and hated creature in the Lord's creation. When we read his history we discover that the blame of converting this otherwise righteous son of an illustrious sage into a truly demonic creature, a blood-thirsty monster who was most immoral and cruel by nature, one who derived sadistic pleasure in doing evil deeds and tormenting others without a cause, and who did everything unworthy without a trace of shame in him, rests squarely upon his mother, named Kaikasi, who was the daughter of a demon named Sumali. True to her upbringing and the evil blood running through her veins, she had no compunctions or regrets in overseeing her own son's fall from grace by converting him into a shameful and evil demon. We learn from Ravana's story how a mother has a greater influence upon her son and plays a far more crucial role in moulding a person's character, behaviour and nature that determine his future and fate than his father does.

When we say that Ravana was a 'demon' we refer not so much to his physical features that were monster-like as to his nature, temperament and character traits that were demonic to the extreme, being sinful, evil, pervert, cruel, haughty, arrogant, wicked, greedy, unrighteous, deceitful, blood-thirsty and war-mongering, sexually promiscuous and lascivious, and having virtually all the negative characteristics that are collectively called Tama Gunas—the dark moral traits in a person. So we see that inspite of being born in the family of great Brahmin sages, Ravana turned into a most loathed creature in this creation who had no shame worth the name left in him.

Ravana had become a big Hector and Achilles of his time; a big bully and tormentor, a merciless brute, a ruthless and unbridled warrior, a haughty, arrogant and egoist ruler of the world, but at the same time matchlessly brave, bold, valorous, courageous, strong, fearless and mighty, someone invincible and immune to death except for one weakness in his body which made him vulnerable, his Navel, for if someone hit him here with a sharp weapon, such as an arrow, it was destined that Ravana would die, very much like Achilles' Heels.

The story of Lord Ram that has been immortalised in the form of the great epic known universally as the 'Ramayan', a story that has been narrated and retold in different ways and in different languages through the ages by many an illustrious sages, saints, bards and poets, is though centred around the personality of Lord Ram and his time and deeds, but it is also not a deniable fact that it was the Lord's conquest of Lanka of which Ravana was a king, and the death of Ravana and other great demon warriors that included his kin in the war, that is perhaps the only singular event that has led to the glorification of the story of the Ramayan as well as the event that has made Lord Ram become an immortal hero who had vanquished the evil forces represented by the demons of whom Ravana was a king.

The glorious and most fascinating story of Lord Ram cannot be de-linked and separated from the story of Ravana, as both of them played an equally important role in the story. Lord Ram's name and that of Ravana are integral to the story of

Ramayan, and undeniably the fame and the glory of both depends upon the other—for had it not been for Lord Ram and the death of Ravana at his hands, especially of the fact that at the time of death Ravana's soul had emerged from his gross body in the form of a brilliant shaft of light to enter the divine body of Lord Ram who represented the Supreme Being, Ravana would have been one of the thousands of demons who took birth and were killed in due course of time, and similarly Lord Ram had acquired such fame and glory as he indeed had for the simple and manifest reason that the Lord had conquered and eliminated an invincible and all-powerful warrior as Ravana who had the privilege of protection from death due to the boons that were granted to him by the Creator himself, and whose name sent shivers amongst the Gods who cowered for cover as soon as they heard of him.

The Lord's fame and glory and honour and majestic powers got incontrovertibly well established and recognized in the annals of history, and acquired the glorious sheen and the radiance and splendour with which it has shone down the ages due to the Lord's conquest of the cruel, evil and sinful demon race, and the elimination of the scourge and havoc caused by these demons led by their great and mighty king Ravana who had become invincible and unconquerable even for the Gods.

It is surely and without gainsay an irrefutable and unchallengeable fact therefore that it is due to Ravana that the glory of Lord Ram was brought to the fore and had shone in the world like the splendorous sun in the sky, because had it not been for the Lord's conquest of Lanka and his elimination of the cruel demons led by Ravana and his kin, the Lord would have been one of the long chain of kings and princes of the royal dynasty that ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya since a long time in the past. Lord Ram at the most would have been the greatest and the most renowned king in the illustrious dynasty of Ayodhya descending from king Ikshwaku and king Raghu, with all the kings of this line being great and mighty and renowned in their own rights, all being judicious rulers and ardent followers of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and goodness) who ruled with kindness and compassion; and that would have been all.

Ravana's prowess, valour and might can be judged from the fact that the mighty and all-powerful Gods scampered for cover as soon as they heard Ravana approaching, and his mere name instilled the fear of life in them. These Gods, small and big, had all of them surrendered themselves and yielded before his great warrior of the demon race. Surely therefore it was no mean feat for Lord Ram to defeat and eliminate such a formidable force as what Ravana represented.

The Gods were the rulers of the world, and to subjugate them was equivalent to subjugating the world. Ravana had fought fierce battles with the Gods to vanquish them, but he had another formidable enemy which came in the way of the fulfilment of his ambition of being the supreme ruler of the whole world. They were the sages, ascetics and hermits who had tremendous spiritual and mystical powers acquired by their austerities and penances, and it became necessary for Ravana to somehow get over this remaining obstacle. It was easy for him to defeat an enemy such as the Gods in war, but Ravana was in a quandary when it came to vanquishing the sages, hermits and ascetics—because they never took up arms and 'fought' like a warrior. So what should he do? He began tormenting and harassing them; defiling their religious sacrifices, plundering their hermitages, and constantly inflicting extreme cruelty upon

them and creating such nuisance for them that gradually the burden of sins became overwhelming.

Had Ravana's show of strength and valour and attempt at supremacy been limited to the Gods it would not have been so bad for him, but his torture of innocent creatures and tormenting of holy souls was his undoing and led to his downfall.

Therefore, throughout history and mythological narratives, Ravana has been depicted as being a horribly sinful and evil character. That perhaps is the reason why the word 'demon', which itself symbolises an evil and terribly sinful nature, had come to be appended to his name. As a result, our minds have been conditioned to treat Ravana as a hugely 'demonic' person with an evil character and as a fallen soul, a vile person who has always been reviled and demonised by one and all, but it is so easily and usually forgotten that though it is true that on the face he was indeed a sinful and evil person by his deeds and the actions of his gross physical body, but internally he was an illustrious and enlightened soul, a soul so high and powerful that even the Supreme Being (Lord Vishnu) had to come down to earth as a human being (Lord Ram) and do severe Tapa (penance, austerity and suffering of hardship for some great cause) by way of spending fourteen long years in the forest, walking barefoot for thousands of miles to reach the city of Lanka, face the ignominy and humiliation of having his divine consort (Sita) abducted, make humble monkeys and bears as friends, suffer the ravages of a bloody war, and so on and so forth—just to kill Ravana!

Is this in itself not an extraordinary and an unbelievable thing that the Supreme Being—who is supposed to possess unimaginably great supernatural and mystical powers that would empower him to create or destroy and recreate the entire creation by as much as a mere wish—could not eliminate one single individual (Ravana) whom all the Gods and all other creatures had wanted to be got rid of, an individual who had subdued the heaven and the earth, and who had unleashed a reign of terror that directly challenged the authority of the Supreme Being himself, without having to take the trouble of having to come down to earth as a human and having to fight a hand-to-hand battle with his opponent?

The implied message is obvious. It was not easy to eliminate Ravana, because he had such stupendous mystical powers as none others possessed, not even Lord Vishnu. This power of Ravana was acquired by intense Tapa and sharpening of the spiritual prowess of his soul. So therefore to achieve the feat of slaying Ravana his opponent was required to have mystical powers and strength that would surpass that of Ravana, powers that cannot come while living in the luxury of heaven, as was the case with Lord Vishnu. So therefore, if Ravana was to be vanquished, Vishnu too would be required to do Tapa that was at least equal to if not more severe than that done by Ravana as indicated by the Lord's coming down from heaven to the mortal world and suffering its horrors and pains like an ordinary human being.

And besides all this, there are other remarkable facts about Ravana that distinguishes him from all the other characters we meet in the story of the Ramayan. At the time of his death when he collapsed on being shot by Lord Ram's arrow, his soul had exited from his gross body and emerged from it in the form of a blazing shaft of lightening which went straight and entered the body of Lord Ram! This singular event is narrated in all the versions of Ramayan, the epic tale describing the story of Lord Ram. This

particular event is of immense significance and of great spiritual importance because, according to the metaphysical philosophy enunciated by the Upanishads and the Purans and the Vedas, the ultimate destination of the Atma, the soul of all living beings, where it finds its eternal rest and peace, is its merger with the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul of creation. In the case of Ravana and Lord Ram, the former represented the living being, the individual creature, and the latter represented the Supreme Being. So therefore, Ravana's soul merging with the supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram—and that too in a visible manner that was witnessed by all, including the Gods who were anxiously watching the developments in the battle-field of Lanka from the sky—is an incontrovertible proof of Ravana's greatness, of the purity of his heart and the piety of his soul!

In all sooth and without gainsay indeed, what better and stronger proof is there that is needed to establish that Ravana's soul was of the purest and the most holy kind, because nothing that is impure and unholy can ever hope to find its place in the bosom of the Lord of the World (here represented by Lord Ram)!

Ravana was also well learned in the Vedas and other scriptures. In fact, during his time there was perhaps no one who was a greater scholar than him. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, the Lord who is called a 'Mahadeva', i.e. the 'Great Lord' amongst all the Gods, and had composed a hymn in the Lord's praise the like of which has never been replicated in the realm of Sanskrit hymns. It is called Ravana's Shiva Tandava Stotra. To wit therefore, Ravana was not entirely an atheist, for had he been one he would neither have worshipped Lord Shiva nor a goddess named as Katyayani, the goddess of war, whom he regularly worshipped.

But due to circumstances and certain events of his previous life, about which we shall read in due course in this Book, he had become a 'demon' by his external physical body. He knew that with his evil deeds it is not possible for him to attain liberation and deliverance of his soul, and neither were there any hopes for finding emancipation and salvation. He realized throughout that his gross body had become very sinful and tainted, and that this darkened veil has trapped and stifled his Atma, his soul, that retained its sublime nature. So being wise and worried about his fate he decided that the only way to free his Atma from the snare of his sinful and vile body was to die and get rid of the gross body. But he wanted to make sure that his deliverance and salvation were assured, and he determined that to make it a certainty it was necessary to die at the hands of the Supreme Lord himself.

He was fully aware that the world recognizes him as the most vile fellow in the Lord's creation. He wanted to remove this scar, this dark taint from his name for ever in a way that the world could stand witness to and see it for itself. He could have got liberation for himself from his demon body by fighting and getting killed by Lord Vishnu somewhere in the heaven during a stage-managed battle fought there. But obviously no one on earth would have known about it, except some great sages or scribes who had access to the events occurring in heaven. The result would be that the taint sticking to his name would have survived even after he was dead and had actually found deliverance and salvation.

That is why he had manoeuvred things in such a way that would force the Supreme Being to come down right here on earth and kill Ravana in front of the whole world.

And to make sure that the taint of evil was removed from his soul and name for all times to come, he ensured that his Atma would visibly exit his body and enter the body of Lord Ram—so that everyone would witness it first-hand, and the honour of his soul would be restored.

It is clearly written in Adhyatma Ramayan¹ as well as Ram Charit Manas² and Anand Ramayan³ that Ravana wanted himself to be killed at the hands of Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, as he determined it was the only way for his salvation, and that is why he stole Sita to create a pretext by which the Lord would come and fight with him and then kill him. {¹Adhyatma Ramayan, (a) Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 59-61; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Canto 3, verse nos. 29-42, 54-59; (ii) Canto 4, verse no. 11; ²Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 23; ³Anand Ramayan, Saarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 137-139.}

Even at the time of abducting Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, Ravana had been careful to treat her as he would have treated his own mother and offered her his mental respect, bowing to her silently. {Ref: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 28.} To observe the greatest respect for Sita, Ravana had not physically grabbed her by the hand to take her away, but had respectfully scooped the earth from beneath her feet like the way a gardener uses to transplant a living plant from one place to another. He had then taken her to Lanka and placed that scooped-up soil with Sita sitting on it in his royal garden. {Ref: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 51-52, and verse no. 65.}

This was not all. Ravana had taken due precaution that Sita could live reasonably comfortably by keeping her under the shade of a huge tree, called Ashok Tree, that was surrounded by a lush green garden. To be on the safer side and to ensure that the lady demon guards (i.e. the demonesses) who were assigned to keep an eye on Sita would not torment her unnecessarily, he had appointed an old and pious demoness named Trijata to be with Sita at all times. Trijata had comforted Sita whenever she was depressed and hopeless, even predicting to her that Ravana's death was imminent. Trijata had admonished other guards when they tried to tease Sita, and had instilled the fear of death in them so much that hence forth they stopped tormenting her. In fact, Trijata was Sita's close confidante and friend all throughout her captivity, and it was Trijata who had kept Sita's spirits high and buoyant. {Ref: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29-b; (b) Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 10—Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.}

To be fair to Ravana, had he had the intention to torture Sita and make her buckle under pressure, or to prevent Lord Ram getting her back in the eventuality of the Lord winning the war, say then would he have taken such precautions as appointing a good-natured demoness to guard Sita from the cruelty of other guards? It shows clearly that he had simply staged a drama of abduction of Sita to prepare a pretext that would ensure that he could leave his sinful body by getting killed at the hands of the Supreme Being when he comes right over to face him in the battle-field for freeing Sita from his clutches. {Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 23.}

We read in all the versions of the Ramayan (except Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas) that Lord Ram ruled for ten thousand of years after his Lanka campaign and the war with Ravana, and during this long time he and his brothers had launched many a military campaigns in far off countries and established their domains there. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 29; and Canto 9, verse nos. 16-22; as well as many Cantos of Uttar Kand in Valmiki's Ramayan.} But none of the events of later life and none of the great sacrifices, wars and expeditions undertaken by Lord Ram became as famous and glorifying for the Lord as was his campaign at Lanka and the slaying of Ravana.

Lord Ram's father, king Dasrath, had also fought many a great battles on behalf of the Gods {refer for example: Valmiki Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 12-18}, and so did almost all his ancestors. One of them was Sagar who is remembered as the great king after whom the ocean is called 'Sagar' in the ancient scriptures.

So surely enough we see that Ravana had indeed played a pivotal role in the establishment and spread of the glory and the fame of Lord Ram as we know of them by the reading of the wonderful story of the Ramayan.

Having said this, now let us see briefly who the 'demons' were according to mythology. They are called 'Asurs' or anti-Gods. The Asurs symbolised the malevolent powers and evil or negative forces of creation as opposed to the Gods who stood for benevolence and goodness and positive aspects.

Both the Gods and the Asurs descended from sage Kashyap, their common father. Kashyap was the grandson of the creator Brahma. The elder wife of Kashyap was Aditi from whom the Gods came into being, and his other two wives were Diti and Danu from whom the Daityas and the Danavas, for whom we use the common word 'demons', were respectively born. While Indra became the king of the Gods, Virochan was appointed as the king of the demon clan.

As time passed and thousands of millenniums elapsed, countless generations of demons evolved and spread over all parts of this creation. So, if the Gods made themselves omnipresent in a subtle form of good virtues, auspiciousness and righteous values, the Demons made their presence felt in the form of evil characters, negativity and sinfulness. The world paradoxically is a fine balance between the two—as the Grand Supreme Creator wished it to be so. So when this delicate balance gets disturbed and evil becomes ascendant, it is then that the Supreme Guardian of creation intervenes personally to set things right, and restore the order and balance that he had created himself. This in simple words answers the question of why the Supreme Being has to come down to earth repeatedly in one form or the other.

Now coming back to our story of Ravana, let us have a quick glance at his previous life and see why he became a demon at all. It will also tell us why he became so revengeful and antagonised against the Gods, Brahmins and sages.

In his previous life he was known as king Pratapbhanu. This story is narrated in the epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153, to Doha no. 176. It was narrated to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyawalkya. We shall be reading it in detail in the very first chapter of our present Book.

Briefly, however, it is as follows. Some long time in the past, there was a great king by the name of Pratapbhanu (pronounced as Pratāpbhānu), also known as Bhanupratap. His name literally means ‘one whose glory and fame shone like the splendour and radiance of the sun in the sky’. He was a noble and righteous king who ruled judiciously over the kingdom of Kaikaya after his father Satyaketu abdicated the throne in his favour and went to the forest to do penance. This kingdom was famous for prosperity and happiness that comes with righteousness and probity, where the laws of Dharma (ethics, propriety, nobility and goodness) and Truth prevailed.

But unfortunately, as is usually the way with kings, he was very ambitious. He wished to conquer and rule over the whole world, and even be able to subdue elders and wise men such as the Brahmins if they try to stand in his way, so that he may rule unopposed for eternity. It is not possible in this mortal world that anyone can become eternal and be untouched completely by the rules of creation. Likewise, the tide of time and fiat of fate cannot be conquered, undermined and subdued forever, and so it is also not possible to remain unconquerable for eternity.

So, by-and-by, this ambitious nature of Pratapbhanu led to his ultimate downfall. He fell into a trap of a king whom he had defeated sometime earlier in battle, and who was bidding his time to take revenge. This defeated king went to the forest to hide in the disguise of a hermit, and wait. Once it so happened that the noble king Pratapbhanu fell into his trap when he got lost during hunting. The cunning fellow promised false boons to the king and prevailed upon him to arrange for a grand feast for Brahmins where he would manipulate things and get him blessed by Brahmins with the boons of things he so much desires. As fate would have it however, the king’s enemy mixed cooked meat in the food that was being served to the invited guests. When this became known, the angry Brahmins cursed the king that he along with his entire family and all his subjects would become flesh-eating demons themselves. With the passage of time, Pratapbhanu was born as the demon Ravana, and his kin were born as the other members of his demon race.

When king Pratapbhanu was cursed to become a demon by the Brahmins for no fault of his as he was completely unaware that meat has been mixed in the food served to them for which they cursed him—a fact even the Gods had acknowledged in the first place and regretted by the Brahmins themselves¹, the king was full of indignation, anger, vexation and exasperation. Though the damage was already done but this singular injustice done to an otherwise upright and righteous king had a lasting effect on his psyche, and he was so internally fired with anger and a feeling of vengeance that it could not be forgotten but would rear its ugly head in his next birth as the demon Ravana. He bided for his time, and when he got empowered he decided to punish those who had been instrumental in his becoming a demon—i.e. the Gods, the Brahmin and the sages—so much so that no sooner had he got the boons of invincibility from the Creator he unleashed a horrific wave of retribution upon them². {Refer: ¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 170—to Doha no. 174; ²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 181—to Doha no. 182.}

By-and-by, king Pratapbhanu himself became the famous demon Ravana; his younger brother named Arimardan became the demon Kumbhakaran; his chief minister who

was an ardent follower of righteousness became Vibhishan; his son became Meghanad; and all the rest of his kin and subjects became demons of different denominations and stature in their next life. {Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 176.}

The next phase of the tale is the story of the birth of Ravana as well as his kin and the rest of the demons, the establishment of their kingdom and a reign of terror that they relentlessly unleashed. This has been narrated in (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, (i) Canto 1, verse nos. 23-61; (ii) Canto 2, verse nos. 1-60; (c) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 1-139. We shall be reading all these texts one-by-one in our narrative in this Book.

Let us have a brief and quick glance at this part of the story. There was a sage by the name of Pulastya. He was the son of the creator Brahma. Pulastya was married to a daughter of Trinbindu, and from her he begot an illustrious son name Visrawa (pronounced as Viśravā). Visrawa was married to the daughter of sage Bharadwaj, and from her he got a son named Kuber who became the treasurer of Gods. Kuber had first established Lanka, the city of gold created by Vishwakarma, the architect of the Gods.

The demons at that time had been hiding in the nether world due to the fear of Lord Vishnu and the powerful Gods. One of them named Sumali (Sumāli) had once come to the surface of earth with his daughter Kaikasi. They saw Kuber roaming in all his godly splendour in an airplane called Pushpak which belonged to the Gods. Both father and daughter became jealous, and Sumali asked his daughter to go and ask Visrawa to marry her so that she also gets sons that would have the same glory as that of Kuber. Kaikasi, being a beauty in her own right, approached Visrawa with the proposal, and though it was not the proper thing to do, the sage could not turn her away and restrain himself; so he accepted it. Eventually, the three brothers Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan were born to her. A girl was also born; her name was Supernakha. But since their mother was a female demon (a demoness), all of them became demons.

In the early stages of life Ravana was a good young man, befitting his father Visrawa. But his evil mother kept on nagging at him and made him jealous of Kuber who happened to be his half-brother. She instigated him to do Tapa and acquire powers which would enable him to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of life¹. Even after acquiring the boon of invincibility and immense strength and powers, internally Ravana was still a righteous and pious person, for when the demon Sumali, his mother Kaikasi's father, and other demons such as Prahastya, tried to instigate him to revolt against Kuber and the Gods, Ravana had refused, saying that Kuber was his elder step-brother and he had done no harm to him, so there was no justification in confronting him. However, Sumali wanted to take revenge against the Gods, especially their leader Lord Vishnu, because they had vanquished the demons and forced them to live a life in hiding. With a powerful grandson in the form of Ravana by his side, Sumali wished to settle old scores with the Gods. He used all tricks in the book and succeeded in making Ravana revengeful vigorously². And then there was no looking back, for Ravana successfully paid the Gods their due in their own coin!

{¹Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 3-6; ²Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 24-33.}

At this juncture Ravana reflected deeply and recalled the events of his previous life: how injustice was done to him when the Brahmins had cursed him for no fault of his own, and how they were alerted by the Gods that meat was mixed in their food. Even at that time, as we have read herein above, he was filled with vengeance as he felt he was a victim of gross injustice and wrongly implicated for a sin or a crime which he was ignorant about, and that feeling was now stoked and ignited into a raging fire of hatred and retribution once he had acquired the wherewithal for its requital. In this context one can easily recollect the story of Edmond Dantes made immortal by Alexandre Dumas in his classic tale of 'The Count of Monte Cristo'. In this story, Dantes was falsely implicated and imprisoned, losing his honour and esteem, but providence was favourable to him as he ultimately escaped and acquired the wherewithal for retribution which he unleashed vengefully to attain a triumphant revenge.

Similarly here, Ravana, as king Pratapbhanu, was condemned to become a demon for a reason of which he had no inkling himself but was nevertheless held guilty of, but once he empowered himself by obtaining boons from Brahma the creator, he sought revenge with a vengeance, and even succeeded in it. But ultimately his conscience bore heavily upon him as he realised what his hubristic nature has yielded to him, for later on he felt excessive spiritual discomfort for a life spent relentlessly in sins and perversions so much so that he sincerely yearned for liberation and deliverance of his soul from the quagmire it had landed itself in. In Dumas' classic cited above, Monte Cristo too feels uneasy with his actions of revenge and retribution, and regrets their consequences, ultimately pardoning Danglers who had trampled mercilessly, out of extreme selfishness and jealousy, upon his fate early on in life when he was known as Edmond Dantes, by forcing Dantes to utter condemnation, hastening the death his grief-stricken and heart-broken father, and separating him from his betrothed, not being aware that Providence held other plans for the innocent Edmond.

It was around this time that Lord Ram, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, had come down to fulfil the long-pending prayers of the Gods and Mother Earth, which was to free them from the torture and horrors inflicted upon them by Ravana. So Ravana saw a window of hope: he decided that he would invoke the dirtiest part of his nature and kidnap Sita, Lord Ram's wife, to force the Lord to come and kill him. It was his way of finding liberation from a demon's body that was in accordance with his nature—face his opponent in the battle-field, and fall down fighting, not by showing cowardice by turning his back to the enemy. Ravana's remorse and penitence for a sinful life was sincere, his desire for final deliverance was honest, and so Lord Ram honoured his wishes by accepting his Soul within his own Self at the time of Ravana's death, thereby pardoning Ravana. These irrefutable facts are endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103, and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23, as well as in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uddha/Lanka Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 73-70.

Coming back to our story, as we have read already destiny was preordained for the three brothers, Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan, because all of them had been cursed in their previous life to become 'flesh eating demons'—i.e. be cruel and

animal-like. Besides this, the unfulfilled yearning of the late king Pratapbhanu to rule over the world unopposed reared its ugly head once again in his current life as Ravana. So when they did Tapa, Ravana sought the boon of invincibility so that he can conquer the world. The creator Brahma who had come to give them the boons was dismayed. Enough was enough he thought. So he and the other Gods manoeuvred things and deluded his brother Kumbhakaran when his turn came for asking his desired boon. Kumbhakaran asked for something that was absurd: he wanted to eat a huge meal and then enjoy sleep for six months! It was immediately granted before he could change his mind. Vibhishan, who was a righteous minister of the king in his early life, though retained his inherent piety, and he sought the boon of devotion for Lord God. It too was granted.

We observe a remarkable thing here. In the midst of the great desert of evil, vices, cruelty, unlawfulness and sin that the demons stood for in general, Vibhishan, Ravana's brother, was like an oasis of peace, piety, devotion for God, non-violence, probity, goodness and righteousness. This is the beauty of Nature and of Creation: to keep the seed of hope and goodness alive it is so arranged that goodness and virtuousness manage to exist, even if in an infinitesimally small ratio, in the surrounding ocean of overpowering nature of sins, evil and vices. When the time comes, the next phase of goodness and virtuousness would sprout from this hidden seed! So was it in the case of the demons too—when all the cruel and sinful demons were eliminated in the war of Lanka, the remnants of them who were good by nature lived on to keep the genes of the demon race alive. They were ruled by Vibhishan as their new king.

In due course of time, Ravana had conquered the whole world and had unleashed his cruel reign of terror. This forced Lord Vishnu to come down as Lord Ram. By-and-by, Ravana stole Sita, the wife of Lord Ram. In order to recover her, a search party consisting of monkeys and bears, whose king Sugriv was befriended earlier by Lord Ram, was sent. Out of them, one named Hanuman managed to cross the vast ocean and locate Sita in Lanka. When he was humiliated by Ravana and the demons tried to kill him by setting his tail on fire, Hanuman had burnt the whole city of Lanka. This set the stage for the war. When he came back and reported everything to the Lord, a mighty army was assembled and a campaign launched.

Meanwhile, Vibhishan too had joined Lord Ram's camp when he was publicly insulted by Ravana. The army crossed the ocean over a bridge constructed over its surface to span it. Before the actual war, Lord Ram sent Angad, the nephew of Sugriv, the king of the monkeys and bears, as an emissary to the court of Ravana in an attempt to avoid the blood-spilling war. But it came to naught. So finally the attack was launched.

What followed was a legendary war, the most horrifying war that the earth ever witnessed. We shall read it in great detail by way of quoting directly from the scriptures as we progress with our narrative in this Book.

Finally, Ravana met his end, and so also ended the sinful reign of the demons. Those who survived did not dare to repeat the mistakes of their predecessors. The new kingdom of Lanka was helmed by Vibhishan who ruled with probity and in accordance with the laws of Dharma. So though the new kingdom was also called a

kingdom of demons, but its nature and constitution and structure was completely different from what it had been earlier under Ravana.

The question that seems pertinent here is this: If Ravana's 'true self', i.e. his Atma or soul, was actually of a holy and exalted nature as the 'Atma' is expected to be because the Atma is by nature pure and holy as it is pure consciousness and it represents the Supreme Soul or the cosmic supreme Consciousness of this creation, then why did Ravana become so ruthless and cruel, and why was he not contented by being the ruler of the golden city of Lanka and the sovereign of the demon race? Well, there are some obvious reasons why this came to be. In his previous life Ravana was the great king Pratapbhanu, and he was very ambitious, desiring to conquer the whole world and having no enemy so much so that he wanted even to subdue the Brahmins (who were elders in the society and learned people) because he feared them the most. It is because the Brahmins represented Gods, and should the king go astray from his righteous path the Brahmins could have stopped him in his track or even curse him if he did not mend his ways. Pratapbhanu did not want any fetters. So by-and-by, as the fate destined and events unfolded, Pratapbhanu, in his zeal to subdue Brahmins, had fallen in the trap of one of his earlier enemies—a king whom he had defeated in battle and who had disguised himself as a hermit to bid for time to settle scores—who manipulated things in such a way that the unaware Pratapbhanu was cursed by the Brahmins to become a 'demon who ate flesh' and 'would live a hateful and ignominious life full of sins that would make his soul slide down gradually that would ultimately lead him to interminable suffering in hell'.

When this king Pratapbhanu took birth in the next life as Ravana, this hidden desire of his to conquer the world and trounce all opponents surfaced once again. This was coupled by his suppressed anger at the Brahmins and the Gods for his cursing to become a 'demon'. So he decided to settle scores with them and pay them in their own coin. Hence, once he acquired immense powers and strength after doing severe Tapa, he started wreaking vengeance upon them, right, left and center.

In these developments, his demoness mother Kaikasi and his maternal grandfather the demon Sumali played a crucial role. The demons had, in some long time past, been defeated by Lord Vishnu, the Lord of heaven, and so they ran away and hid themselves somewhere in the nether world. When one of their descendants, i.e. Ravana, became powerful and invincible by the virtue of doing Tapa and being blessed by the creator Brahma himself, it was natural that now they decided to square things up with the Gods and their leader Vishnu. The Brahmins, sages and ascetics—they all offered their worship to the Gods and Lord Vishnu, and it was the offering that they made in the fire sacrifices which provided nourishment to the Gods. So Ravana decided to starve the Gods by defiling or destroying the fire sacrifices. Again, since the Brahmins and sages and ascetics had great spiritual powers, and it were the Brahmins and Gods who had been instrumental in Pratapbhanu's becoming a demon, Ravana decided to teach them a good lesson by unleashing terror on them.

And this is also the apparent reason why Ravana had not spared Lord Ram—who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu whom the demons treated as their arch enemy because it was Vishnu who had earlier forced them into hiding till the time Ravana came on the stage to challenge Vishnu's and Gods' might—from all the horrors he possibly could inflict upon the Lord, such as abducting his wife Sita, making her suffer in

captivity, forcing Lord Ram to undergo the pain, the horrors, the physical injuries and sufferings that he had to endure during the war.

But internally Ravana realized that whatever he is doing is not good for him, and he yearned for salvation and deliverance if the opportunity presented itself. That is why when he was able to determine that Lord Vishnu has after all come to eliminate him, he decided that it was the opportunity he had been waiting for, and if he could manoeuvre things and bring Vishnu to Lanka it would be good for him.

Of course Ravana knew that Vishnu couldn't and wouldn't go to meet him as a 'friend' because the demons were arch enemies of the Gods. Therefore, the only way for Ravana to meet Lord Vishnu was in the form of an 'enemy'. And since Lord Vishnu, here in the form of Lord Ram, cannot normally become anyone's enemy without a grave cause, Ravana decided to do the worst of abducting the Lord's wife so that no option would be left for Lord Ram but to fight with him in order to liberate Sita. And this would serve Ravana's purpose excellently—he would not even have to go and beg Vishnu to forgive him for his misdemeanours and sins, and liberate his soul from the evil body of a demon, but it would be Vishnu who would be forced to free his soul from remaining trapped in a demon's body by killing him in battle!

It was indeed a well-planned and well-orchestrated stage-managed move by Ravana, and perfectly executed, to attain emancipation and salvation. And he indeed succeeded in it in a marvelous fashion because Lord Ram had himself provided the final liberation and deliverance to the Atma or soul of Ravana from the trap of an evil demonic body when the Lord had slayed him and freed his soul. And the greatest wonder of them all is that Ravana's soul had emerged from his body and entered the body of Lord Ram to become one with the Supreme Soul, a fate that made Ravana immortal and eternal as well as worthy of high praise and honour—for no sinful being can ever find rest by becoming 'one' with the Supreme Being. This incident is clearly written in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 11, verse no. 78-79.

There are some obvious lessons—secular, temporal, spiritual and metaphysical—that we learn from the story of Ravana. Now, let us see them at a glance.

The first is this: Though the soul, known as the Atma of an individual, is primarily independent, immaculate, pure and destined to be holy, yet when this same Atma assumes the form of a 'Jiva-Atma', i.e. when the Atma comes to dwell in a gross body and assumes the form of a living being known as a Jiva (hence the combined name 'Jiva-Atma'), it automatically has to assume a gross identity for its own self like that of its host, the Jiva. The result is that the Atma now becomes subject to and conditioned by all the laws of Nature that applies to the gross body of the Jiva—such as it being influenced by Maya (delusions), by Ahankar (pride and ego), the three Gunas (such as the Sata, Raja and Tama, which are the basic qualities that determine the nature and character of all living beings), the numerous Vasanas (desires, passions and temptations that arise due to the inherent nature of the sense organs of the gross body of a creature that are naturally attracted to their respective sense objects in this material world), and so on and so forth.

To wit, the Atma loses its pristine purity, and instead becomes tainted and scarred. This starts its downward slide, and if it is not wise and alert then it falls in a dark pit from which it takes numerous generations for it to rise. But by-and-by rise it does, because a time comes when the Jiva realizes its follies and stupidity that led to the Atma being subjected to the ignominy and suffering that it got in spite of its primary form of being above all reproach. And then the suffering Jiva seeks a remedy for all his ills and strives to do all that is necessary and within its powers to have his Atma, which incidentally is the Jiva's 'true self and real identity' instead of its gross body, freed from this vicious trap and find liberation.

And what is this 'liberation'? The Atma's liberation is its freedom from the fetters of the gross body which had been its habitat for generations, to escape from its clutches and fly like a bird released from a cage.

But then, where would this liberated Atma go to find its rest and peace? The Jiva-Atma's destination, after finding freedom from the trap of the gross body of the creature, is the Supreme Atma or the Cosmic Soul from which it had got separated in the beginning. It is here that the 'parent' of the Jiva-Atma lives, and like all prisoners who flee from the gates of the prison there is peace and happiness to be found in the arms of one's loving parent! So it is also with the Jiva-Atma—for when the individual's Atma merges with the Supreme Atma, also known as the 'Parmatma' or the 'Lord God', then it finds its eternal rest, peace and bliss, for now there is no more suffering and pain and misery that were its lot in the form of a Jiva-Atma.

This unique journey of the 'Atma' is clearly marked in the story of Ravana. In his previous life as king Pratapbhanu, he became a victim of desires—he wanted to rule the whole world without having any opposition. This led to his curse and downfall as a demon. In the next body of Ravana, the demon, his Atma showed its holiness when he first refused to toe his mother's and maternal grandfather's line to usurp the kingdom of Lanka because he said that it rightfully belonged to his half-brother Kuber, the treasurer of Gods. But then the voice of his inner-self—what we call the 'voice of conscience' which is the voice of the Atma—was suppressed by the din caused by the voice of passion and lust stoked by none other than his own so-called well-wishers, i.e. his mother (Kaikasi) and maternal grandfather (Sumali), when they convinced him of the futility of such words of ethics, wisdom and righteousness as they would serve him no good if he really wished to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of life in this world which would be all his if he ruled like a king. Once again Ravana's Atma fell in a trap. But by-and-by he realized his mistake, and discovered to his dismay the depth of the dark pit of sin in which he has made his Atma fall, a depth from which liberation was well-nigh impossible by conventional means as prescribed by the scriptures. So what should he do now? He was in a quandary; so perplexed and anxious for his salvation was he that he decided to go the whole hog and turn the thing right on its head. He decided to become an epitome of sin and cruelty, for he knew that it would be his gross body that would commit these sins and misdemeanours, while his Atma he would decidedly endeavour to keep clean and separated from all the evil that would be associated with his body.

How is this possible? Well, Ravana was no ordinary demon; he was well-versed in the scriptures and highly learned in their principles. He was fully aware of the fact that the Atma is a sublime and holy entity that is different and separate from the grossness

associated with the physical body of a creature. Hence, if he ensured that this sublime Atma was not involved in the evil committed by the gross body then there is no fear of the Atma's further decline. On the other hand, he analyzed correctly as the later events prove, that if he managed to force the Supreme Being to come down to eliminate him, and if he could manoeuvre things in such a way that the Supreme Being destroys his evil-smeared gross body, then his Atma would be automatically freed from this sinful cage of a demon's body, and find its liberation.

What's more, if the Supreme Being is right in front at the time his Atma exits from the gross body upon the latter's destruction, it won't have to go anywhere in search of the Supreme Atma to find its final rest—for the simple and obvious reason that that much sought-after 'Supreme Atma' or the 'Parmatma' would be standing right in front, there itself! Ravana concluded that this game-plan suited him perfectly as he will have the best of the two worlds simultaneously—he would be able to rule and enjoy the fruits of the material world like its sole sovereign while he was alive, and at the same time he would also be able to have salvation and deliverance of his Atma ensured with the least effort—for he knew that other paths such as those prescribed in the scriptures by which the soul can attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation were extremely arduous and entail a lot of severe effort which he decided he won't be able to endure any longer. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23.}

But Ravana knew that to force the Supreme Being to take this trouble of coming down himself to provide liberation to his Atma right here in this mortal world was not a child's joke, unless he managed to devise a device for it. And what was the clever device he devised? It was to unleash an unprecedented reign of terror and horror on the creatures of this world, a dread of such a great magnitude that it would force the Supreme Being to intervene personally to settle things and bring order.

When we go through the story and read how Ravana relentlessly and without regret unleashed terror, how he refused to relent and avoid a destructive war that would certainly lead to his death at the hands of Lord Ram who represented the Supreme Being in a human body, and how his Atma finally escaped from his body to enter the body of Lord Ram—we would come to the conclusion that the entire story was well-planned and pursued by Ravana with the singular aim of finding liberation and deliverance for his Atma.

Ravana was vilified and demonized alright because his deeds were such that they needed to be denounced and condemned in no uncertain terms, but at the same time it is also true that had he been as true a demon internally as he has been made out to be it would not have been possible for him to have attained an exalted and rare death by the virtue of being killed at the hands of the Supreme Being himself, and to have his soul visibly exiting his body to enter and merge with the Supreme Soul to find its ultimate dissolution and rest as it did actually happen when he died. And besides this, the Supreme Being would never have accepted a fallen and sinful soul to come and reside within his own cosmic soul as Lord Ram had allowed Ravana's soul to do. This development had even astonished the Gods who were supposed to be 'all-knowing', for they had never expected that their enemy Ravana would attain that end which is inaccessible for even the greatest of sages and ascetics. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

The other lesson that this story teaches us is this: No matter how pure the Atma or the Soul of a creature is, if one is careless and allows one's self to fall prey to temptations and passions as well as bad company, then this innocent Atma of his is made to suffer. First Pratabbhanu fell to temptations, and then Ravana too fell to temptations, and in the process the Atma suffered.

The next lesson is this: That though the Atma, which incidentally is the true 'self' of all living beings and is pure consciousness—an entity of which the cosmic counterpart is known as the Supreme Consciousness represented by the Supreme Being or the Parmatma, the Lord God—is above reproach, yet it is accused of so many negative things just because of its association with the gross body in which it comes to dwell and becomes known as the 'Jiva-Atma'. When a wise person becomes aware of this Truth, i.e. when he knows that 'he' is not the gross physical body but the 'Atma' that lives in it, that this Atma is pure and sublime unlike the gross body which the world recognizes as the identity of that person, then this wisened person disassociates himself from the gross body and becomes happy and contented in the Atma. To wit, he becomes 'self-realized' and 'enlightened'. Then even if his body does commit any error he would remain free from its taints because he has begun to identify himself with his Atma and not his gross body.

But this eclectic thought should be genuine and honest; it should not be a conceited method and a pretentious way to avoid punishment for the sins committed by the body. Such a self-realized person would not at all be agitated should his body be punished for any of its crimes and transgressions, and he would be able to maintain complete calm and peace in all circumstances and adversities that would cause immense suffering for ordinary creatures who think their identity is their body.

And one more relevant lesson is that the Jiva-Atma, i.e. the living being, cannot claim immunity from punishment on the plea that his 'true self' is his Atma and that this Atma does not do anything, but it is the body that does everything and commits sins. Why? Because the Creator has given the Jiva, especially the human being who is placed on the highest plane of evolution, the power to think, to analyse, to decide, to choose, and to act with discretion. This being the case, a Jiva who occupies a higher place in the ladder of evolution cannot blame everything on providence; he cannot say that fate had destined him to be sinful, so he is committing sins. No; this is a fallacious and an erroneous argument—because the power to decide what to do and what not to do rests with the Jiva himself, and it is independent of what providence had provided for him.

So the Jiva himself is responsible for the future course of his Atma—whether the Atma rises or falls in the hierarchy of evolution, whether the Atma rises higher and higher to ultimately escape from the shackles of this gross existence and find its final freedom and deliverance, or whether it suffers a downhill slide and enters the cycle of birth and death and remains trapped in it. This is what is called the 'Law of Karma': a law that essentially says that one reaps the fruits of the sort of seeds he sows. If the creature does good and meritorious deeds out of choice, his Atma gets to acquire merit, and the reverse happens if a creature does sinful deeds that would exhaust whatever good the Atma already has.

The most important thing which this story tells us is that no matter how much the gross body of an individual is condemned and vilified, it is a fact that it harbours an entity known as the Atma which is eternally pure and truly holy. And hence, true wisdom of a person lies in an enlightened view that helps him to clearly distinguish between his Atma and his body, and thereby manage to maintain the independence and holiness of the Atma, which by the way is that person's 'true self and true identity', inspite of all the problems that are associated with his gross body. For this he has to keep a safe distance from the body—i.e. he has to learn not to have any attachment with the body and be free from all the prodding of its sense organs. He ought to let the body do what it is destined to do, but he must be determined that he has aught nothing to do with it. This will enable him to maintain internal calm and happiness, the hallmarks of the Atma, even while he lives like an ordinary Jiva in this mundane world and appears to be involved in its affairs. With this eclectic attitude, such a self-realized and wise person is rightly called a 'Jivan Mukta'—i.e. a person who has found liberation from the fetters of this body and the delusions associated with the world even while he lives in the same world and has interacts with it using his body, for he knows that his 'true self', i.e. his Atma, is not at all involved in any of these mundane things that would trap him in the cycle of transmigration.

Now however, though it is true that the Atma remains independent of the gross body, yet it cannot claim total immunity from blame if the creature commits some gross and grave sin. For after all, a living being is a 'living being' because of the presence of this Atma inside his body, and this Atma is supposed to be at the helm of affairs in the creature. A sovereign cannot deny responsibility for the misdeeds committed by his ministers and subjects; likewise, the Atma cannot say that it is not to be blamed by what the creature does. So directly or indirectly, the Atma gets the stigma of sins committed by the creature. But the trick for a wise and self-realized creature is to understand the subtle relationship between the Atma and his gross body, as well as the working of the 'Law of Karma', and make diligent effort to steer himself clear of misdeeds and evil as best as he can.

The unwitting effect of the deeds done by the body upon the Atma can be understood by a simple example. Suppose a man lives in a house that has a dirty and unkempt appearance, that appears to be falling apart due to neglect, and is also present in a bad neighbourhood. That person's name would also be shamed by the virtue of his association with this house.

Take another example. Suppose a man borrows and wears a shirt that was worn by another person earlier who is known to be a chain smoker. It is observed in practical life that if a person smokes incessantly, the clothes he wears acquire a typical odour unique to tobacco. So when this second person, who himself may not have touched a cigarette all his life, wears this shirt that has the odour of tobacco clinging to it and then goes out on the street for a short while and meets people who do not know anything about him, they would naturally think that this gentleman smokes because the odour is unmistakably that of a tobacco smoker.

This is what happens to the Atma as well. Even though the Atma is inherently pure and uncorrupt, nevertheless its association with a corrupt body gives an impression that the Atma itself is corrupt. The story of Ravana clearly points in this direction. Ravana was no doubt an evil character, but his Atma, his soul, too became maligned

because of its association with his evil body. The event where his soul exited his body in a brilliant shaft of light to enter the body of the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram was a singularly watershed event to bring to the knowledge of the world the metaphysical truth of the Upanishads—that the Atma or the soul of a Jiva, the living being, is always pure and holy irrespective of the sort of body that the Jiva has. So therefore, a wise man is one who always practices equanimity and equality while dealing with others in this world because he sees the hidden ‘self’ of a Jiva in the form of the latter’s holy and immaculate Atma instead of the grossness associated with his external body.

This creation has its origin in the Supreme Being, and hence all that is present in it also has its origin in the Supreme Being. This is true for both the negative forces as well as the positive forces. The Lord had planned things in such a way that a fine balance is to be maintained between these two opposing forces of Nature. But while the positive forces are by their nature self-restraint and modest because they stand for good virtues and spiritual merit, the negative forces on the other hand are unrestrained and immodest to the extreme as they represent all the sinful and evil things in this creation.

Hence, the chances of positive forces going out of hand and those who have them becoming haughty and arrogant due to their excellent virtues and glorious qualities are remote and rare to come by as compared to the negative forces represented by evil, vices and bad qualities that make those who possess them start hopping and jumping with vigour at the slightest encouragement.

The Lord is an impartial judge; he takes sides with none. So the chances of the Lord’s intervention to rein-in positive forces are rare simply because the owners of such forces observe self-discipline themselves, something not true for the owners of negative forces who go berserk easily and with a vengeance. This is why there more stories of the Lord having to intervene and eliminate demons who represent negativity are known vis-à-vis his intervention to restrain those who have positive qualities.

But often times it so happens that those who are supposed to be possessors of good virtues and excellent spiritual powers that they get by the virtue of their doing various religious sacrifices, doing penances and observance of austerity and other spiritual efforts, start behaving in a haughty and arrogant manner in the erroneous belief that there is no one to counter them. It is then that the Supreme Being decides to teach them a good lesson so that they understand their limits. This is evident in the story of Ravana. The Brahmins had become so confident of their powers and mystical abilities that they feared no retribution from any quarter. They would curse anyone, even those who were not at fault, at the slightest provocation because they wished everyone to bow and yield before them—as is clear when the Brahmins had cursed king Pratapbhanu to become a demon for no fault of his. These Brahmins thought that even as a demon, Pratapbhanu would not be able to harm them. So, the Lord taught them a bitter lesson and gave them back in the same coin in which they had tried to subjugate others in the Lord’s creation. Ravana wreaked vengeance upon them relentlessly to bring them to heel, and the same Brahmins who would curse at will anyone who dared to offend them had to run for cover under the terror unleashed by Ravana. Where was their power to curse and spell doom on their opponents now? Why couldn’t they now lift their hands and say ‘Ravana, we curse you to burn to ashes’?

So in this way, the Supreme Being gave a clear hint that no one has the authority to upset the laws of the Creator. If he could punish the evil creatures represented by the demons, he could also punish those who called themselves holy and good but became proud and arrogant enough to exceed the threshold of modesty and restraint.

This is therefore a wonderful, marvellous and captivating tale of intrigue, dilemma, apparent contradictions and a lot of maneuvering by the Jiva-Atma. The Story keeps the mind riveted as it unfolds in a gradual but fascinating way.

The above discussion must have made the reader aware by now of the voluminous and extensive nature, as well as the wide canvas that has been used to narrate this most awe-inspiring and fascinating ‘Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka’ in our present Book. So therefore, the subject matter of the Book has been divided into 6 Parts with a total of 22 Chapters spread amongst them, and these Chapters are further sub-divided into Sections and sub-sections, each systematically numbered—all with the intention to make this vast Story properly structured, so as to make it easy to read and comprehend.

Finally, I wish to give my thanks to Sri Somil Bharti, B.Tech (IIT Kanpur) and MBA (IIM Calcutta) who has done the Roman Transliteration of the verses of the Original Text for me. He has always done it so gladly, even though he is a busy professional in his life.

I had tried to do my best, yet surely some errors may have crept in. For this I beg forgiveness from my esteemed readers, for after all I am an ordinary human being like the rest of us. I had to do this Book single-handedly as I have no companion or assistant of any kind to help me. With age factor working against me (for now I am in the sixty-fourth year of my life) I may have overlooked things and made inadvertent mistakes. So they are to be kindly overlooked by the reader.

Amen !

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Introduction:

A Brief Outline of the Story and its Important Characters

This magnificent and enthralling “Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka” is one of the best known classical tales of an era that predates our present civilization, and it goes back to hundred and thousands of years in history, yet it is so captivating and wonderful that its charm and fascination has never faded down the ages, and it has been told and retold in its numerous versions, both in the form of the many oral traditions as well as in the form of one of the most ancient and fascinating classics of India, the epic known to the world as the ‘Ramayana’. The awe-inspiring Story is so wondrous and marvellous that it has spawned many a versions of the Ramayana across cultures and in different languages. As a result, though the main frame of the Story remains the same but the finer details have undergone changes and a lot of tinkering through the many ages and the countless generations through which it has travelled.

The Ramayana, in essence, is the story that describes the life and time of Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of creation, who had to come down to earth to eliminate the ruthlessly cruel demon race presided over by their king known as Ravana because they had overturned and trampled upon the laws of Dharma, the rules that governed proper functioning of the world and helped maintain peace, happiness and order in the society where all the living beings followed the norms of propriety, probity, goodness and righteousness in this world. It’s the story of the conquest of the evil by the good; it’s the story of how the Supreme Being watches patiently when some members of his own creation fall on the path of sin, giving them ample opportunity to make amends and repent, but when he determines that things have slid beyond a certain threshold level and needs his personal intervention, the Lord—being the Sovereign, the Supreme Commander, the Guardian and the Father of this creation—does step in to set his house in order and carry out his moral obligation.

In the case of Ravana and the demon race he headed as their king, things had deteriorated to such an extent that the Lord’s humble children, the ordinary creatures represented by human beings, as well as the Mother Earth that sustained and nourished them, and the Gods who protected them all, were themselves extremely horrified and tormented so much so that if nothing was done then everything that stood for life and goodness would be pushed to extinction under the fiery onslaught of sin, evil, cruelty and vices that the demons stood for. So it became obligatory for the Lord to intervene personally.

In order to introduce the reader to this marvelous Tale told in our Book in its entirety, covering its expanse in all its hues and emotions, we shall outline here the way the Chapters are arranged in this Book, as it would also help to give an idea of the flow of the narrative.

Chapter no. 1: We shall begin our narrative from the time of King Pratapbhanu—as this king was the one who later on, in his next life, became the demon King Ravana due to certain unfortunate developments.

Chapter no. 2: This Chapter describes the birth of Ravana, the various boons and curses he got, and the establishment of the demon kingdom.

Chapter no. 3: In this Chapter we read how after establishing his kingdom of demons at Lanka, Ravana had unleashed a dreadful reign of terror and cruelty that horrified all living beings.

Chapter no. 4: The Gods and Mother Earth could not bear things any more and so they prayed to Lord Vishnu to save them from Ravana's tyranny. The Lord promised them to come down personally in the form of Lord Ram to set things in order. This part of the story is covered in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 5: In order to accomplish his mission of eliminating the cruel demons and slaying their king Ravana along with his kin, Lord Ram had to find an excuse to travel to Lanka, the citadel of the demons and the capital city of Ravana. In order to give effect to his grand plan, the Lord had to maneuver things in such a way that his wife Sita would be abducted by Ravana, which would provide the Lord with a ready-made excuse to go and vanquish the evil demons so that Sita could be freed. How this grand plan of the Lord was implemented and Sita was abducted by Ravana is narrated in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 6: The Lord then began his search for Sita though he knew everything in advance. During his wanderings in the wild forest, the Lord met Jatayu, the vulture who had tried to save Sita but was gravely injured when Ravana sliced off his wings, and Sabari who was an old woman living alone in an abandoned hermitage. From them the Lord came to know that Ravana had taken Sita away, and he was advised to proceed to the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha where he should befriend Sugriva, the prince of the monkeys, who would help the Lord to first find where exactly Sita was, and then launch a military campaign to recover her.

Lord Ram went in the direction told and befriended Hanuman and Sugriva. By-and-by, spies and heralds were dispatched in all the directions to find out the whereabouts of Sita. One team consisting of chief monkeys and bears reached the shore of the southern ocean where they meet Sampati, an old vulture and elder brother of Jatayu. He told them that Sita was held captive in Lanka across the ocean. So it was decided now to send Hanuman and ascertain the facts. He crosses the ocean to land on the shore of Lanka. These events are narrated in vivid detail in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 7: After landing in Lanka, Hanuman goes about his job in right earnest. During his search he first meets Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, and befriends him. Vibhishana guides him to the garden named Ashoka Van where Sita was held captive under a massive tree. Hanuman meets Sita, informs her of the latest developments, and assures her that soon Lord Ram would come to free her. Then he plunders the garden on the excuse that he is hungry and wishes to eat fruits. During his rampaging he kills a large part of the demon army sent to capture him, but finally yielded and allowed himself to be tied so that he could have a chance to meet Ravana personally and judge him. He was taken to the royal court of the demons where an

acrimonious exchange of sharp words took place between him and the demon king. Ultimately, Ravana was so infuriated that he ordered that Hanuman's tail be burnt as a punishment. However, Hanuman was waiting for this opportunity, for he freed himself and ran amok in the city, dragging the reams of clothes tied on his tail and set alight by the demons, thereby sparking a wild fire that ravaged the gilded city of Lanka and reducing it to a dark hulk of a ruin of burnt-out rubble. Taking leave of Sita, Hanuman leapt across the ocean to come back to Kishkindha and report to Lord Ram about the success of his mission. These developments are covered in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 8: Lord Ram wastes no time in collecting a huge army of monkeys and bears to launch a military campaign to free Sita from the clutches of the demons. The army departs on its mission from Kishkindha and reaches the shore of the south ocean. We read about it in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 9: Meanwhile, ever since Hanuman had laid Lanka to waste by burning it down, there was a general air discontent and fear in the city. Many senior ministers tried to persuade Ravana to avoid a ruinous war by giving Sita back to Lord Ram, but of course to no avail. One among them was his own brother Vibhishan. But Ravana was so angry at this that he kicked Vibhishan in full court, at which the latter decided to quit Lanka and join the camp of Lord Ram. This Chapter describes these events.

Chapter no. 10: The only problem to be overcome now by Lord Ram's army was to cross the mighty ocean. For this a bridge was constructed on its surface; it was a miraculous feat indeed. The army then crossed over to land on the soil of Lanka. We read about it in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 11: Lord Ram did not wish to go down in history with the ignominy of not having given the angel of peace a chance so that bloodshed and ruin could be averted. So after war parleys were held it was decided to send Angad, the crown prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha and one of Lord Ram's close confidantes, to go as an 'emissary of peace' to explore if there was any hope of avoiding a destructive war. Angad's mission, however, failed. This Chapter narrates these developments.

Chapter no. 12: So then, the War finally begins. Ravana's wife Mandodari tried her best on her part repeatedly to convince her stubborn husband to see reason and abandon his haughtiness, but as the fiat of fate determined and providence willed, Ravana would pay no heed to her entreaties for his doom was pre-destined. We read about Mandodari's entreaties in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 13: War Parleys in both the camps of Lord Ram and Ravana are urgently held. Lord Ram decides to send Angad as his emissary to the demon court in an attempt to make peace and avoid a destructive war.

Chapter no. 14: In this Chapter we watch from our ring-side seats as the initial wave of attack by Lord Ram's forces commences, and the fort of Lanka crumbles under the force of the onslaught. We get a glimpse of the horrifying and blood-curdling war between Ravana's army of demons and Lord Ram's army of monkeys and bears as the sack of Lanka and the ravages of war begin.

Chapter no. 15: During the initial phases of the war, Ravana's son Meghanad had fought a fierce duel with Laxman, Lord Ram's brother, and had gravely wounded him so much that Laxman had become unconscious and fell on the battle-field. Hanuman had then gone to the northern mountains and brought one of its hills that contained a special life-giving herb by administration of which Laxman could be revived. This phase of the war is described in this Chapter.

Chapter no. 16: After Laxman was revived and joined the war once again, Ravana was extremely perturbed. He persuaded his brother Kumbhakaran to face the enemy and defeat it. Kumbhakaran was flabbergasted for he understood the foolishness of this war; so he warned Ravana of the ruinous consequences of his decision to fight Lord Ram. However, Kumbhakaran joined the battle, and was ultimately slayed by Lord Ram, becoming the first major casualty of the war. This Chapter describes Kumbhakarn's fierce battle with Lord Ram and his army, and his ultimate death.

Chapter no. 17: Next we read in this Chapter about the second battle between Laxman and Meghnad, the mightily powerful son of Ravana. He was finally killed by Laxman, and Meghand's death was the second major casualty of the war after Kumbhakaran.

Chapter no. 18: The war entered its final stage, and in this Chapter the no-holds barred battle between Lord Ram and Ravana, that culminated in the latter's death, has been described vividly.

Chapter no. 19: The war ends with victory for Lord Ram's forces. There is mass celebration and jubilation everywhere, especially in the ranks of the Gods who were exceptionally elated and praised Lord Ram highly. Then Lord Ram appointed Vibhishan as the new king of Lanka. We read all about it in this Chapter.

Chapter 20: Now the main objective of the war was to be accomplished—which was Sita's reunion with Lord Ram. This Chapter narrates this pleasant development.

Chapter no. 21: After being reunited with Sita and fulfilling the promise he had made to Mother Earth and the Gods—that he would free them from the torments of Ravana and his cruel demon hordes, Lord Ram embarked on his journey back home to Ayodhya with his companions onboard the air-plane called Pushpak. A heart-warming and arousing reception was given to the Lord when he finally landed on the soil of Ayodhya at the end of his fourteen years of forest sojourn; he arrived home to a tumultuous welcome. Lord Ram is then crowned as the King-Emperor amidst wide-spread festivities, and then we read about the departure of his guests for their respective homes in Kishkindha and Lanka. This brings us to the End of this fascinating and marvellous Story.

Chapter no. 22: The whole Story of the "Ramayana" has been recapitulated and re-told quickly in a 'Fast Motion' mode in this final chapter, and for this we shall be reading Ram Charit Manas's Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68.

It ought also to be pointed out here that, in order to make our Book as comprehensive and have as wide a sweep as possible, we shall be curating, collating and reading from four classics that present this Tale in most fascinating terms—viz. (i) Ram Charit

Manas, (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, (iii) Geetawali Ramayan, and (iv) Kavitawali Ramayan.

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The Main Characters of the Story

1. King Pratapbhanu: He was a great King of a kingdom known as Satyaketu. The kingdom was famous for prosperity and happiness that comes with righteousness and probity, where the laws of Dharma (ethics, propriety, nobility and goodness) and Truth prevailed. King Pratapbhanu was a noble king who ruled with justice and prudence.

But unfortunately, as is usually the way with kings, he was very ambitious. He wished to conquer the world, even be able to subdue elders and wise men such as the Brahmins if they try to stand in his way, so that he may rule un-opposed for eternity. It is not possible in this mortal world that anyone can become eternal and be untouched completely by the rules of creation. Likewise, the tide of time and fiat of providence cannot be conquered, undermined and subdued forever, and so it is also not possible to remain unconquerable for eternity.

So by-and-by this ambitious nature of Pratapbhanu led to his ultimate downfall. He fell into a trap of a king whom he had defeated sometime earlier in battle, and who was bidding his time to take revenge. This defeated king went to the forest to hide in the disguise of a hermit, and wait. Once it so happened that the noble king Pratapbhanu fell into his trap when he got lost during hunting. The cunning fellow promised false boons to the king and prevailed upon him to arrange for a grand feast for Brahmins where he would manipulate things and get him blessed by Brahmins with the boons of things he so much desires. As fate would have it however, the king's enemy ensured that the Brahmins would curse the king and his entire family and subjects to be condemned to become blood thirsty demons so that their generations after generations would remain accursed for their sinful and evil deeds!

With the passage of time, Pratapbhanu was born as the demon Ravana, and his kin were born as the other members of his demon race.

2. Ravana: He was a grandson of sage Pulastya, who in turn was a son of the creator Brahma. Pulastya was married to the daughter of Trinbindu, and from her he begot a son named Visrawa.

Visrawa had two wives. His first wife was the daughter of sage Bharadwaj, and she gave birth to Kuber who later on became the treasurer of Gods.

Visrawa's second wife was Kaikasi, daughter of the demon Sumali. From her were born Ravana and his siblings. His sister was Supernakha, and his two younger brothers were Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan.

Ravan's wife was Mandodari, and his son was Meghanad—the one who roared like the thunder clap.

3. Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan were the two brothers of Ravana. Out of the two, Vibhishan was a pious soul, a follower of Dharma (principles of good character and righteousness), and a devotee of Lord God.

Kumbhakaran, on the other hand, was more like his elder brother Ravana, for he had demonic traits dominant in him. But fortunately for the world, he was quite lazy, and preferred to eat and sleep, for he slept for six months at a stretch. But on the day he woke up to eat, the land was laid barren as he swallowed whatever came his way—wine, meat and whatever else he could lay his hand on.

Kumbhakaran was so-called because he had huge ears like that of fat pitcher. Kumbha = a huge pot or pitcher; Karan or Karna = ear.

Kumbhakaran was killed by Lord Ram during the Battle, and like his brother Ravana he too found eternal rest for himself when his soul emerged from his body and merged with Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

4. Meghanad: He was the son of Ravana, and one of the most unconquerable of the demons. He had subdued Indra, the king of Gods. He got his name because his roar resembled that of a thunder-clap. Megha = cloud; Naad = sound.

He had fought bravely and made Laxman faint during the Battle of Lanka. He had earlier ensnared Hanuman when no other demon could subdue him. He was finally slayed by Laxman.

5. Vibhishan: He was the younger brother of Ravana and a devotee of Lord Vishnu. When Hanuman had entered Lanka in his search for Sita, it was Vibhishan whom he first met and who had guided him to the place where Sita was held captive. Later on, when Vibhishan tried to persuade Ravana to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid the ruinous war, he was insulted and kicked by Ravana which compelled him to abandon Lanka and join Lord Ram. When the war ended, Lord Ram made him the next king of Lanka.

6. Supernakha was Ravana's sister. She was as cruel and demonic as her brother Ravana. She had huge nails and fan like ears. Hence she got her name. Sup (pronounced as soop) = a winnowing basket (representing large ears); Nakha = nails.

7. Trijataa: She was a demoness deputed by Ravana to keep a close watch on Sita. She became sympathetic towards her ward Sita and had always encouraged the latter to keep hope inspite of overwhelming despair.

8. Mandadori: She was the wise wife of Ravana who had tried on several occasions to persuade her husband to return Sita and prevent the ruinous war. She was a daughter of the demon Maya.

9. Marich (pronounced as Maaricha):--The demon who was forced by Ravana to become a deer with a golden skin so that Sita could be distracted. Seeing this unique deer, Sita asked her husband Lord Ram to go and bring the deer for her. When the Lord went away, Ravana abducted Sita. Marich was eventually shot down by Ram.

10. Baali/Vaali:-- The king of Kishkindha and the monkey race. He was also the elder brother of Sugriv, the friend of Lord Ram.

11. Sugriv:-- The younger brother of Baali who was thrown out of the kingdom due to certain misunderstanding between the two brothers. He lived in exile on top of the Rishyamook Mountain where Lord Ram and he became friends. He was reinstated on the throne of Kishkindha, and in return he had helped Lord Ram in finding out about the whereabouts of Sita and rescuing her by lending his huge army of monkeys and bears to the Lord.

12. Hanuman:-- A companion of Sugriv and said to be the son of the Wind God. He became an ardent follower, a great devotee and a trusted lieutenant of Lord Ram. of Lord Ram. It was he who went to Lanka to discover Sita, and burn the city down. Later on in the war, he had brought the herb to revive Laxman when he was wounded in the battle field. Hanuman played a pivotal role in the epic war and the conquest of Lanka.

13. Angad:-- He was the son of Baali, brother of Sugriv. He later on became a faithful follower of Lord Ram. His devotion for the Lord was no less than that of Hanuman. Lord Ram had sent him as his messenger to Ravana in a last attempt to avoid the war.

14. Lord Ram:-- An incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of a human being. Vishnu had come down to earth as Lord Ram on the request of the Gods and Mother Earth to slay Ravana and the cruel demons who had unleashed a horrifying reign of terror in the world.

Lord Ram was born as a prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and his worldly father was the kingdom's ruler Dasrath. When the Lord had to go to the forest, his wife Sita was abducted by Ravana. This was the reason why Ravana met his end—for Lord Ram launched a campaign to retrieve Sita which led to the fierce War of Lanka and the annihilation of the cruel demons.

15. Laxman:-- He was Lord Ram's younger brother who had accompanied the Lord all the way to Lanka from Ayodhya. Laxman was Lord Ram's comrade-in-arm and his constant companion all through the period the Lord had been away from Ayodhya on his mission to get rid of the demons and free the world of their scourge. Laxman had fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Lord during the War of Lanka.

16. Sita:-- She was the daughter of king Janak of the kingdom of Janakpur. She was married to Lord Ram and had accompanied him to the forest. Ravana had abducted her to avenge the insult of Suparnakha whose nose and ear were cut by Laxman on the instructions of Lord Ram as she was creating unwarranted mischief and nuisance for the Lord, going even to the extent of trying to seduce him and trap him in fits of sensual passion.

It was Sita's abduction that led to the burning and final sac of Lanka, as well as the killing of Ravana, Kumbhakaran, Meghanad etc.

17. The Monkeys and the Bears:-- They were actually the Gods in disguise. When Lord Vishnu had promised the Gods and Mother Earth that he would come down to earth in order to eliminate the demons and free the world from their torments, the creator Brahma had asked all the Gods to help Lord Vishnu by assuming the form of monkeys and bears and descending down to earth to help Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, in his endeavour to get rid of the demons.

These Gods in the form of the monkeys and bears had formed the 'army of Lord Ram' which had defeated the demon army of Ravana and conquered Lanka.

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Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka

Told in Slow Motion

[Entirely Based on the Classics Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali,
Geetawali, Adhyatma Ramayan & Anand Ramayan]

Part 1

Birth of Ravana, Establishment of the Demon Kingdom, And their Reign of Terror

(With Roman Transliteration of Verses, English Exposition and Notes)

In this Part 1, we have the following Chapters:

Chapter 1: The Story of Ravana in his Previous Life.

Chapter 2: The Birth of Ravana and the Establishment of the Demon Kingdom.

Chapter 3: The Reign of Terror unleashed by Ravana and the Demons.

Chapter 4: Gods and Mother Earth pray to Lord Vishnu to save them from Ravana's Tyranny, and the Lord's Promise to them.

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Part 1

Chapter 1: The Story of Ravana in his Previous Life.

The story of the previous life of Ravana, the great king of the demon race and the ruler of the kingdom which had its capital on the island of Lanka, is a very fascinating tale about a noble king of a great kingdom who was overcome with a jealous desire to

rule over the whole world un-opposed, how this desire led him to become a victim of conceit and treachery, how his yearning was exploited by a cunning enemy who took advantage of his hidden desire to settle old scores and seek revenge upon him by ensuring that the unsuspecting king was condemned for life to become a demon, to lead a life of ignominy and denunciation, a life which would have led him to slide down to even further lower levels of existence had he not been provided salvation by the Supreme Being who came down to this mortal world himself in the form of Lord Ram to liberate Ravana's soul from his evil body and grant eternal rest to him.

This wonderful story has been narrated in the great epic known as 'Ram Charit Manas' written by Goswami Tulsidas. It is described in its Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 176.

Now, let us read this interesting story from Ram Charit Manas verbatim in detail.

चौ०. सुनु मुनि कथा पुनीत पुरानी । जो गिरिजा प्रति संभु बखानी ॥ १ ॥
बिस्व बिदित एक कैकय देसू । सत्यकेतु तहँ बसइ नरेसू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu muni kathā punīta purānī. jō girijā prati sambhu bakhānī. 1.
bisva bidita ēka kaikaya dēsū. satyakētu tahaṁ basa'i narēsū. 2.

[Sage Yagyavalkya was once asked by sage Bharadwaj why the Supreme Being had to come down to this mortal world in the form of a human prince known as Lord Ram. While answering Bharadwaj, sage Yagyavalkya narrated a fascinating story that on some previous occasion had been told by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Parvati (who was known as Girija as she was the daughter of the king of mountains).

It was the story of a great king known as Pratapbhanu, who was the son of a great and righteous king called Satyaketu. He ruled over a mighty kingdom known by the name of Kaikaya¹.]

Sage Yagyavalkya (also spelled as Yagyavalkya) said to sage Bharadwaj: 'Listen oh sage. Listen to this great, ancient and legendary tale which Lord Shiva had narrated to Girija (his divine consort) in some time in the past. (1)

There was a famed kingdom (a principality) known as 'Kaikaya²'; it was famous throughout the world. A great king by the name of 'Satyaketu³' ruled there. (2)

[Note—¹It is believed that this story of Ravana's previous life when he was king Satyaketu of the kingdom of Kaikaya is narrated in three most ancient and obscure texts known as (i) Agastya Ramayan written by sage Agastya, (ii) the Maha-Ramayan, and (iii) Shiva-Samhita.

²The kingdom of 'Kaikaya' lied on the other side of two ancient rivers named Vyaas and Shaalmali. At the time of this story, its capital was known as Girivraj or Raajgriha. At present it lies in the state of Kashmir in the north of India, nestled in the mighty range of the Himalayas. Its present name is 'Kakkaa'; locally it is also called 'Gakar'. It is believed that it was established by sage Kashyap.

By the fiat of fate it so chanced that when Satyaketu, alias Pratapbhanu, was cursed by the Brahmins to be doomed, then the cunning false-hermit, who had been instrumental in arranging the feast where the Brahmins cursed the king, informed all his enemies of the development. They launched attacks from all sides to take advantage of the situation, confident that Pratapbhanu could be easily conquered now. In the ensuing wars, while all kings returned with the spoils of war and contented at being successful in defeating their erstwhile arch enemy, one of them remained behind to establish his sovereignty there. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 175.}

In due course of time, one of the princesses of this kingdom of Kaikaya was married to king Dasrath of Ayodhya; her name was 'Kaikeyi' or 'Kaikai'—meaning the daughter of the kingdom of Kaikaya. She was the step-mother of Lord Ram and the mother of Bharat. It was she who became instrumental in Lord Ram's going to the forest for a fourteen year period of exile during which the famed war of Lanka took place and Ravana was slayed by him.

³The name 'Satyaketu' of the king is significant. It means one who holds high the Flag (ketu) of Truth (satya). To wit, king Satyaketu was an upholder of truth and righteousness, and ruled over his kingdom judicially and in accordance to the laws of Dharma (probity, propriety, nobility, compassion, prudence, righteousness, ethics and morality).

It is really such a wonder and an irony of fate that such a great and righteous king who was loved by his subjects and had not a scar on his character that would go against him should become a hated 'demon' known as Ravana who was loathed by the world.]

धरम धुरंधर नीति निधाना । तेज प्रताप सील बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥

तेहि कें भए जुगल सुत बीरा । सब गुन धाम महा रनधीरा ॥ ४ ॥

dharama dhurandhara nīti nidhānā. tēja pratāpa sīla balavānā. 3.
tēhi kēm̐ bha'ē jugala suta bīrā. saba guna dhāma mahā ranadhīrā. 4.

The King (Satyaketu) was a great champion of good virtues and an upholder of Dharma (the principles of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and noble conduct). He was well-versed in the laws of politics and statesmanship, was endowed with glory, esteem and dignity that come with being meritorious and above reproach, and was famed for his valour and strength, but at the same time he was very polite and courteous. (3)

He had two sons who were like their father—i.e. they were repositories of virtues and had all the merits of their father, possessing all the fine qualities and characters that he had. They were strong, valiant, righteous and noble like their father¹. (4)

[Note—¹A son inherits his father's genes and legacy. A worthy son is one who takes forward the name of his father and his family to higher glories, instead of doing anything that would put them to shame. If a father is meritorious and good, his son would normally be like him. This natural law of inheritance of qualities is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 142

where the birth of Dhruva, the great devotee of Lord Vishnu, is mentioned. It is said here that there was a very noble and righteous king named Swayambhu, and from him was born Uttanpad, a son who was like him in all meritorious virtues, and then Dhruva was born to Uttanpad and he also inherited the glorious virtues of his grandfather and father.

Amongst the great qualities of a king is his being righteous and judicious in the affairs of the state, being compassionate and considerate when dealing with his subjects, having excellent knowledge of statecraft and principles of statesmanship, and being courageous and valiant in the battle-field. Satyaketu and his two sons had all these virtues in them.]

राज धनी जो जेठ सुत आही । नाम प्रतापभानु अस ताही ॥ ५ ॥

अपर सुतहि अरिमर्दन नामा । भुजबल अतुल अचल संग्रामा ॥ ६ ॥

rāja dhanī jō jēṭha suta āhī. nāma pratāpabhānu asa tāhī. 5.

apara sutahi arimardana nāmā. bhujabala atula acala saṅgrāmā. 6.

The elder son, who was the heir to the throne, was called ‘Pratapbhanu’¹. (5)

The second son was named ‘Arimardan’². He had immense strength and valour in his arms that was unmatched by any other warrior. During a duel or a war, he was extremely steadfast and stood his ground like a mighty mountain. [To wit, it was well-nigh impossible to defeat him in a duel. He never turned his back and fled the battle-field. During a war he made his enemies bite dust, and his mere presence sent chill down the spine of his adversaries.] (6)

[Note—¹The word ‘Pratapbhanu’ literally means ‘one whose glories and fame shone like the sun’; or ‘one who shone like the sun for his glories and fame’.

In his next birth also as Ravana, this unique quality of the king lasted because there was no one to match Ravana’s fame in the world.

²The word ‘Arimardan’ refers to ‘one who vanquishes his enemies and crushes their strength’. This surely was true even in this prince’s next birth when he was born as Kumbhakaran. No one dared to confront him in the battle-field, and when he stepped to face his enemy, the latter’s army was scattered like dry leaves in a severe storm.

Arimardan was stronger in physical strength as compared to his elder brother Pratapbhanu. This was also replicated in their next birth as Kumbhakaran and Ravana respectively.

When we shall eventually be reading about the battle at Lanka we shall read how Kumbhakaran single-handedly dispersed Lord Ram’s army helter-skelter under his vicious onslaught¹, while no such feat could be achieved by Ravana. {¹Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 65; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 67.}

We shall cite an instance from the battle of Lanka to highlight how Arimardan was stronger than Ravana. It so happened once during the course of the war that Hanuman, who was a very strong warrior in his own right and matched Ravana and Kumbhakaran in their might and valour, had been punched by Ravana forcefully which made Hanuman buckle and fall back a bit, but he managed to recover from the

blow quite easily and got up angrily to face Ravana and give him a strong blow of his fist in revenge which made Ravana fall unconscious for a moment. But when Kumbhakaran gave a mighty fistful to Hanuman, the latter swooned and fell down unconsciousness for some time, unable to recover instantly. These two events are respectively mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 65.]

भाइहि भाइहि परम समीती । सकल दोष छल बरजित प्रीती ॥ ७ ॥
जेठे सुतहि राज नृप दीन्हा । हरि हित आपु गवन बन कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

bhā'ihī bhā'ihī parama samīti. sakala dōṣa chala barajita prīti. 7.
jēṭhē sutahi rāja nrpa dīnhā. hari hita āpu gavana bana kīnhā. 8.

The two brothers warmly loved each other, and there was perfect unity between them. Their affection for each other was genuine and selfless, without guile, deceit and blemishes of any kind. (7)

The king (Satyaketu) abdicated the throne and installed his elder son (Pratapbhanu) on it¹. After that, the king went to the forest to lead an austere life for his spiritual pursuits and devote the rest of his life in devotion of Lord Hari². (8)

[Note—¹According to ancient tradition, when a king became old he should appoint his eldest son to throne as his heir. This is also borne out when king Dasrath decided to anoint his eldest son Lord Ram to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 4; (ii) Doha no. 31.}

²This was another tradition according to which a man was expected to spend the last quarter of his life as a Sanyasi—i.e. one who renounces all his attachment with the world and spend his remaining days in meditation and contemplation in preparation for his ultimate death and attainment of peace for his soul. Prior to that, he should hand over all his worldly responsibilities to his heirs and withdraw himself to the forest or any other serene place that would give him freedom from involvement with the world and its endless worries. This is called Vaanprastha—literally meaning ‘heading to the forest’.

So in accordance to this tradition, king Satyaketu handed over the reign of the kingdom to his elder son and went to the forest to lead a life of devotion and contemplation. There he would spend his remaining days in worshipping Lord Hari, also known as Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

This event also shows that the family of Pratapbhanu was god-fearing and devoted to Lord Vishnu. It's such a twist of fate and an irony of providence that members of the same family would become arch enemies of Lord Vishnu in their next birth as Ravana, Kumbhakaran, and the rest of the demon race.]

दो०. जब प्रतापरबि भयउ नृप फिरी दोहाई देस ।
प्रजा पाल अति बेदबिधि कतहुँ नहीं अघ लेस ॥ १५३ ॥

dōhā.

jaba pratāparabi bhaya'u nṛpa phirī dōhā'ī dēsa.
prajā pāla ati bēdabidhi katahuṁ nahīm agha lēsa. 153.

When Pratapbhanu ascended the throne and was declared a king, a royal proclamation to this effect was made throughout the land.

He ruled the kingdom most righteously in accordance with the laws and rules laid down in the Vedas (scriptures). There was no trace of sin and evil throughout the realm during his reign. (Doha no. 153)

चौ०. नृप हितकारक सचिव सयाना । नाम धरमरुचि सुक्र समाना ॥ १ ॥

सचिव सयान बंधु बलबीरा । आपु प्रतापपुंज रनधीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

nṛpa hitakāraka saciva sayānā. nāma dharamaruci sukra samānā. 1.
saciva sayāna bandhu balabīrā. āpu pratāpapuñja ranadhīrā. 2.

The king had an able and wise chief minister. His name was 'Dharmaruchi'. This minister was clever and prudent like the legendary sage Sukracharya (who is said to be the Guru or the priest and preceptor of the demon race) in his wisdom, knowledge, prudence and abilities. (1)

All circumstances were favourable (for a great kingdom with a glorious future)—the minister (Dharmaruchi) was most competent, intelligent, skilled and wise, the king's brother (Arimardan) was counted as the first in the rank of great warriors and those who were brave and valiant, and the king (Pratapbhanu) himself was a veritable treasury of fine glorious qualities as well as one who was steady in the face of an enemy in the battle-field. (2)

[Note—¹The word 'Dharmaruchi' literally means 'one who takes great interest in Dharma—i.e. in the laws of probity, propriety, righteousness and ethics'. If a king's chief advisor and minister is good and competent, the king rises and acquires fame in the world, and the kingdom prospers.

Just like a man has two hands that help him to carry on with his duties in this world, a king has two arms that help him rule over his realm. One arm is his chief minister, and the other arm is his brother, and in the case he has none then his kin whom he can trust. In the case of king Pratapbhanu, both his minister and brother were excellent, and so he was very lucky and in a very fortunate situation.

In the next verse we read that this fortunate circumstance was complemented by the king having an excellent army at his command. This enabled him to extend his rule over vast stretches of the earth, and also to maintain good law and order situation.]

सेन संग चतुरंग अपारा । अमित सुभट सब समर जुझारा ॥ ३ ॥

सेन बिलोकि राउ हरषाना । अरु बाजे गहगहे निसाना ॥ ४ ॥

sēna saṅga caturaṅga apārā. amita subhaṭa saba samara jujhārā. 3.
sēna bilōki rā'u haraṣānā. aru bājē gahagahē nisānā. 4.

He had a vast army of countless veterans at his command. This army had four divisions or wings (sēna caturaṅga)¹. The soldiers were all brave, courageous and fearless in the battle-field as well as in their commitment and loyalty to the king and the throne. (3)

When the king observed his mighty and virtually invincible forces, he felt very elated. To celebrate the occasion, trumpets and kettledrums were sounded tumultuously. (4)

[Note—¹The ‘four wings’ of the army of those times traditionally consisted of horsemen, elephants, foot soldiers and chariots. Of course there were variants in the form of archers who used bows and arrows, soldiers who used swords, lancets and spear to fight hand-to-hand battles, the artillery brigade, the boomerangs, the battering-rams, etc. It was a formidable army no doubt.]

बिजय हेतु कटकई बनाई । सुदिन साधि नृप चलेउ बजाई ॥ ५ ॥
जहँ तहँ परीं अनेक लराई । जीते सकल भूप बरिआई ॥ ६ ॥

bijaya hētu kaṭaka'ī banā'ī. sudina sādhi nṛpa calē'u bajā'ī. 5.
jahaṁ tahaṁ parīm anēka larā'īm. jītē sakala bhūpa bari'ā'īm. 6.

Being elated and confident of success, the king decided to launch a campaign to conquer the world. So he arrayed a huge army for this purpose, and determining an auspicious day when to start on his campaign, he marched forward with his army to the accompaniment of drums and other musical instruments to announce his departure. (5)

He fought many a battles with kings on the way who dared to oppose him, conquering them all by the might of his overwhelming force. (6)

[Note—All through history we come across such ambitious kings as Pratapbhanu was, those who led great military campaigns in order to extend their dominion over vast tracts of land. But the great lesson of history was lost and forgotten by them all—that for the time being they did manage to hold sway over the destiny of others, but the rules of Nature and of that of Creation always superseded their ambitious design and lust for power because the tide of time overturned everything upside down, great empires rose and fell, entire civilisations flourished and perished, and a time came when all such great conquerors and emperors whose rein once extended from one corner of the earth to the other, who prided themselves as being the owners and the rulers of the land where the ‘sun never sets’, had to die like all others, quite frequently miserably and in ignominy, probably also lost in obscurity with their memory covered in the dust of time when all their acquired riches and glory shrank and got lost, becoming merely some chapter in the pages of history which only a few interested bothered to open and read.]

सप्त दीप भुजबल बस कीन्हे । लै लै दंड छाड़ि नृप दीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥
सकल अवनि मंडल तेहि काला । एक प्रतापभानु महिपाला ॥ ८ ॥

sapta dīpa bhujabala basa kīnhē. lai lai daṇḍa chāḍi nrpa dīnhē. 7.
sakala avani maṇḍala tēhi kālā. ēka pratāpabhānu mahipālā. 8.

The king conquered all the seven continents by the virtue of the strength of his arms. He demanded and got tributes (spoils of war in the form of taxes, gifts and compensations) from the kings he vanquished. And then he let them off, reinstating them back on their respective thrones as titular kings who were vassals under the Crown worn by Pratapbhanu¹. (7)

Throughout the length and breadth of the land, the rein of Emperor Pratapbhanu was proclaimed and established (and there was no one to challenge him). He was the only Ruler of the earth in those times². (8)

[Note—¹Pratapbhanu declared himself a supreme Emperor. So after subjugating these kings, he extracted huge tributes from them and made a treaty whereby these kings were restored their kingdoms with the condition that they would hold their title at the pleasure of the Emperor to whom all will owe their allegiance. They would pay regular tributes and stand in attendance in his court whenever called to do so. Otherwise, the punishment would be severe and swift, mostly in the form of their heads being severed.

This had been the norm with great conquerors since times immemorial.

²When Lord Ram became the king of Ayodhya, a similar situation prevailed during his time—for there was no other king who was a match for the Lord anywhere on this earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22.]

दो०. स्वबस बिस्व करि बाहुबल निज पुर कीन्ह प्रबेसु ।
अरथ धरम कामादि सुख सेवइ समयँ नरेसु ॥ १५४ ॥

dōhā.

svabasa bisva kari bāhubala nija pura kīnha prabēsu.
aratha dharama kāmādi sukha sēva'i samayaṁ narēsu. 154.

After having conquered the whole world and making it surrender to the might of his arms, the king returned victorious to his own capital. He revelled and rejoiced in the light of the glory of his conquests and the acclaim that went with it; he enjoyed the spoils of war in the form of its riches, comforts and pleasures.

The king chose appropriate times to indulge in the various pastimes usual for great conquerors and emperors¹, such as enjoying the comforts and pleasures of huge wealth (aratha), merit and fame that comes by following the laws of Dharma (i.e. by adhering to the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety inspite of being

great and powerful; following religious practices—“dharama”), fulfilment of sensual pleasures and worldly desires, and so on and so forth (kāmadī). (Doha no. 154)

[Note—¹In Valmiki’s Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 63, verse no. 9, Kumbhakaran has told Ravana that a person who enjoys things when the time is appropriate for them, such as enjoying meal when it is time to eat, going to sleep when it is time for it, relaxing and doing other activities at their proper and designated times, i.e. doing in the morning, in the afternoon and the evening things that are supposed to be done then, then such a person or a king is praised as being prudent, wise and intelligent; he is lauded as being a follower of Dharma.

So, king Pratapbhanu too followed this principle and did things at the proper and appropriate time.]

चौ०. भूप प्रतापभानु बल पाई । कामधेनु भै भूमि सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

सब दुख बरजित प्रजा सुखारी । धरमसील सुंदर नर नारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa pratāpabhānu bala pāī. kāmadhēnu bhai bhūmi suhāī. 1.
saba dukha barajita prajā sukhārī. dharamasīla sundara nara nārī. 2.

The earth became invigorated (green and lush) and started giving excellent yields (such as crops, minerals, fruits, vegetables, marine products etc.) when it got the support of the mighty arms of king Pratapbhanu. In fact, the earth became a personified form of the heavenly cow called ‘Kaam-dhenu’ which gives an abundance of milk and fulfils all the desires of those who seek anything from it.¹ (1)

There was no misery and pain of any kind that would make the subjects of the kingdom suffer in any way, and all the people were happy and contented. All the men and women were virtuous and adherents of the law of Dharma (principles of righteousness, probity, good conduct and thought), and their cheerful and pleasant physical appearances and demeanours showed that there was nothing that either worried them or made them feel unhappy.² (2)

[Note—When the earth is ruled by a good and noble king, there is happiness and prosperity everywhere. The subjects are taken well care of, and the fame of the king spreads to all corners of the earth. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 21—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22 where we read the same thing about the glory of the kingdom that was ruled by Lord Ram.

The kind of prosperous and rich kingdom that was established under king Pratapbhanu and the happiness of its subjects finds an exact resonance in the kingdom of Ayodhya that was ruled by Lord Ram. This is described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23.

¹Refer specifically to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 23 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 26.]

सचिव धरमरुचि हरि पद प्रीती । नृप हित हेतु सिखव नित नीती ॥ ३ ॥
गुर सुर संत पितर महिदेवा । करइ सदा नृप सब कै सेवा ॥ ४ ॥

saciva dharamaruci hari pada prīti. nṛpa hita hētu sikhava nita nīti. 3.
gura sura santa pitara mahidēvā. kara'i sadā nṛpa saba kai sēvā. 4.

The king's chief minister named Dharmaruchi was very virtuous and judicious, and true to his name he diligently followed the laws of Dharma (proper conduct and thought; upholding the principles of prudence, auspiciousness, righteousness, ethics, probity and propriety above all other considerations). He was also god-fearing and was devoted to Lord Hari whom he worshipped with great faith.¹

He always thought for what would be good for the king, and was careful about the latter's welfare. Keeping this in mind, he always ensured that he would give wise and prudent advice to the king on day-to-day basis. (3)

The king made it a point to always serve and pay his obeisance and worship to his Guru (preceptor and moral guide), the Gods, the saints and pious men, the spirits of his ancestors, and the holy men known as Brahmins who are deemed to be representatives of Gods on earth. (4)

[Note—¹These grand virtues of the chief minister have already been pointed out in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154 herein above.]

भूप धरम जे बेद बखाने । सकल करइ सादर सुख माने ॥ ५ ॥
दिन प्रति देइ बिबिध बिधि दाना । सुनइ साज बर बेद पुराना ॥ ६ ॥

bhūpa dharama jē bēda bakhānē. sakala kara'i sādara sukha mānē. 5.
dina prati dē'i bibidha bidhi dānā. suna'i sāstra bara bēda purānā. 6.

Whatever duties that the Vedas have prescribed for a king, he (Pratapbhanu) carried out all of them cheerfully and with due diligence with the thought that he was paying respect to the scriptures. Hence, he enjoyed doing his duties and fulfilling his obligations. (5)

He routinely gave liberal donations and made charities in various forms on a daily basis.

He also used to listen to religious discourses based on the Vedas, Purans and other scriptures¹. (6)

[Note—¹It was a normal practice with great kings to listen to religious discourses. The great king Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya and the father of Lord Ram too listened to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 359.]

Even Lord Ram used to listen to such discourses regularly though he knew all the things that were told during such sessions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 26.

We also read here that the scriptures were read and discussed in each household of Ayodhya during the reign of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26.

There is a wonderful book titled ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ which is dedicated to the theme of Bhakti or devotion for Lord God. In its verse no. 17 it is said that listening to the scriptures where the glories of the Lord are narrated helps to nourish Bhakti in the heart of a devotee. An English version of this book has been written and published by this author and is available on-line.]

नाना बापीं कूप तड़ागा । सुमन बाटिका सुंदर बागा ॥ ७ ॥
बिप्रभवन सुरभवन सुहाए । सब तीरथन्ह बिचित्र बनाए ॥ ८ ॥

nānā bāpīm kūpa tarāgā. sumana bāṭikā sundara bāgā. 7.
biprabhavana surabhavana suhā'ē. saba tīrathanha bicitra banā'ē. 8.

The king got constructed excellent water-bodies such as ponds, wells and lakes, wonderful gardens and orchards, as well as beautiful homes for Brahmins and shrines for the Gods in all the holy pilgrim places on earth. (7-8)

[Note—Such activities were undertaken by all great kings as means of charity and social work.]

दो०. जहँ लगि कहे पुरान श्रुति एक एक सब जाग ।
बार सहस्र सहस्र नृप किए सहित अनुराग ॥ १५५ ॥
dōhā.

jahaṁ lagi kahē purāna śruti ēka ēka saba jāga.
bāra sahasra sahasra nr̥pa ki'ē sahita anurāga. 155.

Whatever religious sacrifices have been described in the Vedas and Purans, the king performed them faithfully and diligently countless numbers of times, one by one.¹ (Doha no. 155)

[Note—¹Usually a great king was expected to do the ‘Ashwamegh Yagya’, or the horse sacrifice. Even Lord Ram had done it. We also read that Lord Ram was very particular about following the path of religious practices and goodness as advised by the scriptures. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 24.

To wit, all great kings became ‘great’ and renowned because they had followed the path shown by the scriptures.]

चौ०. हृदयं न कछु फल अनुसंधाना । भूप बिबेकी परम सुजाना ॥ १ ॥

करइ जे धरम करम मन बानी । बासुदेव अर्पित नृप ग्यानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hr̥dayaṁ na kachu phala anusandhānā. bhūpa bibēkī parama sujānā. 1.
kara'i jē dharama karama mana bānī. bāsudēva arpita nr̥pa gyānī. 2.

The king was very wise and intelligent. He had never desired for anything.¹ (1)

Whatever meritorious deeds that the king did, he faithfully offered them all to Lord Vasudeo (i.e. Lord Vishnu)². (2)

[Note—¹The king was well-versed in the doctrines of the scriptures, and so he knew fully well that if a person leads an honourable life in accordance to the principles laid down in the scriptures then all good things in the world come to him even without his asking for them. So therefore, why should he worry about anything; why should he allow himself to be tainted with the negativity associated with 'desires and passions'?

Verily, all his needs, of the world and of the spirit, were being taken care of by his doing meritorious deeds and strictly following the religious path prescribed in the scriptures. So what sense was there in asking for things which he has in abundance, or even if he did not have them currently they would come to him by-and-by.

'Narad Bhakti Sutra', verse nos. 5 and 7 highly praise the virtue of not having any kind of desires.

²It has been said in the scriptures that the best form of service to the Lord God is to offer everything to him; all deeds and their fruits ought to be offered selflessly to the Lord. This is one of the best forms of Bhakti or devotion.

It is said that those deeds and their fruits that are not offered to the Lord God are worthy of shame, and it would be good not doing any such deed at all no matter how meritorious they may be.

In this context, the reader should refer to verse nos. 14, 19 and 61 of a wonderful text on Bhakti, called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra'. An English version of this book has been written and published by this author.]

चढ़ि बर बाजि बार एक राजा । मृगया कर सब साजि समाजा ॥ ३ ॥

बिंध्याचल गभीर बन गयऊ । मृग पुनीत बहु मारत भयऊ ॥ ४ ॥

caḍhi bara bāji bāra ēka rājā. mṛgayā kara saba sāji samājā. 3.

bindhyācala gabhīra bana gaya'ū. mṛga punīta bahu mārata bhaya'ū. 4.

Once upon a time, the king mounted his gallant horse and went on a hunting expedition with all his courtiers, and fully equipped with all the royal paraphernalia needed for the purpose. (3)

He entered the deep recesses of the forest nestling in the lap of the lofty ranges of the Vindhyachal Mountain in pursuit of game, and by-and-by shot many a beautiful deer and other wild animals. (4)

फिरत बिपिन नृप दीख बराहू । जनु बन दुरेड ससिहि ग्रसि राहू ॥ ५ ॥
 बड़ बिधु नहिं समात मुख माहीं । मनहुं क्रोध बस उगिलत नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

phirata bipina nrpa dīkha barāhū. janu bana durē'u sasihi grasi rāhū. 5.
 barā bidhu nahīm samāta mukha māhīm. manahum̐ krōdha basa ugilata
 nāhīm. 6.

During the course of his hunting, he saw a majestic wild boar¹ that was roaming in the forest. He was so huge and awesome that it appeared that the demon 'Rahu' had come to hide in the wilds, fearing for his own life, after having eclipsed the moon². (5)

It appeared that since the Moon was too large for the demon's mouth, the latter could not gobble it up, and this made the demon seethe with anger as he did not want to let the prey slip away³. (6)

[Note—¹This was no ordinary wild boar. It was actually a demon named 'Kalketu' who had seven sons and ten brothers. Together they had been causing great horror for the Gods and the Brahmins. So king Pratapbhanu engaged them in a battle and killed all his sons and brothers, but the demon Kalketu managed to escape. He took a vow of revenge upon the king and hid in the forest looking for an opportunity. In due course of time he met a king who had also been defeated by Pratapbhanu in battle and who had managed to escape arrest and fled to the forest. This defeated king disguised himself as a hermit and waited for his chance for revenge.

As destiny would have it, both these arch enemies of king Pratapbhanu, who were burning with the fire of hate and revenge, joined hands and became friends-in-common-cause. The story of this boar and his friendship with the erstwhile king disguised as a hermit is narrated herein below in Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 170. They planned a wicked and nasty device which would bring ruin to king Pratapbhanu and his entire family.

²According to mythological legend, the demon 'Rahu' has only a head with a mouth with which it periodically gobbles up the Moon and the Sun. This marks the occurrence of the lunar and the solar eclipses respectively. Since the demon's head is severed from his neck, the Moon and the Sun first enter the demon's mouth and then eventually emerge from the hollow of the neck below. This marks the end of the eclipse.

Now Rahu gets frightened that the Moon God and the Sun God would punish him, so he runs away and hides in a thick forest where the light of neither the Moon nor the Sun can reach. This is said to be the legend.

The wild boar which king Pratapbhanu sighted in the dark forest was so huge and fearsome and fat that it resembled the demon Rahu who had the shape of a huge rounded ball because he had only his head.

³Actually what is being said here in a dramatic way is that the king wanted to shoot this wild boar, but no matter how hard he tried to achieve success in his effort, the boar always escaped him. This angered the king beyond measure, and so he pursued his game relentlessly, without bothering to be careful and seeking assistance from the

soldiers and courtiers who were accompanying him as this would mean his personal defeat and humiliation.

We will read soon how the king's desire to hunt this boar without taking due precautions about his own security led him into the unknown depths of the forest where he got lost because all his companions were left behind while he was on hot pursuit of the game. Then as the fiat of fate had destined for him, he fell a victim of a trap laid by one of his enemies whom the king had defeated in battle some time in the past, and who was bidding for time to settle scores with him.]

कोल कराल दसन छबि गाई । तनु बिसाल पीवर अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥
घुरुघुरात हय आरौ पाएँ । चकित बिलोकत कान उठाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

kōla karāla dasana chabi gā'ī. tanu bisāla pīvara adhikā'ī.
ghurughurāta haya ārau pā'ēṁ. cakita bilōkata kāna uṭhā'ēṁ. 4.

The boar had enormous wide jaws; his body was of huge proportions; and he was very fat and bulky. (7)

When the boar heard the tramping sound of the hooves of the king's horse, he growled and grunted angrily and held his ears erect. (8)

दो०. नील महीधर सिखर सम देखि बिसाल बराहु ।
चपरि चलेउ हय सुटुकि नृप हाँकि न होइ निबाहु ॥ १५६ ॥
dōhā.

nīla mahīdhara sikhara sama dēkhi bisāla barāhu.
capari calē'u haya suṭuki nrpa hāṁki na hō'i nibāhu. 156.

When the king observed the huge wild boar who resembled the mighty mountain known as Neel Giri (literally the 'blue mountain') in its girth and the height, he got tempted so much to hunt him down that he whipped his steed and spurred it to move swiftly towards the boar, challenging the latter and saying that he would not be able to escape now¹. (Doha no. 156)

[Note—¹In his enthusiasm and excitement, the king shouted at the boar. If he would have been wise and careful like a good and scrupulous hunter, he would have quietly shot an arrow to kill the boar instead of alerting it and giving it a chance to run away. But the king was so over-confident of his strength and powers that he forgot to follow rules. He forgot, for instance, that he is not in a battle-field facing a warrior whom he must challenge first before launching his attack as is the proper rule for a duel. A wild animal who is about to be shot dead won't wait for an arrow before fleeing from the spot for its dear life.]

चौ०. आवत देखि अधिक रव बाजी । चलेउ बराह मरुत गति भाजी ॥ १ ॥

तुरत कीन्ह नृप सर संधाना । महि मिलि गयउ बिलोकत बाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

āvata dēkhi adhika rava bājī. calē'u barāha maruta gati bhājī. 1.

turata kīnha nṛpa sara sandhānā. mahi mili gaya'u bilōkata bānā. 2.

When the wild boar saw the king's horse approach rapidly, he fled with the swiftness of wind. (1)

The king immediately mounted an arrow and shot it at the boar, but the latter, as soon as he observed the king aiming the arrow, stopped dead on its track and crouched low on the ground to hide himself in the surrounding undergrowth, thickets and wild grass that grew in abundance in the dense forest. (2)

तकि तकि तीर महीस चलावा । करि छल सुअर सरीर बचावा ॥ ३ ॥

प्रगटत दुरत जाइ मृग भागा । रिस बस भूप चलेउ सँग लागा ॥ ४ ॥

taki taki tīra mahīsa calāvā. kari chala su'ara sarīra bacāvā. 3.

pragaṭata durata jā'i mṛga bhāgā. risa basa bhūpa calē'u saṁga lāgā. 4.

The king took repeated aims and shot many arrows, but the clever boar dodged him each time by different maneuverings¹. (3)

The boar repeatedly hid and reappeared as if to tease the king, who was so peeved and embarrassed at this apparent humiliation and virtual defeat that he kept on his hot pursuit of the boar angrily, and deciding not to give up he went very far and deep in the dense forest (without taking precautions about his own safety and calling for support from others in the royal entourage that had accompanied him)². (4)

[Note—¹Thus the boar escaped the arrow and getting killed. We have read earlier that the boar was of a gigantic size and the king was moving at a great speed on his steed. Since the target was large, the king had aimed the arrow in its general direction. Besides this, he was astride a galloping horse, and to shoot an arrow the two hands must be free—one to hold the bow and the other to aim the arrow. It obviously means that the king had to let go of the rein of the horse while it was in swift motion in order to hold the bow, take aim and shoot the arrow. He was confident that the arrow will hit the bull's eye as the target was so huge, and so he must have aimed higher than is usual for a hunter aiming his arrow at an ordinary game.

But this game outwitted the hunter, for it immediately crouched and lay low on the ground in self-defence even as the arrow whizzed past it. Since the king's horse was moving at great speed, it overshot the boar. And by the time the king gathered his wits to look around and search for his prey, the latter rose and quickly vanished in the surrounding thickets in the dense forest.

²The king was ashamed of himself at his failure to hunt down a single boar, and thinking what others would say of him if he called out for support and help, he decided to take a great risk and so continued to pursue his game alone.]

गयउ दूरि घन गहन बराहू । जहँ नाहिन गज बाजि निबाहू ॥ ५ ॥
अति अकेल बन बिपुल कलेसू । तदपि न मृग मग तजइ नरेसू ॥ ६ ॥

gaya'u dūri ghana gahana barāhū. jahañ nāhina gaja bāji nibāhū. 5.
ati akēla bana bipula kalēsū. tadapi na mṛga maga taja'i narēsū. 6.

By-and-by, the wild boar went deep into the thickest part of the dense forest where horses and elephants could not have any access (because this part of the forest was extremely dense and thick with wild undergrowth, thick trees, entangled creepers and tall wild grass). (5)

Though the king was all alone and frustrated, still he did not abandon his game to return back to his companions¹. (6)

[Note—¹Obviously, as has been noted earlier, he felt ashamed at his failure to hunt down a single boar, and what others would say of him when they found out that he returned empty-handed. This prospect was preposterous and intolerable for him. So he continued with his pursuit.]

कोल बिलोकि भूप बड़ धीरा । भागि पैठ गिरिगुहँ गभीरा ॥ ७ ॥
अगम देखि नृप अति पछिताई । फिरेउ महाबन परेउ भुलाई ॥ ८ ॥

kōla bilōki bhūpa baṛa dhīrā. bhāgi paiṭha giriguhāñ gabhīrā.
agama dēkhi nṛpa ati pachitā'ī. phirē'u mahābana parē'u bhu'lā'ī. 4.

When the boar discovered that the king was very resolute and would not give up his pursuit, he fled and hid himself swiftly in a dark and deep cave on the side of a great mountain. (7)

The king found to his utter dismay that he would not be able to enter that cave. Disgusted and frustrated, he at last turned back. But by this time he had gone so far deep in that foreboding forest that he lost his way in its dark and un-chartered environ. (8)

दो०. खेद खिन्न छुद्धित तृषित राजा बाजि समेत ।
खोजत व्याकुल सरित सर जल बिनु भयउ अचेत ॥ १५७ ॥
dōhā.

khēda khinna chud'dhita tṛṣita rājā bāji samēta.
khōjata byākula sarita sara jala binu bhaya'u acēta. 157.

Overcome with dismay, frustration and humiliation, the distraught king was very thirsty and hungry. He held his tired and thirsty horse dejectedly, and roamed about in

the forest searching for some water-body such as a pond or a stream to quench his and the horse's thirst and refresh themselves somewhat.

For want of water, the two, the king and the horse, were very agitated and almost on the edge of fainting. (Doha no. 157)

चौ०. फिरत बिपिन आश्रम एक देखा । तहाँ बस नृपति कपट मुनिबेषा ॥ १ ॥

जासु देस नृप लीन्ह छड़ाई । समर सेन तजि गयउ पराई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

phirata bipina āśrama ēka dēkhā. tahañ basa nṛpati kapaṭa munibēṣā. 1.

jāsu dēsa nṛpa līnha chaṛāī. samara sēna taji gaya'u parāī. 2.

While so wandering in the forest, the king sighted a hermitage. In it lived a king disguised as a hermit. (1)

This king had been defeated by Pratapbhanu some time in the past, and his kingdom was conquered and subjugated by the victorious Pratapbhanu who failed to lay his hands on the defeated king as he managed to escape after abandoning his army and his subjects. But the vanquished king, who escaped from thus being captured, retreated to the forest to hide there in the form of a hermit, bidding for time to seek his revenge upon his enemy Pratapbhanu if a favourable opportunity presented itself by providence some time later on. (2)

समय प्रतापभानु कर जानी । आपन अति असमय अनुमानी ॥ ३ ॥

गयउ न गृह मन बहुत गलानी । मिला न राजहि नृप अभिमानी ॥ ४ ॥

samaya pratāpabhānu kara jānī. āpana ati asamaya anumānī. 3.

gaya'u na gr̥ha mana bahuta galānī. milā na rājahi nṛpa abhimānī. 4.

This defeated king was full of grief and remorse, and thought that the while the time was bad and unfavourable for him it was good and favourable for Pratapbhanu (and so it was useless to resist then). (3)

Thus overcome with shame, regret and humiliation, he did not (or refused to) return to his palace, and abandoned the kingdom. He was too proud to surrender himself before the victorious king (Pratapbhanu) and make a treaty of peace with him¹. (4)

[Note—¹As destiny would have it, it was this same king whom Pratapbhanu met in the forest, disguised as a hermit! Frankly speaking and to do justice to the vanquished king, no great self-respecting warrior would like to surrender his dignity and self-esteem by kneeling before his vanquisher, especially if he is attacked by someone without any provocation just because his opponent wishes to conquer the whole world by the might of his arm and make everyone bow before his ego as Pratapbhanu had wished.

So this king swallowed a bitter pill that was forced down his throat. Naturally he was filled with vengeance and hatred for Pratapbhanu.

We see in history that the higher one rises the more his ego becomes inflated, and the more he thinks that he is the chosen one, as the case of Pratapbhanu clearly depicts. Such a person becomes cocooned in his own world of grandiose self-belief, thinking that he is the greatest of them all. He gradually becomes a tyrant, a dictator and a hypocrite, someone who gets distanced from reality, someone who loses the virtues of humbleness and simplicity, and someone who has no friends but enemies all around him.

Pratapbhanu had risen to such great heights of unbridled power and authority that unwittingly he had surrounded himself with jealous enemies who were all bidding their times to settle scores with him but of whom he was not aware because they all wore a cloak of submission and loyalty to him while hating him from within.]

रिस उर मारि रंक जिमि राजा । बिपिन बसइ तापस कें साजा ॥ ५ ॥
तासु समीप गवन नृप कीन्हा । यह प्रतापरबि तेहिं तब चीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

risa ura māri raṅka jimi rājā. bipina basa'i tāpasa kēm sājā. 5.
tāsu samīpa gavana nrpa kīnhā. yaha pratāparabi tēhiṁ taba cīnhā. 6.

Hence, the defeated king suppressed his anger and went to the forest like a poor man who is insulted, robbed of his rightful possessions and thrown out by someone who is rich and powerful, against whom this poor fellow is powerless to seek revenge. In the forest, this king hid himself in the disguise of a hermit. (5)

It was this king that Pratapbhanu approached when he sighted the hermitage in the thick forest. As soon as the king, who was disguised as a hermit, saw Pratapbhanu, he immediately recognized him (as his arch-enemy, the person who had usurped his kingdom and thrown him to such misery and humiliation). (6)

राउ तृषित नहिं सो पहिचाना । देखि सुबेष महामुनि जाना ॥ ७ ॥
उतरि तुरग तें कीन्ह प्रनामा । परम चतुर न कहेउ निज नामा ॥ ८ ॥

rā'u trṣita nahim sō pahicānā. dēkhi subēṣa mahāmuni jānā.
utari turaga tēm kīnha pranāmā. parama catura na kahē'u nija nāmā. 4.

The king (Pratapbhanu) was very agitated and weary with thirst, and so he could not recognize who that hermit actually was. Hence when he saw the holy external appearance and attire of a hermit, he mistook the person living in the hermitage to be some great sage. (7)

He alighted from his horse and bowed reverentially to the (fake) hermit, but he took the precaution of not disclosing his name and who he was. (8)

[Note—The king's enemy who was disguised as a hermit immediately knew that the stranger was king Pratapbhanu, but the latter could not recognize who that hermit actually was. The reason is that Pratapbhanu was weary with thirst and emotionally

exhausted so much that his mind did not function properly. Another reason is that the defeated king had disguised himself so perfectly that it was difficult to know his true identity. And third, during the course of his career of battles and wars and conquests, he had vanquished so many kings that it was not possible for him to keep track of each and every one whom he conquered and captured, and those who escaped.

What to talk of Pratapbhanu, even Lord Ram's great messenger Hanuman was misled by a demon named Kaalnemi who was sent by Ravana to capture and kill Hanuman while he was on his way to bring the herb to revive Laxman, the brother of Lord Ram, who lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka during the epic war. We shall read about it in due course. Kaalnemi had also disguised himself as a hermit and created a nice magical hermitage with a pond of water. Hanuman too was thirsty, and when he saw that pond he went there to refresh himself. Hanuman also could not recognize the demon, and thought that he was some sage. But a demoness who was assigned the task to kill Hanuman went and hid as a crocodile in that pond. As soon as Hanuman went in the water, she caught hold of him, but was immediately slayed by the Lord's messenger. She disclosed Kaalnemi's truth and soon Hanuman slayed him.

This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

दो०. भूपति तृषित बिलोकि तेहिं सरबरु दीन्ह देखाइ ।

मज्जन पान समेत हय कीन्ह नृपति हरषाइ ॥ १५८ ॥

dōhā.

bhūpati tṛṣita bilōki tēhiṃ sarabaru dīnha dēkhā'i.
majjana pāna samēta haya kīnha nṛpati haraṣā'i. 158.

This false hermit observed that the king (Partapbhanu) was overcome with thirst, so he showed him the pond of water.

The king cheerfully took a bath and drank water himself, and also refreshed his horse likewise. Then he felt rejuvenated and energized once again. (Doha no. 158)

[Note—Obviously, Pratapbhanu felt obliged and was much grateful to this hermit. And in his elation he lost his usual discretion and caution. He felt that this is a true and helpful hermit who has virtually saved his and his horse's lives as if he was god-sent. The cunning hermit's demeanours and attires were so perfect that he gave no occasion for suspicion.

The pretentious hermit saw that Pratapbhanu was armed as he come a-hunting, while he himself was completely unarmed as a hermit ought to be. Besides it, he saw that a great chance has knocked at this door to settle old scores with his arch-enemy who has landed himself at his doorstep as if he was sent by providence.

So he concluded that if he played his cards carefully and with wisdom then he could fulfil his long-cherished wish to square up with Pratapbhanu. On the other hand, if he made one wrong move and Pratapbhanu could find out who that hermit actually was, he would be killed by well-armed king instantly. So the cunning hermit played his game to perfection and with care.]

चौ०. गै श्रम सकल सुखी नृप भयऊ । निज आश्रम तापस लै गयऊ ॥ १ ॥

आसन दीन्ह अस्त रबि जानी । पुनि तापस बोलेउ मृदु बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gai śrama sakala sukhī nrpa bhaya'ū. nija āśrama tāpasa lai gaya'ū. 1.

āsana dīnha asta rabi jānī. puni tāpasa bōlē'u mṛdu bānī. 2.

When the guest king (Pratapbhanu) was fully refreshed and felt rejuvenated, he became cheerful. Then the hermit took him back to his hermitage.¹ (1)

Observing that the time for the sun to set had arrived, the hermit gave the king a seat to sit down and relax. Then he addressed the king with polite words. (2)

[Note—¹This shows that the water-body was a little way off the hermitage. The false hermit accompanied Pratapbhanu to ensure that the latter did not go away after taking a bath, drinking water and refreshing himself. Because he rightly concluded that if he would be present at the site then the great king would be obliged to thank him and observe some basic courtesy by asking his leave, at which point the hermit would encourage him to come with him to his hermitage and take some rest before proceeding ahead with his journey.

Since it was almost night time, it would be easy to persuade the king to spend the night there in the safety of the hermitage because the forest was full of danger if one ventured into it during the darkness of the night. And if the things went the way the deceitful hermit planned quickly in his head, he would see to it that Pratapbhanu is ruined.

²The unsuspecting king agreed to stay overnight because he too did not wish to go forth through a forest with which he was not acquainted. And the treacherous hermit hit the dagger hard and sunk it till its hilt! He of course had to be polite if he wanted to trap the king into talking. Otherwise, the king could say he was tired and excuse himself to go and take rest.

So, as the king was already grateful to this hermit, he readily agreed to sit down and have a little chat with him when offered a seat and the hermit expressed a desire for some light talk.]

को तुम्ह कस बन फिरहु अकेलें । सुंदर जुबा जीव परहेलें ॥ ३ ॥

चक्रबर्ति के लच्छन तोरें । देखत दया लागि अति मोरें ॥ ४ ॥

kō tumha kasa bana phirahu akēlēṁ. sundara jubā jīva parahēlēṁ. 3.

cakrabarti kē lacchana tōrēṁ. dēkhata dayā lāgi ati mōrēṁ. 4.

The hermit enquired politely, 'Say, who are you and why are you wandering alone in this wild forest? You are handsome and young, so why do you risk your precious life by venturing alone in this fierce wilderness? (3)

I feel great pity for you because I see in you signs of a great emperor who rules over all the directions of the earth like it were a great circle of his dominion (cakrabarti)'.
(4)

नाम प्रतापभानु अवनीसा । तासु सचिव मैं सुनहु मुनीसा ॥ ५ ॥
फिरत अहेरें परेउँ भुलाई । बड़ें भाग देखेउँ पद आई ॥ ६ ॥

nāma pratāpabhānu avanīsā. tāsu saciva mairṁ sunahu munīsā. 5.
phirata ahērēm parē'uṁ bhulāī. barēm bhāga dēkhē'uṁ pada āī. 6.

The king replied with caution, saying, 'Listen oh sage! There is a great king named Pratapbhanu, and I am his minister¹. (4)

I was hunting and pursuing a game when I lost my way. It is due to good fortune that I came here and saw your holy feet. (6)

[Note—¹The king tried to be extra careful here. He was aware that he is renowned for being truthful, but here the situation demanded that he cannot speak the truth for fear of disclosing his identity to a stranger. So he devised a device by saying half-truth, that he was a minister with king Pratapbhanu. In a way he gave a hint to the stranger that if a king's minister is so great that he has signs and an air of a great ruler who rules over all the directions of the earth, then one can imagine the glory and majesty of the king under whom this minister works.

Refer Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 158 herein above where we read that at the time the king first met the hermit he had not disclosed his name then also. The reason is that wisdom and discretion dictates that a king should keep his identity secret in an alien land for he can't be sure whether he is amongst friends or foes.]

हम कहँ दुर्लभ दरस तुम्हारा । जानत हौं कछु भल होनिहारा ॥ ७ ॥
कह मुनि तात भयउ अँधिआरा । जोजन सतरि नगरु तुम्हारा ॥ ८ ॥

hama kahaṁ durlabha darasa tumhārā. jānata hauṁ kachu bhala hōnihārā. 7.
kaha muni tāta bhaya'u aṁdhi'ārā. jōjana sanāri nagaru tumhārā. 8.

It is rare for ordinary mortals like us to have a sight of sages and their holy feet. So I think that some great is in store for me and some good tidings are coming my way.'
(7)

The hermit replied, 'My dear, it is dark already now, and your capital city is at a distance of seventy yojans (roughly five hundred and sixty miles) from here¹. (8)

[Note—¹The cunning hermit smiled on the sly at his good fortune and thought to himself—"Well, well; it seems that the king is about to fall in my net, if only I could manoeuvre things a little more to my liking."

¹ Yojan = roughly 80 miles.]

दो०. निसा घोर गंभीर बन पंथ न सुनहु सुजान ।

बसहु आजु अस जानि तुम्ह जाएहु होत बिहान ॥ १५९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

nisā ghōra gambhīra bana pantha na sunahu sujāna.
basahu āju asa jāni tumha jā'ēhu hōta bihāna. 159 (a).

Listen oh gentleman (sujāna)! The night is pitch dark, and the fearsome forest is thick and deep. There is no proper track through it (which you can take back to your city).

So therefore, keeping this in mind, it would be wise for you to stay here overnight and go your way at dawn.' (Doha no. 159-a)

तुलसी जसि भवतव्यता तैसी मिलइ सहाइ ।

आपुनु आवइ ताहि पहिं ताहि तहाँ लै जाइ ॥ १५९ (ख) ॥

tulasī jasi bhavatabyatā taisī mila'i sahā'i.
āpunu āva'i tāhi pahim tāhi tahāṁ lai jā'i. 159 (b).

Tulsidas (the learned poet-saint who composed this classic tale called Ram Charit Manas) observes in a solemn way that whatever is destined by destiny and is inevitable in one's fate is invariably preceded by circumstances and developments that lead up to the main chain of events. Either such circumstances or developments come to visit at the doorstep of a person who is to face some fiat of providence, or he is himself pulled along involuntarily towards those circumstances and developments that would lead to situations that would be in sync with his destiny. (Doha no. 159-b)

[Note—Put simply it means that what is destined to happen would happen, and no one can change it. There are certain developments in everyone's life which support this conclusion, when no matter how hard one tries and devises things his way they would always go against his wishes and what he had hoped for. In the same way, some unexpected developments occur of which one has no inkling, but they pull him out of some intractable situation which seemed to him almost hopeless a moment ago.

In the present case, Pratapbhanu's destiny brought him face to face with a person whom he had vanquished himself some time ago, but unfortunately he could not recognize him. Though no power on earth could stand the might of Pratapbhanu if all such powers united against him in battle, a lone, poor and unarmed erstwhile king who has been disenfranchised from his kingdom and power by Pratapbhanu who had trounced him would prove one day to be his nemesis and vanquisher without even a fight.

A king who would have knelt before Pratapbhanu in the battle-field praying for mercy, now has the latter bowing before him in gratitude for saving his life by providing him water to drink!

A king whose ruin was caused at the hands of Pratapbhanu now became the cause of ruin of Pratapbhanu himself—and that too without a fight. And the greatest irony is that the prey (Pratapbhanu) came to be killed voluntarily by him (the defeated king now disguised as a hermit) who he had earlier wished to destroy in battle.

This Doha essentially says that “destiny, fate and providence are very powerful forces in a person’s life, and whatever is to happen will surely happen in one’s life no matter how hard one tries to change or avoid it”.]

चौ०. भलेहिं नाथ आयसु धरि सीसा । बाँधि तुरग तरु बैठ महीसा ॥ १ ॥

नृप बहु भाँति प्रसंसेउ ताही । चरन बंदि निज भाग्य सराही ॥ २ ॥ ॥

caupāī.

bhalēhiṁ nātha āyasu dhari sīsā. bāṁdhi turaga taru baiṭha mahīsā. 1.
nrpa bahu bhāṁti prasansē'u tāhī. carana bandi nija bhāgya sarāhī. 2.

Accepting the offer of the hermit gladly, the king said, ‘Alright oh Lord’, and went to tie the horse to a tree. Then he came back and sat down before the hermit¹. (1)

The king praised the hermit a lot, bowed at his feet, and congratulated himself (at finding a friendly person in the midst of a hopeless situation)². (2)

[Note—¹This shows that till now the king had been standing with his horse, but now that he has to spend the night in the hermitage he tied the horse to a tree and came to sit down comfortably.

²The king was all praises for this hermit because he felt that the latter was a nice person: first the hermit had shown him water, even accompanied to the pond for the sake of courteousness, and now he has requested the king to spend the night at the hermitage because it was already dark and night had come, the path back to his city was long, and it passed through a dense and hostile forest. The king already had an experience of the sort of wild forest he would have to cross because it was in this forest that he had lost his way. So when offered the chance of staying overnight, he gladly accepted it as god-sent.

In the situation in which the king found himself currently, any other person in his place too would have felt obliged to the hermit who played the role of a perfect host who was most courteous and hospitable.]

पुनि बोलेउ मृदु गिरा सुहाई । जानि पिता प्रभु करउँ ढिठाई ॥ ३ ॥

मोहि मुनीस सुत सेवक जानी । नाथ नाम निज कहहु बखानी ॥ ४ ॥

puni bōlē'u mṛdu girā suhāī. jāni pitā prabhu kara'uṁ ḍhiṭhāī. 3.
mōhi munīsa suta sēvaka jānī. nātha nāma nija kahahu bakhānī. 4.

After he was comfortably seated and felt thankful to the hermit for the hospitality offered by him, the king said most politely, using sweetness in his voice, ‘Oh Lord! I regard you as my father¹, and so I am venturing to speak to you out of turn. [To wit,

even though you have not asked me to say anything, nevertheless I feel sufficiently free to talk to you as a son would to his father, for there is no formality between the two of them.] (3)

Oh sage, you too should regard me as your son and follower, and so please be kind to tell me your name (so that I may become aware about who you are)². (4)

[Note—¹The king wished to show his respect to the hermit and express his thanks to him. He calls the latter his ‘father’ because a hermit and a sage are no less respectable than a father for a man. Besides this, the hermit had saved his life by showing him water and asking him no to venture into the wild forest in the night as it would be too dangerous for his security.

While addressing the king earlier in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 159, the hermit had used the affectionate word ‘tāta’ for the king, which means “oh dear”, a term that is usually used in classical texts for someone who is very dear, such as a son. So the king reciprocated this gesture by addressing the hermit as his father.

There is another point here. The king was in the company of a stranger with whom he had to pass the night. So he thought it wise to create some kind of close bond, even if it was superficial or artificial, with his host so that the latter’s conscience would stop him from doing any mischief while the king was unarmed and asleep.

²Earlier the hermit too had asked the king who he was in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 159, so the king decided that there was no harm in asking the hermit his name. This was also done to start a conversation, and to keep busy and pass time. It would also help the king to reward the hermit after he returned to his capital the next day.]

तेहि न जान नृप नृपहि सो जाना । भूप सुहृद सो कपट सयाना ॥ ५ ॥
बैरी पुनि छत्री पुनि राजा । छल बल कीन्ह चहइ निज काजा ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi na jāna nr̥pa nr̥pahi sō jānā. bhūpa suhr̥da sō kapaṭa sayānā. 5.
bairī puni chatrī puni rājā. chala bala kīnha caha'i nija kājā. 6.

The king could not recognize who the hermit was, but the latter had immediately known who his guest actually was as soon as he saw the king¹.

The king was simple-hearted and had no deceit in him, but the hermit was a cunning fraud who was skilled in conceit and pretensions. (5)

In the first instance the hermit was an enemy, and then he was a Kshatriya by race (i.e. a warrior), and to top it all he was an erstwhile king who was defeated and his kingdom usurped. So (since he was seething with anger) he wished to accomplish his task (of seeking revenge) by hook or by crook². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 6-7 that precede Doha no. 158.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 158.

There are three things mentioned here which went squarely against Pratapbhanu—viz. (i) the hermit being a king who was defeated by Pratapbhanu, and whose kingdom was conquered and subjugated by him, (ii) the hermit being a warrior by birth, and for such a person the greatest humiliation in life is defeat and being forced to run away from the battle-field, and (iii) the hermit being the guest's arch enemy. All these three factors went against Pratapbhanu.

This situation was made worse and exacerbated because the king could not recognize his enemy so that he could have been alert and taken due precautions. The cunning hermit played his cards well and expertly by being most polite and courteous so that no suspicion was raised in the mind of the king. And he mightily succeeded in his game-plan because the king actually failed to recognize his enemy and fell right into the trap laid out for him by his sworn enemy!

The hermit had been waiting for such an opportunity for a long time when he could extract his revenge upon his enemy Pratapbhanu, and now this opportunity came knocking at his door. As the hermit had been a king himself before he was defeated by Pratapbhanu and had to escape and hide in the forest, he knew the tricks of the trade well, and so he knew how to trap an enemy without harming his own interests and extract whatever he wanted from the latter.

So we see the irony of fate here and the truth of what has been said as a maxim in Doha no. 159-b herein above that “destiny, fate and providence are very powerful forces in a person's life, and whatever is to happen will surely happen in one's life no matter how hard one tries to change or avoid it”.]

समुझि राजसुख दुखित अराती । अवाँ अनल इव सुलगइ छाती ॥ ७ ॥
सरल बचन नृप के सुनि काना । बयर सँभारि हृदयँ हरषाना ॥ ८ ॥

samujhi rājasukha dukhita arātī. avāṁ anala iva sulaga'i chātī. 7.
sarala bacana nṛpa kē suni kānā. bayara saṁbhāri hṛdayaṁ haraṣānā. 8.

The disenfranchised and disinherited king (i.e. the hermit) had remembered the pleasures and comforts of royalty which had been snatched away from him. So he was burning with a fire of hatred and vengeance for the person (i.e. Pratapbhanu) who had robbed him of such privileges. (7)

Hearing with his ears the king's unsuspecting and polite words, he (i.e. the cunning hermit) felt very happy and reassured in his heart (that now finally he would achieve his objective and square up with his arch enemy). (8)

दो०. कपट बोरि बानी मृदुल बोलेउ जुगुति समेत ।
नाम हमार भिखारि अब निर्धन रहित निकेत ॥ १६० ॥
dōhā.

kapaṭa bōri bānī mṛdula bōlē'u juguti samēta.
nāma hamāra bhikhāri aba nirdhana rahita nikēta. 160.

The pretentious hermit spoke artfully words that were polite on their face but ambiguous and full of deceit. He said, 'My name now is a 'beggar', because I am poor and without a home of my own.¹' (Doha no. 160)

[Note—¹The king ought to have taken note of these words, but he failed. A true hermit would never refer to himself as a 'beggar (bhikhāri)' to hint at his hidden regret of having left the pleasures and wealth of a household. A hermit is expected to be happy and cheerful in his chosen way of life of renunciation and meditation. This should have rung alarm bells for Pratapbhanu, but as destiny had wished his fall he overlooked the obvious, so deluded his mind was.

Perhaps the king missed the obvious because he thought that the hermit was being truthful as indeed he had no wealth at present. But at the same time, he concluded, that prior to becoming a hermit he was a rich man—as hinted by the hermit saying that 'now I am a beggar' with no home and riches. That means he had them previously.

The hermit knew how a king thinks and treats others. If the other person is of a noble and rich bearing and heritage, a king would treat him with respect; otherwise he pays little or no attention to him. For the hermit to succeed in his game-plan, it was absolutely necessary for him to gain Pratapbhanu's full attention and confidence. He decided that the chances of Pratapbhanu paying more heed to what he says and accept his advice would be high if the king thought that this hermit was of a noble upbringing but had left all his wealth due to his spiritual urges. This is why it is said here that the hermit "spoke artfully" words that had dual meaning—it was first to test how alert his victim was, and then to inspire so much confidence in him that he would not question the hermit's integrity when he actually began implementing his nefarious design to wreak revenge upon the unsuspecting king.]

चौ०. कह नृप जे बिग्यान निधाना । तुम्ह सारिखे गलित अभिमाना ॥ १ ॥
सदा रहहिं अपनपौ दुराएँ । सब बिधि कुसल कुबेष बनाएँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha nrpa jē bigyāna nidhānā. tumha sārīkhē galita abhimānā. 1.
sadā rahahim apanapau durā'ēṁ. saba bidhi kusala kubēṣa banā'ēṁ. 2.

The king (Pratapbhanu) replied, 'Those who are intelligent and repositories of wisdom and prudence, as well as free from pride and ego like you [1], always keep the reality about themselves and their glory secret and hidden from others like you have done, for they feel that it is always better to remain incognito and conceal their proficiency and knowledge by remaining in tattered clothes (so that no one pays attention to them and leaves them alone in peace) [2]. (1-2)

[Note—We observe that the king was also speaking in a language that conveyed a double meaning—for what he said might be a genuine praise of a wise and enlightened sage or hermit who wish to remain anonymous so that no one comes to disturb him to seek favours, and at the same time it may mean that the king praised

the hermit in sarcasm to indicate that he has indeed recognized who this hermit actually was but was being courteous as the latter had extended warm hospitality to the former.

From what we shall be reading in a moment now, the former case is true—for the king had praised the hermit with a genuine spirit of respect for him and a belief that he was fortunate to have met a nice hermit in the wild forest who came to his rescue when he was lost and would have faced a grave situation during the night in a dangerous place full of wild beasts.

The king's overwhelming sense of gratitude and relief at having found some humble and an apparently holy man was so great that it eclipsed his own wisdom and disarmed him of his usual sense of precaution and prudence. The king fell for the holy attire of the fraudster.

A message that is conveyed by this story is that one should never let down one's guard and take anyone at face value, for more often than not appearances are very misleading.

A true hermit or ascetic would indeed like to live anonymously. Though he may have mystical powers and may be very wise and learned, yet he wishes to be left alone so that he can pursue his spiritual goals. He does not want to be disturbed and mobbed by favour seekers who would flock to him for their worldly desires to be fulfilled if the word leaked out that a particular sage or hermit or ascetic can alleviate their troubles by his spiritual powers. No one in his right senses would normally like to be associated with a beggar in tattered clothes, and so a wise hermit would dress himself accordingly in rags to avoid worldly company.

Besides this, a hermit is expected to be free from pride and ego; he is not supposed to go boasting about his past achievements or present spiritual prowess. So the king said that he respected the hermit for his humbleness and lack of pride inspite of being full of wisdom and abilities. It is not easy to live and survive alone in the middle of the wilderness, surrounded by an uninhabitable forest full of wild beasts, away from civilization and all possible human contact. So a hermit or an ascetic who manages to do so successfully obviously must have some exceptional powers that other men do not possess. Hence, when the king saw the circumstances in which this hermit lived in the middle of a wild forest he was naturally overcome with awe and determined that this was a truly holy man who deserved his praise.]

तेहि तें कहहिं संत श्रुति टेरे । परम अकिंचन प्रिय हरि केरे ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्ह सम अधन भिखारि अगेहा । होत बिरंचि सिवहि संदेहा ॥ ४ ॥

tēhi tēm kahahim santa śruti ṭērēm. parama akiñcana priya hari kērēm. 3.
tumha sama adhana bhikhāri agēhā. hōta birañci sivahi sandēhā. 4.

Verily indeed it is asserted by the Vedas and great saints that those who are simple and unpretentious, who have no worldly assets and attachments are dear to the Lord God¹. (3)

When the Creator (birañci) and Lord Shiva see someone who is as penniless and homeless as you are, even they begin to doubt about the actual powers and abilities of

such a person. [This being the case, how can I know who you actually are or about your spiritual powers and achievements when even the two senior Gods of the Trinity, i.e. the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva fail to know in depth about the exalted state of persons like you.]² (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the Lord loves those who are attached and devoted to none except the Lord himself, those for whom the Lord is the only wealth, only kin and only support. The Lord does not like a hermit or an ascetic who goes around boasting about his spiritual status. He likes the humble and the meek. The same idea is expressed in the New Testament of the Holy Bible, St. Matthew, 5/3-8; and Galatians, 5/23.

It has been said in the Upanishads and other scriptures that a Sanyasi, i.e. a person who has renounced the world and taken the vows of renunciation ought not to lust for worldly name and wealth any longer. It is because worldly contact creates a disturbance for the hermit's or ascetic's mind and creates a hindrance in his spiritual pursuit. This is also the reason given by this hermit in Doha no. 161 herein below.

²The king is being clever in this instance: he wishes to hide his inability to recognize the fraudulent hermit by saying that it is necessary as well as a convention to show respect to a person who is attired in a holy garb, no matter who actually he is.

The king is being wise and cautious here also, and a bit sarcastic. He defends his inability to recognize the real identity of the hermit because of his holy garb which has such a powerful influence upon the mind of the beholder who is usually trained and accustomed to show the greatest of respect to this attire as well as the person who wears it. This is because the attire of a hermit or an ascetic is universally respected by one and all, and even the great Gods such as Brahma and Shiva pay their homage to a person who is attired like a hermit and an ascetic.

So therefore, the king says that he is paying homage to this 'attire of a hermit' without going into further details about the person himself because he who dons a holy garb is to be shown due respect, especially when he exhibits other glorious traits of humbleness, simplicity, lack of pride and desire for worldly riches as asserted by Vedas and great saints, and as exhibited by his host in the present instance.

Earlier we have read that the king calls this cunning hermit his 'father-like' in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160. And now he praises the cunning hermit by comparing him with some great sage who is attired in a holy garb and is extremely humble and wise. So once again the king takes a precaution not to arouse any suspicion in the mind of a stranger in whose company he has to spend the night in a forest. He does not want that the hermit, in case he is some scoundrel, get a hint that the king doubts his integrity because that would be very dangerous for the king's own security. But at the same time, by saying that even great Gods do not know the reality of someone who is in a holy garb such as that of a hermit or an ascetic, the king gives a subtle hint that he is not fully convinced of the truth about his host!

The next verse clearly implies that the king is not fully convinced about the authenticity of the hermit, but he still shows respect to him because of his attire of a hermit which is respectable and makes its wearer an object of respect.]

जोसि सोसि तव चरन नमामी । मो पर कृपा करिअ अब स्वामी ॥ ५ ॥

सहज प्रीति भूपति कै देखी । आपु बिषय बिस्वास बिसेषी ॥ ६ ॥

jōsi sōsi tava carana namāmī. mō para kṛpā kari'a aba svāmī. 5.
sahaja prīti bhūpati kai dēkhī. āpu biṣaya bisvāsa bisēṣī. 6.

Whoever you are, I still bow at your feet and pay my respects to you. Now, oh lord, be kind upon me and bless me by your grace¹. (5)

The hermit observed that the king had indeed been unable to recognize him, and instead has developed great faith, respect and affection for him. [To wit, instead of being suspicious of the hermit, the king developed great affection for his cunning host, and became totally submissive to him.]

So the hermit was now confident that he would be able to carry out his plans as he had wished². (6)

[Note—¹The king urges the hermit to spare him because he is bowing at his feet as a token of surrender. The king thought that in case this stranger hermit had some sense of conscience and humanity in him, then no matter who he is he will be bound by guilt if he does any harm to someone who has surrendered unconditionally before him. Well, this principle applies under normal conditions to someone who is noble in heart, naturally merciful by disposition, of high thinking and exemplary scruples, but not to someone who is burning with the fire of revenge.

Here the hermit is burning with a desire for vengeance, and so whatever scruples and morality he may have in his conscience were reduced to ashes in the raging fire of retribution.

²And what was the hermit's plan and wish? It was to settle old scores with king Pratapbhanu and ruin him. Now that he was successful in gaining the full confidence of the king, the hermit prepared for his next move. He wanted to drive the dagger home till its hilt. To wit, he decided that if he took revenge just now he would be able to easily kill the king who was alone, but it would far better if he maneuvered things in such a way that the entire family of the king is ruined for generations to come. So he did not hurry with plunging the dagger right then and there!]

सब प्रकार राजहि अपनाई । बोलेउ अधिक सनेह जनाई ॥ ७ ॥

सुनु सतिभाउ कहउँ महिपाला । इहाँ बसत बीते बहु काला ॥ ८ ॥

saba prakāra rājahi apanā'ī. bōlē'u adhika sanēha janā'ī. 7.
sunu satibhā'u kaha'uṁ mahipālā. ihāṁ basata bītē bahu kālā. 8.

Hence, the hermit played the next move of his game by showing greater affection to the (unfortunate and unaware) king with the aim of winning him over completely and acquiring his full confidence without a trace of doubt¹. (7)

So he said, 'Listen oh great king²! I am telling you all that is the truth. A lot of time has passed while I have lived here. (8)

[Note—¹The false-hermit was by this time convinced that he has succeeded in his plan to deceive the king and get his confidence. The king treated him with great respect just like a great king would treat a hermit who comes visiting his court. The

king was not only full of praise for the hermit but also bowed before him, called him a 'fatherly' figure, and now seeks his 'blessings'.

²We have read earlier that the king had never told who he actually was. In Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 159 the king had told the hermit that he was a 'chief minister' of king Pratapbhanu. So now when the hermit addressed him as 'the king', he was more convinced of the hermit's mystical powers which enabled him to know the truth of who his guest was!

This simple ploy of the hermit pulled the innocent king nearer to the trap that was being spread out for him for now he was sure that this hermit was no ordinary man but one who has transcendental powers.]

दो०. अब लगि मोहि न मिलेउ कोउ मैं न जनावउँ काहु ।

लोकमान्यता अनल सम कर तप कानन दाहु ॥ १६१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

aba lagi mōhi na milē'u kō'u mair̥ na janāva'uṁ kāhu.

lōkamān'yatā anala sama kara tapa kānana dāhu. 161 (a).

[The hermit continued—] 'No one has met me till now (for I live far away from populated areas, in a remote and secluded part of the forest), and neither do I (prefer to) reveal my identity to anyone. I prefer anonymity because worldly recognition and honour are like a fire that destroys the symbolic forest of Tapa (spiritual benefits gained by practicing austerity and penance).¹ [To wit, a true hermit and ascetic are expected to avoid company with others and lead a life in obscurity and serenity so that he can pursue his spiritual objectives without any interference.] (Doha no. 161-a)

[Note—¹The cunning hermit wishes to keep the king engaged in conversation and gain more access to his confidence so that he would tie the noose more tightly. He knew that king Pratapbhanu was extremely ambitious and had a hidden desire to conquer the whole world, as this was the only reason why he had attacked and conquered, without any provocation, the kingdom of which this hermit of ours was a king earlier. So if the guest king could somehow be cajoled into believing that luckily he has now met a great hermit who possesses supernatural powers, then it is quite possible that he may seek the hermit's help to fulfill his desires and complete whatever remnants of victory that still elude him, and successfully conquer those territories that are still not under his sovereignty.

The hermit therefore tried to impress the king about the magical powers that he possesses, about his great spiritual prowess and special achievements, that usually come to great hermits and ascetics by the virtue of their doing severe Tapa. With these powers the hermits and ascetics can achieve stupendous feats that ordinary mortals cannot even think of.]

सो०. तुलसी देखि सुबेषु भूलहिं मूढ़ न चतुर नर ।

सुंदर केकिहि पेखु बचन सुधा सम असन अहि ॥ १६१ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

tulasī dēkhi subēṣu bhūlahim mūrha na catura nara.
sundara kēkihi pēkhu bacana sudhā sama asana ahi. 161 (b).

Tulsidas observes that an honourable and pleasant-looking attire and appearance often misleads everyone, for not only the ordinary people but even those who are intelligent and sagacious are deceived by them.

See the peacock; it is so beautiful to look at (with its fantastically wonderful plumes that have an array of colours), and it also has a voice that is attractive and sweet to hear, but ironically it feeds on poisonous snakes. (Sortha no. 136-b)

[Note—The learned poet Tulsidas (who has written this book Ram Charit Manas) makes a great point here as a warning for all of us: that one should not judge someone by his looks, for appearances are more often deceiving and do not tell the truth. So one must always be on guard when dealing with strangers and unknown situations.

A peacock is so lovely to look at from the outside, but it is so horrible from inside that it devours snakes and manages to digest the reptile. The snake that would kill one and all by its poison is unable to harm the peacock because the latter is more poisonous than the snake, and hence is easily able to neutralize the weaker poison contained in the body of the snake.

Who would believe that a bird which looks so pleasant from the outside and has a sweet voice would have such strong poisonous instincts that it does not fear the poison of the snake and easily gobbles it up?

To wit, a person who by his appearances looks very friendly and helpful may actually be some dangerous scoundrel preying for a victim, who will stab one behind one's back without warning so much so that even while putting up a show of warmth with an affectionate embrace, he may gladly and without any remorse drive a knife in the back of the unsuspecting victim during this embrace.

One thing is to be noted here. The voice of a peacock is not actually 'sweet and pleasant' as it is made out to be here, for it is shrill and sharp. But the peacock usually cries out in jubilation when it sees the dark rain-bearing clouds in the sky at the onset of the rainy season. So therefore, the peacock's cry against the background of the sound of thunder of the approaching storm and rain appears very pleasant to hearer because it signals the arrival of rain that is welcomed by one and all at the end of a harsh summer.]

चौ०. तातें गुपुत रहउँ जग माहीं । हरि तजि किमपि प्रयोजन नाही ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु जानत सब बिनहिं जनाएँ । कहहु कवनि सिधि लोक रिझाएँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tātēm guputa raha'uṁ jaga māhīm. hari taji kimapi prayōjana nāhīm. 1.
prabhu jānata saba binahim janā'ēṁ. kahahu kavani sidhi lōka rijhā'ēṁ. 2.

[The pretentious hermit continued with his honey-laced talk. He said—] 'That is why¹ I prefer to remain anonymous and hidden from the world, for I don't want and need to do anything with anyone except Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being)². (1)

The Lord is all-knowing and he knows everything without saying a word or being told of anything. So therefore, say, what use is there in trying to please and appease the world³? (2)

[Note—¹The hermit has already given the reason for it in Doha no. 161-a herein above. And he further elaborates on it now onwards.

²To wit, I spend my time in meditation and contemplation and worship of Lord Hari with great devotion. Being a true hermit and an ascetic, why should I waste my time and energy by thinking of other things and worrying about them? I feel contented in my spiritual pursuits, and prefer to lead a calm and serene life in seclusion, away from all contacts and free from attachments. My basic needs are taken care of by the Lord, and so there is no occasion for me to venture outside into the world.

³The pretentious hermit is so cunning that he speaks excellent words of wisdom like a really great, sagacious and enlightened saint so as to convince the king of his noble thoughts and greatness, make him more faithful and devoted towards himself. A truly faithful devotee of the Lord God would seek from no one except his Lord. So the hermit tries to impress upon the gullible king that he is a loyal devotee of Lord Hari, and hence a holy and reliable soul, for devotees of Lord Hari are deemed to be pure in heart and pious souls.

A cheat and a scoundrel would go to any length to achieve his objectives, and he has no compunctions or reservations in employing any dirty trick he can think of as long as his nefarious design succeeds. Lying and falsehoods cause no embarrassment to such persons.]

तुम्ह सुचि सुमति परम प्रिय मोरें । प्रीति प्रतीति मोहि पर तोरें ॥ ३ ॥
अब जाँ तात दुरावउँ तोही । दारुन दोष घटइ अति मोही ॥ ४ ॥

tumha suci sumati parama priya mōrēm. prīti pratīti mōhi para tōrēm. 3.
aba jaum tāta durāva'uṁ tōhī. dārūna dōṣa ghaṭa'i ati mōhī. 4.

You (the guest king) have a clean conscience and purity of mind; that is why I have (developed an) affection for you and have confidence in you. (3)

My dear, this being the case, if I hide anything from you then it would be a great sin on my part¹. (4)

[Note—¹What was the thing that the hermit alluded to when he said that he did not want to hide anything from the king? Well, in the beginning this hermit has told the king that he does not want to reveal to anyone who he was, what mystical powers he possessed, or anything else about his spiritual life and achievements, and especially not to a stranger. He has always preferred to remain anonymous and hidden from publicity. This is clearly evident from Doha nos. 160 and 161, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 161.

But then now the same hermit has revealed quite a bit about himself before the king—that he worships Lord Hari and is the Lord's great devotee, that he seeks from no one except Lord Hari, that he has lived in seclusion for a long time doing Tapa,

that he has transcendental powers by which he could know that his guest was ‘a king’ and ‘not a king’s minister’ though the guest himself told him that he was king Pratapbhanu’s chief minister, and so on.

So the hermit now gives a reason why he confided in the king and told him some secrets that he has not revealed to anyone else till now—and it is that he was very impressed by the king’s simplicity and faith in him, and so he decided that when one pure heart meets another pure heart there should be openness between the two.

This was a very clever ploy as it further reinforced the king’s trust in the hermit. It helped the hermit to appeal to the natural emotions of the king to open up with a holy person; the king would now be encouraged to share some of the secrets in his own heart with the hermit just as the hermit has shared some of his own secrets with him in a voluntary way. The hermit correctly guessed that the king would overcome his initial reluctance and open up.

And what message is there in this verse? It is that those who really and truly trust each other should have an open heart and not hide anything between them. This attitude helps them bond and come to each other’s aid in times of need. It also helps both the partners to seek and give selfless advice on various matters. But at the same time it is of utmost importance that one chooses one’s partner most carefully and take due precautions and undertake diligence before reposting complete faith on anyone. For otherwise, one would be doomed as was the unfortunate case of king Pratapbhanu who fell prey to a scoundrel’s sweet words.]

जिमि जिमि तापसु कथइ उदासा । तिमि तिमि नृपहि उपज बिस्वासा ॥ ५ ॥
देखा स्वबस कर्म मन बानी । तब बोला तापस बगध्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

jimi jimi tāpasu katha'i udāsā. timi timi nr̥pahi upaja bisvāsā. 5.
dēkhā svabasa karma mana bānī. taba bōlā tāpasa bagadhyānī. 6.

The more the hermit talked of indifference to the world and his devotion to spiritual pursuits, the more the king’s faith in him increased. (5)

When the false and deceitful hermit, who was like a cunning crane preying on its victim¹, determined that the king had developed full trust and faith in him so much so that he has become fully devoted to him in his thought, word and deed, he (the hermit) said—(6)

[Note—¹The crane stands in the water on one of its legs and the neck bent inwards, appearing to be immersed in deep meditation. But its attention is fixed on the water where some fish might come to the surface. And as soon as the crane sights the fish, it immediately picks it up in its beak. This metaphor of the crane is used to imply a person who pretends to be holy on the outside but is very selfish and cruel internally; he traps his victim by pretending to be his well wisher and dear friend, but at the first opportunity he would pounce at his unsuspecting victim and extract whatever he had planned from him.]

नाम हमार एकतनु भाई । सुनि नृप बोलेउ पुनि सिरु नाई ॥ ७ ॥

कहहु नाम कर अरथ बखानी । मोहि सेवक अति आपन जानी ॥ ८ ॥

nāma hamāra ēkatanu bhā'ī. suni nrpa bōlē'u puni siru nā'ī. 7.
kahahu nāma kara aratha bakhānī. mōhi sēvaka ati āpana jānī. 8.

‘Brother (bhā'ī), my name is Ekatanu (ēkatanu)¹.’

When the king heard this, he bowed his head (in reverence)² and said—(7)

‘Please consider me to be your devoted follower (or servant) and explain to me the meaning of your name. (8)

[Note—¹The hermit is trying to become more and more informal with the king in his effort of developing greater rapport with him. We note that the hermit is playing his trick very expertly, step-by-step, in order to judge how much the king is willing to yield himself to the former.

So therefore now the hermit uses a dearer and more informal term of address for someone, such as the word ‘brother’. He goes a step further in his effort to draw the unsuspecting king, who was slowly slipping into the trap being laid out by the villainous hermit, closer to him with greater trust and faith when he would address the king as his ‘son’ in the Chaupai that follows Doha no. 162 herein below.

The word ‘Ekatanu’ is explained by him in the next Doha no. 162 herein below.

²The king ‘bowed his head’: this shows that the king has begun to treat the hermit with greater respect with each passing moment.]

दो०. आदिसृष्टि उपजी जबहिं तब उतपति भै मोरि ।

नाम एकतनु हेतु तेहि देह न धरी बहोरि ॥ १६२ ॥

dōhā.

ādisṛṣṭi upajā jabahim taba utapati bhai mōri.
nāma ēkatanu hētu tēhi dēha na dharī bahōri. 162.

[The hermit replied—] ‘I was born when the creation came into being. My name is ‘Elatanu’ which means ‘one who has had only a single body’, for I never died and therefore I hadn’t taken a birth again. [To wit, I have been in this body of a hermit which you see now ever since the dawn of creation, for I never died, and so there was no need for me to take a new birth again.]¹’ (Doha no. 162)

[Note—¹Of all the claims that this hermit made this was the most outlandish. This is a mortal world, and no creature can claim immortality for its gross body; no human being can claim that his gross body has survived and lived in the same way since the beginning of creation. It’s absurd and impossible.

This ridiculous claim of the hermit should have rung alarm bells for the king. But as destiny had planned otherwise, the king’s wisdom was eclipsed and he could

not see the tell-tale signs of lies and falsehood in the hermit's words of excessive absurdity.

Well, the hermit made a final test to see whether some sense of prudence and common sense still was left with the king, or has he become totally numbed in his mind and intellect. When a thug wants to rob his victim, he first gives him some intoxicating substance, and then waits and watches what effect it has on the victim. Only when he finds that the drug has its full effect upon the prey that the villain strikes and then flees with the booty.

There is one very interesting observation that can be made here in connection with the word 'Ekatanu'. While one of its meanings is as described above—i.e. a person who has had the same body since the creation started, the other meaning is that 'I have no other physical body', or 'I don't have a second or duplicate body'. If we were to take this second meaning into consideration then also we conclude that the king had been very stupid not to realize that no one has a 'duplicate body' or a 'parallel body' or 'a second body other than one's own body'. The hermit was playing a trick with words upon the king—and the deluded king could not see through it!

This term may also mean that the hermit was the 'only son of his parents'. If he had some other sibling, especially a 'twin', then it could be said that there is another person in the likeness of the hermit as brothers carry the same genes in them, have the same parents, and their features also match each other to a great extent.]

चौ०. जनि आचरजु करहु मन माहीं । सुत तप तें दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
तपबल तें जग सृजइ बिधाता । तपबल बिजु भए पस्त्रिता ॥ २ ॥
तपबल संभु करहिं संघारा । तप तें अगम न कछु संसारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jani ācaraju karahu mana māhīm. suta tapa tēm durlabha kachu nāhīm. 1.
tapabala tēm jaga srja'i bidhātā. tapabala biṣṇu bha'ē paritrātā. 2.
tapabala sambhu karahīm saṅghārā. tapa tēm agama na kachu sansārā. 3.

[The hermit continued to explain to the king the meaning of his name. Thus he said—
] 'Oh son1, don't be surprised at all about this (that I have not died and thus have been able to live through countless ages with this same body with which I took birth at the beginning of creation as I have told you about myself). For, nothing is impossible by the virtue of the powers granted by doing Tapa (strict spiritual practices such as observing austerity, doing penance and offering self-sacrifices)². (1)

[Elaborating upon the stupendous powers and astounding abilities that are granted by doing Tapa, the hermit said—] The creator Brahma creates this universe on the strength of Tapa; it is on the strength of Tapa that Lord Vishnu is able to take care of this creation and provide for its needs; (2)

Lord Shiva is able to conclude or bring to an end this creation by relying on the powers granted by Tapa.

Verily indeed, there is nothing impossible and there is nothing that can't be done or achieved in this world by relying on the strength of Tapa.³ (3)

[Note—¹Earlier the hermit had addressed the king as a 'brother', and now he addresses him as a 'son'. This is an obvious attempt on his part to gain the king's unbridled confidence and faith. The hermit plays subtly on the king's emotions by referring to the king's own submission at the time he accepted the hermit's offer to spend the night at the hermitage when the king had said to the hermit that he was like a 'father' for him—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160.

The cunning hermit decided that before he bared his fangs and dug his teeth deep into the victim it is crucial for him that his prey is firmly in his clutches so much so that he would do the hermit's bidding faithfully and obediently like a devoted disciple who carries out his Guru's (preceptor's) orders without asking any questions or expressing any doubts.

²When the hermit had said that he has retained the same body ever since the dawn of creation, without dying and taking birth even once, the king was incredulous and absolutely astonished as this seemed to be an outlandish and impractical suggestion that defied the laws of Nature. The clever hermit was closely observing every gesture and expression on the face of the king, so he immediately picked up the signal that the king is not ready to take this bait so easily. Hence, he went on an overdrive to explain why he has managed to retain the same body ever since taking birth at the beginning of civilization.

He gave credit to his doing severe Tapa for this most magical feat. This explanation seemed reasonable and acceptable to the king because he was himself very well-versed in the doctrines of religious practices and knew that anything can be achieved by the force and power of Tapa. He knew that Tapa grants transcendental and supernatural powers to its practitioners.

When the hermit observed that the king seemed satisfied with this explanation, he felt very glad in his heart, because now he could use this ruse of his being able to do the impossible by the powers gained by him due to his Tapa in order to give effect to his nefarious designs to take revenge upon the king, as would be evident shortly.

³The hermit wished to be sure that the king is convinced of his reasoning that he has been able to live with the same body for ages after ages on the strength of Tapa. So he cites some of the irrefutable proofs for it—that of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Even the scriptures have endorsed this point that these three Gods of the Trinity gain their powers by doing Tapa.]

भयउ नृपहि सुनि अति अनुरागा । कथा पुरातन कहै सो लागा ॥ ४ ॥

करम धरम इतिहास अनेका । करइ निरूपन बिरति बिबेका ॥ ५ ॥

उदभव पालन प्रलय कहानी । कहेसि अमित आचरज बखानी ॥ ६ ॥

bhaya'u nr̥pahi suni ati anurāgā. kathā purātana kahai sō lāgā. 4.

karama dharama itihāsa anēkā. kara'i nirūpana birati bibēkā. 5.

udabhava pālana pralaya kahānī. kahēsi amita ācaraja bakhānī. 6.

Hearing these sagacious words of wisdom, the king felt very enamoured of the hermit and developed great admiration for him.

Then the hermit began to tell him many ancient stories and antecedents from the Purans (mythological histories)¹. (4)

He (the hermit) then gave a lengthy discourse on the principles of Karma and Dharma (the principles governing deeds and righteousness as laid down in the scriptures) along with many stories that would explain these doctrines.

He also gave discourses elaborating on the virtues of Gyan (gnosis; knowledge and spiritual enlightenment) and Vairagya (renunciation and detachment).² (5)

He told the king many wonderful and fascinating stories about this creation—about its origin, its sustenance, and its final end, stories that were awe-inspiring and interesting. (6)

[Note—¹It was a usual practice in ancient times that when someone went to a great sage and sought his blessings, the sage would spend some quality time with his guest by talking about the scriptures and spiritual topics. Great sages who had established hermitages would routinely give discourses on ancient scriptures and explain them to the host of other junior sages and disciples who lived with him to acquire knowledge.

²The hermit wanted to keep the king engaged in conversation and create an impression on him. He wanted to subtly tell the king that he was no ordinary hermit but was indeed a great and learned sage who is well acquainted with all the scriptures as a sage ought to be, and there is aught nothing that he knows not. That he lives alone and does not have many juniors surrounding him does not mean that he is not highly knowledgeable and wise.

So therefore he gave a long discourse on a wide variety of topics so that the king is fully convinced of his greatness and vast knowledge.]

सुनि महीप तापस बस भयऊ । आपन नाम कहन तब लयऊ ॥ ७ ॥
कह तापस नृप जानउँ तोही । कीन्हेहु कपट लाग भल मोही ॥ ८ ॥

sunī mahīpa tāpasa basa bhaya'ū. āpana nāma kahana taba laya'ū. 7.
kaha tāpasa nrpa jāna'uṁ tōhī. kīnhēhu kapaṭa lāga bhala mōhī. 8.

Hearing all these wise talks, the king was fully convinced of the greatness of this hermit, and he developed full faith in him. The king now trusted the hermit so much that he proceeded to disclose his real name to the latter. (7)

But the hermit interjected, and before the king could divulge his true identity the hermit said, 'Oh king, I know already who you actually are. I very much appreciate your stance that you tried to withhold the truth from me¹. [In Doha no. 163 herein below the hermit explains why he appreciated the king's deception.] (8)

सो०. सुनु महीस असि नीति जहँ तहँ नाम न कहहिं नृप ।

मोहि तोहि पर अति प्रीति सोइ चतुरता बिचारि तव ॥ १६३ ॥

sōraṭhā.

sunu mahīsa asi nīti jaham̐ tahaṁ nāma na kahahim̐ nṛpa.
mōhi tōhi para ati prīti sō'i caturatā bicāri tava. 163.

‘Listen oh king. It is a well established doctrine of statecraft that a king should not divulge his name (and true identity) at an alien place or before a stranger.

Observing this wisdom, prudence and sagacity of yours, I have developed great affection and respect for you. [To wit, instead of feeling offended that you have tried to deceive me by telling me an untrue statement about your identity when I asked you about it, I, on the contrary, liked your approach that you followed the principles of kingship by concealing your identity before a stranger like me.]’ (Doha no. 163)

चौ०. नाम तुम्हार प्रताप दिनेसा । सत्यकेतु तव पिता नरेसा ॥ १ ॥

गुर प्रसाद सब जानिअ राजा । कहिअ न आपन जानि अकाजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāma tumhāra pratāpa dinēsā. satyakētu tava pitā narēsā. 1.
gura prasāda saba jāni'a rājā. kahi'a na āpana jāni akājā. 2.

[The hermit continued—] ‘Your name is Bhanupratap, and king Satyaketu was your father. (1)

*Oh king! By the grace of my Guru (spiritual preceptor) I know everything, but perceiving that telling the complete truth could bring harm to me I do not wish to tell more¹.

{*This verse may be read as follows also: ‘Oh king! I know everything by the grace of my Guru. It is alright that you did not tell the truth about yourself to me for fear of harming your self interests as I have already explained that a king is well within his rights to do so.’² (2)

[Note—¹The hermit has given ample hints to the king that there is something amiss. What was there that the hermit feared from the king that prevents him from telling the ‘whole truth’? Surely if the full truth came out, the king would know that this hermit was his enemy!

But it is an irony of fate and a quirk of providence that still the king could not realize that there was something wrong somewhere. Why would a hermit who claims possessing exceptional mystical powers by the virtue of Tapa so much so that he could even defer death and overturn the laws of Nature by remaining alive and retaining the same body ever since the dawn of creation, fear harm from an ordinary mortal such as a human king if he told him the whole truth? Wasn’t there something obviously mysterious in this? Obviously the king was so much influenced by the hermit that he had let down his guard beyond reason.

²This interpretation may be okay on the face of it, but since it is a repetition of what has already been said in Doha no. 163, the other explanation—that the hermit did not wish to tell more about what he knew about the king because it may bring harm to him—seems more plausible here. What harm would it bring to the hermit? If told the full truth the king would know that this hermit was actually his arch enemy!]

देखि तात तव सहज सुधाई । प्रीति प्रतीति नीति निपुनाई ॥ ३ ॥
उपजि परी ममता मन मोरें । कहउँ कथा निज पूछे तोरें ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi tāta tava sahaja sudhā'ī. prīti pratīti nīti nipunā'ī. 3.
upaji parī mamatā mana mōrēm. kaha'uṁ kathā nija pūchē tōrēm. 4.

Oh dear, observing your simplicity of manners, straightforwardness, affection and faith in me, as well as your prudence of mind and expertise in political wisdom – (3)

-- I developed affection and liking for you. That is why I told you about myself when you had asked me about it¹. (4)

[Note—¹The hermit is clearly double-talking. On the one hand he says that he does not want to tell the whole truth as it may harm him, and then he says he has told the king about himself in a truthful manner. If that is the case, then what was that extra information which the hermit did not wish to disclose to the king for fear of inviting harm to his own security or welfare as he has said in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above? Obviously the hermit wished to keep secret his own true identity from the king for it was definitely going to bring harm to him as he was the king's sworn enemy.

We have read that the hermit said that he has retained the same body since he took birth at the beginning of creation, and so there was nothing else to tell except about his present life. To wit, he seems to convey the idea that he has told the 'whole truth' to the king. This is contrary to his own admission that he would not like to tell the whole truth for fear of harm coming his way.]

अब प्रसन्न मैं संसय नाही । मागु जो भूप भाव मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
सुनि सुबचन भूपति हरषाना । गहि पद बिनय कीन्हि बिधि नाना ॥ ६ ॥

aba prasanna mairṁ sansaya nāhīm. māgu jō bhūpa bhāva mana māhīm. 5.
suni subacana bhūpati haraṣānā. gahi pada binaya kīnhi bidhi nānā. 6.

Now since I am very pleased with you, you can ask for any boon from me that you wish for in your heart.' (5)

When the king heard these pleasant and favourable words, he felt very fortunate and exhilarated. He held the feet of the hermit and prayed to him in many ways (i.e. devotedly and faithfully, to express his gratitude and devotion for his benefactor)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Here we see that the king has totally surrendered himself before the cunning hermit—by his actions, mind and emotions, as is evident in his (i) holding the hermit's feet, (ii) feeling exhilarated, and (iii) praying to him with devotion.]

कृपासिंधु मुनि दरसन तोरें । चारि पदारथ करतल मोरें ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभुहि तथापि प्रसन्न बिलोकी । मागि अगम बर होउँ असोकी ॥ ८ ॥

krpāsindhu muni darasana tōrēm. cāri padāratha karatala mōrēm. 7.
prabhuhi tathāpi prasanna bilōkī. māgi agama bara hō'uṁ asōkī. 8.

The king prayed, 'Oh sage who is an ocean of mercy, kindness and grace! By having had the good fortune of seeing your holiness I feel that all the four fruits that come to meritorious persons¹ have come in my hands. [Say, what more would I want!] (7)

But still oh my lord, since you are so pleased with me I beg your leave to ask for a boon that is very difficult to obtain². (8)

[Note—¹The four great fruits that come to a person for meritorious life are the following—(i) Artha—wealth and prosperity; (ii) Dharma—credit that comes with righteousness and auspiciousness; (iii) Kaam—fulfillment of all desires; and (iv) Moksha—liberation and deliverance of the soul; emancipation and salvation at the time of death.

²The king decided that he has got one rare god-sent chance to fulfill his unfulfilled desires which he would express in the next verse, and he did not want to miss this golden opportunity. By all that the hermit told him about himself—about his transcendental knowledge, about his doing great Tapa and about living like an immortal being—the king was convinced that this hermit indeed has the mystical ability to grant him what is virtually impossible to attain. And since the offer of granting boons came from the hermit himself, the king felt sure that he was too willing to grant whatever the king would ask for.

The king thought that he would be foolish for him to let go of this chance.]

दो०. जरा मरन दुख रहित तनु समर जितै जनि कोउ ।
एकछत्र रिपुहीन महि राज कलप सत होउ ॥ १६४ ॥
dōhā.

jarā marana dukha rahita tanu samara jitai jani kō'u.
ēkachatra ripuhīna mahi rāja kalapa sata hō'u. 164.

[The king now makes his request in one breath, without a pause.] 'Let my body be free from the pains and misery associated with old age and death; let no one defeat me in battle; let me have sole sovereignty of the whole world (i.e. let my reign be unopposed and unchallenged, and let me be a sole monarch of the whole world); let there be no enemy of mine on this earth; and let my reign last for a hundred Kalpas¹.'* (Doha no. 164)

[Note—(a) 1 Kalpa = It is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yog cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.

Each Kalpa (i.e. 1 day of Brahma's life) is also divided into 14 *Manvantars*, and each such Manvantars is ruled by one Manu, the first male. Therefore, 1 Manu rules over 71.42 (1000/4) four-Yug cycles.

We are now passing through the 51st year of Brahma's life, and our present Kaliyug belongs to the 7th Manvantar out of the 14 Manvantars, and its Manu is called Vaivasvata, and it is 28th Kaliyug of the four-Yug cycle.

In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion (4.32×10^9) years.

To wit, the king wanted that he should rule for virtually an eternity! When he discovered that his host, the hermit, had himself lived for eternity by the virtue of the great magical powers of Tapa that he said he did, the king became greedy and thought that here was an opportunity for him to acquire 'a life of eternity' without having to undertake the stress of doing Tapa. He must have sat on the edge of his seat and trembling with excitement at this fantastic prospect. And the fraudster hermit must surely have read the expression on the king's face that revealed his eagerness and willingness to do anything the former asked him to do if it would fulfill his outlandish desires. So the preying hermit must have smiled within himself that his trick is working perfectly and having the desired effect on his victim.

*The king was so excited that he asked for so many boons in one breath; he did not want to pause and lose time for the fear that the hermit may say 'granted' even before all that he wanted to say was complete.

The king was very wise. He thought that in case the hermit would say that he can grant only one boon, the king asked for protection from the fear of death and old age as the first request. He guessed that this boon was surely within the reach of the hermit to grant as he himself has conquered death and old age by his own admission—refer: Doha no. 162 herein above.

So in case the hermit refused or was unable to grant the rest of the boons, then at least the king thought that he will be free from death.

Then he did not lose a breath in asking for the boon of invincibility and sovereignty over the whole world almost for eternity. This shows how highly ambitious and greedy-for-power he was.

Another important observation about the king is that completely worldly man and had no element of spiritualism in him even in its rudimentary form, for had he been a spiritually-minded person and a devotee of the Lord God then when he had got the rare opportunity to ask for any boons that he wished to be granted, howsoever difficult they may be, he would have sought for his spiritual welfare, enhancement of his devotion for God, and for liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of his soul. He would never have asked for worldly gains, and would never have lusted for eternal life of his body so that he could enjoy the pleasures and comforts of material things of this gross, mortal world that come in abundance to a mighty emperor that he wanted to become.

This perhaps explains why his downfall was never regretted by anyone, not even by the gods. And this is also the reason why the so-called hermit had no remorse at having misused his holy attire to defraud the king as the latter was not a spiritually inclined man, but a completely selfish and worldly man of great greed and lust for power.]

चौ०. कह तापस नृप ऐसेइ होऊ । कारन एक कठिन सुनु सोऊ ॥ १ ॥
कालउ तुअ पद नाइहि सीसा । एक बिप्रकुल छाड़ि महीसा ॥ २ ॥
तपबल बिप्र सदा बरिआरा । तिन्ह के कोप न कोउ रखवारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kaha tāpasa nrpa aisē'i hō'ū. kārana ēka kaṭhina sunu sō'ū. 1.
kāla'u tu'a pada nā'ihī sīsā. ēka biprakula chāḍi mahīsā. 2.
tapabala bipra sadā bari'ārā. tinha kē kōpa na kō'u rakhavārā. 3.

[The hermit told the king that it would be as he wished, but there was an obstacle in its successful implementation, so the king should know about it.]

The hermit replied to the king, 'Oh king, it could be as you wish, but there is a certain difficult reason why its successful implementation becomes doubtful. (1)

[And what is that reason?] Even Kaal (the god of death) would bow his head before you (i.e. even 'Death' would obey you, and would not be able to harm you). But oh great king, there is one exception—and it is the Brahmins.

[To wit, except the Brahmins no one would be able to harm you in any way and bring about your death. So the only ones who could destroy your dreams to live for eternity and rule over the world as its sole and unopposed emperor who has no enemy to fear from are the Brahmins. Why is it so? The answer is this—] (2)

This is because the Brahmins are always superior to others in this world by the virtue of the natural powers vested in them due their doing Tapa. Hence, there is no one who can protect anyone against their wrath and curse. (3)

[Note—The hermit spoke in a very amiable and convincing way. It is true that Brahmins are deemed to be superior to others in the world by the virtue of their knowledge and spiritual way of life. So the king was all the more sure that the hermit is his guardian and benefactor who though wishing to willingly grant all that he wants also wants to warn him of the only obstacle that stands in the way of fulfillment of his wishes, so that precautionary measures can be taken. And the king felt more thankful for this sagacious advice.

Now the next question was: how to overcome this obstacle? The eager king decided that he must obey what the hermit, whom by this time he had begun to trust unquestionably and completely as his best friend and well-wisher, would advise him to do.

The hermit on his part was taking extra care not to arouse any suspicion in the mind of the king that the hermit is taking him for a ride for what he wants is impossible for even the Creator to grant, so how can a human being do so. Even the

Brahmins, who can curse and cause ruin, cannot grant anyone eternity! Besides this, the hermit wished that he alone should not be seen as the one who is to be blamed for the destruction of the career of a great king and cause ruin and suffering to the kingdom and its innocent subjects. So why not devise a device whereby the entire Brahmin community would share the blame, and unless one knows this secret history of the king meeting the hermit in the deep forest no one would ever cast aspersions on the hermit.

So the cunning hermit thought that in case his plan failed and king Pratapbhanu could not be totally ruined but escaped with minor problems caused by Brahmins, then the king would at least not harm the hermit, but would always feel obliged and grateful to him instead.

May be that the king, on his return to his capital, arrange for some huge gift or a large largesse for the hermit as an immediate reward for his benefactor, before his ruin actually happens. So it was a win-win situation for the clever hermit.]

जौं बिप्रन्ह बस करहु नरेसा । तौ तुअ बस बिधि बिष्नु महेसा ॥ ४ ॥
 चल न ब्रह्मकुल सन बरिआई । सत्य कहउँ दोउ भुजा उठाई ॥ ५ ॥
 बिप्र श्राप बिनु सुनु महिपाला । तोर नास नहिं कवनेहुँ काला ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ bipranha basa karahu narēsā. tau tu'a basa bidhi biṣṇu mahēsā. 4.
 cala na brahmakula sana bari'ā'ī. satya kaha'uṁ dō'u bhujā uṭhā'ī. 5.
 bipra śrāpa binu sunu mahipālā. tōra nāsa nahim kavanēhuṁ kālā. 6.

Therefore oh king, if the Brahmins could be somehow controlled and brought under your wish (i.e. if some device can be devised by which the Brahmins could be subjugated and reined in by you) then it is certain that even the creator Lord Brahma, the protector Lord Vishnu and the concluder of creation Lord Shiva would all be yours. [To wit, if you can make the Brahmins obey you then you can also make the Gods of the Trinity obey your will.] (4)

In all sooth and without gainsay, I raise my two arms to solemnly declare the truth that it is not possible to exert any pressure and compel the Brahmin race to surrender to one's wishes and whims. (5)

So let it be known that without the curse of Brahmins, your ruin cannot happen any time, in any era, and under any circumstance.¹ (6)

[Note—¹The bait was too alluring for the rapacious king to let go so easily. Why, so thought the ambitious king who was made more greedy by the prospect of ruling over the earth as well as the heaven—now he was on the verge of conquering not only the mortal world but even superseding the three great Gods of the Trinity, what to talk of humbler gods such as the 'god of death' or the 'god of war'! Why not clinch the deal with both hands and do the bidding of this great hermit who was so willing to help, reasoned the gullible king.

And as a consequence, the 'dagger' was being sunk deeper and deeper into the king by his treacherous enemy who was disguised as a 'holy' hermit!]

हरषेउ राउ बचन सुनि तासू । नाथ न होइ मोर अब नासू ॥ ७ ॥
तव प्रसाद प्रभु कृपानिधाना । मो कहूँ सर्व काल कल्याणा ॥ ८ ॥

haraṣē'u rā'u bacana suni tāsū. nātha na hō'i mōra aba nāsū. 7.
tava prasāda prabhu kṛpānidhānā. mō kahum̐ sarba kāla kalyānā. 8.

The overjoyed king was exhilarated when he heard the words of the hermit. He exclaimed, 'Oh lord! My ruin cannot happen now. (7)

Oh the one who is a treasury of mercy and kindness (kṛpānidhānā)! By your grace and blessings, I will have welfare and good fortunes at all the times (and now I have nothing to fear from)¹. (8)

[Note—¹The king thought that it was a matter of 'fate accomplished', so over-confident he was of his authority and powers as he thought that no Brahmin would dare to go against the wishes of their patron king in whose kingdom he lives and on whose charity he survives. A king is worried about an opponent who is a warrior himself for he knows that a true warrior would never kneel down and humble himself and compromise his self-respect before anyone. But Brahmins are by habit docile and malleable persons, and they abhor violence and rough manners. They can be easily pleased by showing a little respect to them, even if it is superficial and temporary, or giving them some gift.

The king had ruled his kingdom with a charitable disposition and he had ensured that the Brahmins were kept in good humour. So now to win them over seemed to be a virtual cake-walk for the king.

The king thought that the battle has already been won! Little did the king know and little did he suspect that he is being egged-on by this treacherous hermit to dig his own grave.]

दो०. एवमस्तु कहि कपटमुनि बोला कुटिल बहोरि ।
मिलब हमार भुलाब निज कहहु त हमहि न खोरि ॥ १६५ ॥
dōhā.

ēvamastu kahi kapaṭamuni bōlā kuṭila bahōri.
milaba hamāra bhulāba nija kahahu ta hamahi na khōri. 165.

The fraudster, the wicked and the deceitful man who was disguised as a hermit (kapaṭamuni) said to the king, 'So shall it be! But if you tell this story of your losing your way and going lost in the forest as well as your meeting with me to anyone, the fault shall not be mine (if this revelation causes you any discomfort or embarrassment, if it harms you in any way and creates a situation whereby your wishes cannot be realized)¹. (Doha no. 165)

[Note—¹The hermit was very intelligent, prudent and clever. He guessed that if the king told his ministers about meeting a hermit in the forest who granted him a boon by which he could gain immunity from death as well as an impunity from the

consequences of offending the Brahmins only if he could subjugate them in entirety, the ministers, whom the hermit knew from his early days as an erstwhile king to be extremely wise and intelligent, would immediately smell that something was amiss, and they were sure to alert the king, who would then send his army to capture the fictitious hermit and bring him to justice.

So therefore the hermit instilled the fear of ruin and harm should the king divulge anything of his meeting with the hermit.

He also warned the king that it would be very demeaning and insulting for his own reputation, dignity and self-respect to admit that he ‘got lost in the forest’. Say, what his courtiers and subjects would think of his majesty when they learn that their great king could not find his own way back to the capital and needed the help of a hermit to return!

And that, inspite of already being an emperor and ruling over interminable tracts of land on the earth, their king was still not satisfied and wanted more and still more of everything. This would not auger well for the king’s reputation as it would portray him as a greedy, rapacious and selfish man who has no end to his yearnings, especially if it becomes known that he wants to subjugate the Brahmins, whom the whole society respects, so that he can become a virtual demi-god or a despotic dictator who would not tolerate anyone to oppose him.

To wit, the hermit created so much fear in the mind of the king that he would never disclose about his meeting with the hermit to anyone. See Chaupai line no. 2 herein below where the hermit has clearly warned the king of personal harm if this story is leaked.

This veil of secrecy was necessary so that the enemy-hermit could put into effect the plan he had devised in his mind to bring about the fall of king Pratapbhanu.]

चौ०. तातेँ मैं तोहि बरजउँ राजा । कहें कथा तव परम अकाजा ॥ १ ॥

छठें श्रवन यह परत कहानी । नास तुम्हार सत्य मम बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tātēṁ maiṁ tōhi baraja'uṁ rājā. kahēṁ kathā tava parama akājā. 1.

chaṭhēṁ śravana yaha parata kahānī. nāsa tumhāra satya mama bānī. 2.

[The hermit told the king—] ‘Oh king, the reason why I advise you not to disclose anything about our meeting to anyone else is that it would cause great harm to your own interests (and jeopardize the successful accomplishment of the plan by which your desires could be fulfilled).

[To wit, if you tell anyone about our meeting then it would create an obstacle in the fulfillment of your wishes, and would be against your own good. That is why I have told you earlier that if you disclose anything, then the consequences of such disclosure would be yours. So I pray that you keep quiet and maintain a discreet silence about everything—our meeting and whatever we have discussed here.¹] (1)

If any sixth ear (i.e. anyone third person other than the two of us) comes to hear of this story (of our meeting and what transpired between us), then I tell you truly that your ruin is certain². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Doha no. 165 herein above.

²Refer to the note that is appended to Doha no. 165 herein above. The hermit tried his best to bar the king from disclosing anything to anyone, not even to his trusted ministers, for the fear of certain harm. If the king had not been swept off his feet by the prospect of gaining unbridled powers and authority in this world by toeing the line of this hermit, and had been a little more scrupulous and alert than what he seemed to be at present, he wouldn't have reposted so much complete trust on a stranger as to not even disclose anything about his meeting with him to his own trusted aides and ministers, for it is an established doctrine for a king that he should not hide anything of importance from his most trusted ministers on whom his own safety and the security of the kingdom depend.

Had the king discussed this event with his trusted ministers upon his return to the capital, it is almost certain that his ruin could have been averted—for the wise ministers would have smelled a rat and started their investigation.]

यह प्रगटें अथवा द्विजश्रापा । नास तोर सुनु भानुप्रतापा ॥ ३ ॥
आन उपायँ निधन तव नाही । जौं हरि हर कोपहिं मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

yaha pragaṭēm athavā dvijaśrāpā. nāsa tōra sunu bhānupratāpā. 3.
āna upāyaṁ nidhana tava nāhīm. jauri hari hara kōpahim mana māhīm. 4.

Listen oh king Bhanupratap. Your ruin will happen if either you reveal anything of this story to anyone, or due to the curse of Brahmins¹. (3)

Your death would not happen by any other means, even if the Lord Hari (Vishnu, the protector of creation) and Lord Har (Shiva, the concluder of creation) become wrathful at you. [To wit, except the two conditions—viz. (i) your disclosing our meeting to anyone else, and (ii) the Brahmins cursing you—you would be fearless, and no other power in creation could bring about your death.]² (4)

[Note—¹The hermit knew that the king would be scared out of his wits if he is convinced that his ruin can come if he discloses this story to anyone. Earlier the king was told that no one can ruin him except the Brahmins, and the king had joyously exclaimed that now he was certain that no one can harm him as he was sure the Brahmins would not cause his ruin as he was their greatest patron and protector.

So the hermit changed his tactic immediately—because he did not want anyone, especially the Brahmins, to know beforehand what he had planned to do. We shall learn gradually that the hermit had planned a dirty scheme whereby he would get the Brahmins to curse the king to get ruined and become a demon. And to give effect to this plan it was essential that the Brahmins did not know that the horrible mischief that was about to happen was not the creation of the king to defile their religious beliefs or make them do something that is evil and sinful for Brahmins. But if this story was disclosed before the mischief actually happened, then the Brahmins would be alerted as to the real culprit, and then they would curse this hermit instead of the king. Obviously the hermit would not want this to occur. So he virtually threatened the king with ruin if he told anyone about what transpired at the hermitage.

²It is to be noted here that the hermit has cleverly omitted 'Brahma, the creator', who is the first of the Trinity of Gods, when he names Vishnu and Shiva who would not be able to harm the king. This is because of two reasons—(i) the Brahmins represent Brahma, and in fact they derive their name from the word 'Brahma', and he has already said that Brahmins can cause the king's ruin and downfall if they so wish and curse him; and (ii) Brahma is the patriarch of creation, the Father of creation, and hence the senior-most God, so his most exalted stature must not be compromised for selfish interests of mortals—for after all, no matter how much the hermit was burning with the fire of revenge upon the king, he himself feared the wrath of the supreme Creator if he dared to insult him by implying that the mortal king was superior to the Creator himself because he would be immune to the Creator's writ.

Since the Brahmins represent the creator Brahma, so it is why there is no one to supersede them. It is said that those who cannot be killed by the fierce weapon of Indra, the king of the Gods, or the death-baton of Kaal, the god of death, or by the discus of Lord Vishnu—even such powerful and invincible ones are reduced ashes by the fire of wrath of Brahmins. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 109 which expressly endorses this view.]

सत्य नाथ पद गहि नृप भाषा । द्विज गुर कोप कहहु को राखा ॥ ५ ॥

राखइ गुर जौं कोप बिधाता । गुर बिरोध नहिं कोउ जग त्राता ॥ ६ ॥

satya nātha pada gahi nrpa bhāṣā. dvija gura kōpa kahahu kō rākhā. 5.
rākha'i gura jāum kōpa bidhātā. gura birōdha nahim kō'u jaga trātā. 6.

The king reverentially held the feet of the hermit and said, 'Oh lord, what you say is indeed the truth. Who can protect one against the wrath of Brahmins and the Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide)¹. (5)

If the creator Brahma becomes angry at someone then his Guru can provide protection to him against Brahma's wrath. But if the Guru himself becomes angry or annoyed due to some reason, then say who in this creation can provide solace and succour to anyone against his Guru?

[To wit, the Guru can protect his disciple from any harm even if the creator himself becomes angry at him, but if the Guru is offended for any reason then there is no succour or solace to be found from any quarter anywhere in this world.] (6)

[Note—¹The king was so much awed by the hermit's grandiose talk and got so influenced by him that he regarded the latter as his 'Guru'. This is clearly hinted in the pervious verses where we read that the king has submitted himself unconditionally before the hermit. Refer especially to Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 160; Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 161; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 162; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 163; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 164; and Doha no. 167 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

जौं न चलब हम कहे तुम्हारे । होउ नास नहिं सोच हमारे ॥ ७ ॥

एकहिं डर डरपत मन मोरा । प्रभु महिदेव श्राप अति घोरा ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ na calaba hama kahē tumhārēm̐. hō'u nāsa nahim̐ sōca hamārēm̐. 7.
ēkahim̐ ḍara ḍarapata mana mōrā. prabhu mahidēva śrāpa ati ghōrā. 8.

So therefore, if I do not follow your instructions and do as you tell me, then I shall not regret if any harm or ruin comes to me from any quarter. [To wit, I promise you that will fully obey your commands like a faithful follower.] (7)

But oh lord, there is now but only one fear that is tormenting my heart and mind, and it is that the curse of Brahmins is very fierce.

[To wit, by your grace I have now nothing to fear from anyone because since I have decided to treat you as my Guru, I am sure that even Brahma would not be able to harm me. But my only fear is from the curse of Brahmins, for which there seems to be no remedy.] (8)

दो०. होहिं बिप्र बस कवन बिधि कहहु कृपा करि सोउ ।
तुम्ह तजि दीनदयाल निज हितू न देखउँ कोउ ॥ १६६ ॥
dōhā.

hōhim̐ bipra basa kavana bidhi kahahu kṛpā kari sō'u.
tumha taji dīnadayāla nija hitū na dēkha'um̐ kō'u. 166.

Hence, oh lord, please be kind enough to tell me how the Brahmins can be brought under my control and how I can prevail upon them.

For oh lord, I do not see anyone else who would think for my good and welfare more than you.¹ (Doha no. 166)

[Note—¹This Doha clearly shows that the king has become completely subdued by the pretentious hermit. He has become subservient to the hermit in his selfishness to rule over the world unopposed. The lesson we get here is often times one's greed and selfish ambitions lands one in such grave and dire situations that one's wisdom and prudence are eclipsed, one lets down one's guard, and allows oneself to fall prey to circumstances that could well have been avoided with a little astuteness, a little alertness and a little application of mind.

To wit, a person whose desires don't end will some day find himself in a difficult situation that would only cause him misery and pain.]

चौ०. सुनु नृप बिबिध जतन जग माहीं । कष्टसाध्य पुनि होहिं कि नाही ॥ १ ॥
अहड़ एक अति सुगम उपाई । तहाँ परंतु एक कठिनाई ॥ २ ॥
मम आधीन जुगुति नृप सोई । मोर जाब तव नगर न होई ॥ ३ ॥
आजु लगेँ अरु जब तेँ भयऊँ । काहू के गृह ग्राम न गयऊँ ॥ ४ ॥
जौ न जाउँ तव होइ अकाजू । बना आइ असमंजस आजू ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

sunu nr̥pa bibidha jatana jaga m̥hīm. kaṣṭasādhya puni hōhim ki nāhīm. 1.
 aha'i ēka ati sugama upā'ī. tahām̥ parantu ēka kaṭhinā'ī. 2.
 mama ādhīna juguti nr̥pa sō'ī. mōra jāba tava nagara na hō'ī. 3.
 āju lagēm̥ aru jaba tēm̥ bhaya'ūṃ. kāhū kē gr̥ha grāma na gaya'ūṃ. 4.
 jaur̥m na jā'ūṃ tava hō'i akājū. banā ā'i asamañjasa ājū. 5.

[The hermit now decided that it was the right time to roll out his plan which would bring about ruin of his arch enemy who was now firmly in his grip. So he replied to the king—] ‘Listen king. There are many ways in this world (by which what you desire can be achieved), but while on the one hand they are difficult to implement, it is also not certain whether the desired result can be obtained by pursuing them. (1)

However, there is one simple and easy way out, but even in this device there is one great difficulty. (2)

Oh king! This easy device is known only to me, and it is me alone who can put it into effect. But the only problem is that it is not possible for me to go to your capital city. (3)

The reason is till this day, ever since I was born and have been living in this hermitage, I have never gone out to visit any village or anyone's home. (4)

But if I do not go to your place it would mean that your future good would suffer. It's surely a very piquant situation, and it has left me in a grave dilemma¹. (5)

[Note—¹The enemy-hermit pretends to be a great friend, well-wisher and benefactor of the unsuspecting king. He in effect tells the king that the only thing that separates the king and the fulfillment of his desires is the reluctance of the hermit, whom by now the king has begun to treat as his Guru and true friend, to go to his capital so that the method by which the king would achieve what he wants can be put into effect. This was a clever ploy to prevail upon the king that things should be managed in such a way that the identity of the hermit could be kept a top secret. The hermit knew that if he accompanied the king to the capital, or even if he went alone after the king had returned and the king showed acquaintance with him, he would certainly draw immense attention from all quarters, and it is almost certain that one of the wise ministers or captains of the king's army would recognize him as an erstwhile king who was defeated once by Pratapbhanu, and who ran away from the battle-field to avoid being captured. Oh no, this risk is not acceptable. So the hermit did not like to go to the capital openly.

First the hermit says that he could help the king achieve his objective of ruling unopposed in the world for eternity and also being able to have sway over the pious Brahmins and make them all obey his wishes. But for that it is necessary that he visit the king's capital as the way to do it was known only to him, and he cannot go as it would make him break his vows of not going to any village or home throughout life like a true ascetic who should not.

Then the hermit immediately realized his error—that should the king decide it would not be proper to compel his Guru to break his vows to achieve selfish ends, then all the planning that the hermit had meticulously done so far would come crumbling like a pack of cards.

Hence the cunning fellow instantly changed track and showed his willingness to help the king, for whom he pretended to have developed a great liking, if some way could be devised by which he can remain incognito and anonymous while implementing the plan by which the king's desires could be fulfilled. This strategy would help the enemy-hermit to escape detection and capture.

He was sure that the king, who was bent to fulfill his wants by any means, would go to any length to realize his dreams, and so he will make sure that the hermit could remain secret during his visit to the capital.]

सुनि महीस बोलेउ मृदु बानी । नाथ निगम असि नीति बखानी ॥ ६ ॥
बड़े सनेह लघुन्ह पर करहीं । गिरि निज सिरनि सदा तृन धरहीं ॥ ७ ॥
जलधि अगाध मौलि बह फेनू । संतत धरनि धरत सिर रेनू ॥ ८ ॥

sunī mahīsa bōlē'u mṛḍu bānī. nātha nigama asi nīti bakhānī. 6.
baṛē sanēha laghunha para karahīm. giri nija sirani sadā tṛna dharahīm. 7.
jaladhi agādha mauli baha phēnū. santata dharani dharata sira rēnū. 8.

[The hermit had guessed it right, for the king now began earnestly beseeching him to endure some sufferance for the welfare of his disciple. It would be a noble deed on the part of the hermit, said the king, as great and pious souls willingly undergo hardship if it brings happiness and good to others. So the hermit should overcome his reluctance and help the king.]

Hearing what the hermit said, the king pleaded with him with a sweet and pleasant voice, 'Oh lord. The Vedas (scriptures) have praised the maxim [6] that those who are senior and great ought to show kindness to those who are junior and subordinate to them. For instance, great and majestic mountains always cheerfully bear countless humble twigs or blades of grass on their summits [7]. (6-7)

Similarly, the vast and fathomless ocean always allows the foam to flow easily over its surface.

The great earth too bears dust particles on its head (i.e. on its surface).' (8)

[Note—The king was alarmed when he felt that the magic pot was slipping from his hand, for if the hermit refused to go to his capital then his dreams of attaining eternal sovereignty over one and all would fail miserably. So he virtually bent over backwards and employed the best of skills at pleading he could muster at the moment to somehow prevail upon the hermit to overcome his reluctance to come to the king's capital and complete the rituals that he alone could do.

So the king was extremely polite because at this juncture he could not force the hermit to do anything against the latter's wishes. The king guessed that if he managed to evoke the natural kindness and graciousness that was present in the hermit's heart then there are fair chances that the hermit would agree to suffer a little for the larger good of his devoted disciple.

This is why the king invoked the Vedas as it would be difficult to contradict what they proclaim. Then he also cited some obvious examples to drive home the point that great men do not hesitate to suffer a bit if this sufferance would bring

happiness and good to others. It would be a charitable deed on the part of the hermit to ensure the king's better future.

Saying this, the king fell at the hermit's feet and clasped it so that the hermit wouldn't gather courage to say 'no' as we will read in the following Doha.]

दो०. अस कहि गहे नरेस पद स्वामी होहु कृपाल ।

मोहि लागि दुख सहिअ प्रभु सज्जन दीनदयाल ॥ १६७ ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi gahē narēsa pada svāmī hōhu kṛpāla.

mōhi lāgi dukha sahi'a prabhu sajjana dīnadayāla. 167.

Saying this, the king fell at the hermit's feet and clasped them. He pleaded, 'Oh lord, please show kindness and grace upon me; please have pity on me. Please endure a little sufferance for my sake as you are very gentlemanly (*sajjana*) as well as kind and gracious towards those who are miserable and in a pitiable situation (like me) (*dīnadayāla*)'. (Doha no. 167)

[Note—We will note how a selfish and rapacious person falls from grace, sacrifices his stature and self-respect, and compromises his dignity and honour in order to achieve his goals and satisfy his never-ending greed.

This king was not an ordinary king—for he was already an emperor who had conquered countless kings and extended his domain to virtually cover the entire length and breadth of the earth; he had all that a king would normally want to have. His kingdom was great; he had renown as being a righteous and meritorious king; his subjects were happy and prosperous; his writ prevailed everywhere. Refer: Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.

But still he was not contented! He now wanted to supersede even the Trinity Gods, to overcome the Laws of Nature, and to attain eternity which even the creator Brahma does not have as his life also has an end. So when the hermit promised the impossible to him the king virtually started salivating. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 165.

So therefore, when the king found that as simple an obstacle as a hermit's vows that he would not visit any city or a household—a vow that seemed utterly frivolous, ridiculous and obsolete to the king who was accustomed to material comforts and sensual pleasures of the world, and who was surrounded by submissive priests who lived a comfortable life of material comfort relying solely on the king's largesse, never once talking of renunciation and dispassion—stood between the success and failure of his goals, he was utterly flabbergasted and disgusted. He decided he must somehow prevail upon the hermit to fulfill his wishes, no matter what.

But he also feared the hermit's wrath, so preferred to take a soft approach rather than using a king's usual method of insisting that his orders be carried out either by the fear of punishment or by the bait of a grand reward.]

चौ०. जानि नृपहि आपन आधीना । बोला तापस कपट प्रबीना ॥ १ ॥

सत्य कहउँ भूपति सुनु तोही । जग नाहिन दुर्लभ कछु मोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāni nr̥pahi āpana ādhīnā. bōlā tāpasa kapaṭa prabīnā. 1.

satya kaha'uṁ bhūpati sunu tōhī. jaga nāhina durlabha kachu mōhī. 2.

When the hermit, who was expert in conceit, deceit and pretensions, became absolutely sure that the king had come completely under his influence, he said, --- (1)

‘Listen oh king. I tell you the truth that there is nothing in this world that is not possible for me’¹. (2)

[Note—¹The hermit has already said that he can do the impossible by the virtue of the powers that Tapa has granted him—refer Doha no. 162 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

He repeats his stupendous abilities here once again to refresh the king’s memory and make him more submissive and devoted, as well as to prepare the king mentally to believe that the seemingly incredulous magical feat the hermit would propose in a moment can actually be done successfully and desired fruits obtained.]

अवसि काज मैं करिहउँ तोरा । मन तन बचन भगत तैं मोरा ॥ ३ ॥

जोग जुगुति तप मंत्र प्रभाऊ । फलइ तबहिं जब करिअ दुराऊ ॥ ४ ॥

avasi kāja mair̥m kariha'uṁ tōrā. mana tana bacana bhagata tair̥m mōrā. 3.

jōga juguti tapa mantra prabhāū. phala'i tabahir̥m jaba kari'a durā'ū. 4.

I (hermit) will certainly do the work for you as you are my devoted follower and an ardent devotee by your Mana (heart and mind), by your body (deeds and actions) and by your words (by what you say; by the words that express your inner feeling for me)¹. (3)

But mind you—Yoga (meditation), Yukti (clever planning, means and ways, and proper devices employed to achieve success in any secret endeavour), Tapa (austerity and penance) and Mantra (divine esoteric formulas that grant mystical powers) bear fruit only when they are kept secret.

[To wit, if you indeed want success then you must vow to keep secret what I am about to divulge presently, as it involves certain magical charms and esoteric rituals that needed to be done so as to cast a mystical spell upon the objects that are needed to be tamed, in this case the Brahmins.]² (4)

[Note—¹The king had become so overwhelmed by the hermit’s holy attire and pious talk that he had submitted himself completely to the latter and thought himself to be extremely lucky to have discovered a great sage. The clever hermit had adroitly observed this quite early during the meeting: Refer to (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 161, and again to (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 162.

²Not wanting to take any risk caused by revelation of his identity and evil designs, and thereby putting to grave peril his own security and life, the evil hermit continues to harp on the importance and the necessity of complete secrecy of the plan and its implementation.]

जौं नरेस में करौं रसोई । तुम्ह परसहु मोहि जान न कोई ॥ ५ ॥
 अन्न सो जोड़ जोड़ भोजन करई । सोइ सोइ तव आयसु अनुसरई ॥ ६ ॥
 पुनि तिन्ह के गृह जेवई जोऊ । तव बस होइ भूप सुनु सोऊ ॥ ७ ॥
 जाइ उपाय रचहु नृप एहू । संबत भरि संकल्प करेहू ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ narēsa maim̐ karaum̐ rasō'ī. tumha parusahu mōhi jāna na kō'ī. 5.
 anna sō jō'i jō'i bhōjana kara'ī. sō'i sō'i tava āyasu anusara'ī. 6.
 puni tinha kē gr̥ha jēvaṁi jō'ū. tava basa hō'i bhūpa sunu sō'ū. 7.
 jā'i upāya racahu nr̥pa ēhū. sambata bhari saṅkalapa karēhū. 8.

[And finally the hermit reveals to the king the formidable and monster plan. He said assertively—] If I prepare and cook the meal for a grand feast that you are required to organize for all the Brahmins, and you serve this food yourself to the invited guests (the Brahmins) without anyone knowing that the food has been cooked by me, --- (5)

--- Then all those who partake of this food will become unquestionably obedient to you; they would obey your commands without reservations, become totally subservient to you, and be under your full sovereignty. (6)

Listen oh king. Not only this, but all those who would subsequently eat food in the homes of such guests whom you would have served in the feast too would come under your spell and command, and this chain would go on expanding and getting wider in an exponential manner to eventually cover the entire Brahmin race! (7)

So, oh king, go and make haste to carry out this magical device. And make sure that you take a vow that such feasts would be organized on a regular basis for one full year. (8)

[Note—The credulous king obviously had lost all his wits in his zeal to accomplish the impossible. Couldn't he logically think how a hermit, who has lived all his life in the forest subsisting on forest produce and lean and simple food, would be skilled enough to cook delicious fare for a grand royal feast where thousands of guests would be fed—not for one day but for a whole year.

Would that not mean that the hermit would not be able to attend to his routine of spiritual practices for this long period of time? No matter how nice and obliging the hermit may be, but this proposition of abstaining from his religious practices for one full year just for the sake of a king ought to be absolutely unacceptable and ridiculous for any good hermit to even contemplate. Wasn't there something fishy in the whole matter?

But what to say—destiny's writ is so strong and blinding that the wisest and the cleverest fall in the trap as if a piece of iron is being pulled by an invisible magnet.]

दो०. नित नूतन द्विज सहस सत बरेहु सहित परिवार ।
मैं तुम्हरे संकल्प लागि दिनहिं करबि जेवनार ॥ १६८ ॥

dōhā.

nita nūtana dvija sahasa sata barēhu sahita parivāra.
mair̥ tumharē saṅkalapa lagi dinahir̥ karabi jēvanāra. 168.

Everyday you must invite a hundred thousand Brahmins with their families! I will personally prepare the food daily that you would serve the guests for one full year. (Doha no. 168)

[Note—The hermit knew fully well that all that he proposes to do is absurd and ridiculous to the extreme. If the number of Brahmins he said the king must feed daily extends for a year then it does not need a mathematician to calculate after all the Brahmins who live on this earth would have partaken of the food in one round would be invited repeatedly again and again. What after all is the use of this futile exercise if one meal is enough to cast a magical spell on the Brahmins, especially if all those who eat in the household of the Brahmin who has already eaten the king's food at the feast would also come under the king's spell?

It seems extraordinarily superfluous and extravagantly unnecessary. But still the greedy and deluded king could not see the trap laid out for him!]

चौ०. एहि बिधि भूप कष्ट अति थोरें । होइहहिं सकल बिप्र बस तोरें ॥ १ ॥
करिहहिं बिप्र होम मख सेवा । तेहिं प्रसंग सहजेहिं बस देवा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi bhūpa kaṣṭa ati thōrēm̐. hō'ihahir̥ sakala bipra basa tōrēm̐. 1.
karihahir̥ bipra hōma makha sēvā. tēhir̥ prasaṅga saha-jēhir̥ basa dēvā. 2.

‘Oh king, in this easy way and with the least of trouble all the Brahmins would come under your spell. (1)

The Gods, in turn, would easily come under your sway by the virtue of the various ‘Sewas’ (services) that these Brahmins offer to them, such as doing ‘Homa’ (offerings meant for the Gods that the Brahmins make to the sacred fire during sacrifices), and ‘Makha’ (fire sacrifice rituals)¹. (2)

[Note—¹The offerings that are made to the sacred fire during sacrifices are meant for the Gods as they derive their nourishment and strength from the food that are offered during such rituals.

It has already been assured by the hermit in Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 168 herein above that “all those who eat in the households of Brahmins who were fed by the king during the grand feast that is being planned in order to cast a spell of magical charm upon the Brahmins and bring them all under the will of the

king, would also become obedient to him, and this chain would continue so that ultimately the entire Brahmin race would be under the king's magical charm".

So therefore it is logical that the food which the Brahmins, who have already eaten the magically charmed food at the king's feast and have come under his spell, prepare in their homes and then offer such food to the Gods via the medium of the fire sacrifices that they do would also bring the Gods who partake this magically charmed food to come under its effect, which means that they would also become obedient to the king just like the other Brahmins who happen to eat this food.

It indeed is a fantastically clever idea that is wonderfully planned and proposed to be executed in a masterly fashion aimed to bring both the Brahmins and the Gods under the tutelage of the king at one stroke. No wonder than that the king was awe-struck at the ingenuity of the hermit! Anyone in his place would have marveled at the hermit's stupendous intellect and astounding genius at being able to devise such a flawless device as so short a notice.]

और एक तोहि कहउँ लखाऊ । मैं एहिं बेष न आउब काऊ ॥ ३ ॥
 तुम्हरे उपरोहित कहूँ राया । हरि आनब मैं करि निज माया ॥ ४ ॥
 तपबल तेहि करि आपु समाना । रखिहउँ इहाँ बरष परवाना ॥ ५ ॥
 मैं धरि तासु बेषु सुनु राजा । सब बिधि तोर सँवारब काजा ॥ ६ ॥

aura ēka tōhi kaha'uṁ lakhā'ū. mair̥m ēhir̥m bēṣa na ā'uba kā'ū. 3.
 tumharē uparōhita kahuṁ rāyā. hari ānaba mair̥m kari nija māyā. 4.
 tapabala tēhi kari āpu samānā. rakhiha'uṁ ihāṁ baraṣa paravānā. 5.
 mair̥m dhari tāsu bēṣu sunu rājā. saba bidhi tōra saṁvāraba kājā. 6.

[I shall now tell you another important secret.] (Since) I will never come to your place to accomplish your objective in my present form (as I have already told you that my identity should be kept completely secret), so I give you a sign or a hint (by which you would be able to recognize me). (3)

Oh king, I shall carry-off your family priest by the virtue of my magical powers (nija māyā). (4)

Employing the mystical powers that I possess by the virtue of my Tapa, I shall keep him here in this hermitage disguised as myself during the whole year (while I would be at your place to keep my promise to you and carry on with my obligations of preparing the magical food to be served at the feast). [To wit, by this ruse no one will doubt or become suspicious of anything. Should any secret agent come to enquire here at my hermitage, he will find the dummy hermit here and become assured that everything is alright. And since your priest would be under the spell of my charm he too would be so much deluded that he wouldn't ever know who he actually is or anything about his changed circumstances.] (5)

I will assume his (your priest's) form and fulfill all your desires in every possible way. [The people will think that it is your own family priest who has advised you to undertake this grand and novel exercise. It is he who is overseeing the entire process, right from organizing the feast, inviting Brahmins, preparing food, and serving it to

the guests. No one would doubt anything, and you will have nothing to fear. I too will be able to carry out my plans with a free hand.] (6)

गै निसि बहुत सयन अब कीजे । मोहि तोहि भूप भेंट दिन तीजे ॥ ७ ॥
मैं तपबल तोहि तुरग समेता । पहुँचैहउँ सोवतहि निकेता ॥ ८ ॥

gai nisi bahuta sayana aba kījē. mōhi tōhi bhūpa bhēṇṭa dina tijē. 7.
mair̥m tapabala tōhi turaga samētā. pahuṁcaiha'um̐ sōvatahi nikētā. 8.

It is now quite late in the night, so go and sleep. Oh king, I shall meet you three days from now¹. (7)

While you would be asleep, I shall employ the magical powers that I have got by the virtue of my Tapa and convey you and your horse to your home (even without waking you up from your sleep). (8)

[Note—¹The hermit did not want to show that he was in any great hurry. The king must be given due time to rest and think. After all that had happened during the course of that day, the king would be too upset and weary to act in a proper way if the entire plan was to be rolled out the very next day. It will also create suspicion in the mind of the king's ministers etc. who, in all probability, must be in great anxiety and alarmed beyond measure when they failed to follow the king and had lost track of him as he was running behind the game during the hunt. Surely they would be searching for the king in the forest the entire next day of the hunt.

When the hermit would transport the king back home by some magical means he plans to employ about which we shall read in a moment, the good news that the king has returned unharmed would spread immediately. And by-and-by the search party would come to know of it and return to the capital by the end of the day or the next day.

Everyone will think that after hotly pursuing the game and slaying it in some distant part of the forest, the king had returned home late in the night and sneaked in. It would seem absolutely okay as great kings would often go out in disguise and in a surreptitious manner to find out how the things were going on in the kingdom and what the condition of its citizens was. This is because they wanted to take stock of the situation first hand without relying blindly upon their informers and spies.

So the next one day or two would be spent in this way. By the third day however, the things would settle down to normal. This is why the hermit chose the 'third day' to carry out the plan.]

दो०. मैं आउब सोइ बेषु धरि पहिचानेहु तब मोहि ।
जब एकांत बोलाइ सब कथा सुनावौं तोहि ॥ १६९ ॥

dōhā.

mair̥m ā'uba sō'i bēṣu dhari pahicānēhu taba mōhi.
jaba ēkānta bōlā'i saba kathā sunāvaum̥ tōhi. 169.

Now remember, I shall come there in the disguise I have told you about (i.e. as your royal priest). So you must recognize me when I call you for a private meeting and narrate this entire story for your recollection¹. (Doha no. 169)

[Note—¹How will the king know whether or not the priest to whom he is talking in his capital is his benefactor hermit? It will be when the hermit, who would be disguised as the royal priest, tells the king all that had transpired in the hermitage in the forest. Then the king would immediately know who the priest actually was, and then he must obey what is commanded to him to do.]

चौ०. सयन कीन्ह नृप आयसु मानी । आसन जाइ बैठ छलग्यानी ॥ १ ॥
श्रमित भूप निद्रा अति आई । सो किमि सोव सोच अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

sayana kīnha nṛpa āyasu mānī. āsana jā'i baiṭha chalagyānī. 1.
śramita bhūpa nidrā ati ā'ī. sō kimi sōva sōca adhikā'ī. 2.

The king obeyed the hermit's orders and went to sleep, while the deceitful and fraudulent hermit, who pretended to be all-knowing and possessing mystical powers, went and sat down on his seat¹. (1)

The king was very tired, so he immediately fell asleep. But how could the hermit sleep as his mind was very busy with thoughts². (2)

[Note—¹The false hermit was extra cautious. He thought that the king may pretend to sleep but might be watching what the hermit does for the rest of the night. Since the hermit had given the impression that he does a lot of Tapa, he thought that it would be wise to go and sit on his seat and pretend to be doing meditation.

Besides this, he did not want to sleep just to ensure that the king did not get up quietly and slip away in the dead of night. It would bring every thing that the hermit had planned coming down with a crash. And he also did not want to sleep for the fear that the king might have seen through the veil of deceit and would get up quietly and kill the hermit by his sword.

²This is the fourth reason why the hermit did not go to sleep. His mind was too occupied with thoughts and plans that sleep defied him. His arch enemy was right in his front, sleeping soundly and unarmed. Should he stab him here and now? No, that would destroy the bigger plan. He wanted the entire family of king Pratapbhanu to be destroyed, and so if he killed the king alone now then the rest of them will remain alive, and one day they will surely spy him out and then torture him to death.

So the hermit sat and contemplated.]

कालकेतु निसिचर तहँ आवा । जेहिं सूकर होइ नृपहि भुलावा ॥ ३ ॥

परम मित्र तापस नृप केरा । जानइ सो अति कपट घनेरा ॥ ४ ॥

kālakētu nīsicara tahaṁ āvā. jēhiṁ sūkara hō'i nṛpahi bhulāvā. 3.
parama mitra tāpasa nṛpa kērā. jāna'i sō ati kapaṭa ghanērā. 4.

Meanwhile, Kalketu, a demon who used to roam around during the night (kālakētu nīsicara), arrived there. It was he who had disguised himself as a wild boar to waylay the king (Pratapbhanu) and make him go astray¹. (3)

This demon had become a fast friend of the hermit, and he was skilled in deceit and carrying out magical feats of delusion. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 156—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 157.]

तेहि के सत सुत अरु दस भाई । खल अति अजय देव दुखदाई ॥ ५ ॥
प्रथमहिं भूप समर सब मारे । बिप्र संत सुर देखि दुखारे ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi kē sata suta aru dasa bhā'ī. khala ati ajaya dēva dukhadā'ī. 5.
prathamahiṁ bhūpa samara saba mārē. bipra santa sura dēkhi dukhārē. 6.

He (the demon Kalketu) had seven sons and ten brothers. They had become invincible and used to torment the Gods a lot. (5)

When the great king Pratapbhanu saw the misery and sufferings to which the Brahmins, saints and sages as well as the Gods were subjected to by these demons, he had slayed them in the beginning of his many campaigns. [But somehow this demon Kalketu managed to escape, and he went to the dense forest to hide in it.] (6)

तेहिं खल पाछिल बयरु सँभारा । तापस नृप मिलि मंत्र बिचारा ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं रिपु छय सोइ रचेन्हि उपाऊ । भावी बस न जान कछु राऊ ॥ ८ ॥

tēhiṁ khala pāchila bayaru saṁbhārā. tāpasa nṛpa mili mantra bicārā. 7.
jēhiṁ ripu chaya sō'i racēnhi upā'ū. bhā'vī basa na jāna kachu rā'ū. 8.

This wicked fellow developed hatred for the king and vowed to take revenge when the opportunity would come in due course. He forged a friendship with the hermit (who was also an enemy of king Pratapbhanu as he had been defeated in a battle and had managed to escape to the forest where he hid in the guise of a hermit).

Both of them (i.e. the demon Kalketu whose family members were killed by Pratapbhanu, and the erstwhile king who was defeated in battle and whose kingdom was snatched by Pratapbhanu, and who now lived in disguise as a hermit) hatched a conspiracy by which a plan was contrived to bring about complete ruin of their common enemy (i.e. king Pratapbhanu).

But unfortunately due to the fiat of fate, the king was totally unaware of this wicked plot and the identity of the perpetrators of this sinister conspiracy. (7-8)

दो०. रिपु तेजसी अकेल अपि लघु करि गनिअ न ताहु ।
अजहुँ देत दुख रबि ससिहि सिर अवसेषित राहु ॥ १७० ॥

dōhā.

ripu tējāsī akēla api laghu kari gani'a na tāhu.
ajahuṁ dēta dukha rabi sasihi sira avasēṣita rāhu. 170.

[The sagacious and erudite poet-saint Tulsidas, the author of this classic Ram Charit Manas, cites a well established maxim which states that—] One must not underestimate and take lightly a powerful enemy even though he may be alone (at the time due to certain circumstances)¹.

For instance, the demon Rahu, who has nothing left out of his body except his head, is able to perpetually torment both the Sun and the Moon by devouring them periodically (inspite of being fully aware that he cannot permanently harm them in any way as they would soon emerge from the severed part of his neck)². (Doha no. 170)

[Note—¹King Pratapbhanu was so over-confident of his own invincibility, of his strength, powers and authority that at the time the defeated king as well as the defeated demon ran away from his clutches he had not searched them out and take them into his custody or had completely eliminated them because he thought that they wouldn't be of any consequence in the future, and they would not dare and would not be able to cause him any harm whatsoever. So he paid no attention to the escapees. Little did he know at the time that these two seemingly impotent enemies who had been completely routed, and hence rendered toothless and harmless as they had no support of arms or an army, would one day prove to be his nemesis and the cause of his ruin.

Had the king been wise he would have hunted them down and put them into a prison. To the message is that even the smallest and seemingly harmless enemy is dangerous and he should never be taken lightly, nor should his sweet words be taken at face value. Even if an enemy can't do much harm to his adversary he can still be a cause of incessant problems and constant harassment that is more irritating then an outright confrontation. It's like something of a skin affection that causes constant irritation and incessant annoyance even if it is not life-threatening.

²The demon Rahu had his head severed from his neck by Lord Vishnu's discus when he had tried to cheat on the Gods by disguising himself as one of them and sitting surreptitiously between the Sun God and the Moon God when the Amrit, the nectar of immortality, was being distributed at the time when it was produced by the legendary 'churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons'. The Sun and the Moon discovered his deceit and they warned Lord Vishnu who cut off Rahu's head, but by that time a drop of Amrit had fell in his head. So he couldn't be killed.

The Creator then found a way out so that Rahu may survive inspite of being decapitated. He told him that once in a while he would be able to devour one of the Gods as a retribution for what has been done to him. Since the cause of this

misfortune that befell Rahu was the Sun and the Moon gods, he took a pledge that when he felt hungry he would gobble up the rounded ball of the Sun and the Moon as a repast to feed his hunger.

So whenever Rahu feels hungry he lunges at the ball of the Moon and the Sun and swallows them into his open mouth. But soon these balls emerge from the hollow cavity of the neck from where the body of Rahu was severed. According to mythology, these two events—i.e. eating and then discharging of the Sun and the Moon by Rahu are known as the Solar and the Lunar eclipses respectively. The eclipse starts when either of the two enters Rahu's mouth, and the eclipse ends when they emerge from his severed neck.

What is implied here is that the Sun and the Moon Gods took Rahu very lightly when his head was cut off from his neck, as they thought what a decapitated enemy would ever do to them, never realizing that the same enemy, who seemed rendered impotent to cause any harm as his body was cut into two, would continue to torment them till the end of creation.

Similarly, king Pratapbhanu had thought that since he was so mighty that he had conquered all the great kings and valiant warriors of the time, a single king or demon who ran away like an impotent coward from the battle field were of no more importance than a tiny insect, and so he did not bother to waste his energy and time to pay any heed to them for he feared nothing from their quarter. And now this negligence on his part proved to be his own grave.]

चौ०. तापस नृप निज सखहि निहारी । हरषि मिलेउ उठि भयउ सुखारी ॥ १ ॥

मित्रहि कहि सब कथा सुनाई । जातुधान बोला सुख पाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāpasa nrpa nija sakhahi nihārī. haraṣi milē'u uṭhi bhaya'u sukhārī. 1.
mitrahi kahi saba kathā sunāī. jātudhāna bōlā sukha pāī. 2.

The hermit-king saw his friend, the demon (Kalketu), arrive. So he got up and met him cheerfully, feeling very glad and accomplished. (1)

Then the hermit told him the entire story (of what had transpired between him and king Pratapbhanu). Hearing everything the demon felt very happy, and he then said—
(2)

अब साधेउँ रिपु सुनहु नरेसा । जौं तुम्ह कीन्ह मोर उपदेसा ॥ ३ ॥

परिहरि सोच रहहु तुम्ह सोई । बिनु औषध बिआधि बिधि खोई ॥ ४ ॥

कुल समेत रिपु मूल बहाई । चौथें दिवस मिलब मैं आई ॥ ५ ॥

aba sādhe'um̐ ripu sunahu narēsā. jaum̐ tumha kīnha mōra upadēsā. 3.
parihari sōca rahahu tumha sōī. binu auṣadha bi'ādhi bidhi khōī. 4.
kula samēta ripu mūla bahāī. cauthēm̐ divasa milaba maim̐ āī. 5.

‘Listen king. If you do according to what I advice you then be sure that I have finally conquered our common enemy (i.e. we will now be able to destroy him without bringing any harm to our own safety). (3)

Now discard all worries and go to sleep. The Creator has become benevolent upon us and he has virtually cured the disease without any medicine! [To wit, it was not an easy thing to bring about our enemy’s destruction so easily. But it seems that the Creator has listened to our prayers as now this destruction of our arch enemy is certain, and that also by an easy method and the least effort. It’s a virtual boon for us!] (4)

After eliminating the enemy and throwing him out (ruining him) from his very roots along with his entire family, I shall come back to meet you on the fourth day.’¹ (5)

[Note—¹It is obvious by now that this demon, who had great magical powers in him as demons usually had and as proved by his becoming a wild boar earlier, was the one who would do all the nasty tricks that would culminate in king Pratapbhanu’s fall. The hermit-king played the role of laying the bait and trapping the prey, but the actual killing was done by this demon.

The hermit had told king Pratapbhanu that he would meet him on the ‘third day’. So now the demon tells him that everything would be fixed and ended on the third day itself if things go according to plan, and on the fourth day he will return to convey the good news of Pratapbhanu’s destruction to his friend, the hermit. Then it would be time to rejoice!]

तापस नृपहि बहुत परितोषी । चला महाकपटी अतिरोषी ॥ ६ ॥
 भानुप्रतापहि बाजि समेता । पहुँचाएसि छन माझ निकेता ॥ ७ ॥
 नृपहि नारि पहिं सयन कराई । हयगृहँ बाँधेसि बाजि बनाई ॥ ८ ॥

tāpasa nr̥pahi bahuta paritōṣī. calā mahākapaṭī atirōṣī. 6.
 bhānupratāpahi bāji samētā. pahuṁcā'ēsi chana mājha nikētā. 7.
 nr̥pahi nāri pahim̐ sayana karā'ī. hayagr̥haṁ bāṁdhēsi bāji banā'ī. 8.

After having reassured the hermit in various ways¹, the angry demon (Kalketu), who was exceptionally cunning, deceitful and wicked, started on his mission with a vengeance. (6)

He (the demon) used his magical powers to convey (transport) the king and his horse to the palace almost in an instant. (7)

The king was placed at his usual place by the queen’s side, and the horse was taken to the stable and tied up properly there in the usual manner². (8)

[Note—¹The hermit was very skeptical if this master scheme of deceit and stab-in-the-back would actually succeed as he knew of the might and the intelligence of king Pratapbhanu as well as his ministers. He was apprehensive that the king may become suspicious in case the demon, who would actually carry out the plan instead of the hermit himself, made any slip or committed some error somewhere, wittingly or

unwittingly. That would be disastrous for both of them—for the king would immediately capture the demon and torture him to reveal the truth of his companion, the hermit. And then both of them would be sent to the gallows.

So it was necessary for the demon to reassure his friend, the hermit, not to worry on any count.

²It is indeed a great feat of magic that is beyond imagination. Surely the queen was asleep at the time, and the guards of the stable must be dozing. None got the hint that the king and the horse have come back all of a sudden. When we read this story of magical transportation and of the subsequent feast that was organised in the king's capital, then many of the tales from the fables of 'One Thousand and One Arabian Nights' come to the mind.]

दो०. राजा के उपरोहितहि हरि लै गयउ बहोरि ।

लै राखेसि गिरि खोह महुँ मायाँ करि मति भोरि ॥ १७१ ॥

dōhā.

rājā kē uparōhitahi hari lai gaya'u bahōri.

lai rākhēsi giri khōha mahūṁ māyāṁ kari mati bhōri. 171.

The demon carried away the king's royal priest (employing the same magical powers with which he had brought the king and his horse), and after casting a delusory spell upon the abducted priest, he hid him in a cave in the mountain. (Doha no. 171)

चौ०. आपु बिरचि उपरोहित रूपा । परेउ जाइ तेहि सेज अनूपा ॥ १ ॥

जागेउ नृप अनभाएँ बिहाना । देखि भवन अति अचरजु माना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āpu biraci uparōhita rūpā. parē'u jā'i tēhi sēja anūpā. 1.

jāgē'u nr̥pa anabha'ēṁ bihānā. dēkhi bhavana ati acaraju mānā. 2.

He (the demon Kalketu) disguised himself as the royal priest and went to lie down on his wonderful bed. (1)

The king woke up before dawn, and when he found himself inside the palace he was astonished beyond measure¹. (2)

[Note—¹The last thing of which the king was aware of was his being in a hermit's hermitage in the midst of a forest in the night, and of his going to sleep at the hermit's request. Then as he was very tired he immediately sank into deep sleep. But when he woke up he found himself inside his palace and lying on his own bed. It was sure to stun him and befuddle his mind. For a moment he could not bring himself to understand that what he was seeing was actually a fact and not merely a dream. It took him some time to reflect on the developments of the previous night and gather his wits sufficiently enough to have some bearing about himself and his whereabouts.]

मुनि महिमा मन महुँ अनुमानी । उठेउ गवँहिं जेहिं जान न रानी ॥ ३ ॥
कानन गयउ बाजि चढ़ि तेहीं । पुर नर नारि न जानेउ केहीं ॥ ४ ॥

muni mahimā mana mahuṁ anumānī. uṭhē'u gavaṁhiṁ jēhiṁ jāna na rānī. 3.
kānana gaya'u bāji caḍhi tēhiṁ. pura nara nāri na jānē'u kēhiṁ. 4.

Reflecting upon the developments the king concluded that it is due to the hermit's astounding mystical powers that this miracle could happen (that he has been transported so secretly from the hermitage in the deep forest to his palace in the capital, a distance of seventy yojans, so quickly and imperceptibly). [To wit, the awe-inspired king attributed his presence in the palace to the magical powers of the hermit whom he believed could do the most supernatural things one can hardly think of.]

So (to ensure that no one could know what had happened) he got up very quietly in such a way that the queen would have no inkling that he had come there and then gone away, and sneaked out of the palace surreptitiously. (3)

He silently picked up the same horse and secretly rode out to the forest so that no one in the city, not a single male or female citizen, could know anything of the matter¹. (4)

[Note—¹One would wonder how the king managed to go out of his palace to the stable, collect his horse, and from there go out of the city to the forest without anyone knowing anything about it.

The answer is common sense and it lies in the precautions that kings normally took as a matter of security. In the case of danger, a king had some secret route by which he would escape before the enemy could lay his hand upon him. King Pratapbhanu had gone out of the city by this route.]

गाँ जाम जुग भूपति आवा । घर घर उत्सव बाज बधावा ॥ ५ ॥
उपरोहितहि देख जब राजा । चकित बिलोक सुमिरि सोइ काजा ॥ ६ ॥

ga'eṁ jāma juga bhūpati āvā. ghara ghara utsava bāja badhāvā. 5.
uparōhitahi dēkha jaba rājā. cakita bilōka sumiri sō'i kājā. 6.

When it was noon time, the king returned. When the news spread of his return safely, there was mass celebration in the city as every household rejoiced with playing of music and singing of songs. (5)

When the king saw his priest he was speechless as he immediately recollected the work that was discussed between him and the hermit, and for which this priest was chosen as a medium by which it could be successfully accomplished¹. (6)

[Note—¹The king upon his safe return was met by all his anxious ministers, courtiers, commanders and citizens. Of course the royal priest was one of them. So as soon as the king's eyes fell upon this unfortunate man his mind alerted him about all that the hermit had said the previous night.

Let us not forget that the demon had abducted the original priest and replaced him with his own disguised form—refer: Doha no. 171 herein above. The demon was a master in deceit and magic, so he also knew the art of hypnotism. When the eye of the king met this decoy priest's eyes, the demon cast his deep, penetrating and hypnotic gaze upon the king to bring him under his magical spell. The deluded king thereafter acted like a puppet, meekly dancing to the tune of the crafty puppeteer!

One can very well visualize the scene of the moment—while everyone was exuberant and lively, embracing each other and thanking God for the king's safe return, and all the chief courtiers and ministers joyously milling around the king and expressing their happiness at his coming back with a smile on their cheerful faces, the priest stood quite aloof and almost emotionless even though he also attended the welcoming ceremony for the king and sported a formal smile on his otherwise somber face. No one noticed it as no one could ever doubt, even in their wildest of imaginations, about anything being amiss or any kind of fish-play, chiefly with respect to the royal high priest who was held in high esteem.

But when the eyes of the two met, i.e. of the king and the priest, some unworded and silent message was exchanged between the two of them. Even if the king felt excited for a fleeting moment and blood rushed to his cheeks, he suppressed his emotions consciously as he remembered the word of honour he had given to the hermit—which was to exercise the greatest of restraint and discretion, and keep everything top secret.]

जुग सम नृपहि गए दिन तीनी । कपटी मुनि पद रह मति लीनी ॥ ७ ॥
समय जानि उपरोहित आवा । नृपहि मते सब कहि समुझावा ॥ ८ ॥

juga sama nr̥pahi ga'e dina tīnī. kapaṭī muni pada raha mati līnī. 7.
samaya jāni uparōhita āvā. nr̥pahi matē saba kahi samujhāvā. 8.

The king remained on tenterhooks for three days that passed (while he waited for the hermit to come and meet him), and these three days seemed to be like three Yugs for him to pass. [To wit, the three days looked like ages for the king, and the time passed so slowly for him as if three cycles of creation and destruction had passed.]

During this time the king's mind was always thinking reverentially of the hermit who pretended to be holy and pious but albeit was full of wickedness, deceit and fraud¹. (7)

When the appointed time arrived (i.e. the third day), the priest came to the king and told the king about the secret story (to signal him about his identity and to remind him about the job at hand)². (8)

[Note—¹That is why the word used for the hermit in the text is 'kapaṭī muni'—i.e. a sage or hermit who is full of wickedness, fraud, deceit and pretension.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 169 in this context where the hermit had told the king that when he would come to him and remind him about the work to be done on the third day, then the king must recognize him.]

दो०. नृप हरषेउ पहिचानि गुरु भ्रम बस रहा न चेत ।
बरे तुरत सत सहस बर बिप्र कुटुंब समेत ॥ १७२ ॥

dōhā.

nṛpa haraṣē'u pahicāni guru bhrama basa rahā na cēta.
barē turata sata sahasa bara bipra kuṭumba samēta. 172.

The king was jubilant when he recognized his Guru. He was unaware of the reality due to the veil of delusions which had been cast upon him to shroud his wisdom and make his mind and intellect become defunct so much so that even his natural instincts for prudence and self-preservation were undermined¹.

So he immediately (without due diligence and consulting his advisors) invited a hundred thousand chosen Brahmins along with their families for a meal². (Doha no. 172)

[Note—¹One very important observation can be made here. The king was driven blind by his ambitions to bring even the learned Brahmins under his sway, and through them to have control over the Gods—this was what was promised to him by the hermit. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 168 herein above. This would make him the sole and unchallenged ruler of the whole world as he desired—refer: Doha no. 164 herein above.

In his eagerness to accomplish even the impossible, the greedy king had thrown to the winds the basic principles of caution that should have warned him much early of something being wrong when the hermit had told him that “he would remove his royal priest surreptitiously using his powers of Maya or the ability of creating delusions, and sneak himself in his stead”—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 169.

The king should have thought this matter over carefully: Why would a holy and pious hermit—who is supposed to lead a life of renunciation and detachment from all worldly pursuit—adopt such wrong and deceitful ways to please someone, no matter what the motivation was? Why would a holy man cheat someone, especially when the object of such cheating was himself supposed to be a pious and holy man as the royal priest was expected to be? How can a person who practices cheating and deceit for any reason or cause be a true hermit or sage? But the king was so overwhelmed by his ambitious greed that he did not bother to pay attention to such tell-tale signs of fraud and mischief that seemed to be insignificant or inconsequential to him as long as his wishes could be fulfilled.

²On the face of it, things looked perfectly normal. The king had faced some grave misadventure when it appeared that he was all but lost in the un-chartered forest; then he returned safe and sound the next day. It was obviously a time to celebrate. In such good times great kings were accustomed to give a grand feast to feed the Brahmins and others in the kingdom. The citizens and the ministers thought that the priest was within his rights and was doing his duty to advise the king for the grand feast. So no suspicion was raised!]

चौ०. उपरोहित जेवनार बनाई । छरस चारि बिधि जसि श्रुति गाई ॥ १ ॥

मायामय तेहिं कीन्हि रसोई । बिंजन बहु गनि सकइ न कोई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

uparōhita jēvanāra banā'ī. charasa cāri bidhi jasi śruti gā'ī. 1.

māyāmaya tēhim kīnhi rasō'ī. binjana bahu gani saka'i na kō'ī. 2.

The royal priest (who was actually the demon Kalketu in a disguised form) supervised the preparation of the food for the grand repast. He prepared the food according to the way prescribed in the Vedas for a grand feast that is organized on such occasions—i.e. the food was of all the four categories, and had all the six kinds of tastes¹. (1)

He used his magical powers to create a huge illusion that made the food look extraordinarily wonderful and supernaturally good, with a wide variety of viands and sumptuous delicacies that defied imagination and description. (2)

[Note—¹The four classical categories of food are—(a) Bhakshya--that which is eaten raw by tearing and lacerating with the help of teeth, that which requires proper chewing and mastication before it can enter the food pipe, e.g. bread, fruits, vegetables, chewing of sugarcane; (b) Bhojya--that which is cooked and eaten with fingers or spoons, requiring least chewing or masticating and can be easily swallowed down the gullet, e.g. rice, curry; (c) Lehya--that which is licked with the tongue, e.g. eating pickles or honey; and (d) Choshya--that which is sipped or sucked, e.g. water, milk, tea.

The *Garbho-panishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 5 however classifies the four basic types of foods as—(i) Lehya: that which is licked; (ii) Peya: that which is drunk; (iii) Khaadya: that which is chewed or masticated; and (iv) Choshya: that which is sucked.

The six classical forms of tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

बिबिध मृगन्ह कर आमिष राँधा । तेहि महुँ बिप्र माँसु खल साँधा ॥ ३ ॥

भोजन कहुँ सब बिप्र बोलाए । पद पखारि सादर बैठाए ॥ ४ ॥

bibidha mṛganha kara āmiṣa rāṁdhā. tēhi mahum̐ bipra māṁsu khala sāṁdhā. 3.

bhōjana kahuṁ saba bipra bōlā'ē. pada pakhāri sādara baiṭhā'ē. 4.

And in this food he mixed meat of different animals as well as that of Brahmins. [To wit, in order to ensure that the food served by the king to the invited guests would be completely defiled and polluted in terms of its sanctity, the wicked demon did not

limit himself to mixing animal meat, but he went further to mix even the flesh of dead Brahmins with the food.] (3)

The ignorant king welcomed the invited Brahmins for the repast, and he duly washed their feet as a mark of respect before they were seated. (4)

परुसन जबहिं लाग महिपाला । भै अकासबानी तेहि काला ॥ ५ ॥
 बिप्रबृन्द उठि उठि गृह जाहू । है बड़ि हानि अन्न जनि खाहू ॥ ६ ॥
 भयउ रसोई भूसुर माँसू । सब द्विज उठे मानि बिस्वासू ॥ ७ ॥
 भूप बिकल मति मोहँ भुलानी । भावी बस न आव मुख बानी ॥ ८ ॥

parusana jabahim lāga mahipālā. bhai akāśabānī tēhi kālā. 5.
 biprabṛnda uṭhi uṭhi gr̥ha jāhū. hai baḍi hāni anna jani khāhū. 6.
 bhaya'u rasō'īm bhūsura māṁsū. saba dvija uṭhē māni bisvāsū. 7.
 bhūpa bikala mati mōhaṁ bhulānī. bhāvī basa na āva mukha bānī. 8.

As soon as the king started serving the meal to the invited Brahmins, a mysterious voice was heard in the sky which warned the guests¹—(5)

‘Oh Brahmins! Get up and go back to your homes. To eat this food would be very demeaning and sinful for you all, so don’t eat it even taste a bit of it. (6)

The meal is mixed with the flesh of Brahmins.’

All the assembled Brahmins believed this mysterious voice that warned them, and they got up immediately. (7)

The stunned king was dumbfounded and taken aback. His mind was befuddled by delusory veil that was already cast upon it, so he couldn’t think coherently. He was under the spell of ill-fate that had provisioned for his doom, and so he could not say a word (in self-defense). (8)

[Note—¹One may wonder who was he that spoke mysteriously from the sky? Was this some God warning the Brahmins that the food was defiled by meat?

No, it was not the voice of any God, but it was the demon Kalketu himself. How can we deduce this? Well, if it had been some God then the voice would have also told the Brahmins that one demon named Kalketu had mixed meat in the food that was being served.

Not only that, the Gods would have alerted the unsuspecting king at the very beginning that meat was being mixed in the royal kitchen, and he must inspect it immediately.

Therefore in all probability, the meat was actually mixed just at the nick of time when the food was taken from the kitchen and was being served to the Brahmins. This ensured that no alarm was raised and the king alerted, for if the mixing was done in the kitchen itself then at least some of the cooks and assistants who were engaged keeping in mind the vastness of the scale of the enterprise, at least some would have known that meat is being mixed, and it is absolutely sure that the king would have

been informed. Obviously no one in his right mind would have ever expected that the king would order meat to be mixed in the food meant for the Brahmins.

That is why he was stunned and stood dazed as he just could not comprehend what was happening.

So it is definitely the voice of the demon Kalketu.

We shall read shortly that this voice is heard again, but the second time it is the Gods who are speaking because they realized that the Brahmins had unwittingly cursed an innocent king whose only fault was that he believed a hermit and also that he was unduly ambitious. But that does not mean that he had planned to defile the religious beliefs of the Brahmins and make them commit such a grave sin as eating meat. So the Gods came to the defense of the king, but by this time the damage was already done and it was too late to rectify it.]

दो०. बोले बिप्र सकोप तब नहिं कछु कीन्ह बिचार ।

जाइ निसाचर होहु नृप मूढ़ सहित परिवार ॥ १७३ ॥

dōhā.

bōlē bipra sakōpa taba nahim kachu kīnha bicāra.
jā'i nisācara hōhu nrpa mūṛha sahita parivāra. 173.

The Brahmins were taken aback and became very angry, and without thinking anything they vehemently cursed the king, 'Oh stupid king! Go and become a demon yourself, along with all your other family members. (Doha no. 173)

चौ०. छत्रबंधु तैं बिप्र बोलाई । घालै लिए सहित समुदाई ॥ १ ॥

ईस्वर राखा धरम हमारा । जैहसि तैं समेत परिवारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

chatrabandhu taim bipra bōlāī. ghālai li'ē sahita samudāī. 1.
īsvara rākha dharama hamārā. jaihasi taim samēta parivārā. 2.

Oh fallen Kshatriya (king) who pretended to be friend of all (chatrabandhu)! You had invited all the Brahmins along with their kith and kin in order to destroy their religion and make them all fall into committing a grave sin (because eating meat is strictly prohibited for a Brahmin). (1)

It is by the grace of God that our religion and spiritual practices could be saved, but you will be condemned and destroyed along with all your kith and kin. [To wit, you had tried to make us eat meat, so you too would be turned into meat-eating monster along with your entire family.] (2)

संबत मध्य नास तव होऊ । जलदाता न रहिहि कुल कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥

नृप सुनि श्राप बिकल अति त्रासा । भैं बहोरि बर गिरा अकासा ॥ ४ ॥

बिप्रहु श्राप बिचारि न दीन्हा । नहिं अपराध भूप कछु कीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

sambata madhya nāsa tava hō'ū. jaladātā na rahihi kula kō'ū. 3.
nr̥pa suni śrāpa bikala ati trāsā. bhai bahōri bara girā akāsā. 4.
biprahu śrāpa bicāri na dīnhā. nahim̐ aparādha bhūpa kachu kīnhā. 5.

Your complete ruin shall occur within a year. No one would be left in your clan to offer water to your spirit after you are dead.' (3)

The king was extremely agitated and horrified with fear when he heard the curse.
The voice from the sky spoke once again¹— (4)

'Oh Brahmins! You had not given due thought before cursing the king, for the king is not at fault at all.' (5)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to the note appended to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 173 herein above.

The first time it was the demon Kalketu who spoke so that the Brahmins would curse the king. But this second time it is the Gods who are speaking because they realized that the Brahmins had unwittingly cursed an innocent king whose only fault was that he believed a hermit and also that he was unduly ambitious. But that does not mean that he had planned to defile the religious beliefs of the Brahmins and make them commit such a grave sin as eating meat. So the Gods came to the defense of the king, but by this time the damage was already done and it was too late to rectify it as the Brahmins regretted for their curse but were unable to do anything now.]

चकित बिप्र सब सुनि नभबानी । भूप गयउ जहँ भोजन खानी ॥ ६ ॥
तहँ न असन नहिं बिप्र सुआरा । फिरेउ राउ मन सोच अपारा ॥ ७ ॥
सब प्रसंग महिसुरन्ह सुनाई । त्रसित परेउ अवनीं अकुलाई ॥ ८ ॥

cakita bipra saba suni nabhabānī. bhūpa gaya'u jahaṁ bhōjana khānī. 6.
tahaṁ na asana nahim̐ bipra su'ārā. phirē'u rā'u mana sōca apārā. 7.
saba prasaṅga mahisuranha sunā'ī. trasita parē'u avanīm̐ akulā'ī. 8.

The Brahmins were astonished and speechless when they heard this message from the heaven¹.

Meanwhile, the vexed king went to the kitchen to inspect the stock of food kept there in preparation for it being served. (6)

There in the kitchen he discovered that neither was there any food nor the Brahmin cook (i.e. the priest who was supposed to be supervising the cooking of the meal)².

Flabbergasted and completely crestfallen by the misfortune that stared on his face, the king returned with a heavy heart and overcome with dark foreboding thoughts crowding his mind. (7)

He came back to where the Brahmins were waiting³, told them the entire story, and terrified and out of his wits, he fell down trembling out of fear at their feet (seeking mercy and reprieve). (8)

[Note—¹The Brahmins could neither imagine nor believe that such a grand event can take place in full public view without the king being in the knowledge of what is actually happening. But since this was proclaimed by the heavenly voice they had to believe its truthfulness.

²We have read that the demon Kalketu knew stupendous magical tricks, and he had used his magical abilities to prepare a huge feast with diverse categories of food in such a short span of time as a single day. This feat is not practical and humanly possible even for a great king to pull off. Hence the demon had just created an illusion of prepared food.

³Why were the Brahmins waiting? It is because they were themselves confused about what had actually happened and wanted to know the truth. So they waited out of curiosity for the king to go and find out what had actually happened.

Meanwhile their anger abated a little and they began regretting that they had been too hasty in making the curse.]

दो०. भूपति भावी मिटइ नहिं जदपि न दूषन तोर ।
किँ अन्यथा होइ नहिं बिप्रश्राप अति घोर ॥ १७४ ॥

dōhā.

bhūpati bhāvī miṭa'i nahim jadapi na dūṣana tōra.
ki'eṁ an'yathā hō'i nahim bipraśrāpa ati ghōra. 174.

The Brahmins said to the king, 'Oh king! It is not possible to change what has been written in one's fate by providence, though it is clear that you were not at fault.

A Brahmin's curse is very terrible and it cannot be altered or revoked.¹' (Doha no. 174)

[Note—¹If one were to look at this episode dispassionately, one is bound to think that if the Brahmins could curse someone if he is at fault, then they should also show some sort of mercy and compassion when it is proved that the cursed person is not at all at fault. Why is this one-sided approach? If someone is empowered to punish then he is also empowered to give reward, or at least reduce the intensity or severity of the punishment.

If the Brahmins cursed the king to become a flesh-eating ogre when they believed that he was trying them to eat meat and fall into committing a grave sin, then when it was revealed that the king was innocent they could have reduced the gravity of the curse and diluted it with some kind of positive boon even if it was not possible to completely revoke the main curse.

That is possibly why when the king became a demon named Ravana he wrecked havoc on the Brahmins. He was particularly antagonistic with the hermits and others who were attired in a holy garb as it is they and this garb that had cheated him in his previous life.

Why was Ravana not antagonistic with the demons? It is because he was totally unaware that some demon named Kalketu was the chief culprit that brought ruin to him.]

चौ०. अस कहि सब महिदेव सिधाए । समाचार पुरलोगन्ह पाए ॥ १ ॥

सोचहिं दूषन दैवहि देहीं । बिरचत हंस काग किय जेहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi saba mahidēva sidhā'ē. samācāra puralōganha pā'ē. 1.
sōcahiṁ dūṣana daivahi dēhīṁ. biracata hansa kāga kiya jēhīṁ. 2.

The invited Brahmins went their way, and the citizens heard the news¹. (1)

All the citizens were extremely distressed, perturbed and perplexed beyond measure. They began to blame Providence for the most unexpected evil turn of events, lamenting that the Creator had begun the process of making a swan but produced a crow instead². (2)

[Note—¹When the large group of Brahmins were going back home it is but natural that they were all animatedly talking and discussing about the events of the day. Besides them, there were countless attendants, waiters and servitors of the king at the feast. So the news of the king being cursed spread like wild-fire all through the length and breadth of not only the city but even to the distant realms of the kingdom.

The citizens loved their king very much as he was a very righteous ruler who ruled judiciously and in accordance with the laws of Dharma (propriety and probity; principles laid down for good governance in the scriptures). If the king became great and strong it was so much the better for the common man as it would deter attack from enemies and herald peace and prosperity.

The happy citizens therefore looked forward to a great future when suddenly this bad turn of events struck them like lightening—for they knew that their own future was intricately and inseparably linked to the future of their king, and so if the king was doomed their own future was doomed too.

As a result, a dark pall of gloom descended upon the capital. What was a bright day of celebrations and rejoicing a moment ago suddenly turned into a gloomy day of mourning and grief.]

उपरोहितहि भवन पहुँचाई । असुर तापसहि खबरि जनाई ॥ ३ ॥

तेहिं खल जहँ तहँ पत्र पठाए । सजि सजि सेन भूप सब धाए ॥ ४ ॥

uparōhitahi bhavana pahuṁcāī. asura tāpasahi khabari janāī. 3.
tēhiṁ khala jahaṁ tahaṁ patra paṭhā'ē. saji saji sēna bhūpa saba dhā'ē. 4.

Meanwhile, the demon brought the royal priest back home, and then he informed his friend, the hermit, of the news (that the mission has been successfully accomplished). (3)

That rascal (the hermit-king) then immediately sent out letters to other kings (who were defeated and conquered by Pratapbhanu earlier, and had harboured a secret desire for revenge)¹.

When these kings (who were obviously acquainted with this hermit-king, and so could recognize his signature or handwriting or the language that kings usually use for royal messages) heard the news (which greatly pleased them), all of them made haste, arranging their armies and launching attacks either singly or in groups (to vanquish king Pratapbhanu once and for all)². (4)

[Note—¹The hermit-king was well acquainted with the events of king Pratapbhanu's 'campaign of conquest' when he had fought many battles and had subjugated countless kings by the force of his arms in order to become an emperor. Not a single king was happy at this development, and though they all surrendered to Pratapbhanu but secretly all of them hated him and would welcome a chance to square accounts with him.

The question arises—who was the messenger who took the hermit-king's letters to these kings? The answer is easy—it was his demon friend Kalketu. We have already seen that Kalketu possessed great magical powers, so it was just a sport for him to reach all the kings and deliver the message in a short span of time.

²It is quite possible that this hermit-king had been maintaining some sort of secret contact with all like-minded kings. They were all waiting for such an opportunity, so as soon as the message came that their sworn enemy king Pratapbhanu had been cursed to doom by the Brahmins, a curse which is bound to be true no matter how strong Pratapbhanu was, they hurried to grab the chance and get the honour of being the first one to vanquish an all-powerful emperor whom the world praised as being invincible a day ago.

These kings were sure that they will now certainly succeed to bring Pratapbhanu to his knees and force him to bite dust as he was now heavily encumbered with a great mill-stone in the form of the Brahmin's curse around his neck; it was like a shackle from which he can't break free, and which was bound to sink him, and along with him his entire family, into an abyss from which there was no door of recovery.]

घेरेन्हि नगर निसान बजाई । बिबिध भाँति नित होइ लराई ॥ ५ ॥

जूझे सकल सुभट करि करनी । बंधु समेत परेउ नृप धरनी ॥ ६ ॥

ghērēnhi nagara nisāna bajā'ī. bibidha bhānti nita hō'i larā'ī. 5.

jūjhē sakala subhaṭa kari karanī. bandhu samēta parē'u nr̥pa dharanī. 6.

These enemy-kings surrounded the capital city from all the sides, playing their battle drums and sounding their trumpets of war. Every day there were fierce battles. (5)

All the greatest of warriors and fighters of the kingdom fought bravely and courageously before all of them fell down in the battle-field one-by-one (to have a dignified death befitting an honourable warrior who is lauded for such a death, instead of running away from the battle-field).

Ultimately even the king (Pratapbhanu) fell down in the battle-field along with his brother (named Arimardan). [Alas, the noble king Pratapbhanu and his brave brother Arimardan too died in the battle.] (6)

सत्यकेतु कुल कोउ नहिं बाँचा । बिप्रश्राप किमि होइ असाँचा ॥ ७ ॥
रिपु जिति सब नृप नगर बसाई । निज पुर गवने जय जसु पाई ॥ ८ ॥

satyakētu kula kō'u nahim bāṁcā. bipraśrāpa kimi hō'i asāṁcā. 7.
ripu jiti saba nrpa nagara basāī. nija pura gavanē jaya jasu pāī. 8.

Alack, no one in the illustrious family of the great and noble king Satyaketu (i.e. his descendants king Pratapbhanu, his brother Arimardan, and others) survived!

[To wit, all in the family of king Satyaketu died one after another in the battles that raged in the wake of the Brahmins cursing king Pratapbhanu and his entire family.]

Say, how can a curse of Brahmins be false?

[To wit, it was only due to this curse that every single member of the great king Pratapbhanu's family died; no one escaped. His clan was completely annihilated. Had it not been for the curse there was no one on earth who would have dared to defeat the mighty king.] (7)

After having conquered and completely destroying their arch enemy (king Pratapbhanu), all the attacking kings re-established the city, and collecting rich spoils of war and tributes from its citizens they went back to their respective kingdoms, basking in the glory of conquest and feeling exuberant at having had the honour of defeating a seemingly invincible emperor¹. (8)

[Note—¹As is normally the case in such situations of military campaigns where a number of allied forces unite against a single enemy, when the war is over and the allied forces become victorious, they divide the spoils of war in proportion to their contribution in the war effort, restore and reconstruct the city, reach an agreement whereby the dominant partner or the one who had first entered the besieged city and conquered it is given control over the city, agreeing to appoint a governor who presides over a senate having representatives of all the partners, and then the rest of the partners return home leaving the day-to-day administration of the city to the people chosen by them by common consent.

So was also the case with the capital city of king Pratapbhanu. After the war ended, its citizens were rehabilitated, a new administrative machinery was put into place, the victors exacted their share of tributes and spoils of war, and then they returned jubilant and victorious to their own homelands.]

दो०. भरद्वाज सुनु जाहि जब होइ बिधाता बाम ।
धूरि मेरुसम जनक जम ताहि व्यालसम दाम ॥ १७५ ॥

dōhā.

bharadvāja sunu jāhi jaba hō'i bidhātā bāma.
dhūri mērusama janaka jama tāhi byālasama dāma. 175.

[This story was narrated by sage Yagyawalkya to sage Bharadvaj. So Yagyawalkya said—]

‘Listen Bharadwaj. When the Creator turns hostile and becomes malevolent towards someone then even an inconsequential particle of dust turns into an insurmountable mountain as huge as Meru¹ for him, his own father becomes a personified form of the god of death for him, and the harmless rope or an ordinary garland becomes like a poisonous snake for him². (Doha no. 175)

[Note—¹Mt. Meru is the huge mountain where Gods are supposed to have their abode on earth.

²All these three instances can be seen to have proved themselves in the case of king Pratapbhanu.

The first is the instance of “an inconsequential particle of dust turns into an insurmountable mountain as huge as Meru”. The king who was defeated by the mighty king Pratapbhanu and who ran away from the battle-field to hide in the forest disguised as a hermit, was most inconsequential and not worthy of paying any more attention because he had lost his army and all his supporters. He was alone and banished to the forest. For all practical purposes this disenfranchised and defeated hermit-king presented no cause of worry for the mighty king Pratapbhanu. He was virtually like a speck of dust against the might of an emperor. But as it happened, this seemingly harmless and hapless hermit turned to be the nemesis of Pratapbhanu. So in effect, ‘the miniscule dust became like a huge mountain which crushed Pratapbhanu underfoot’.

The second instance of “father becoming a personified form of the god of death” is made true also as Pratapbhanu himself calls the hermit ‘father-like’ in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160 herein above, but this same fellow mercifully plotted the ruin of a person whom he accepted as his ‘son’—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 163 herein above.

In the third instance of “the harmless rope or an ordinary garland becoming like a poisonous snake” we find that the large number of Brahmins whom the king had always shown respect and who had always benefited from the king’s charities and patronage now did not hesitate to bite him viciously by cursing him to utter doom].

चौ०. काल पाइ मुनि सुनु सोइ राजा । भयउ निसाचर सहित समाजा ॥ १ ॥

दस सिर ताहि बीस भुजदंडा । रावन नाम बीर बरिबंडा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāla pā'i muni sunu sō'i rājā. bhaya'u nisācara sahita samājā. 1.
dasa sira tāhi bīsa bhujaḍaṇḍā. rāvana nāma bīra baribaṇḍā. 2.

[Sage Yagyawalkya told sage Bharadwaj—] ‘Listen oh sage! In due course of time the same king (Pratapbhanu) became a demon along with his whole clan.

[To wit, all the members of his near and extended family as well as his close associates such as ministers and courtiers and commanders and servitors and other members of the royal entourage became demons in their next births¹.] (1)

He had twenty arms and ten heads, and his name was ‘Ravana’². He was extraordinarily strong and brave, and had long and sturdy arms that were like huge maces or clubs. (2)

[Note—¹It is not clearly said here if the citizens of his capital and the subjects of his kingdom too became demons. In the previous Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175 it is mentioned that the victorious kings ‘re-established the capital before returning back home’.

This question is answered below in Chaupai line no. 6 which says that king Pratapbhanu’s servitors, his attendants, servants, ministers, courtiers, commanders of the army, governors of his kingdom and all others who served him directly or indirectly, along with their own family members such as their sons etc, had become demon in the next birth.

We can visualise two scenes here as follows:

(i) It may be that only those who were close to king Pratapbhanu and fought for him in the battles to die in the battle-field were the ones who ‘were reborn as demons’. The ordinary citizens did not participate in the actual battles, and so they escaped death. Hence there was no question of their being ‘born again or taking a rebirth’ as either demons or anyone else.

(ii) The other possibility is that everyone, including the citizens, became demons. But then it would mean that every single person was slaughtered in the war. This was obviously not the case as then who would live in the reconstructed city. Even during modern wars when the army defending a city surrenders, its inhabitants are spared death. The only casualties are the ones that occur while the battle rages, and not after the defending army surrenders. In this case therefore, after king Pratapbhanu was killed the war automatically ended, and with it ended further bloodshed.

So in all probabilities, and logically also, only those who died during the duration of the battles and who were close to king Pratapbhanu became demons. The rest of the subjects, who were not directly serving the king or who had managed to flee the city, survived, only to come back when the war ended and the victors were rehabilitating it.

²Thus, king Pratapbhanu became the demon king Ravana in the next birth.

The Atharva Veda’s *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 18 describes the meaning of the word ‘Ravana’ as follows—

“Since the demon had abducted Ram’s consort (Sita) from a ‘Van’ (pronounced as *won* or *one*; meaning a dense forest), he was called ‘Ravana’¹. [The first letter of the word *Ram* and the word *Van* are combined to form the name of the demon as ‘Ra+van = Ravana’.]

There is another interpretation. ‘Ravana’ also means—‘the one who makes others weep, cry, lament and wail due to the severe pain, misery, torments, terror and sorrows inflicted upon them’ (for Ravana’s actions had made Sita suffer, weep and wail). Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 16.

Further, he made a lot of noise or false claims, or he used to brag haughtily about his achievements, his strength and powers as well as of his invincibility and lordship over even the heavens. Wherever he went, he behaved most wildly and acted like a savage, making a lot of din and clamour to spread fear and terror.

So, the first part of his name *Ravana* comes from the word *Rav* for ‘fuss, noise, chatter, clamour, nuisance and din’². Thus, he became famous as ‘Ravana’ because he made a lot of noise and false claims.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Laxman began their search for Sita (18).

[Note—¹There is an interesting connotation of the word ‘Ravana’. Since his name includes the Beej Mantra for Lord Ram which incidentally is also the Beej Mantra for the eternal fire element, i.e. the letter ‘Ra’, it implies that Ravana was not an ordinary soul but a highly learned and scholarly one. Then, the word ‘Van’, meaning a forest, implies that he was a ‘treasury’ of scriptural knowledge and learning. The fact that he became a ‘demon’ instead of a living being behooving of his high standard of scriptural scholarship, knowledge, learning and erudition as well as his birth in the Brahmin race shows how merely literal knowledge and expertise in the scriptures would not necessarily mean that a person is exalted, worthy of honour and reverence, and spiritually liberated if he has not actually understood the hidden meaning of the doctrines and philosophy of the scriptures, and if he has not actually implemented them in practice in his life and deeds.

Ravana had become extremely haughty and arrogant because of his knowledge and acquisition of mystical powers that come naturally to them who do severe Tapa (penances, austerities, religious exercises), and Ravana had scored high on this count. He had done exemplary Tapa so much so that it had pleased Brahma the creator as well as Shiva the concluder. There are numerous instances in the story of the Ramayana when he has told those who had tried to persuade him to abandon his stubbornness and make peace with Lord Ram that he knows fully well that Ram is not an ordinary prince but the Supreme Being himself, and that Sita is not an ordinary woman but Shakti herself. He had stressed to them that he has purposely created this situation of animosity with the Lord by stealing Sita with full knowledge that this would lead to his getting slayed at the hands of the Lord, and that this was the only once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that he has got for his spiritual liberation from the prison of the evil body of a demon that he had acquired for himself due to his own follies and misdeeds. He would not let go of this golden chance by any means. When we take this point of view of Ravana into account, the whole story of Ramayana assumes a divine hue as the story of a highly learned and realised soul who has committed some mistakes in the past due to arrogance and lack of wisdom as to what his deeds would amount to, but realises and acknowledges later on that he is a sinful man. All the deplorable actions of Ravana around which the story of the epic Ramayana is woven are actually the attempt of a soul to find redemption for its past sins, and find emancipation and salvation once and for all.

Besides this point of his scriptural knowledge, it is also well established that he was the greatest devotee of Lord Shiva at that time. Shiva is the Lord who is honoured by the title of being a ‘Maha-Deva’—the great Lord God. Shiva is also the patron God of ascetics and hermits, and he is the wisest and most enlightened God in the pantheon of Gods. So, the point is—how can one expect an ardent and faithful devotee of such a great God as actually being as sinful and unholy internally as Ravana’s external behaviour and life has made him appear to be?

²In this regard there is a legend that when Ravana lifted Mount Kailash, where Lord Shiva has his abode, in order to transplant it in his own kingdom of Lanka, Lord Shiva had exerted immense pressure on this mountain so as to make it exceedingly heavy and difficult to be shifted and moved over to Lanka by Ravana. At that time, Ravana had made a lot of fuss and created a lot of nuisance. Hence he came to be known as ‘Ravana’.]”

The ‘ten’ heads of Ravana has a symbolic meaning. Usually the demons had only one head like all living beings. They were called ‘demons’ because of their evil and sinful deeds, corrupt and pervert mind and intellect, cruelty of behaviour, reckless and

ruthlessness tendencies, and despicable general demeanours. The demons had a preponderance of the Tama Guna, and a negative nature marked by horribly violent and intolerably volatile temperament. They had contempt for ethics and morality; they paid no heed to the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and auspiciousness).

The numeral ‘ten’ simply means that their king Ravana was ten times more sinful and ten times more powerful than the rest of them. It also means that negativity and evil nature of Ravana was ten times more than other demons of his race. So the Lord decided to get rid of this great menace for creation first, and then treat the ten-headed Ravana’s killing as a warning to the rest of the demon race to mend their selves or face the same punishment. The Lord wished to give the rest of the demons a chance to mend their ways out of fear for their lives, if for nothing else. In fact, this is what exactly happened. Not all the demons were killed and eliminated from the surface of earth during the epic war at Lanka—and the surviving ones were ruled by Vibhishan who was the younger brother of Ravana and who had taken sides with Lord Ram in the epic war at Lanka in which his elder brother Ravana was killed.

This proves one more very important and pertinent point—merely possessing a gross body like that of a demon does not mean that a Jiva is condemned if his Atma, his inner being is not demonic or sinful, and instead is holy and pious like other wise and realized souls in this creation. Further, merely Gyan or knowledge of the scriptures does not ensure that the creature would be provided with Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance—this is proved by the fact that though Ravana was an expert in the knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures, and though he was a Brahmin by birth, he still was the most evil Jiva alive at that time. Therefore, it is how a Jiva (living being, a creature) puts his body and knowledge to practical use that is of paramount importance rather than merely possessing a certain type of gross body or being able to have an access to knowledge and scriptures.

Hence, while the Lord felt it necessary to eliminate the demon king Ravana, the same Lord made his brother Vibhishan as the king of the remaining demon race.

There is another interpretation of depicting Ravana with ten heads. He was not an ordinary demon or villain, for Ravana was an expert in the four Vedas (Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva), the four Up-Vedas or sub-Vedas (Dhanur Veda pertaining to the science of warfare, Aurveda pertaining to herbal medicines, Arthashastra pertaining to economics and public administration, and Gandharva-veda related to music, song and dance-drama), the Purans (mythological histories) and the Dharmashastras (other scriptures relating to the philosophy of Dharma or the laws of probity, propriety and righteousness). But inspite of having thoroughly studied all the Vedas and scriptures, inspite of being an expert in their tenets, and inspite of having this huge body of knowledge at his disposal, Ravana still became extremely pervert and sinful because of his vanity, passions, lust for power, ego, haughtiness and arrogance. He did not understand the spiritual message and meaning of the scriptures, and he did not utilise this knowledge for his spiritual welfare, most probably because he limited himself to their literal knowledge only, a knowledge that gave him immense temporal powers and fame but proved to be his unmaking.

This has the message for all spiritual aspirants and seekers of Mukti that mere knowledge of the scriptures is not sufficient for one’s salvation; one must implement them in practice. By killing Ravana the Lord has sent a strong message to such people who are proud of their overpowering control over the literal versions of the scriptures that salvation is not theirs if they are not careful in how they utilise this knowledge and skill intelligently with proper wisdom. The Lord would not excuse them even if

they are Brahmins (Ravana was a Brahmin by birth) and learned (Ravana was matchless in his knowledge of the scriptures) if they become sinful and fall from their path.

Why is he known as 'Ravana'? According to one story, once Ravana got on his chariot and flew above Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Shiva. Nandi, the mount of Shiva, told him to stop, but the arrogant Ravana did not pay any heed. So Nandi blocked his path in the sky. Peeved and feeling insulted, Ravana scooped up the entire mountain and put it on his shoulder to throw it somewhere. Lord Shiva used his might and pressed the mountain with his big toe. This crushed Ravana under the weight and the pressure, and he began to yell. He remained for a thousand years crushed under the weight of the mountain and continued to pray to Lord Shiva to free him. At that time Shiva cursed him—'you have been wailing for so long under the weight of the mountain and you are in the habit of making others wail by your cruelty, so your name will be Ravana, or 'the one who wails himself and make others wail too'.' This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13, verse nos. 84-85.

His ten heads—Ravana had pleased Lord Shiva by offering his own head. As soon as he offered one head, another came up on his shoulder. He continued to offer them ten times, and each time a new head was created.

Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Vaali (or Baali), had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Vaali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. Angad, the emissary of Lord Ram, refers to that incident when Ravana had tried his best to escape from Vaali but could not do so, and remained clamped and squeezed under his armpit for a long time in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24. This story is narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.

There is another legend associated with Ravana. Once, he had asked Lord Shiva to come and stay at Lanka, the demon capital. But the Lord refused. So, determined to fulfill his wish, Ravana had scooped up the entire mountain Kailash where Shiva lives in the upper reaches of the Himalayas in his bid to plant the whole mountain at Lanka. The Gods were flabbergasted and shocked at this, so they devised a device whereby the Wind God and the Water God entered Ravana's abdomen, which resulted in a strong urge in him to urinate somewhere between the original location of Kailash and Lanka.

Now it so happened that at the time of lifting the mountain, Ravana had pledged that he will not place Mt. Kailash on the ground before reaching Lanka, and should he do so then he would not be able to lift it again. Taking advantage of this pre-condition, the two Gods, the Wind and Water Gods, created a situation whereby Ravana could no longer hold his urine, and putting Kailash at a secure place he went to relieve himself. But when he came back, the great mountain refused to budge. This immensely annoyed Ravana and in disgust he pushed the Shiva's Lingam with his big toe so hard that it sunk into the ground. It is believed that this insult that Ravana did to Shiva was the root cause of his fall and final death—because Shiva's eleventh form known as 'Rudra', the God of wrath and annihilation, assumed the form of Hanuman,

the monkey warrior who led the charge of Lord Ram's army on Lanka that culminated in Ravana's death and defeat of the entire demon army.]

भूप अनुज अरिमर्दन नामा । भयउ सो कुंभकरन बलधामा ॥ ३ ॥
 सचिव जो रहा धरमरुचि जासू । भयउ बिमात्र बंधु लघु तासू ॥ ४ ॥
 नाम बिभीषन जेहि जग जाना । बिष्णुभगत बिग्यान निधाना ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpa anuja arimardana nāmā. bhaya'u sō kumbhakarana baladhāmā. 3.
 saciva jō rahā dharamaruci jāsū. bhaya'u bimātra bandhu laghu tāsū. 4.
 nāma bibhīṣana jēhi jaga jānā. biṣṇubhagata bigyāna nidhānā. 5.

The king's younger brother named Arimardan became a demon named Kumbhakaran in the new birth. He was a virtual treasury of strength and valour.

[To wit, Kumbhakaran became Ravana's younger brother, and he was exceptionally strong, possessing immense strength and valour.] (3)

The king's chief minister who took interest in the principles of 'Dharma' (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility in thought and conduct) became his younger step-brother¹. (4)

His name was Vibhishan. The world knows him as one who was a devotee of Lord Vishnu, and as one who was well endowed with the virtues of wisdom, sagacity, prudence and intelligence². (5)

[Note—¹King Pratapbhanu must have had many ministers like other great kings. But one of them was very close to him and the chief amongst all the ministers. He was the king's main advisor. This chief minister became Ravana's step-brother named Vibhishan.

This minister was not directly related to the king by blood, but since he was so nice and sagacious the king treated him like his own brother. So in the next birth too they were brothers but separated by blood—Vibhishan became Ravana's step-brother instead of being his direct blood-related sibling like Kumbhakaran who was Pratapbhanu's direct younger brother in the previous life.

According to Mahabharat, Vanparva, Chapter 275, Vibhishan is said to be a step-brother of Ravana. Briefly this story is as follows:-

Kuber, the treasurer of Gods, had appointed three young maidens of the demon race to serve sage Visrawa who happened also to be Kuber's father. Their names were Pushpotkataa, Raakaa and Maalini. They were experts in music and dance, and they used to keep the sage entertained. The sage was eventually pleased by their service and blessed them with boons that they would have three sons who would be as powerful and glorious as the three Lokpals, the three custodians of the three divisions of the world. By-and-by, Pushpotkataa gave birth to two sons—Ravana and Kumbhakaran, and Malini gave birth to a son named Vibhishan. The third woman named Raakaa gave birth to a daughter named Supernakha. Refer: Mahabharat, Vanparva, Chapter 275, verse nos. 7-8.

²It was expected of Vibhishan because in his previous life also he was a noble chief minister of king Pratapbhanu, and had always taken interest in following the principles of Dharma. That is why he was honoured with the name of 'Dharmaruchi'—one who takes interest in matters related to Dharma.]

रहे जे सुत सेवक नृप केरे । भए निसाचर घोर घनेरे ॥ ६ ॥
 कामरूप खल जिनस अनेका । कुटिल भयंकर बिगत बिबेका ॥ ७ ॥
 कृपा रहित हिंसक सब पापी । बरनि न जाहिं बिस्व परितापी ॥ ८ ॥

rahē jē suta sēvaka nṛpa kērē. bha'ē nisācara ghōra ghanērē. 6.
 kāmarūpa khala jinasa anēkā. kuṭila bhayaṅkara bigata bibēkā.
 kṛpā rahita hiṁsaka saba pāpī. barani na jāhiṁ bisva paritāpī. 4.

All the sons of the king (Pratapbhanu) as well as those who were serving him, along with their own kith and kin, became demons in their next birth. These demons were extremely ferocious and vicious, and countless in numbers. (6)

All of them were personified forms of passion and lust, and they had magical powers by which they could assume any form they wished¹. They were of many classes and orders. All were however highly wicked and deceitful, were fierce and terrible by all means, had no wisdom worth the name, and lacked all sense of propriety and probity. (7)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181 where also this unique quality of the demon race has been reiterated.]

They had no trace of mercy or compassion in them. They were all sinful, cruel, vicious and ferocious to the extreme. It is not possible to narrate the way they ruthlessly tormented the whole world with virtual impunity. (8)

दो०. उपजे जदपि पुलस्त्यकुल पावन अमल अनूप ।
 तदपि महीसुर श्राप बस भए सकल अघरूप ॥ १७६ ॥
 dōhā.

upajā jādapi pulastyakula pāvana amala anūpa.
 tadapi mahīsura śrāpa basa bha'ē sakala agharūpa. 176.

Though the demons were born in the worthy and honourable clan of sage Pulsatya which was held in great esteem, a family that was revered, free from taints, and deemed to be pious and holy, yet by the virtue of the curse of Brahmins the monstrous off-springs of the same clan became loathsome and degraded to the extreme, reaching the nadir of spiritual depravation and sinfulness, and transformed into embodiments of every sort of vice, evil, cruelty and wickedness that can be thought of. (Doha no. 176)

[Note—So far we have read about the life of Ravana in his previous birth. Now in the next Chapter no. 2 we shall read about his and his sibling's birth in the clan of sage

Pulastya, and the establishment of the demon kingdom with its capital in the island of Lanka.]

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Part 1

Chapter 2: The Birth of Ravana And the Establishment of the Demon Kingdom

As a result of the Brahmins' curse all the members of king Pratapbhanu's family, either close or distant, as well as all his ministers, courtiers, servitors, commanders of the army, and all others who directly or indirectly served him or were related to him, became demons in their next birth.

In this Chapter no. 2 we will read the part of the story of Ravana which narrates his and his sibling's birth, their attainment of supernatural powers that made them so feared and invincible, and the establishment of the Demon Kingdom with its capital at Lanka, a golden city situated on an island in the middle of the ocean.

For this narration we be reading from two celebrated classics, viz. (i) Anand Ramayan said to have been written by sage Valmiki, and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan that was penned by sage Veda Vyas.

This Chapter is divided into 3 sections: the 1st section (no. 2.1) quotes the story from Anand Ramayan, the 2nd section (2.2) from Adhyatma Ramayan, and the 3rd section (2.3) from Ram Charit Manas.

Section 2.1:

Anand Ramayan

Anand Ramayan narrates the story of the birth of Ravana and his siblings, the early period of his life when he and his other two brothers acquired their boons, how he gradually became so evil, the manner of his reckless and extremely pervert behaviour, his repeated defeats in battle and severe humiliation inspite of his claim to invincibility and suzerainty over the whole world, how inspite of these setbacks and insults he was never ashamed of himself, and how this behaviour caused him to be repeatedly cursed, a development that virtually neutralized the benefits of his boons, and which ultimately resulted in his death at the hands of Lord Ram.

This fascinating story is told in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 1-139. It was narrated by Lord Shiva, the third of the Trinity Gods, to his divine consort Parvati.

Now, let us proceed with the narration.

आनन्दरामायणे

सारकाण्डम्

ānandarāmāyaṇ, sārkaṇḍ, canto 13, verse nos. 1-139.

एकदा राघवं द्रष्टुं मुनिभिः कुम्भसंभवः ।

ययौ रामेण संमानमानितः स उपाविषत् ॥1॥

उपविष्टाः प्रहृष्टाश्च मुनयो रामपूजिताः ।

संपृष्टकुषलाः सर्वे रामं कुषलमब्रुवन् ॥2॥

ānandarāmāyaṇe

sārakāṇḍam

ekadā rāghavaṁ draṣṭuṁ munibhiḥ kumbhasambhavaḥ /
yayau rāmeṇa saṁmānamānitaḥ sa upāviṣat // 1 //
upaviṣṭāḥ prahrṣṭāśca munayo rāmapūjitaḥ /
saṁprṣṭakuṣalāḥ sarve rāmaṁ kuṣalamabruvan // 2 //

Lord Shiva said (to his divine consort Parvati), ‘Listen dear. One day a large group of sages led by sage Agastya came to see (“draṣṭuṁ”; meaning to visit; to meet) Lord Ram (at Ayodhya). After being warmly welcomed and shown due respect by the Lord, he was given an honourable seat to sit down. (1)

All other sages who accompanied him were similarly worshipped by Lord Ram and given seats upon which all of them cheerfully sat down. When the Lord enquired about their well-being as a gesture of courtesy, they replied that everything was fine with them. (2)

कुषलं ते महामाबो सर्वत्र रघुनन्दन ।

दिष्ट्येदानीं प्रपष्यामो हतषत्रुमरिदम ॥3॥

दिष्ट्या त्वया हताः सर्वे मेघनादादयोऽसुराः ।

हत्वा रक्षोगणान्सर्वान् कृतकृत्योऽद्य जीवसि ॥4॥

kuṣalaṁ te mahāmābo sarvatra raghunaṁdana /
 diṣṭyedānīm prapaśyāmo hataṣatrumariṁdama // 3 //
 diṣṭyā tvayā hatāḥ sarve meghanādādayo'surāḥ /
 hatvā rakṣogaṇānsarvān kṛtakṛtyo'dya jīvasi // 4 //

Then they told Lord Ram, ‘Oh Raghunandan (literally one who was born as a son in the race of the great legendary king of Ayodhya who was called Raghu; i.e. Lord Ram) who are renowned the world over for valour, courage and strength of arms (mahāmābo sarvatra raghunaṁdana).

We are indeed very glad to see you seated on the throne as a victor after your successful campaign against a formidable enemy whom you had vanquished and crushed. You are surely and without gainsay the one who always trounces his enemies (ariṁdama)! (3)

It is a matter of great fortune and good luck for you that you had been able to slay the demon Meghanad¹ along with all other demons.

As a result of this stupendous feat here you are present with all your majesty and glories at their zenith, and are being honoured for having eliminated all of them and accomplishing your mission successfully. [So we congratulate you for this extraordinary victory, and wish you all the best.]’ (4)

[Note—¹Meghanad was the son of the demon king Ravana.]

इति तेषां वचः श्रुत्वा रामस्तान्प्राह सुस्मितः ।
 किमर्थमादौ युष्माभिर्मघनादोऽद्य कीर्तितः ॥ ५ ॥
 इति रामवचः श्रुत्वाऽगस्त्यस्तैरवलोकितः ।
 कुम्भयोनिस्तदा रामं प्रीत्या वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ ६ ॥

iti teṣāṁ vacaḥ śrutvā rāmastānprāha susmitaḥ /
 kimarthamādaū yuṣmābhirmeghanādo'dya kīrtitaḥ // 5 //
 iti rāmavacaḥ śrutvā'gastistairavalokitaḥ /
 kumbhayonistadā rāmaṁ prītyā vacanamabravīt // 6 //

Hearing these words laced with some sort of mystery, Lord Ram smiled with amusement and asked the sages, ‘Oh sages, out of all the demons who were killed in the war why did you single out Meghanad to imply that his killing was the most difficult part in the campaign for me, and so his slaying was a real rare achievement and a stupendous feat that has given me immense glory that I am being honoured for, and which has undisputedly established my fame as an unmatched warrior in the world?’ (5)

When the sages heard these words of Lord Ram, all of them turned to sage Agastya looking for an answer.

Observing that everyone was amazed at this suggestion and an answer was necessary, sage Agastya replied to Lord Ram in affectionate words—(6)

शृणु राम यथा वृत्तं मेघनादस्य चेष्टितम् ।
जन्मकर्मवरप्राप्तिं संक्षेपाद्गदतो मम ॥७॥
पुरा कृतयुगे राम पुलस्त्यो ब्रह्मणः सुतः ।
तृणबिंदुसुतायां स पुत्रं त्रैलोक्याविश्रुतम् ॥८॥

śṛṇu rāma yathā vṛttam meghanādasya ceṣṭitam /
janmakarmavaraprāptim saṁkṣepādgadato mama // 7 //
purā kṛtayuge rāma pulastyo brahmaṇaḥ sutaḥ /
tṛṇabīṇḍusutāyām sa putram trailokyāviśrutam // 8 //

‘Oh Ram, listen. I shall tell you the story of Meghanad in brief, about his birth, deeds, and the way he had acquired some rare magical boons. (7)

Oh Ram, in the ancient age known as Satya-yuga¹, one sage named Pulastya, who was the son of the creator Brahma, married the daughter of Trinbindu. From her he begot a son who would be an expert in all the Vedas (‘Srutis’), and hence he was called ‘Visrawa’, literally one who was to become famous in the Triloki², the three divisions of the world. (8)

[Note—¹Sata-yuga is the first age of the four-yuga one cycle of creation and destruction. The other three Yugas are Treta, Dwapar and Kali. The present era in which we live is the Kali-yuga.

²The three divisions of the world are the heaven, the earth and the nether world.]

निर्ममे विश्रवा नामधेयं वेदनिधिं शुभम् ।
भरद्वाजसुतायां च विश्रवा निर्ममे सुतम् ॥९॥
श्रेष्ठं वैश्रवणं तस्मै प्रसन्नोऽभूद्विधिश्चिरात् ।
विधिर्वैश्रवणायाथ तुष्टस्तत्तपसा ददौ ॥१०॥
मनोऽभिलषितं यानं धनेषत्वमखंडितम् ।
पुष्पकं चाप्येकदाऽसौ द्रष्टुं विश्रवसं ययौ ॥११॥
पुष्पकेण धनाध्यक्षो ब्रह्मदत्तेन भास्वता ।
नत्वा तातं तदा प्राह न स्थानं ब्रह्मणा मम ॥१२॥

nirmame viśravā nāmadheyam vedanidhiṁ śubham /
bharadvājasutāyām ca viśravā nirmame sutam // 9 //
śreṣṭham vaiśravaṇam tasmai prasanno'bhūdvidhiścīrāt /

vidhirvaiśravaṇāyātha tuṣṭastattapasā dadau // 10 //
 mano'bhilaṣitaṁ yānaṁ dhaneṣatvamakhaṁḍitaṁ /
 puṣpakam cāpyekadā'sau draṣṭum viśravasaṁ yayau // 11 //
 puṣpakeṇa dhanādhyakṣo brahmadattena bhāsvatā /
 natvā tātaṁ tadā prāha na sthānaṁ brahmaṇā mama // 12 //

Befitting his auspicious name, this son, in due course of time, became famous in the world as one who was skilled in all the Vedas (primary ancient scriptures).

Visrawa begot an excellent son by marrying the daughter of sage Bharadwaj. His name was Vaisrawan. (9)

After some time, the creator Brahma became pleased with Vaisrawan's Tapa (austerity and penances) and granted him his desired boons, viz. the airplane called 'Pushpak', everlasting lordship over unmatched treasury of wealth, and the title of 'Kuber', the treasurer of the Gods.

After getting these boons from Brahma, Kuber (which was the newly acquired title and name of Visrawan) was very elated. Once he rode his magnificent plane, and adorned with the title of being the Lord of Wealth, he went to his father Visrawa to give the good tidings to him. However, when he reached his father, who was obviously extremely glad at the good fortune that his son had achieved, Kuber expressed his dissatisfaction at his acquisitions.

He complained to his father, 'Oh dear father! Brahma has not granted me an independent place to live. (10-12)

दत्तं स्थेयं मया कुत्र तद्विचार्य वदस्व माम् ।
 विश्रवा ह्यपि तं प्राह विश्वकर्मविनिर्मिता ॥13॥
 लंकानाम्नी पुरी श्रेष्ठा सागरेऽस्ति सुमंडिता ।
 त्यक्त्वा विष्णुभयाद्दैत्या विविषुस्तं रसातलम् ॥14॥

dattaṁ stheyam mayā kutra tadvicārya vadasva mām /
 viśravā hyapi taṁ prāha viśvakarmavinirmitā // 13 //
 laṁkānāmnī purī śreṣṭhā sāgare'sti sumanḍitā /
 tyaktvā viṣṇubhayāddaityā viviṣustaṁ rasātalam // 14 //

So please think the matter over and tell me a place befitting my stature where I can go and live.'

Visrawa replied, 'A very beautiful and most excellent city called Lanka had been constructed by Vishwakarma (the Gods' architect). It is situated in the middle of the ocean. The demons who used to dwell there had abandoned it out of fear of Lord Vishnu (and hence it is lying vacant). (13-14)

सुखं त्वं वस तस्यां हि तथेत्युक्त्वा धनेश्वरः ।
 गत्वा तस्यां चिरं कालमुवास पितृसंमतः ॥15॥
 कस्मिंश्चित्त्वथ काले हि सुमालीनाम राक्षसः ।

दुहित्रा व्यवचरद्भूमौ पुष्पकेतुं ददर्श सः ॥16॥

sukhaṁ tvaṁ vasa tasyāṁ hi tathetyuktvā dhaneśvaraḥ /
gatvā tasyāṁ ciraṁ kālamuvāsa piṭṛsaṁmataḥ // 15 //
kaśimmiücittvatha kāle hi sumālīnāma rākṣasaḥ /
duhitrā vyavacaradbhūmau puṣpaketuṁ dadarṣa saḥ // 16 //

You go there and live comfortably.’

Thanking his father and saying ‘so shall it be’, Kuber went there (Lanka) and lived there for a long time. (15)

Some time passed without any development. Once a time a demon named Sumali came to the surface of the earth with his daughter to roam around (and show her the sights of the new world)¹.

During the course of their wanderings he sighted the wonderful plane called Pushpak in the sky. (16)

[Note—¹When the demons had abandoned Lanka because they had feared Lord Vishnu, the third of the Trinity Gods and the protector of the world, they went to the nether world and started living there. Once upon a time one of these demons decided to take his daughter to the surface of the earth for sight-seeing and to show her the ‘other side of the world’ where their erstwhile kingdom of Lanka was situated.]

हिताय चिंतयामास राक्षसानां महामनाः ।

कैकसीं तनयामाह गच्छ विश्रवसं मुनिम् ॥17॥

वरयस्व मुनेस्तेजःप्रतापात्ते सुताः शुमाः ।

भविष्यन्ति धनाध्यक्षतुल्या नो हितकारिणः ॥18॥

hitāya ciṁtayāmāsa rākṣasānāṁ mahāmanāḥ /
kaikasīṁ tanayāmāha gaccha viśravaśaṁ munim // 17 //
varayasva munestejaḥpratāpātte sutāḥ śumāḥ /
bhaviṣyanti dhanādhyakṣatulyā no hitakāriṇaḥ // 18 //

[When Sumali saw the plane he became pensive as recollected the good old days when the demons had inhabited it and were enjoying the good things of life.]

As he was worried about the future of the demon race and seeking some way to ensure their welfare (as well as to take revenge upon the Gods, especially Vishnu who had forced the demons out of Lanka), he prevailed upon his daughter named Kaikasi to go to sage Visrawa and please him. When successful in doing so she should ask the sage to bless her with sons befitting the greatness and the mystical powers that the sage possessed. ‘These sons of yours would be as majestic, powerful and strong as Kuber (because they too would have the sage’s genes in them). If this succeeds then it would auger well for all of us as a race of demons.’ (17-18)

सा संध्यायां ययौ शीघ्रं मुनेरग्रे व्यवस्थिता ।

लिखन्ती भुवि पादांगुष्ठेन चाधोमुखी स्थिता ।।19।।

तामपृच्छन्मुनिः का त्वं साऽऽह त्वं वेत्तमर्हसि ।

ततो ध्यात्वा मुनिः सर्वं ज्ञात्वा तां प्रत्यभाषत ।।20।।

sā saṁdhyāyām yayau śīghraṁ muneraḡre vyavasthitā /
likhantī bhuvi pādāṁguṣṭhena cādhomukhī sthitā // 19 //
tāmapṛcchanmuniḥ kā tvaṁ sā"ha tvaṁ vettamarhasi /
tato dhyātvā muniḥ sarvaṁ jñātvā tāṁ pratyabhāṣata // 20 //

In accordance with this plan, she (Kaikasi) went to the sage (Visrawa) in the evening hours. She started scrapping the earth shyly with the big toe of her leg, digging a shallow furrow in the earth, and stood before the sage. [Her demeanours and gestures clearly hinted that she wished to have some passionate moments in private with the sage.] (19)

The sage glanced at her and asked who she was. She replied (in a lust-full tone) that (being a great sage who possesses transcendental powers) he could know the answer himself if he so desired.

The sage meditated for some time and became aware of everything. (20)

ज्ञातं तवाभिलषितं मत्तः पुत्रानभीप्ससि ।

दारुणायां तु वेलायामागताऽसि सुमध्यमे ।।21।।

अतस्ते दारुणौ पुत्रौ राक्षसौ संभविष्यतः ।

साऽब्रवीन्मुनिषादूलं त्वत्तोऽप्येवंविधौ सुतौ ।।22।।

jñātaṁ tavābhilaṣitaṁ mattaḥ putrānabhīpsasi /
dāruṇāyām tu velāyāmāgatā'si sumadhyame // 21 //
ataste dāruṇau putrau rākṣasau sambhaviṣyataḥ /
sā'bravīnmuniṣārdūlaṁ tvatto'pyevaṁvidhau sutau // 22 //

The sage replied, 'I have become aware of your wishes. You want to have sons from me. But oh the lady with a narrow waist (sumadhyame)¹, you have come here at a most inappropriate time (because these are twilight hours and not the proper time for conceiving good and noble sons). This is why you shall give birth to two monstrous who would become terrible demons.'

Taken aback, she pleaded with the sage, 'Oh great sage! Is it ever remotely possible that I shall get sons like the monsters you have just said they would be even from such a great and blessed sage like you are, one who is regarded as being a lion (king) amongst sages (muniṣārdūlaṁ)? (21-22)

[Note--¹In ancient classical literature of India, the beauty of a woman is usually described by citing one or more of her physical features that stand out as being the most remarkable. In the case of Kaikasi, she being the daughter of a monster named

Sumali, the only physical feature that could be described as ‘beautiful and attractive’ in her was her slim waist.]

तामाहान्तिमजो यस्ते भविष्यति महामतिः ।

ततः सा सुषुवे पुत्रान् यथाकाले सुमध्यमा ।।23।।

रावणं कुम्भकर्णं च क्रौंचीं शूप्रणखां शुभाम् ।

कुम्भीनसीं कनीयांसं तृतीयं तं विभीषणम् ।।24।।

रावणः कुम्भकर्णश्च त्रयो दुहितरस्तथा ।

दुर्वृत्ताः प्राणिभक्षाश्च बभूवुर्मुनिहिंसकाः ।।25।।

tāmāhāntimajo yaste bhaviṣyati mahāmatih /
tataḥ sā suṣuve putrān yathākāle sumadhyamā // 23 //
rāvaṇaṁ kumbhakaraṇaṁ ca krauñcīṁ śūpraṇakhāṁ śubhām /
kubhīnasīṁ kanīyāṁsaṁ tṛtīyaṁ taṁ vibhīṣaṇam // 24 //
rāvaṇaḥ kumbhakaraṇaśca trayo duhitarastathā /
durvṛttāḥ prāṇibhakṣāśca babhūvurmunihiṁsakāḥ // 25 //

Then the great sage blessed her, saying, ‘Alright; your last son would be very wise and noble.’

After some time, three sons were born from the lady who had a beautiful waist (i.e. from Kaikasi). (23)

Ravana, Kumbhakaran, Kraunchi, Supernakha, Kumbhinasi, and the youngest of the siblings who was called Vibhishan (were the names of her six children)¹. (24)

Out of the six children, the first two sons Ravana and Kumbhakaran, as well as the three daughters (Kraunchi, Supernakha, Kumbhinasi) became very immoral monsters who were cruel flesh eaters, devouring all living beings (ogres) and killing sages and ascetics. (25)

[Note—¹There were six children of Kaikasi. Her three sons were Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan, and three daughters were Kraunchi, Supernakha and Kumbhinasi. Ravana was the eldest, and Vibhishan the youngest.]

एकदा रावणो मात्रा लिंगार्थं प्रेषितः शिवम् ।

कर्तुं प्रसन्नमकरोत् कैलासे कर्म दुष्करम् ।।26।।

किञ्चित्त्रीयं शिरष्ठित्वा वीणां षड्जस्वरैर्मुहुः ।

कृत्वा पीठं हि देहस्य तन्मूलं शिरसस्तथा ।।27।।

तदग्रं पादयोः कृत्वा शंकून्गुलिभिस्तथा ।

तंत्रीः कृत्वाऽन्त्रमालाभिः शतोषोऽथ सहस्रत्रयः ।।28।।

एवं कृत्वा स्वदेहस्य वीणां षड्जस्वरैर्मुहुः ।

चकार स्वमुखेनैव गांधर्वं गायनं शुभम् ॥29॥

ekadā rāvaṇo mātrā liṅgārthaṁ preṣitaḥ śivam /
kartuṁ prasannamakarot kailāse karma duṣkaram // 26 //
kiṁcitstrīyaṁ śiraṣchittvā vīṇāṁ ṣaḍjasvarairmuhuh /
kṛtvā pīṭhaṁ hi dehasya tanmūlaṁ śirasastathā // 27 //
tadagraṁ pādayoḥ kṛtvā śaṁkūnaṁgulibhistathā /
taṁtrīḥ kṛtvā'ntramālābhiḥ śatoṣo'tha sahastraṣaḥ // 28 //
evaṁ kṛtvā svadehasya vīṇāṁ ṣaḍjasvarairmuhuh /
cakāra svamukhenaiva gāṁdharaṁ gāyanaṁ śubham // 29 //

One day Ravana's mother Kaikasi sent him to Lord Shiva to bring the Lord's symbol known as the Shiva-Lingam.

Obeying his mother, Ravana went to Mt. Kailash (where Lord Shiva is believed to dwell) and did a most astonishing thing that defies imagination to please Lord Shiva. (26)

[What did he do?] He made an Indian lute out of his own body (so that he could use this musical instrument to play a sweet tune to accompany the prayers that he would offer to Shiva to please him)!

He crafted the upper part of this lute from a part of his own skull that he cut-off. Then he used his body to mould the rest of the lute. He used his legs to make the lower part of the lute, his fingers as the knobs and the pegs, and pulled out his own intestines to make countless fine wires that were tautly tied around these pegs and knobs so that they would produce musical notes when pulled or struck. In this wondrous way he made a unique and magnificent lute.

After that he began singing beautifully like the Gandharvas (the singers of heaven), using the lute so crafted from his own body to produce all the six categories of tunes and notes that are deemed to be alluring, sweet and charming in classical Indian music. (27-29)

तदा नंदीश्वरं प्राह शंकरो लोकषंकरः ।

षिरः संधाय हस्तेन त्वया वाच्योऽद्य रावणः ॥30॥

आत्मलिंगं राक्षसं त्वां शंकरो न प्रदास्यति ।

हृद्गतं हि मया ज्ञातं शंभोस्त्वं याहि स्वस्थलम् ॥31॥

tadā naṁdīśvaraṁ prāha śaṁkaro lokaṣaṁkaraḥ /
śiraḥ saṁdhāya hastena tvayā vācya'dya rāvaṇaḥ // 30 //
ātmaliṅga rākṣasaṁ tvāṁ śaṁkaro na pradāsyati /
hṛdgataṁ hi mayā jñātaṁ śaṁbhostvaṁ yāhi svasthalam // 31 //

Then Lord Shiva, who does good for the whole world, asked his close attendant Nandi, the Bull, to go to Ravana and fix his head (put it back on his body) with his own hands. Then Nandi was asked to tell Ravana, 'Lord Shiva will never give the

Lingam, which he holds very dear to his heart, to a demon like you, for I (Nandi) know the inner thoughts of Shiva (as I am very close to the Lord and his confidante). So therefore you should go back to your place. (30-31)

इत्युक्त्वा प्रेषणीयः स रावणः स्त्रस्थल त्वया ।

इति शंभोर्वचः श्रुत्वा ययौ नंदी स रावणम् ॥32॥

षिरः संयोज्य हस्तेन ध्योक्तं तं न्यवेदयत् ।

तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणश्चापि समतिक्रम्य तां निषाम् ॥33॥

ityuktvā preṣaṇīyaḥ sa rāvaṇaḥ strasthala tvayā /
iti śambhorvacaḥ śrutvā yayau naṇdī sa rāvaṇam // 32 //
ṣiraḥ saṁyojya hastena ṣviktaṁ taṁ nyavedayat /
tacchru tvā rāvaṇaścāpi samatikramya tāṁ niṣām // 33 //

Shiva instructed Nandi that after telling Ravana this, he must send him back home.
Hearing these words of Lord Shiva, Nandi went to Ravana. (32)

He stitched Ravana's head back on his body and told him what Lord Shiva had said.
But even after hearing Shiva's words (instructions), Ravana did not return home but stayed there during the night. (33)

चकार पूर्ववद्गानं द्वितीय दिवसे पुनः ।

नन्दिना शंकरश्चापि पूर्ववत्तं न्यवेदयत् ॥34॥

इत्थं दश दिनान्येव गतानि रावणस्य च ।

अथ तत्कर्मणा तुष्टः शंकरो गायनेन च ॥35॥

cakāra pūrvavadgānaṁ dvitīya divase punaḥ /
nandinā śaṁkaraścāpi pūrvavattaṁ nyavedayat // 34 //
itthaṁ daśa dinānyeva gatāni rāvaṇasya ca /
atha tatkarmaṇā tuṣṭaḥ śaṁkaro gāyanena ca // 35 //

The next day Ravana once again began singing praises for Lord Shiva in the same way as he had done on the first day. Once again Lord Shiva sent Nandi with the same message as was done the earlier day (asking Ravana to go back home). (34)

In this way, Ravana continued for ten days with his songs using the lute (made daily from his own body after it was restored by Nandi the previous evening) and the prayers that he offered to please Lord Shiva. (35)

भूत्वा प्रसन्नस्तं प्राह वरं वरय चेति वै ।

दृष्ट्वा शंभुं रावणोऽपि षिरसा तेन संधितः ॥36॥

वरयामास मन्मात्रे ह्यात्मलिंगं तथा मम ।

पत्न्यर्थं पार्वतीं देहि तथेत्युक्त्वा ददौ शिवः ।।37।।

bhūtvā prasannastaṁ prāha vara mvaraya ceti vai /
dr̥ṣṭvā śaṁbhuṁ rāvaṇo'pi śirasā tena saṁdhitāḥ // 36 //
varayāmāsa manmātre hyātmalīṅgaṁ tathā mama /
patnyartham pārvatīm dehi tathetyuktvā dadau śivaḥ // 37 //

Finally Lord Shiva was pleased with Ravana's perseverance and tenacity of purpose with which he had been performing such a difficult penance (as making a lute out of his own body) and singing such sweet songs to pray fervently to the Lord.

So the Lord appeared before Ravana, and stitching his head back to his body with his own hands. (36)

Then he asked Ravana to seek a boon. Ravana asked Shiva, 'If you are indeed pleased with me, then give your Lingam which is so dear to your heart so that I can give it as a gift to my mother, and also give Parvati¹ to me so I can make her my wife!'

Saying 'so shall it be', Lord Shiva granted the two boons. (37)

[Note—¹Parvati is Shiva's divine consort! It's so incredulous to believe that Shiva would give away his own consort to another person, demon or not, to make it possible for him to wed her. This instance shows that Lord Shiva is indeed a true ascetic from his inner-core because he is attached to none, not even his own wife, as well as a matchless and selfless giver of gifts and desired grants like none other in this creation, because when he is pleased with someone he does not blink in fulfilling his desires, no matter how absolutely absurd, unbelievable and horrible such desires are.]

गृहीत्वा गंतुकामं तं पुनः प्राह हरस्तदा ।

मत्तोषार्थं त्वया वीर दषवारं निजं शिरः ।।38।।

खड्गेन छेदितं यस्मात्तस्मात्तेऽद्य शिरांसि हि ।

दष विंशद्भुजाश्चापि भविष्यन्ति गिरा मम ।।39।।

gr̥hītvā gaṁtukāmaṁ taṁ punaḥ prāha harastadā /
mattoṣārthaṁ tvayā vīra daṣavāraṁ nijaṁ śiraḥ // 38 //
khaṅgena cheditaṁ yasmāttasmātte'dya śirāṁsi hi /
daṣa viṁṣadbhujāścāpi bhaviṣyanti girā mama // 39 //

When he (Ravana) took possession of them (i.e. the Shiva Lingam and Parvati) by the virtue of the boon granted by Lord Shiva and was on his way back home, the Lord blessed him further, saying, 'Since you had cut your head ten times with a sword to please me, so I bless you that you will have ten heads and twenty arms¹'. (38-39)

[Note—¹An ordinary individual has two arms and a head. Hence the arithmetic of this boon is simple—viz. if Ravana should have ten heads because he had chopped-off his heads ten times to offer them to Lord Shiva, then he must also have a proportionate

number of arms to go with each of these heads, i.e. each head must have two accompanying arms, which means ten heads would have twenty arms.]

ततः स रावणस्तुष्टो गिरिजालिंगसंयुतः ।

विषद्वजो दशग्रीवः स्वस्थलं गन्तुमुद्यतः ॥40॥

कल्पभेदाच्छतषिराः शतवारं प्रखंडितैः ।

स प्रोक्तः स्वषिरोभिर्हि शतद्वयभुजः क्वचित् ॥41॥

tataḥ sa rāvaṇastuṣṭo girijāliṅgasamyutaḥ /
viṣṭadbhujo daśagrīvaḥ svasthalaṁ gantumudyataḥ // 40 //
kalpabhedācchataṣirāḥ śatavāraṁ prakhaṇḍitaiḥ /
sa proktaḥ svaṣirobhirhi śatadvayabhujāḥ kkacit // 41 //

Thus becoming ten-headed and twenty-armed, Ravana joyously started on his journey back to his place with Parvati and the Shiva Lingam that he had got by Shiva's boon. (40)

In some other ancient versions of this story which date back to some different Kalpas (eras or epochs that relate to different frames of time in the cycle of creation—"kalpabheda") than to the one which is being narrated presently, Ravana has been described as having a hundred heads and two hundred arms. (41)

तस्माद्वि हृतवान् विष्णुस्त्वं तं मार्गे प्रतार्य च ।

तथैवाब्धेस्तटे लिंगं गोकर्णं रावणात्त्वया ॥42॥

गृहीत्वा स्थापितं पूर्वं रावणोऽपि गृहं ययौ ।

मंदोदरीं हरेर्वाक्याल्लब्ध्वा मयसुतां शुभाम् ॥43॥

tasmādvi hṛtavān viṣṇustvaṁ taṁ mārgē pratārya ca /
tathaiābdhēstaṭe liṅgaṁ gokarṇaṁ rāvaṇāttvayā // 42 //
gr̥hītvā sthāpitaṁ pūrvam rāvaṇo'pi gr̥haṁ yayau /
maṇḍodariṁ harervākyāllabdhvā mayasutāṁ śubhām // 43 //

[Lord Shiva continued his narration to Parvati and said—] Then Lord Vishnu intervened on the way and snatched you from Ravana's custody and took you away. Eventually you too managed to dodge Vishnu and free yourself.

But when you were taken away by Lord Vishnu, you took along the Shiva Lingam with you. Later on when you had freed yourself from Vishnu's custody, you had established that Lingam on the shore of the ocean, and this consecrated Lingam came to be known by the name of 'Gokarna'.

Though peeved and frustrated, but unable to do anything about the matter of either retrieving you or the Lingam, Ravana returned empty-handed.

In due course of time, however, in accordance to the words of Vishnu (that he had given Ravana when the latter vehemently opposed Vishnu taking away Parvati

from his possession), a beautiful daughter of the demon named Maya (*mayasutām*) was made available to him. She was called Mandodari. [She was to replace Parvati and become Ravana's wife. Refer verse no. 44 herein below.]¹ (42-43)

[Note—¹One can guess what must have probably happened. When Lord Vishnu came to know of the developments, he was shocked. It would be extremely outrageous and ridiculous if Shiva's consort was married to a demon! So it had to be stopped. Vishnu went and by some clever maneuvering and intelligent trick managed to convince Ravana that Parvati would not suit him as his wife, and there were far more beautiful, charming and sweet virgins available to him in marriage. After all, Parvati was already a married woman, and therefore she would not be as satisfying to him as a virgin maiden. Besides this, since Ravana has got Parvati against her wishes, it is absolutely possible that she would some day betray him in favour of her husband, Shiva, and might do something to escape from his clutches, even if it involves killing him or poisoning him. Further, her loyalty will be always doubtful. Say then, who in his right senses would like to marry such a woman whose very integrity is questionable, who may even spy against him in favour of the Gods who were his arch enemy?

Ravana's mind and resolve were distracted by Lord Vishnu's mystical powers and the logics he presented. Ravana thought that the arguments of Vishnu were strong, and he may have to lament later on if he did not pay heed. So he agreed, but on the condition that a virgin lady better in all ways than his present possession would be made available to him. In due course of time therefore, as Lord Vishnu had promised him, the demon Maya's daughter Mandodari was provided to him in marriage.

As to the question of Lingam being taken away by Parvati when she was rescued by Vishnu, it could have been that at the time of her leaving Lord Shiva to go with Ravana she had asked the Lord to grant her the permission to keep the Lingam with her as a token of remembrance of the him in a far-away and alien land. Ravana agreed as he did not see any harm in this arrangement as Parvati was to become his wife and live right under his watchful eyes inside the secure four walls of his home. He did not think it wise and prudent to make this an issue and create a new hurdle when his plans were almost on the verge of being successful and he was about to return home triumphantly with the desired trophies.

So he allowed Parvati to keep the Lingam with her on the way back home. Enroute he was intercepted by Vishnu who managed to prevail upon him to let Parvati go. Vishnu's magical charm managed to delude Ravana so much that the Lingam skipped his attention. It also may be that he was more concerned about getting a beautiful virgin as his wife, and his mind was so passionately preoccupied with this opportunity which virtually mesmerized him that the lifeless Lingam did not matter to him much, more so because it was his mother's desire and not his. Of course he would conjure up some convincing excuse for his mother for not bringing the Lingam for her, and surely his mother loved him so much that aside some tantrums and angry words from her side nothing more would happen.]

मातुः कार्यमसंपाद्य तूष्णीमेवातिलज्जितः ।

मन्दोदर्याऽकरोत्स्वीयं विवाहं तोषपूरितः ॥४४॥

दृष्ट्वैकदा धनाध्यक्षं पुष्पकस्थं तु कैकसी ।

पुत्रान् धिक्कारयामास यूयं षढा मृतोपमाः ।।45।।

mātuḥ kāryamasānpādya tūṣṇīmevātilajjitah /
maṁndodaryā'karotsvīyaṁ vivāha toṣapūritah // 44 //
ḍḍaṣṭvaikadā dhanādhyakṣaṁ puṣpakasthaṁ tu kaikasī /
putrān dhikkārayāmāsa yūyaṁ ṣaḍhā mṛtopamāḥ // 45 //

Unable to fulfill his mother's wishes he felt very ashamed of himself as he could not reply her for his failure, and therefore he was very unhappy and discontented.

But when in due course of time he married Mandodari he once again began to feel contented and cheerful. (44)

One day when his mother Kaikasi watched Kuber, the lord of wealth, wondering in the sky seated in the majestic plane called Pushpak, she was overwhelmed with jealousy, and sternly rebuking her own sons she vehemently admonished them, saying sarcastically, 'You are all impotent and inept, and worthless as someone who is dead. (45)

सापत्न्यबंधुं ये दृष्ट्वा जायन्ते नात्र लज्जिताः ।

ते मातृवचनं श्रुत्वा ययुर्गोकर्णमुत्तमम् ।।46।।

दषवर्षसहस्राणि कुम्भकर्णोऽकरोत्तपः ।

विभीषणोऽपि धर्मात्मा सत्यधर्मपरायणः ।।47।।

पंचवर्षसहस्राणि पादांगुष्ठेन तस्थिवान् ।

दिव्यवर्षसहस्रं तु धूमाहारो दषाननः ।।48।।

sāpatnyabarṁdhum ye ḍḍaṣṭvā jāyaṁte nātra lajjitāḥ /
te mātṛvacanaṁ śrutvā yayurgokaṁnamutamam // 46 //
daṣavarṣasahastrāṇi kumbhakarṇo'karottapaḥ /
vibhīṣaṇo'pi dharmātmā satyadharmaparāyaṇaḥ // 47 //
paṁcavarṣasahastrāṇi pādāṁguṣṭhena tasthivān /
divyavarṣasahastraṁ tu dhūmāhāro daṣānanaḥ // 48 //

Aren't all of you ashamed of yourselves when you see the excellence and the glory of your step-brother (Kuber)?' [Remember: Kuber was also the son of Visrawa like Ravana etc.]

Stung by this bitter taunt of their mother, the three brothers (decided to acquire immense powers that would surpass those of Kuber, and to achieve this they) went to where Lord Gokarna was. [Gokarna, as we have read earlier, was the site where Lord Shiva's Lingam had been established by Parvati.] (46)

At that holy place, Kumbhakran did Tapa (penance) for ten thousand years.

Vibhishan, who was by nature a pious person and one who willingly followed Dharma (religious principles, and obeying their good and righteous teachings—"dharmātmā") as well as one who was a strict adherent to the principles of Satya

(satyadharmaparāyaṇaḥ”), did Tapa for five hundred years by standing on the toe of his foot.

The ten-headed Ravana too did severe Tapa for ten thousand years, subsisting only by drinking (i.e. inhaling; gulping down) air. (47-48)

पूर्णं वर्षसहस्रं स्वं शीर्षमग्नौ जुहाव सः ।

एवं वर्षसहस्राणि नव तस्यातिचक्रमुः ॥49॥

अथ वर्षसहस्रे तु दशमे दशमं षिरः ।

छेत्तुकामस्य धर्मात्मा प्रसन्नोऽभूत्प्रजापतिः ॥50॥

pūrṇe varṣasahastraṁ svarṁ śīrṣamagnau juhāva saḥ /
evam varṣasahastrāṇi nava tasyāticakramuḥ //49 //
atha varṣasahastre tu daśame daśamaṁ śiraḥ /
chettukāmasya dharmātmā prasanno'bhūtprajāpatiḥ // 50 //

At the end of one thousand years, Ravana used to offer one of his ten heads to the sacred fire as an offering to Lord Gokarna (i.e. Lord Shiva symbolized by the Lingam). In this way nine thousand years passed during which he continued to offer one head into the sacred fire. (49)

When ten thousand years passed and he was about to offer his last and tenth head to the sacred fire, the Prajapati Brahma (i.e. the Creator) became pleased with his Tapa and his firm resolution to achieve his objective. (50)

उवाच वचनं ब्रह्मा वरं वरय कांक्षितम् ।

तदोवाच दशस्यस्तमवध्यत्वं वृणोम्यहम् ॥51॥

सुपणनागयक्षेभ्यो देवेभ्यश्चासुरैरपि ।

त्वत्तः शभोर्महाविष्णोर्मानुषा तृणोपमाः ॥52॥

uvāca vacanaṁ brahmā varaṁ varaya kāmṁkṣitam /
tadovāca daśasyastamavadhyatvaṁ vṛṇomyaham // 51 //
supaṇanāgayakṣebhyo devebhyaścāsuraairapi /
tvattaḥ śabhormahāviṣṇormānuṣā tṛṇopamāḥ // 52 //

Brahma said, ‘Oh son! Ask what you desire.’

Then Ravana prayed, ‘I ask from you immunity from death, that I may not be killed by any of the following: Garud (the celestial vehicle of Lord Vishnu, the Eagle; i.e. from all birds), Serpents (from all reptiles and subterranean creatures), Yakshas (a sort of half-gods who have great mystical powers and invincible strength, and can assume any form), Gods, Asurs (non-Gods; the ogres, demons, monsters and other members of this class), you yourself (i.e. the creator Brahma), Shambhu (Lord Shiva) and Vishnu. I don’t care about human beings for they are no better than a twig for me¹.’ (51-52)

[Note—¹Ravana thought that he was being smart by seeking immunity from death from all possible quarters that were strong and powerful enough to cause him harm. So if the three mighty Gods of the Trinity, such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, along with all other Gods and semi-Gods, his peers such as the other demons who may challenge his authority, all other creatures who either lived in the sky (such creatures being represented by Garud) or could pose danger to him on the surface of the earth or even below it (such as the poisonous serpents)—if none of these powerful forces of the world would be able to harm him, then what do the humble human beings count?

This overconfidence of Ravana that no human being would be able to confront or kill him led him to leave a loophole through which death would finally strike him when the time came—for one day a human being known as Lord Ram would be slaying him in the battle-field of Lanka! This is the reason why Lord Vishnu had come down on earth as a ‘human being’ in the body of Lord Ram on the prayers of the Gods and Mother Earth when the horrors, the miseries and the torments unleashed by Ravana became intolerable, and the need arose to put an end of this scourge. We shall read about it a little later.]

तथेत्युक्त्वा विधिस्तस्मै दश शीर्षाणि संददौ ।

विभीषणाय सद्बुद्धिममरत्वं ददौ मुदा ॥53॥

विमोहितं सरस्वत्या देवेन्द्रपदकाक्षिणम् ।

कुम्भकर्णं विधिः प्राह वरं वरय वाञ्छितम् ॥54॥

सोऽपि तं वरयामास निद्रांमषाणसिकी शुभाम् ।

षाण्मासीये चैकदिनेऽषणं ब्रह्माऽपिदत्तवान् ॥55॥

tathetyuktvā vidhistasmai daśa śīrṣāṇi saṁdadau /
vibhīṣaṇāya sadbuddhimamaratvaṁ dadau mudā // 53 //
vimohitaṁ sarasvatyā deveṇḍrapadakāṁkṣiṇam /
kumbhakarṇaṁ vidhiḥ prāha varaṁ varaya vāṁchitam // 54 //
so'pi taṁ varayāmāsa nidrāṁmaṣāṇasikīṁ śubhām /
ṣāṇmāsiye caikadine'ṣaṇaṁ brahmā'pidattavān // 55 //

Saying ‘so be it’, the Creator blessed Ravana further by granting him ten heads (because he had offered his heads to the sacred fire for nine times and was ready to offer it for the tenth time as well), and granted Vibhishan with wisdom and an eternal life¹. (53)

Then the Creator asked Kumbhakaran, who was eager to acquire the exalted stature of Indra, the title and honour that the king of Gods possesses, to seek what he wanted. (54)

At this, Kumbhakaran, whose mind was deluded by goddess Saraswati², asked that he wanted to enjoy the pleasure of sleeping for six continuous months, so he should be granted the boon of uninterrupted sleep for six months at a time.

Hence, in accordance to his wishes, the Creator granted him sleep for six continuous months, after which he would wake up to feed himself and once again enjoy the luxury of sleeping fast for another six uninterrupted months, and this cycle would continue forever. (55)

[Note—¹Ravana had revealed the evil side of his nature by not only showing his greed for unhindered power but also his bad intentions of using this power to crush everyone, even Death, and thereby overturn the Laws of Nature, by asking that he may not be killed by anyone, something that is too far-fetched and impossible in this mortal world to implement. The Creator immediately sensed trouble, but he could not deny these asked boons to him as he was obliged to recompense Ravana for his Tapa. Ravana was uneasy at the prospect of dying, and so being deprived of the pleasures and comforts of this physical world and enjoyment of its material objects.

In the case of Vibhishan, however, the situation was quite the opposite. He was a follower of Dharma and Truth, and wise also. So he knew very well that the physical gross body of all living beings is perishable, and so it has to die one or the other day. He also knew that the world and its material charms are illusionary as they don't actually give lasting and any true pleasure or comfort to the creature; whatever joy one seems to get in this world are as transient as a bubble of water, here now and gone the next moment. So what is the use of having something that has no pith and substance in it, but is only a castle in the air? The only thing that is eternal, even without specifically asking for it, is the 'soul' or the Atma of all living beings. That is why Vibhishan did not ask for eternity as a boon, but the Creator knew that Vibhishan was a good demon and a noble soul, and so when he would be granted eternity he would understand the true and subtle meaning of this boon, i.e. that his soul would find eternal freedom from the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, as well as the countless miseries and pains that accompany it. So even if he has to shed his physical body in order to obey the Laws of Nature he still would consider himself as being eternal at a subtle and sublime level because his Atma would never die or perish.

Besides this, by being naturally of a spiritual bent of mind and a pious soul, Vibhishan was not attached to any of the things of this material world. So therefore, when he would become eternal Vibhishan would use this opportunity to spread holiness and godly virtues in this world, instead of evil and vices as Ravana was expected to do, by all chances, should he be allowed to become eternal.

²Kumbhakaran wanted to become an 'Indra', or a de-facto King of Gods. He was a 'demon' by his birth, so how can he become even a 'god' what to speak of being a 'king of gods'? The 'gods' and the 'demons' represented two opposite forces of creation—the former stood for goodness and the latter for evilness. Besides this, the Creator, who knows the inner thoughts of all living beings, knew for certain that Ravana and Kumbhakaran were merely acting as fronts for the huge race of cruel, blood-thirsty demons, ogres and monsters; so their wishes were not their individual wishes that can be dealt with at the appropriate time in the appropriate manner even if they are accepted for now with the hope that any damage caused by them to the fabric of creation would be limited only to these two individuals who could be tackled by some method in the future, but it would open a Pandora's Box from which would spill out an endlessly enormous volume of poisonous vermins that would be impossible to control once they are unleashed. That situation, if it all comes to happen, would be

disastrous for the welfare of this creation of which the Creator is the guardian. So he cannot allow it to happen.

Imagine what would happen to the well-being of this creation and its humble creatures if one demon brother, i.e. Ravana, cannot be killed by anyone, and the second demon brother, i.e. Kumbhakaran, becomes the ruler of the world by becoming Indra! It would be akin to having the blazing sun pouring its heat in the day and also in the night, with not a breather in between when the scorched and thirsty creature could find some rest.

Hence, the simple way out of this log-jam was to make one of them, in this case it was Kumbhakaran, sleep even while the other, in this case Ravana, ran wild and amok in the world. At least the unleashed horrors would thereby be halved if Kumbhakaran is intoxicated into a deep stupor by making him go to sleep.

So the goddess of wisdom got into the act and influenced Kumbhakaran's mind which made him ask for this ridiculous boon of being able to enjoy sleep for six months at a stretch. Just look at the laughable side of this boon—a person does severe Tapa for ten thousand years asks as a boon that he could sleep for six months at a stretch! Who would have prevented Kumbhakaran from sleeping as much and as long as he wanted to even without the boon? But the Creator did not wish to take any risk—so he ensured that at least one half of the torment of this world was avoided by making one of the tormentors keep quiet and knocked out by way of sleeping when he sealed and delivered this insurance in the form of a 'granted boon'.]

ततोऽन्तर्द्धानमगमद्विधिस्तेऽपि गृहं ययुः ।

सुमाली बरलब्धांस्तान् ज्ञात्वा दौहित्रसत्तमान् ।।56।।

पातालान्निर्भयः प्रायात्प्रहस्ताद्यैर्भुवं सुखम् ।

मन्त्रिवाक्याद्दृष्टास्योऽपि निष्कास्य धनद बलात् ।।57।।

tato'ntarddhānamagamadvidhiste'pi gṛhaṁ yayuḥ /
sumālī baralabdhāmstān jñātvā dauhitrāsattamān // 56 //
pātālānnirbhayaḥ prāyātprahastādyairbhuvaṁ sukham /
maṁtrivākyaḍḍāśasyo'pi niṣkāsyā dhanada balāt // 57 //

After that (i.e. after granting the desired boons to the three demon brothers), Brahma disappeared from sight, and they too went back home.

When Sumali learnt that his grandsons had gained the desired boons, he felt very glad and emboldened by this development (as now the demons had almost nothing to fear from the Gods, their arch enemies). So he took along other demons such as Prahasta etc. with him and came (out of his hiding place in the nether world) to the surface of the earth, and began roaming fearlessly as pleased him.

On the advice of his minister (Prahasta), Ravana forced Kuber out of Lanka (where he had been living since he a very long time). [Refer: verse nos. 12-14.] (56-57)

लंकापुर्यां राक्षसैस्तु लंकाराज्यं चकार सः ।

धनदः पितरं पृष्ट्वा त्यक्त्वा लङ्का महायषाः ।।58।।

गत्वा कैलासशिखरं तपसाऽतोषयच्छिवम् ।

तेन सख्यमनुप्राप्य तेनैव परिनन्दितः ॥59॥

अलका नगरीं तत्र निर्ममे विश्वकर्मणा ।

दिक्पालत्वमनुप्राप्य शिवस्य वरदानतः ॥60॥

laṁkāpuryāṁ rākṣasaistu laṁkārajyaṁ cakāra saḥ /
dhanadaḥ pitaraṁ prṣṭvā tyaktvā laṁkā mahāyaśāḥ // 58 //
gatvā kailāsaśikharaṁ tapasā'toṣayacchivam /
tena sakhyamanuprāpya tenaiva parinaṁditaḥ // 59 //
alakā nagarīm tatra nirmame viśvakarmaṇā /
dikpālatvamanuprāpya śivasya varadānataḥ // 60 //

Thereafter, Ravana established his own sovereignty over Lanka and began to rule over the demon race as its king from this place.

Kuber went to consult his father (Visrava), and on his advice he left Lanka. [To wit, instead of confronting Ravana, Kuber decided to leave the city on the advice of his father, and maintain peace. It was a wise decision as it would have been almost impossible to defeat Ravana after the boons of invincibility that he had got from the Creator. Any attempt to retake Lanka would have resulted in a horrible blood-bath.] (58)

Kuber then went to the summit of Mt. Kailash and pleased Lord Shiva with his Tapa. Kuber befriended Shiva, and on his advice he engaged Vishwakarma (the architect of the Gods) to develop a new city called Alka-puri which was to become Kuber's own dwelling place and also serve as the capital of the Gods.

Shiva also blessed Kuber with the honourable title of a 'Digpal' (one of the chief and senior custodians of this world). (59-60)

रावणो विद्युज्जिह्वाय ददौ शूप्रणखां तदा ।

पारिवर्हं ददौ तस्मै दंडकारण्यमुत्तमम् ॥61॥

मातृत्वसुः सुतान् संधूं स्त्रिषिरःखरदूषणान् ।

साहाय्यार्थं ददौ तस्मै तत्कांते तु मृतेऽचिरात् ॥62॥

rāvaṇo vidyujjihvāya dadau śūpraṇakhāṁ tadā /
pāriverhaṁ dadau tasmaiṁ daṁḍakāraṇyamuttamam // 61 //
mātṛtvasuḥ sutān saṁdhūṁ strīṣiraḥkharadūṣaṇān /
sāhāyyārthaṁ dadau tasmai tatkānte tu mṛte'cirāt // 62 //

After some time, Ravana got his sister Supernakha married to Vidyujjivna, and gave the great forest called Dandakaranya to her as a marriage gift. (61)

In due course of time when her husband died, Ravana sent Khar and Dushan, the two sons of his maternal aunt, and others to help her and look after her security. (62)

कुंभीनसीं ददौ हर्षान्मधुदैत्याय रावणः ।
 ददौ मधुवनं तस्मै पारिवर्हमनुत्तमम् ॥63॥
 खड्गजिह्वाय तां क्रौंचीं ददौ प्रेम्णा दषाननः ।
 परलङ्कां पारिवर्हं ददौ तस्यै मनोरमम् ॥64॥

kumbhīnasīm dadau harṣānmadhudaityāya rāvaṇaḥ /
 dadau madhuvanaṁ tasmai pāriverhamanuttamam // 63 //
 khaṅgajihnāya tāṁ krauñcīm dadau premṇā daṣānanaḥ /
 paralaṅkāṁ pāriverhaṁ dadau tasyai manoramam // 64 //

Ravana betrothed his sister named Kumbhinasi to a demon named Madhu, and as a marriage gift gave an excellent forest called Madhu-Van to the couple. [This forest was so-called as it was full of bee hives that dripped honey. “Madhu” means honey or something that is very sweet, and “Vana” means a forest.] (63)

Ravana’s third sister Krounchi was married off to the demon named Khangajivha, and he gave them a most magnificent city called Para-Lanka. [This name suggests that it was at least as wonderful, if not more, as the city of Lanka itself.] (64)

वैरोचनस्य दौहित्रीं वृत्रज्वालेति विश्रुताम् ।
 स्वयंदत्तां मुदोवाह कुम्भकर्णाय रावणः ॥65॥
 गन्धर्वराजस्य सुतां शैलूषस्य महात्मनः ।
 विभीषणस्य भार्यार्थे सरमां स मुदाऽवहत् ॥66॥

vairocanasya dauhitrīm vṛtrajvāleti viśrutām /
 svayam̐dattām mudovāha kumbhakarṇāya rāvaṇaḥ // 65 //
 gandharvarājasya sutām śailūṣasya mahātmanah /
 vibhīṣaṇasya bhāryārthe saramām sa mudā'vahat // 66 //

A beautiful demon maiden named Vritrajwala, the famous grand daughter of the demon Virochan, was offered by her father (the son of Virochan) to Ravana so that she could be married to his brother Kumbhakaran. (65)

Ravana brought a fine lady named Sarama, who was the daughter of Shailusha, the great king of Gandharvas (the musicians of heaven), and betrothed her to his younger brother Vibhishan. (66)

ततो मन्दीदरी पुत्रं मेघनादमजीजनत् ।
 जातमात्रस्तु यो नादं मेघवत्प्रचकार ह ॥67॥

ततः सर्वेऽब्रुवन्मेघनादोऽयमिति वै जनाः ।

गुहायाः कुम्भकर्णोऽपि निद्राव्याप्तो विनिद्रितः ॥68॥

tato mandīdarī putraṁ meghanādamajījanat /
jātamātrastu yo nādaṁ meghavatpracakāra ha // 67 //
tataḥ sarve'bruvanmeghanādo'yamiti vai janāḥ /
guhāyāḥ kubhakarṇo'pi nidrāvyāpto vinidritaḥ // 68 //

In due course of time, Mandodari¹ (the wife of Ravana) gave birth to a son named Meghanad² who began to make a loud noise like the thunder of clouds as soon as he was born. (67)

That is why everyone began calling him by the nickname of 'Meghanad'.

Meanwhile, Kumbhakaran went to a cave and fell asleep. (68)

[Note—¹Mandadori was the daughter of the demon called Maya. He was the architect of the demon race just as Vishwakarma was the architect of the Gods. Refer: (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto13, verse nos. 43-44 herein above; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 178; and (c) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 39-40.

²The word “Megha” means a cloud; and “Naad” means a loud, thunderous noise that appears to be like the clap of thunder as the storm approaches. Hence the son was called ‘Meghanad’ because as soon as he was born he began crying exceptionally loudly, and made so great a deafening noise that it was like the burst of thunder.]

ततः स रावणश्चापि देवगन्धर्वकिन्नरान् ।

हत्वा ऋषीश्वरान्नागान् स्त्रियस्तेषामपाहरत् ॥69॥

धनदोऽपि च तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणस्याक्रमं तदा ।

अधर्मं मा कुरुष्वेति दूतवाक्यैर्न्यवारयत् ॥70॥

tataḥ sa rāvaṇaścāpi devagandharvakinnarān /
hatvā ṛṣīśvarānnāgān striyasteṣāmapāharat // 69 //
dhanado'pi ca tacchrutvā rāvaṇasyākramaṁ tadā /
adharmaṁ mā kuruṣveti dūtavākyaairnyavārayat // 70 //

In the meanwhile, Ravana went on the rampage, thrashing the Gods, the Gandharvas (musicians in heaven), Kinnars (male dancers in heaven), the Rishishwars (great sages who maintained hermitages but were married and had a family), and the Naagas (inhabitants of the subterranean world), and abducting their women by force. (69)

Kuber, when he heard of this nasty deed, felt very indignant, and he sent a message to Ravana through his messengers advising and entreating with him to abstain from perpetrating such horribly sinful deeds. (70)

ततः क्रुद्धो दषग्रीवो जगाम धनदालयम् ।
 विनिजित्य धनाध्यक्षं जहार तस्य पुष्पकम् ॥71॥
 अलकायां यदाऽऽसीत्स सेनया रावणस्तदा ।
 निषायामेकदा भ्रातुः कुबेरस्य सुतेन हि ॥72॥

tataḥ kruddho daṣagrīvo jagāma dhanadālayam /
 viniijimtya dhanādhyakṣaṁ jahāra tasya puṣpakam // 71 //
 alakāyāṁ yadā"sītsa senayā rāvaṇstadā /
 niṣāyāmekadā bhrātuḥ kuberasya sutena hi // 72 //

When Ravana heard this good and sane advice, he got all the more infuriated as he took it as an affront to his authority and an attempt by his step-brother to raise fingers at him. So he angrily went to attack Kuber, and after vanquishing him he snatched the air plane called Pushpak from him and brought it back with him as a trophy¹. (71)

At the time Ravana was at Alkapuri with his army of demons to conquer Kuber, a celestial damsel or nymph (an Apsara) named Rambha, who was one of the most beautiful maidens in heaven, was on her way to Alkapuri at the invitation of Nalkuber, the son of Kuber, to meet him. As was the fiat of fate, she arrived at Alkapuri at an inappropriate time when the war was raging in the city (between Kuber and Ravana), because she was unaware of the developments. She was finely decorated, and had magnificent anklets on her legs from which a pleasant jingling and bristling sound emanated as she walked. (72)

[Note—¹It was this very plane that had aroused jealousy in the heart of his demoness mother Kaikasi: refer verse nos. 44-46 herein above.]

प्रार्थिता सा पुरा रम्भा चकार नियतं दिनम् ।
 अज्ञातवृत्ता वेगेन ययौ खान्नु पुरस्वना ॥73॥
 रावणोऽपि च तां दृष्ट्वा बलादेव प्रभुक्तवान् ।
 चिरान्मुक्ताऽथ वृत्तं सा कौबेरं सन्यवेदयत् ॥74॥
 क्रुद्धः सोऽपि ददौ शापं रावणाय महात्मने ।
 अद्यारभ्य दषास्यश्चेद्विरक्तां स्त्रियमुत्तमाम् ॥75॥

prārthitā sā purā rambhā cakāra niyataṁ dinam /
 ajñātavṛttā vegena yayau khānnū purasvanā // 73 //
 rāvaṇo'pi ca tāṁ dṛṣṭvā balādeva prabhuktavān /
 cirānmuktā'tha vṛttam sā kauberaṁ sanyavedayat // 74 //
 krūddhaḥ so'pi dadau śāpaṁ rāvaṇāya mahātmāne /
 adyārabhya daṣāsyascedviraktāṁ striyamuttamām // 75 //

When Ravana's eyes fell on her he grabbed her and forced himself upon her (raped her).

Rambha managed to free herself after a long time from his clutches, and then she went to Nalkuber and narrated the incident to him. (73)

The angry Nalkuber cursed Ravana vehemently and said, 'Oh you ten-headed wretched fellow. From today onwards if you sexually assault any woman without her consent then you will die the same instant.'

One of the messengers of Ravana heard this curse and conveyed the news to his master. (74-75)

[Note—Obviously Ravana was not present at the place where Rambha told Nalkuber about her experience. On learning the evil deed Nalkuber lost his patience and immediately cursed Ravana. One of the spies who must have been following Rambha on the instructions of Ravana, or even out of curiosity of his own, heard it, and he, being loyal to his master Ravana, immediately reported the matter to him in order to alert him.]

हठाद्भोक्ष्यति चेत्तहिं क्षणमात्रान्मरिष्यति ।

इति शापं रावणोऽपि शुश्राव चरवाक्यतः ॥76॥

तदारभ्य स्त्रियं काममनिच्छन्तीं न धर्षयन् ।

ततो यमं च वरुणं निर्जित्य समरेऽसुरः ॥77॥

स्वर्गलोकमगात्तूर्णं देवराजजिघांसया ।

ततो रावणमभ्येत्य बबन्ध त्रिदशेश्वरः ॥78॥

haṭhādbhoksyati cettahiṁ kṣaṇamātrānmarīṣyati /
iti śāpaṁ rāvaṇo'pi śuśrāva caravākyataḥ // 76 //
tadārabhya striyaṁ kāmamanicchantīṁ na dharṣayan /
tato yamaṁ ca varuṇaṁ nirjitya samare'suraḥ // 77 //
svargalokamagāttūrṇaṁ devarājajighāṁsayā /
tato rāvaṇamabhyetya babandha tridaśeśvaraḥ // 78 //

From that day Ravana stopped assaulting and insulting women who were not interested in his overtures or who did not like him to disturb them.

Meanwhile, after vanquishing Kuber, Ravana conquered Yamraj (the God of death) and Varun (the God of water) in battle, and then immediately went to heaven to launch a campaign with an intention to kill Indra, the king of Gods.

The 'lord of the three worlds' (tridaśeśvara—i.e. Indra) boldly went to face Ravana, and captured him. (76-78)

तच्छ्रुत्वा सहसाऽऽगत्य मेघनादः प्रतापवान् ।

कृत्वा युद्धं महाघोरं जित्वा त्रिदशपुङ्गवम् ॥79॥

इन्द्रं घृत्वा दृढं बद्ध्वा मेघनादो महाबलः ।

मोचयित्वा स्वपितरं गृहीत्वेन्द्रं ययौ पुरीम् ।।80।।

ब्रह्मा तं मोचयामास देवेन्द्रं मेघनादतः ।

दत्त्वा वरात्राक्षसाय ब्रह्मा स्वभवनं ययौ ।।81।।

tacchrutvā sahasā"gatya meghanādaḥ pratāpavān /
kṛtvā yuddha mahāghora jivā tridaṣapuṅgavam // 79 //
indram ghr̥tvā dṛḍham baddhvā meghanādo mahābalaḥ /
mocayitvā svapitaram gṛh̥itvendram yayau purīm // 80 //
brahmā taṁ mocayāmāsa devendram meghanādataḥ /
dattvā varāṇnākṣasāya brahmā svabhavanam yayau // 81 //

When the most valiant Meghanad heard that his father (Ravana) has been imprisoned by Indra, he immediately responded by attacking his father's captor, and after a fierce battle he succeeded in vanquishing Indra. (79)

Then he freed his father (Ravana), and in order to punish Indra for his audacity of capturing Ravana, so that Indra dare not repeat it in the future, Meghanad tied him up and brought him to his capital (Lanka) as a prisoner. (80)

Following this incident, the creator Brahma went to Meghanad to intercede on behalf of Indra, and managed to prevail upon the former to release the latter. As a bargain, Brahma blessed the demons with some boons. (81)

इन्द्रजिन्नाम तस्याभूतदारभ्य रघूत्तम ।

रावणादपि यश्चासीदबलिष्ठः समरप्रियः ।।82।।

मेघनादादयश्चेति तस्मात्प्रोक्तं तवाग्रतः ।

एतैर्मुनीश्वरैः पूर्वं तन्निमित्तं मयेरितम् ।।83।।

indrajrinnāma tasyābhūttadārabhya raghūttama /
rāvaṇādapi yaścāsīdbaliṣṭhaḥ samarapriyaḥ // 82 //
meghanādādayaśceti tasmātproktaṁ tavāgrataḥ /
etairmuniśvaraiḥ pūrvam tannimittam mayeritam // 83 //

[Sage Agastya said to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord Ram, the most excellent king in the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya (raghūttama)! It is from then that Meghanad has been honoured with title of ‘Indrajeet’ (one who had conquered Indra, the king of Gods).

Indeed, he was stronger and more valiant than his father Ravana, and was ever eager to engage his enemy or opponent in a battle (for he enjoyed trouncing them, and got sadistic pleasure by tying them up like a slave and seeing their despaired faces). (82)

That is why I had mentioned Meghanad before all other demons slayed by you¹, because as far as strength, valour, invincibility and battle-abilities go there was no

match for him. The sages have reiterated the reason (why Meghanad was superior to all other demons) that I given you now. (83)

[Note—¹Refer verse nos. 4-5 herein above.]

रावणो विजयी लोकान्सर्वान् जित्वा क्रमेण तु ।
जित्वा वह्निं निरृतिं च वायुमीषं ययौ मुदा ॥84॥
कैलासं तोलयामास बाहुभिः परिघोपमैः ।
तदा भीता षिवं देवी दोर्भ्यां सा परिष्वजे ॥85॥

rāvaṇo vijayī lokānsarvān jitvā krameṇa tu /
jitvā vahnīm nirṛtiṁ ca vāyumīṣaṁ yayau mudā // 84 //
kailāsaṁ tolayāmāsa bāhubhiḥ parighopamaiḥ /
tadā bhītā śivam devī dorbhyāṁ sā pariśvasaje // 85 //

[Undeterred by his humiliation on being defeated by Indra, but rather becoming more and more aggressive as a means to take revenge, and especially emboldened by the proven valour and strength of his son Meghanad as narrated in the previous verses, Ravana went on relentlessly with his spree of conquests, vanquishing and bringing to heel different gods and custodians of the world.]

Ravana was triumphant in all his campaigns, and after vanquishing the whole world he was so elated that he cheerfully went on a spree of conquest of some of the other important gods such as ‘vahnīm, nirṛtiṁ, vāyum and īṣaṁ’ (the Fire God, the God of Death, the Nether World and the south-west direction, the Wind God, and Lord Shiva as well as the God of the north-east direction respectively)¹. (84)

After that, he went to lift Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) with his long muscular arms. Terrified of him goddess Parvati panicked, and she tightly clung to her husband Lord Shiva (to seek protection)². (85)

[Note—¹By subduing the two gods of the south-west and the north-east directions, Ravana managed to have his sovereignty established over the whole globe, from one end to the other, because if we draw a straight line between these two points (south-west and north-east) it would be measuring the actual diameter of the earth as it rotates on its axis which is tilted at an angle from the perpendicular.

²We have read earlier how Ravana had managed to trick Shiva in giving away Parvati to him through the granting of a boon, and how she had managed to escape with the help of Lord Vishnu—refer: verse nos. 37-42. At that point of time Ravana was still a green-horn and he hadn’t gone on a rampage as he did later on, defeating gods and abducting their women folk.

But this time Ravana was very powerful, vigorous and ferocious, and not even Lord Vishnu, who had come to her rescue the last time, would dare to challenge him this time. Hence, when Parvati observed Ravana coming menacingly to tear off Mt. Kailash and take it away, she indeed was really and truly terrified out of her wits as

she feared for the worse; she was sore affright that Ravana would wreak vengeance upon her for escaping from his clutches the last time. So she panicked and clung to her husband for protection.]

षिवोऽपि वामपादाङ्गुष्ठेन कैलासमूर्द्धनि ।

भारं दत्त्वा गिरिं खर्वं चकाराथ शनैः शनैः ॥86॥

तदा तदिगरिसम्भृतवल्लिसंधिषु दौर्लताः ।

विषच्चापि रावणस्य ता आसन्मर्दिताः क्षणात् ॥87॥

स तेनाक्रन्दयामास स्तम्भसम्बद्धचोरवत् ।

तदा नन्दीश्वरेणापि शप्तोऽयं रावणेश्वरः ॥88॥

चञ्चलं कर्म यस्मात्ते कपितुल्यमतोऽसुर ।

वानरैर्मानुषैश्चैव नाषं गच्छसि कोपितैः ॥89॥

śivo'pi vāmapādāṅguṣṭhena kailāsamūrdhani /
bhāraṁ dattvā giriṁ kharvaṁ cakārātha śanaiḥ śanaiḥ // 86 //
tadā tadgirisambhṛtavallisandhiṣu daurlatāḥ /
viṁṣaccāpi rāvaṇasya tā āsanmardditāḥ kṣaṇāt // 87 //
sa tenākrandayāmāsa stambhasambaddhacoravat /
tadā nandīśvareṇāpi śapto'yaṁ rāvaṇeśvaraḥ // 88 //
ca 'calaṁ karma yasmātte kapitulyamato'sura /
vānarairmānuṣaiścaiva nāṣaṁ gacchasi kopitaiḥ // 89 //

When Lord Shiva discovered Ravana's evil intentions, he pressed the mountain with the big toe of his left foot. As a result the great mountain began sinking into the earth. (86)

As the great mountain gradually sank, it pressed under its weight and squeezed all the twenty arms of Ravana which he had inserted underneath it to scoop it up from its mooring in the earth. Writhing in pain and suffering abjectly, Ravana began yelling and wailing in utter despair like a thief who is tied tightly on a pillar and the cord is being pulled tighter and tighter every moment.

At that time Nandi (one of the chief attendants of Lord Shiva; the sacred Bull) also cursed Ravana [87-88], saying—‘Oh you wicked demon, you are fickle, restless and ever-so fidgety like a monkey (because you neither live in peace yourself nor let others live their lives in peace, always doing something mischievous that causes endless harassment and nuisance for everyone). So therefore I curse you that your death would be at the hands of monkeys and humans.’¹ [89] (87-89)

[Note—¹This curse of Nandi bore fruit when ultimately Ravana was defeated and killed in the epic war of Lanka by an army of monkeys led by Lord Ram, who was actually Lord Vishnu in a human form, and his brother Laxman, who was Lord Seshnath, the legendary celestial Serpent who is said to hold the earth on his thousand hoods.]

ततः कालान्तरेणायं शम्भुनैव विमोचितः ।
 शप्तोऽप्यगणयन्वाक्यं ययौ हैहयपत्तनम् ।।90।।
 बहिर्गतं नृपं श्रुत्वा सहस्त्रार्जुननामकम् ।
 मध्याह्ने रावणश्चक्रे रेवायां शिवपूजनम् ।।91।।

tataḥ kālāntareṇāyaṁ śambhunaiva vimocitaḥ /
 śapto'pyagaṇayanvākyaṁ yayau haihayapattanam // 90 //
 bahirgataṁ nṛpaṁ śrutvā sahastrārjunanāmakam /
 madhyāhne rāvaṇaścakre revāyāṁ śivapūjanam // 91 //

After some time, Lord Shiva took pity on him (Ravana) and released him (from under the mountain which had crushed him under its weight when the Lord had pressed it down with the toe of his left foot).

Ravana forgot all about his humiliation and curse soon after his release, and reverted back to his reckless old ways. Ignoring Lord Shiva's warning to behave himself, he went to the city (capital) of Haihairaj to fight with him. (90)

When he reached there he found that the king of the place, who was called Sahastrarjun¹ (sahastrārjunanāmakam), was not present on the occasion. So Ravana went to the banks of river Narmada, and observing that there was an island in the middle of the river, he went there and began to offer worship to Lord Shiva when it was noon time.

[To wit, Ravana went to the city of king Sahastrarjun in the morning, discovered that the king was not there, and so decided to offer worship to Lord Shiva. With this purpose he went to river Narmada, crossed to an island in the middle of the river, and started offering worship to Lord Shiva at noon.] (91)

[Note—¹Sahastrarjun, pronounced as 'Sahastraarjuna', was so-called because he had a thousand arms; "Sahatra" = a thousand. Hence his name means 'a king named Arjun who had a thousand arms'.]

अधस्तस्मान्नर्मदाया भुजपाषैश्च सेतुवत् ।
 स्तम्भयामास नीरौघ जलक्रीडां गतोऽर्जुनः ।।92।।
 वेष्टितोऽयुतनारीभिस्तत्तोयं रावणं तदा ।
 प्लावयामास ध्यानस्थं ज्ञातस्तत्कर्मणाऽर्जुनः ।।93।।
 मुक्त्वा ध्यानादिकं सर्वं युद्धं चक्रेऽर्जुनेन सः ।
 तेन बद्धो दषग्रीवः कण्ठे रन्तुं सुताय तम् ।।94।।
 ददौ दषाननं प्रीत्या काष्ठनिर्मितहस्तिवत् ।
 कियत्कालान्तरेणैव पुलस्त्येन स मोचितः ।।95।।

adhastasmānnarmadāyā bhujaṇpāṣaiśca setuvat /
 stambhayāmāsa nīraugha jalakrīḍāṃ gato'rjunah // 92 //
 veṣṭito'yutanārībhīstattoyaṃ rāvaṇaṃ tadā /
 plāvayāmāsa dhyānasthaṃ jñātastatkarmaṇā'rjunah // 93 //
 muktvā dhyānādikaṃ sarvaṃ yuddhaṃ cakre'rjunena saḥ /
 tena baddho daṣagrīvaḥ kaṇṭhe rantuṃ sutāya tam // 94 //
 dadau daṣānanaṃ prītyā kāṣṭhanirmitahastivat /
 kiyatkālāntareṇaiva pulastyena sa mocitaḥ // 95 //

While Ravana was thus engaged in worshipping Lord Shiva on the island, king Sahastrarjun in the meantime was enjoying water-sport in the river. While frolicking around in the water he conjured up a wondrous sight using his thousand arms by using them to make an artificial dam that stopped the flow of the water of the river. (92)

At that time, thousands of women, who were his mistresses and courtesans, were accompanying him. [Perhaps this is the reason why he blocked the river in order to impress them.]

When the river was blocked, the water began to rise and soon inundated the island on which Ravana was offering worship to Lord Shiva. As a result, Ravana was submerged in the water and began to float in it. (93)

This disturbed his meditative posture, and applying common sense he realized that it surely must be Sahastrarjun who had blocked the flow of water.

[Ravana guessed that surely it must be no one else but Sahastrarjun who is doing this mischief to tease him and to create hurdles in his worship. He must have also heard the loud laughing and jesting of the thousands of women who accompanied Sahastrarjun even as the latter himself was splashing around boisterously in the water, showing off his strength and prowess to impress the gleeful ladies.]

Peeved and provoked thus, Ravana left his worship and immediately went to challenge Sahastrarjun for a duel. Sahastrarjun, however, easily caught hold of Ravana, and tied a rope around his neck (like one ties a pet animal)! Then Sahastrarjun gave Ravana with this rope tied around his neck to his son to play with like a child plays with a wooden toy elephant.

[What a supreme form of humiliation it must have been for the mighty king of the demon race to be tied like a pet animal, and pulled here and there by a boy who treated him like a wooden toy elephant, laughing, jesting, teasing and punching Ravana in gleeful abandon!]

After some time however, sage Pulastya went and managed to get Ravana released from this captivity¹. (94-95)

[Note—¹The reader will note that this is the second time Ravana was tied and held captive. The first occasion was when he was captured by Indra, the king of Gods—refer: 78.

But in spite of repeated humiliation Ravana never learnt a lesson as we shall read below in verse nos. 96-101 when he was captured and held under armpit by Vaali, the king of the monkeys, and then tied under the bed of Angad, Vaali's son, where Ravana lay with his face down, and Angad used to urinate upon him!]

ततोऽतिबलमासाद्य जिघांसुर्हरिपुङ्गवम् ।

सागरे ध्यानमासीन् पश्चाद्वागे शनैर्ययौ ।।96।।
 धृतस्तेनैव कक्षेण वालिना दषकन्धरः ।
 भ्रामयित्वा तु चतुरः समुद्रान् रावणं हरिः ।।97।।
 किष्किंधां स्वां ययौ वेगादग्रे दृष्ट्वांगदं षिषुम् ।
 प्रीत्या तं चुबनं दातुं दोभ्यां कट्यां न्यवेषयत् ।।98।।
 तदा बाहोश्चंचलत्वात्कक्षात्स पतितो भुवि ।
 तं दृष्ट्वा स्वजनान् स्त्रीश्च दर्शयामास वै मुदा ।।99।।

tato'tibalamāsādyā jighāmsurharipuṅgavam /
 sāgare dhyānamāsīn paścādbhāge śanairyayau // 96 //
 dhṛtastenaiva kakṣeṇa vālinā daṣakandharaḥ /
 bhrāmayitvā tu caturaḥ samudrān rāvaṇaṁ hariḥ // 97 //
 kiṣkimdhām svām yayau vegādagre dṛṣṭvāṅgadam ṣiṣum /
 prītyā taṁ cubanaṁ dātum dorbhyām kaṭyām nyaveṣayat // 98 //
 tadā bāhoścamcalatvātkakṣātsa patito bhuvi /
 taṁ dṛṣṭvā svajanān strīśca darṣayāmāsa vai mudā // 99 //

After some time had passed and Ravana had recovered his strength, he wanted to kill Vaali, the king of the monkey race. So he went to Vaali who was sitting silently with closed eyes and meditating on the shore of the ocean. Ravana wanted to surprise Vaali, and so he went stealthily and stood behind him even as Vaali was deeply immersed in his meditation.

[Ravana never mended his wanton, reckless and evil ways; he never learnt a lesson from his experiences. So after a while he decided to confront Vaali without the least provocation. But he dared not face Vaali from the front, in an open duel, so he went from the behind while Vaali was unarmed and meditating, in the hope that he would suddenly lunge at his victim and strangulate him to death. This very fact—Ravana trying to kill Vaali from the back rather than challenging him for a face-to-face battle—showed that at least by now he had realized his limits. But he was so ambitious and a wicked fellow to the core that would adopt any way, crooked or straight, to fulfill his ambitions to become an unchallenged ruler of the world by eliminating all those who may pose a challenge to his authority.] (96)

However, Vaali got the wind of his presence, so he caught hold of Ravana by one sweeping back movement of his mighty arms, lifted him and tucked him under his armpit so casually that Ravana dangled there with his face pointing backwards. Then Vaali went on a pilgrimage of all the four corners of the world, around the four oceans so to say, while Ravana lay pressed in the cavity of his armpit all the while.

[It is like one carelessly picking up a small pet animal, such as a cat or a puppy, if the animal disturbs one while one is engaged in some important work. Vaali absent-mindedly just picked up Ravana and pressed him under his arms, in the cavity of his armpit. When his meditation was complete, Vaali went on a pilgrimage, but he forgot that Ravana was pressed in his armpit. It shows how inconsequential Ravana was for Vaali. And it also shows how terrified Ravana must have been that he did not dare to stir at all as that would draw Vaali's attention to him, and may be Vaali would

be so irked that he may simply crush Ravana to death or at least break some of his bones by pressing him harder under his arms!] (97)

By-and-by, Vaali went to his capital called Kishkindha. There he saw his young son Angad. As soon as Vaali lifted his son affectionately to kiss him make him sit astride his hips [98], for which of course he had to lift his arms, Ravana fell down on the ground from under his armpit where he had been lying pressed hitherto. Seeing him fall and writhing like an animal who has developed cramps (because Ravana had been lying in a single pose for a long time), the women folk laughed heartily in merriment, and drew each other's attention to this jovial sight [99]. (98-99)

प्रेखस्योपरि पुत्रस्य बबन्धाधोमुखं चिरम् ।

आसीत्सोऽङ्गदमूत्रस्य धाराधौताननोऽसुरः ॥100॥

स्वयमेव ततो वाली बहुकाले गते सति ।

ददावाज्ञां दषास्याय तेन सख्यं चकार सः ॥101॥

premkhasyopari putrasya babandhādhomukhaṁ ciraṁ /
āsitso'ṅgadamūtrasya dhārādhautānāno'suraḥ // 100 //
svayameva tato vālī bahukāle gate sati /
dadāvājñāṁ daṣāsyāya tena sakhyaṁ cakāra saḥ // 101 //

Vaali put his son's cradle over Ravana, and tied the latter face down to the legs of the stand that held the cradle. He kept Ravana so tied for a long time.

Meanwhile (to add further humiliation to Ravana's already severely compromised self-respect that was like rubbing salt on his sore wounds), Angad used to urinate while lying on his cradle, and this stinking liquid flowed freely on Ravana's face as he lay tied under the foot of the cradle, drenching him all over and forcing his face to be washed by Angad's urine. (100)

In due course of time, Vaali took pity on him voluntarily, and after making a treaty of friendship with him he set Ravana and allowed him to go (back to his city Lanka)¹. (101)

[Note—¹We shall read later on in this wonderful story that when Lord Ram had sent Angad as his emissary to Ravana in an attempt to persuade the latter to return Sita, the Lord's wife who Ravana had abducted and which was the single cause for the ruinous war of Lanka, so as to avoid a blood-bath, and Ravana, not realizing who Angad was, had boasted of the immensity of his strength and how he had subdued all the Gods and other powerful forces in this creation, was chided by Angad and reminded of this incident when he was held a helpless captive under the armpit of Vaali, Angad's father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 21 where this event is sarcastically mentioned by Angad, though he did not divulge the details in order to spare extreme embarrassment to Ravana.

The reader can well imagine how humiliated and insulted Ravana must have felt when this long-ago secret event known only to him at that time was made public in full court where all the ministers of the demon kingdom were in attendance.

But Providence is such a powerful force to reckon with that it successfully deluded Ravana's mind so much that he still believed himself as being invincible and unconquerable in this creation. 'Death' was snarling at him with bared teeth like a hungry wolf, but he felt assured there was no danger to him!]

रावणः स पुनः स्थित्वा पुष्पके व्यचरत्सुखम् ।

पश्यन्नानाविधान्वीरान् ययौ पातालमुत्तमम् ॥102॥

तत्र दृष्ट्वा पुरं रम्यं बलेः कोटिरविप्रभम् ।

तत्तेजोहततेजस्तत्पुष्पकं न चाल वै ॥103॥

rāvaṇaḥ sa punaḥ sthitvā puṣpake vyacaratsukham /
paśyannānāvidhānvīrān yayau pātālamuttamam // 102 //
tatra dṛṣṭvā puram ramaṇam baleḥ koṭiraviprabham /
tattejohatatejastatpuṣpakam na cacāla vai // 103 //

Once again (forgetting all about his bad past experiences and not at all ashamed of any of the earlier events that would have been extremely demeaning for any other person of dignity and self-respect), Ravana boarded his Pushpak plane (that he had snatched from Kuber) and joyfully roamed around freely all over the world, observing its wonderful sights and surreptitiously spying on other warriors and kings who may pose any challenge to him.

By-and-by, he reached the Nether World called 'Patal' (pātāla) which was a wonderful and quite extraordinary world. (102)

Its capital city was as splendidous as thousands of suns. Its attractive forces (which we can liken with the earth's gravitational and magnetic forces) were so strong and powerful that they hindered the path of the Pushpak plane, causing it to slow down and stop¹. (103)

[Note—¹This wonderful and marvelous phenomenon is not quite impossible to imagine as modern science has made it quite feasible to actually happen in our day. Refer a note appended to verse no. 131 herein below which explains it.]

ततः स्वयं ययौ तूष्णीमेक एव दषाननः ।

पुरं प्रविष्य तद्द्वारि त्वां ददर्श च वामनम् ॥104॥

कोटिसूर्यप्रतीकाषं पीतकौषेयवाससम् ।

चतुर्भुज सपत्नीकं द्वाररक्षणतत्परम् ॥105॥

tataḥ svayaṁ yayau tūṣṇīmeḥ eva daṣānanaḥ /
 puraṁ praviṣya taddvāri tvāṁ dadarṣa ca vāmanaṁ // 104 //
 koṭisūryapratikāṣaṁ pītakaūṣeyavāsaṁ /
 caturbhuja sapatnīkaṁ dvārarakṣaṇatatparam // 105 //

The ten-headed Ravana stepped down quietly from his plane and went to see the city. There at its gate he found you (Lord Ram) in the form of Lord Vaaman (the dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu)¹ standing majestically in all his radiant splendour. (104)

The Lord had the radiance of a million suns, and was wearing the unique yellow garment known as Pitambar that is Lord Vishnu's characteristic feature. [This is a body-wrapping silken garment worn by Lord Vishnu, and it is his trademark.]

Vaaman had the four arms so characteristic of and unique to Lord Vishnu, and had goddess Laxmi by his side. He was there to guard the gate of king Bali. (105)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that while narrating the incident related to king Bali and Lord Vaaman in these verses, the narrator, sage Agastya, uses the pronoun 'you' because he has been speaking with Lord Ram, and both Lord Ram and Lord Vaaman are manifestations of the same Lord Vishnu. Hence, for all practical purposes, they are the one and the same Lord God existing in different forms and having different names in different eras or periods of time.

The story of king Bali and Lord Vaaman appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 8/15-23. It relates to the Vaaman (dwarf mendicant) incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. Bali was a grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh (half man and half lion) earlier.

King Bali was very righteous and powerful; he chased away Indra, the promiscuous and lustful king of Gods, from the throne of heaven, and conquered it. He performed a thousand Ashwamedha Yagya (horse sacrifice) during the course of which he had conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, of his heavenly powers. Aditi, the mother of Gods, was peeved, and she requested her husband, sage Kashyap, to find a way out. Kashyap advised her to pray to Lord Vishnu. Aditi did severe penance for twelve days at the end of which Vishnu appeared before her and asked how he could help her. When Aditi told him the problem, Vishnu promised that he will take birth as her son in the form of a 'Vaaman' (a dwarf Brahmin) and retrieve the earth and the kingdom of heaven from Bali's dominion.

Once he heard that king Bali was performing a great fire sacrifice, something Bali used to do routinely, and during which he had declared that he will give anything asked for, again something for which he was renowned. This religious sacrifice was being conducted on the banks of river Narmada. Seizing this opportunity, Vishnu in the form of a Vaaman approached Bali who welcomed him and paid his due respects. Then Bali asked Vaaman to ask for some gift or donation as this was the traditional practice during such great religious sacrifices. Vaaman was waiting for this chance. First he made Bali repeat his vows in public, and then asked for land measuring his three steps.

Bali was dumbfounded—he wondered at the inconsequential dimension of the land covered by three tiny steps of this dwarf! Bali requested Vishnu to ask for something more, but Vishnu was adamant. Bali's priest, sage Shukracharya, knew that this dwarf was no one else but Vishnu, and so he tried to persuade Bali to abstain

from making such commitment off-hand, because he will lose his entire kingdom. But Bali refused, saying that being the grandson of Prahalad, he cannot rescind on his words that he will give this Brahmin dwarf whatever he asks, even if it means sufferance.

Shukracharya was annoyed at this disobedience, but Vishnu was extremely pleased, and the Lord decided that after fulfilling the promise made to the Gods he will instantly reward Bali in ample terms, and will himself serve him! What a wonderful grace Vishnu shows.

So it happened that Vishnu, in the form of Vaaman, assumed a colossal form of cosmic proportions. The Lord measured the entire earth that Bali ruled in his first step. In the second step Vishnu measured the whole heaven. Nothing was left for the third step—so Bali offered his head! Vishnu was extremely pleased, and being the Lord of the world, he decided that since Bali has offered his own self to him like a faithful devotee, he will fully reward him. Hence, Vishnu blessed Bali that he will go down in history as the greatest donor and righteous of all times, that he will become Indra, the king of Gods, and rule over the heavens during the celestial era known as Saawarni Manvantar, that till that time he shall become the king of the nether world where demons would live, and to add icing to the cake the Lord declared that he himself will become his gatekeeper, and anybody who dared oppose him would be punished by the Lord himself!]

त्वां प्राह स दशग्रीवः कोऽत्र राजाऽस्ति मां वद ।

तूष्णीं स्थितो वामनस्त्वमप्रितं नोत्तरं रिपोः ॥106॥

तदा त्वां बधिरं मत्वा स विवेष वलेर्गृहम् ।

तत्र दृष्ट्वा पत्न्या सारिक्रीडनतत्परम् ॥107॥

tvām prāha sa daṣagrīvaḥ ko'tra rājā'sti mām vada /
tūṣṇīm sthito vāmanastvamapritaṁ nottaraṁ ripoḥ // 106 //
tadā tvām badhiraṁ matvā sa viveṣa valergrham /
tatra dḍaṣṭvā patnyā sārīkrīḍanatatparam // 107 //

The ten-headed Ravana enquired of you¹, 'Tell me, who is the king of this city?'

But knowing that he (Ravana) was to become your enemy, you neglected him and did not reply. Ravana kept on standing silently for some time, expecting to hear an answer from you. (107)

[¹See note of verse no. 104 herein above.]

Thinking that you were deaf, he entered the city nevertheless and went to the palace of king Bali. There he found Bali playing the game of dice with his queen. (107)

तस्थौ तत्र क्षणं तूष्णीं बलेर्लक्ष्मीं व्यलोकयत् ।

तावद्दूरे बलेर्हस्तात्क्रीडापासोऽपतद्भुवि ॥108॥

तमानेतुं रावणाय बलिराज्ञापयत्तदा ।

रावणोऽपि तमानेतुं ययौ पासांतिक जवात् ।।109।।

tasthau tatra kṣaṇaṁ tūṣṇīm balerlakṣmīm vyalokayat /
tāvaddūre balerhastātkriḍāpāso'patadbhuvi // 108 //
tamānetuṁ rāvaṇāya balirājñāpayattadā /
rāvaṇo'pi tamānetuṁ yayau pāsāntika javāt // 109 //

He kept on standing quietly as the couple continued to play the game, but his gaze was fixed for some moments on the queen.

[We know that Ravana was a lustful demon whose promiscuity had proven to be one of his biggest banes. It is this sexual perversity that was inherent in his nature that had led Nalkuber to curse him, and it was the same perversity that led to his final death when he had dared to abduct Sita, the wife of Lord Ram.]

In the meantime, the dice slipped from the hands of Bali and fell down a little away from him. (108)

Bali asked Ravana to pick up and bring the dice to him. Ravana immediately went to pick up the dice.

[We will note here that Bali was so engaged in his game that he hadn't noticed that Ravana was standing nearby. When the dice got flipped and Bali raised his head to see where it lay, he observed Ravana standing close to him. Bali paid no special attention to him, and treating him just like he would have treated one of his many servants who attended him, he casually asked Ravana to fetch the dice.] (109)

प्रोच्चचाल भुवः पासं करेण न चचाल सः ।

विषदोर्भिः क्रमेणासौ यावत्पासं प्रचालयत् ।।110।।

तावदंगुलयः सर्वाः पासभारेण पीडिताः ।

न निष्क्रमुः पासतलाच्चूर्णिता रुधिराप्लुताः ।।111।।

तदा चुक्रोष दीर्घं स चिरकालं दषाननः ।

ततो विहस्य दास्या तं पासमानीय वै बलिः ।।112।।

proccacāla bhuvaḥ pāsaṁ kareṇa na cacāla saḥ /
viṁṣaddorbiḥ krameṇāsau yāvatpāsaṁ pracālayat // 110 //
tāvadaṁgulayaḥ sarvāḥ pāsabhāreṇa pīḍitāḥ /
na niṣkramuḥ pāsatalāccūrṇitā rudhirāplutāḥ // 111 //
tadā cukroṣa dīrghaṁ sa cirakālaṁ daṣānanaḥ /
tato vihasya dāsyaḥ taṁ pāsamāniya vai baliḥ // 112 //

He tried to pick up the dice with one hand, but it did not move at all. Then Ravana tried to lift the dice using one after another all his twenty arms, but still the dice did not budge from its position. (110)

But since he had tried to pull up the dice by inserting his fingers underneath it and using them as a lever to move the dice upwards, all his fingers got crushed under the

weight of the dice when it fell back so much so that they started bleeding profusely. (111)

Seriously injured, the ten-headed Ravana began yelling aloud in agony due to the severity of the pain caused by his bleeding fingers that were crushed under the dice and still held there.

At that moment, one of Bali's maids picked up the dice very easily and gave it back to him. (112)

धिग्धिक् कृत्वा रावणं तं गृहान्निष्कासयद्बहिः ।
ततो धृतो राजदूतैस्तदुच्छिष्टैस्तु पोषितः ॥113॥
अश्वानां शकृतं नीत्वा प्राक्षिपत्प्रत्यहं बहिः ।
एकदा द्वापरे गत्वा प्रार्थयामास त्वां मुहुः ॥114॥
त्वया स्वपादलग्नः स्वपदांगुष्ठेन खेऽप्रितः ।
तदाऽतिमुदितो लंकां चिरकालेन रावणः ॥115॥

dhigdhik kṛtvā rāvaṇaṁ taṁ gṛhānniṣkāsayadbahiḥ /
tato dhr̥to rājadūtaistaducchiṣṭaistu poṣitaḥ // 113 //
aśvānāṁ śakṛtaṁ nītvā prākṣipatpratyaḥaṁ bahiḥ /
ekadā dvāpare gatvā prārthayāmāsa tvāṁ muhuḥ // 114 //
tvayā svapādalagnaḥ svapadāṁguṣṭhena khe'pritaḥ /
tadā'timudito laṁkāṁ cirakālena rāvaṇaḥ // 115 //

Bali severely admonished Ravana, and rebuking him sharply he ordered him unceremoniously out of the palace.

Outside the palace, Bali's messengers and other attendants once again caught hold of Ravana, and kept him a prisoner. They fed him with their left-over food. (114)

Ravana was assigned the task of collecting the dung of horses from the stable and throwing it outside.

After sometime, Ravana saw you (i.e. Lord Vaaman) standing at the gate, and so he came to you begging for mercy, falling at your feet and pleading with you to show him the way out of the city so that he can escape from his captivity and find freedom.

Taking pity on him, you had flicked him into the sky with the tip of one of your big toes. Ravana thus managed to escape from the walls of the Nether World and regained his freedom once more.

Having thus found his freedom, he returned to his capital at Lanka after the lapse of a long time. (115)

ययौ मेने निजं जन्म द्वितीयं जातमद्य वै ।
रावणः परमप्रीत एवं लोकान्महाबलः ॥116॥
कर्तुं तान्स्ववषान्नित्यं बभ्राम पुष्पकस्थितः ।

दृष्टैवकदाऽत्र साकेते पूर्वजं तव दीक्षितम् ।।117।।

अनरण्यं संगरेण चकार पतितं रणे ।

तदा शप्तोऽनरण्येन मद्धंषे रघुनन्दनः ।।118।।

भूत्वा त्वां संगरेणैव सकुटुम्बं वधिष्यति ।

इत्युक्त्वा स गतो नाकं रावणोऽपि पुरीं ययौ ।।119।।

yayau mene nijam janma dvitīyaṁ jātamadya vai /
rāvaṇaḥ paramaprīta evaṁ lokānmahābalaḥ // 116 //
kartuṁ tānsvavaśānnityaṁ babhrāma puṣpakasthitaḥ /
dṛṣṭaivakadā'tra sākete pūrvajāṁ tava dikṣitam // 117 //
anaraṇyaṁ saṁgareṇa cakāra patitaṁ raṇe /
tadā śapto'naraṇyena madvaṁṣe raghunandaṇaḥ // 118 //
bhūtvā tvāṁ saṁgareṇaiva sakuṭumbaṁ vadhiṣyati /
ityuktvā sa gato nākaṁ rāvaṇo'pi purīm yayau // 119 //

Once free from the captivity of Bali, Ravana thought to himself that it was like taking a new birth (because he had lost all hopes of escape).

Once again however, after recuperating and recovering his vigour that made him a great warrior all over again, he reverted back to his bad old ways. (116)

He strode his plane and went around the world daily with a desire to discover a place which he could conquer (after of course exempting the places where he had been forced to bite the dust and suffer extraordinary humiliation and defeat in his previous endeavours, and where he dare not go again).

One day, during his routine wanderings, he saw one of your ancestors who had engaged himself in doing a fire sacrifice (the Soma Yagya) as its chief patron, and was thus initiated into the religious vows accompanying such rituals. (117)

His name was king 'Anaranya'. Ravana challenged him for a duel in which he succeeded in defeating the honourable king (who could not give a befitting reply to Ravana as he was restrained by his religious vows taken to complete the pending fire sacrifice).

Though defeated under the force of circumstances¹, the king cursed Ravana that one of his own descendents who would be known as 'Raghunandan' (i.e. Lord Ram, the son of the illustrious family of the great king Raghu of Ayodhya) would kill Ravana along with all his kith and kin some time in the future. (118)

After that, Anaranya went to the heaven (i.e. he died)², and Ravana went back to his own capital (of Lanka). (119)

[Note—¹Ravana knew fully well that a king who is under a religious vow during the course of performing a fire sacrifice is not supposed to pick up arms and kill anyone. So he decided to attack king Anaranya at the time when the king was under a religious vow during the course of the fire sacrifice he was undertaking at that time. Anaranya had but little choice; he could either break his vows which would be tantamount to sacrilege of the fire sacrifice and a grave sin, or accept defeat which would lead to dishonour. The righteous king chose the latter option. This helped him retain the merit

accrued by the performance of the fire sacrifice, and it enabled him to curse Ravana effectively.

²It was too much of a dishonour for the family of the great king Anaranya that he be defeated in battle, and it was a humiliation that he couldn't cope with. So he decided to end his life to keep his family's honour, rather than to live with this ignominy of defeat for the rest of his life.]

सनत्कुमारमेकांते सन्निरिक्ष्यैकदाऽसुरः ।

नत्वा पप्रच्छ देवेषु को वरश्चेति सादरम् ॥120॥

मुनिः प्राह महाविष्णुं तच्छ्रुत्वा प्राह तं पुनः ।

विष्णुना ये हता युद्धे राक्षसाद्या लभन्ति काम् ॥121॥

sanatkumāramekānte sannirīkṣyaikadā'suraḥ /
natvā papraccha deveṣu ko varaśceti sādaram // 120 //
muniḥ prāha mahāviṣṇuṁ tacchrutvā prāha taṁ punaḥ /
viṣṇunā ye hatā yuddhe rākṣasādyā labhanti kām // 121 //

One day the demon (Ravana) met the celestial sage known as Sanatkumar. He bowed before the sage and asked him in private, 'Oh sage, please tell me who is the best amongst the Gods.' (120)

Sage Sanatkumar replied that Lord Vishnu was the best amongst the Gods and the most superior of them.

Hearing this Ravana further enquired about the fate of all the demons who had been slayed by Vishnu till date. (121)

गतिं चेति मुनिः प्राह ते मुक्तिं यांति दुर्लभाम् ।

पुनः पप्रच्छ तं नत्वा केनोपायेन वै हरेः ॥122॥

भविष्यत्यत्र मे मृत्युस्तदा तं मुनिरब्रवीत् ।

त्रेतायां नररूपेण रामो विष्णुर्भविष्यति ॥123॥

अयोध्यायां तदा तेन कृत्वा वैरं सुदारुणम् ।

तस्माद्वघं कुरुष्व त्वमात्मनः परमात्मनः ॥124॥

तेन गच्छसि मुक्तिं त्वं तच्छ्रुत्वा स दषाननः ।

विरोधार्थं जनकजामहरद्गौतमीतटात् ॥125॥

gatiṁ ceti muniḥ prāha te muktiṁ yānti durlabhām /
punaḥ papraccha taṁ natvā kenopāyena vai hareḥ // 122 //
bhaviṣyatyatra me mṛtyustadā taṁ munirabravīt /
tretāyām nara-rūpeṇa rāmo viṣṇurbhaviṣyati // 123 //

ayodhyāyām tadā tena kṛtvā vairam sudāruṇam /
 tasmādvaghaṁ kuruṣva tvamātmanah paramātmanah // 124 //
 tena gacchasi muktirṁ tvam tacchrutvā sa daṣānanaḥ /
 virodhārthaṁ janakajāmaharadgautamītaṭāt // 125 //

The sage replied, ‘All the demons who were killed by Lord Vishnu on different occasions had attained an excellent destiny for themselves, a fate that is very rare to achieve. [To wit, all those who were killed by Lord Vishnu had attained deliverance, emancipation and salvation of their souls; all had obtained freedom from the cycle of birth and death.]’

The demon (Ravana) asked once again, ‘Say then, oh sage, by what means my death can happen at the hands of Lord Hari (Vishnu).¹’

The sage replied, ‘In the age of Treta, Lord Vishnu would assume the form of a human prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya. (122-123)

At that time you can create a situation that would appear to make you an arch enemy of Lord Ram, who in reality would be Lord Vishnu. And using this ploy you can then manoeuvre things in such a way that you could get killed at the hands of Vishnu in the guise of Lord Ram. (124)

If you succeed in this enterprise then you would easily be able to attain a destiny which is very rare for any creature to achieve, the destiny that is called ‘Mukti’, literally meaning freedom and deliverance of the soul, liberation of the soul from the cage of this evil body, and the subsequent attainment of emancipation and salvation for the creature.’

Ravana heard this advice with rapt attention and firmly ensconced it in his heart. [To wit, he decided firmly then and there that it was what he will do no matter what happens, because in it lay his own good and welfare.]

It is for this express reason why Ravana had willfully and willingly created animosity with Lord Ram by abducting his wife Sita, the daughter of Janak, from the banks of river Gautami (where the Lord was living at the time during the course of his fourteen years of forest sojourn). [Ravana took away Sita because he knew that this action of his would certainly provoke Lord Ram to come to Lanka and kill him if he refused to give her back. And it would ensure his deliverance, emancipation and salvation as prophesied by sage Sannatkumar.]² (125)

[Note—¹Ravana was anxious for the redemption of his soul, and he knew very well that his sinful deeds and evil life would never allow him to find deliverance and salvation. Since now it was virtually impossible for him to mend his ways because he would be laughed at and ridiculed by his own demon race who would brand him as a traitor and a coward, he was on the look out of some other means by which he can attain emancipation of his soul and an end to the horrifying life that he was habituated to living.

The very fact that he consulted Sanatkumar about the matter showed his anxiety about his fate, as well as his realization that his destiny was doomed if continued to lead a sinful life as he was leading at the present time and if he did not endeavour to somehow devise a device to seek redemption and deliverance from the grip of the vicious cycle of sins and evils he found himself in at present.

As we will read below, it was this decision on Ravana’s part that he must find out a way by which Lord Vishnu would somehow kill him so that he can find

deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his otherwise doomed soul that led him to kidnap Sita and force Lord Ram to come all the way to Lanka to kill him in the battle that followed.

And of course it goes to Ravana's credit that inspite of being an epitome of sin and evil he did manage to compel the Supreme Being to walk barefoot right up to his own doorstep to grant him salvation and emancipation for his asking, a feat that not even the greatest of sages, hermits, ascetics and other holy men could achieve inspite of their best of spiritual efforts and undertaking of the strictest of religious practices.

²Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23, and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 29-42, 54-59; and Canto 4, verse no. 11.]

अषोके रक्षिता तेन मातृवत्स्ववधेच्छया ।

एकदा नारदं दृष्ट्वा नत्वा पप्रच्छ रावणः ॥126॥

भगवन् ब्रूहि मे योद्धुं कुत्र सन्ति महाबलाः ।

योद्धुमिच्छामि बलिभिस्त्वं जानासि जगत्त्रयम् ॥127॥

aṣoke rakṣitā tena mātṛvatsvavaghecchayā /
ekadā nāradaṁ dṛṣṭvā natvā papraccha rāvaṇaḥ // 126 //
bhagavan brūhi me yoddhuṁ kutra santi mahābalāḥ /
yoddhumicchāmi balibhistvaṁ jānāsi jagattrayam // 127 //

That is why in order to get himself killed (at the hands of Lord Vishnu, who had manifested as Lord Ram, and thereby find deliverance for his soul) he (Ravana) had kept Sita in the garden called 'Ashoka'¹ with proper care and protection that he would have shown to his own mother (mātṛvatsvavaghecchayā).

One day Ravana saw sage Narad (the celestial sage), paid his obeisance to the him, and asked (126), ---

'Oh Lord, please be kind to tell me who are those warriors who can fight with me, and where do they live. I have a desire to fight with those warriors who are brave, strong and valiant. I ask you because you know all about everyone wherever they live in the three Lokas².' (127)

[Note—¹Ravana's favourite garden was called 'Ashoka' because of two probable reasons: one is that it was a tranquil garden that provides solace to the soul, being exceptionally magnificent and charming so much so that it removed all senses of weariness and sorrow as soon as one entered it; and the other reason perhaps is that it was full of the wonderful Ashoka trees (Sarica Indica or Jonesia Ashoka trees).

It was a very pleasant place to dwell in. Since Ravana had no real intention to actually torment or harass Sita in the least, for he had brought her only because he saw that it was the only means by which he would compel Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, to come and slay him in the apparent campaign to liberate Sita from his captivity, and he would thereby attain liberation from his demon body, he took

great care to make her as comfortable as was practical and feasible without arousing suspicion in anybody's mind about his real intentions. So not only did he place her under the shade of a large and leafy Ashoka tree whose shade extended over a wide area, and which provided her a cool place to spend her days under its shadow, he also appointed an old demoness named Trijata at her service, to look after her needs and protect her from other cruel demons and demonesses who may attempt to tease Sita as none of the demons was privy to Ravana's secret mission of using Sita as a bait to call Lord Ram to kill him and grant him deliverance.

It will be noted here that prior to abducting Sita, Ravana had become very anxious about his fate and the destiny of his soul, for he had realized by that time that the sinful life he had led cannot ever give his soul any peace on its own account, and so it would be wise for him to find a way out of his predicaments, and sooner the better. That is why he had consulted Sanatkumar earlier on this matter—how and by what means he can find deliverance, emancipation and salvation. And both had advised him that his only chance lay in being killed at the hands of Lord Vishnu.

So therefore it is clear as crystal that his abduction of Sita was not done as a sinful deed to impulsively satisfy his carnal instincts, but as a holy mission to ensure deliverance of his soul from the cage of a vile body of a demon in which it had got unfortunately trapped, and to add a better jewel in this symbolic crown of his emancipation and salvation was the opportunity to see the Supreme Lord right before his own eyes, not for a fleeting moment as usually is the case when the Lord happens to reveal himself before some great sage or hermit who had done severe penances to have a glimpse of the Lord, but to see the Lord with an eye-full and to his heart's content for as long as he would live after the Lord first came to grant him the opportunity to see his divine form—because the war of Lanka lasted for quite a many days, and not for a fleeting moment, giving Ravana ample time and enough good luck to have his fill of the divine view of the Supreme Being!

It is indeed true that in this aspect Ravana was the luckiest soul who ever lived, for while throughout his life he enjoyed everything it had to offer and ruled over the world without any challenge, and in death he attained the rarest of rare fate of being killed by the Supreme Lord himself, which not only ensured his deliverance, salvation and emancipation but also gave him the chance to drink the symbolic nectar through the medium of his eyes when he could behold the Lord and his divine form to his heart's content.

The Lord duly acknowledged Ravana's sincere desire to atone for his sins as he allowed the latter to suffer gravely in the war before his death. The Lord also acknowledged Ravana's desire to attain deliverance and emancipation for his soul as well as its inherent piety and holiness because it is recorded in the story of the Ramayan that when Ravana died a splendourous ray of light representing his soul emerged from his body and went directly to enter the body of Lord Ram—signifying the merger of the individual soul of the creature with the Supreme Soul of this creation represented by Lord Ram. It was a remarkable and a rare feat for a demon so much hated and reviled by the world that his 'true self' represented by his Atma, the soul, would merge with the Soul of the Lord with whom Ravana was outwardly an enemy. Fantastic and awe-inspiring indeed!

It also shows how merciful the Lord is—that he had no hesitation in accepting Ravana's soul inspite of the latter's well-known external behaviour that was despicable to the extreme, because the Lord realized that internally Ravana had great respect for Sita even though he had brought her to Lanka apparently in a way that was his natural habit, of abducting other person's women, but he had done so, and had also

created a bitter environment of animosity and hate with the Lord just to ensure his salvation and emancipation, and nothing more. The all-knowing Lord was fully aware that sage Sanatkumar had already advised Ravana that his only redemption lay in being killed by Lord Vishnu, and so everything that followed to attain this objective would be in order.

²The ‘three Lokas’ refer to the three divisions of the world, such as the heaven, the earth and the nether world. Sage Narad had access to all these worlds, and he was so nice and polite that he was welcomed everywhere. Everyone knew that Narad was a selfless saint, and that whatever advice he would give would be for their welfare, so everyone respected his views and kept them in mind when planning for the future. So therefore, no one knew the world and its inhabitants much better than Narad. This is why Ravana asked him the question regarding any warrior who was strong enough to be challenged and vanquished—as this feat would give him great fame and honour for which he always longed.]

मुनिर्ध्यात्वा चिरात्प्राह श्वेतद्वीपनिवासिनः ।

महाबला महाकायास्तत्र याहि महामते ॥128॥

विष्णुपूजारता ये वै विष्णुना निहताश्च ये ।

त एव तत्र संजाता ह्यजेयाश्च सुरासुरैः ॥129॥

munirdhyātvā cirātprāha śvetadvīpanivāsinaḥ /
mahābalā mahākāyāstatra yāhi mahāmate // 128 //
viṣṇupūjārātā ye vai viṣṇunā nihatāśca ye /
ta eva tatra saṁjātā hyajeyāśca surāsuraiḥ // 129 //

Sage Narad contemplated for some time and replied, ‘The inhabitants of a continent called ‘Shwet Dwip’ have well-built muscular bodies and are exceptionally strong. They are always involved in worshipping the Lord God. Those creatures who are killed at the hands of Lord Vishnu are born there. These inhabitants have no fear from the Gods as well as the Demons.’

[Since the inhabitants of the Shwet Dwip had obtained Lord Vishnu’s indirect blessing by way of getting killed by the Lord, and they also worship the Lord in their new birth, they attain a sort of special status which protects them and grants them immunity from any kind of fear from any quarter, be it a God or a Demon.] (128-129)

तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणो वेगान्मन्त्रिभिः पुष्पकेण तैः ।

योद्धुकामो ययौ गर्वाच्छ्रुतद्वीपांतिकं मुदा ॥130॥

तत्प्रभाहततेजस्कं पुष्पकं नाचलत्पुरः ।

त्यक्त्वा विमानं प्रययौ स्वयमेव दषाननः ॥131॥

tacchrutvā rāvaṇo vegānmantribhiḥ puṣpakeṇa taiḥ /
yoddhukāmo yayau garvācchrutadvīpāntikam mudā // 130 //
tyaktvā vimānaṁ prayayau svayameva dṣānanaḥ // 131 //

tatprabhāhatatejaskam puṣpakam nācalatpuraḥ /
tyaktvā vimānaṁ prayayau svayameva daśānanaḥ // 131 //

Glad to hear it, Ravana summoned his ministers, and together with them he boarded the Pushpak plane, embarking in all haste on a campaign to wage war against the residents of the Shwet Dwip. (130)

But as soon as the plane reached that place it got stuck as its movement stopped by the rays of dazzling splendour that emanated from the continent's surface¹.

Amazed, Ravana and his entourage of ministers got down from the plane, and leaving it behind Ravana went on foot towards the (center of the) continent (or towards the capital or citadel of the place)². (131)

[Note—¹A similar event occurred when Ravana had gone to the nether world where king Bali lived—see verse nos. 103-104.

It appears to be scene right from modern science fiction movies, and more importantly the way modern nations are building self-defense missile shields. The rays could have been jets of magnetic, electric, laser, nuclear or some other form of powerful form of energy shot from the surface into the sky that would obstruct any object that tried to cross its field, and perhaps even bring it down by shooting it if it did try to fly past the shield. In all probability these rays appear to be powerful jets of magnetic energy that could pull down any object from the sky.

²Since these powerful jets of energy were meant to protect the city below, they were arranged in such a way as to encircle the capital from its periphery, from the very outskirts in a great circle. In ancient times great capitals were built on elevated land and were citadels of power around which the rest of the city spread. So therefore, Ravana's plane came down in an open ground much outside the central part of the city, and beyond protective circle of rays that girdled the city from all its sides.]

प्रविषन्नेव तदद्वीपं घृतो हस्तेन योषिता ।

गच्छन्त्या कस्यचिद्दास्या पुष्पाण्यानयितुं वनम् ॥132॥

तया पुष्टः कुतः कोऽसि प्रेषितः केन वा वद ।

इत्युक्त्वा लीलया स्त्रीभिर्हसन्तीभिर्मुहुर्मुहुः ॥133॥

मुखेषु ताडितो हस्तैर्भ्रामितोऽधोमुखं चिरम् ।

धृत्वैकं तत्पदं ताभिः क्षिप्तः कंदुकवन्मुहुः ॥134॥

परस्परं हि क्रीडद्भिः कया त्यक्तस्तु लीलया ।

पपात परलंकायां क्रौंचायाः शौचकूपके ॥135॥

praviṣanneva taddvīpaṁ ghr̥to hastena yoṣitā /

gacchar̥ntyā kasyaciddāsyā puṣpāṇyānayitum vanam // 132 //

tayā puṣṭaḥ kutaḥ ko'si preṣitaḥ kena vā vada /

ityuktvā līlayā strībhirhasantībhirmuḥurmuhuḥ // 133 //

mukheṣu tāḍito hastairbhrāmito'dhomukhaṁ ciram /

dhṛtvaikaṁ tatpadam tābhiḥ kṣiptaḥ kaṁdukavanmuhuh // 134 //
 parasparam hi krīḍadbhiḥ kayā tyaktastu līlayā /
 papāta paralamkāyām krauñcāyāḥ śaucakūpake // 135 //

As soon as he (Ravana) entered the city, one woman caught hold of him with one of her hands. She was someone's maid and was on her way to the forest to fetch flowers (for worship). (132)

That lady asked him who he was, who had sent him there, whence he had come, and wherefore. Many other ladies joined her, and gleefully laughing and teasing him they started smacking and pinching him on the face in jest. Then they caught his leg, slung him round and round like a ball tied at the end of a string, and flung him away¹. (133-134)

The women folk were playing around cheerfully with Ravana, tossing and flicking him around (just like a group of naughty and rowdy children play around merrily with a petty insect or animal they manage to lay their hands upon).

Finally one of them flicked Ravana high into the sky, and he flew like a missile and landed far away in the toilet of Kraunchi in the city of Para-Lanka². (135)

[Note—¹One can imagine Ravana's utter despair, and the state of abject humiliation and ridicule in which he found himself. But the great irony with him was that he never seemed to learn anything from his mistakes; he never gained anything from experience. We have already read how he had faced almost a similar situation when he went to confront Sahastrabahu, then the monkey king Vaali, and once again in nether world in the palace of king Bali.

The lesson one draws from these events is that if one allows one's unbridled ambitions to have the better of him, if he allows the false sense of self-grandioseness and ego to cast a dark shadow of delusions on one's wisdom and prudence, if one is so arrogant and haughty that he throws all caution to the wind and refuses to learn from experience, then one should be ready to face the fate faced by Ravana.

²Kraunchi was Ravana's elder sister. See verse no. 64.

This landing in the toilet of his own sister was an extremity of insult for Ravana. Earlier he had been tied under the cradle-stand of Angad, and when the latter urinated, the foul liquid drenched Ravana all over, and flowed over his face: refer verse no. 100.]

कृच्छ्राद्धस्ताद्विनिर्मुक्तस्तासां स्त्रीणां दषाननः ।

आश्चर्यमतुलं लब्ध्वा चिन्तयामास दुर्मतिः ॥136॥

विष्णुना ये हता युद्धे तेषामेतादृशं बलम् ।

तर्ह्यत्र निहतस्तेन श्वेतद्वीपं ब्रजाम्यहम् ॥137॥

kṛcchrāddhastādvīnirmuktastāsāṁ strīṇāṁ daṣānanah /
 āścaryamatulaṁ labdhvā cintayāmāsa durmatih // 136 //
 viṣṇunā ye hatā yuddhe teṣāmetādḍaṣaṁ balam /

tarhyatra nihatastena śvetadvīpaṁ vrajāmyaham // 137 //

In this way, Ravana somehow managed to escape from the clutches of those women. That wicked fellow was still not ashamed though he was totally amazed by the developments. He thought to himself (136), ---

---‘Why, it is so wondrous and amazing that those who die at the hands of Lord Vishnu acquire such fantastic powers and miraculous strength as these ladies have proved that they do possess! Well then, I will also get myself killed by Vishnu so that I am born in the Shwet Dwip and acquire such astounding strength and miraculous powers that are got by the residents of this continent who come to live here after being killed by Lord Vishnu¹. (137)

[Note—¹These were merely women who were not supposed to be as strong physically as the men are. But astonishingly they had such stupendous strength that they could toss around Ravana like he was a ball, and then they lifted him by his leg and spun him round like children spin a ball tied to a sling. This feat left Ravana swooning in astonishment. He was greedy for power and strength, so he decided that he will now get himself killed by Vishnu just because that way he would be born again in the Shwet Dwip and acquire such supernatural powers as those that were possessed by the inhabitants of this place and were show-cased by these women.

As has been observed earlier, we will also note here that greed and unbridled ambition had had the better of Ravana’s wisdom and prudence. Whereas some time previously he had sought salvation by being killed at the hands of Lord Vishnu (refer: verse nos. 120-126), yet now he changed his mind and wanted to die at the hands of Vishnu just for the sake of becoming extremely strong and powerful! This is one of the primary reasons why a great sage’s son became fallen and was dishonoured by the epithet of ‘demon’ that was attached to his name for ever.]

मयि विष्णुर्यथा कुप्येत्तथा कार्यं करोम्यहम् ।

इति निश्चित्य वैदेहीं जहार रावणो वनात् ॥138॥

जानन्नेवं महालक्ष्मीं स जहारावनीसुताम् ।

मातृवत्पालयामास त्वत्तः कांक्षन्वधं निजम् ॥139॥

mayi viṣṇuryathā kupyettathā kāryaṁ karomyaham /
iti niścitya vaidehīm jahāra rāvaṇo vanāt // 138 //
jānannevaṁ mahālakṣmīm sa jahārāvanīsutām /
mātrvatpālayāmāsa tvattaḥ kāṁkṣanvadhāṁ nijam // 139 //

Now therefore I will strive to do something that would make Vishnu angry with me.’ It was this thinking that made Ravana abduct Sita from the forest. (138)

He had full become aware that Sita, who was born from earth (jahārāvanīsutām)¹, was actually goddess Laxmi (the divine consort of Lord Vishnu).

That is why, in order to make Vishnu angry and kill him, he had brought Sita, and he kept her safely while treating her like his own mother. [Refer. verse nos. 125-126.] (139)

[Note—¹Sita was found by king Janak, her worldly father, in a pitcher buried in the field while he was preparing it to perform a fire sacrifice. This story has been narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-60.]

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Section 2.2:

Adhyatma Ramayan

The Story of Ravana, right from his birth, his acquisition of boons, the establishment of the Demon Kingdom of Lanka, and the reason why he abducted Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, that led to the destructive war of Lanka and Ravana's ultimate slaying, has been described in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, (i) Canto 1, verse nos. 18-61; (ii) Canto 2, verse nos. 1-62; (iii) Canto 3, verse nos. 29-42, 54-59; (iv) Canto 4, verse nos. 1-11.

However, for the express purpose of this present Section where we narrate the birth of Ravana and his siblings, his boons and the establishment of the kingdom of demons, we shall limit our reading to (i) Canto 1, verse nos. 18-61; and (ii) Canto 2, verse nos. 1-62. The rest part of Ravana's story from the Adhyatma Ramayan will be cited in the other Chapters where the relevant narrative so demands.

Adhyatma Ramayan was penned by the legendary sage Veda Vyas, and is a part of one of the great Purans he composed, known as the 'Brahmaand Puran'. The Adhyatma Ramayan appears in the Uttar Khanda (later half) of this aforesaid Puran.

This Ramayan is so-called because it has spiritual, theological and metaphysical philosophy as its main theme, drawing prominently and conspicuously from the philosophy of the Upanishads in its narrative while building it around the great story of Lord Ram, who was a human incarnation of the Supreme Being.

Veda Vyas is credited as being the great editor of the corpus of the huge text of the holy 'Vedas', dividing them into their present form consisting of four parts known as the Riga, the Sama, the Yajur and the Atharva Vedas. He also separated the philosophical part of these Vedic texts from their ritualistic parts to form the excellent treatises on spiritual, theological and metaphysical philosophy that are collectively known as the famed 'Upanishads' of which there are one-hundred-and-eight in numbers. Besides this stupendous work, he also compiled mythological narratives of the Hindus into what is known as the 'Purans', literally the ancient histories according to mythology typical to the Hindus, of which there are eighteen in numbers, and to this voluminous work on the Purans he added as many subsidiary volumes which are called the 'Up-Purans'.

A full-fledged English version of the Adhyatma Ramayan, as well as of all the 108 Upanishads, with their original Sanskrit Texts followed by Roman Transliteration and English renderings, have been published by this author separately, and all of them are always available to all interested readers.

Now, for the express purpose of this Chapter which describes the birth of Ravana, his obtaining boons and powers, and the establishment of the Demon Kingdom by him in particular, and for the broad purpose of our present book titled 'The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka', we shall presently concentrate only on that part of the Adhyatma Ramayan which narrates this aspect of the story exclusively.

That said, let us start reading this most fascinating and wondrous story from the classic 'Adhyatma Ramayan' as follows:-

(i) Canto 1, verse nos. 18-61:

सह्यमेतन्महाबाहो रावणस्य निबर्हणम् ।
 असह्यमेतत्सम्प्राप्तं रावणेर्यन्निषूदनम् ॥ १८॥
 अन्तकप्रतिमाः सर्वे कुम्भकर्णादयो मृधे ।
 अन्तकप्रतिमैर्बाणैर्हतास्ते रघुसत्तम ॥ १९॥
 दत्ता चेयं त्वयास्माकं पुरा ह्यभयदक्षिणा ।
 हत्वा रक्षोगणान् सङ्ख्ये कृतकृत्योऽद्य जीवसि ॥ २०॥

॥ adhyātmārāmāyaṇe uttarakāṇḍam ॥

sahyametanmahābāho rāvaṇasya nibarhaṇam ।
 asahyametatsamprāptaṁ rāvaṇeryanniṣūdanam ॥ 18॥
 antakapratimāḥ sarve kumbhakarṇādayo mṛdhe ।
 antakapratimairbāṇairhatāste raghusattama ॥ 19॥
 dattā ceyam tvayāsmākaṁ purā hyabhayadakṣiṇā ।
 hatvā rakṣogaṇān saṅkhye kṛtakṛtyo'dya jīvasi ॥ 20॥

[Once upon a time, the illustrious sage Agastya, accompanied by many other great sages, went to meet Lord Ram in his royal court where all other ministers and courtiers were present. After preliminaries and pleasantries were exchanged, sage Agastya praised Lord Ram and lauded him for his victory over Ravana and others of the demon clan. While doing so the sage said that defeating Ravana was not as great a feat that was accompanied on the battle-field of Lanka as was the vanquishing Meghanad, the son of Ravana.

This assertion by the sage astonished everyone present. Lord Ram too was quite a bit surprised as the sage cannot speak a lie. So what was the reason for this declaration, the Lord enquired of the sage. To answer this question the sage narrated

the whole story pertaining to the birth of Ravana and his siblings, his acquiring fantastic boons, the establishment of the Demon Kingdom by him, and the growth of his clout and powers that made him conquer the whole world and establish an unchallenged suzerainty over it.

Sage Agastya told Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord who is brave, is courageous and has great strength of arms (*sahyametanmahābāho*)! It was comparatively easy for you to kill Ravana than to get rid of his son (Meghnad) which was a very difficult task indeed. (18)

These demons, including the formidable Kumbhakarn, were indeed like ‘Death’ itself personified. Oh truly the best amongst the kings of Raghu-race (*raghusattama*)! All of them were killed by your arrows which were also as fierce, potent and irrevocable as ‘Death’ itself¹ (19).

You had already blessed us (all the sages) with the boon of fearlessness. Now you have killed these savage demons yourself and consequentially feel fully satisfied, pleased and thankful in this life². (20)’

[Note—¹The sage says that to counter the formidable foes represented by the demons, and especially Kumbhakran, who were personifications of ‘death’ itself, a force was needed that would not only neutralize but even supersede them. This punch was provided by Lord Ram.

The ‘arrows’ symbolize the Lord’s stupendous powers; these arrows zapped at the demons like powerful and dynamic pulses of high energy beams that neutralize and destroy enemy targets which they strike with intensive force and strength of energy that much surpass that of the opponent, virtually short-circuiting their own devices and burning them to cinders.

²The sage thanks Lord Ram for fulfilling his vows made to all the sages and to other ordinary creatures of this world as well as to Mother Earth that he will free them all from the horrors and torments that they face interminably from the demons. Now the Lord has been able to fulfill his promises made to them as he has successfully eliminated the scourge of the demons. So it is a matter for the Lord to feel satisfied and happy. The Lord’s contentment is all the more marked because in this process he not only provided succour to the world but also aided in the liberation and deliverance of the souls of the demons—because all the demons who were killed at the hands of Lord Ram found immediate emancipation and salvation. So it was clearly a win-win situation for all! This entitled Lord Ram to have double-praise.]

श्रुत्वा तु भाषितं तेषां मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम् ।
विस्मयं परमं गत्वा रामः प्रोज्जलिब्रवीत् ॥ २१॥
रवणादीनतिक्रम्य कुम्भकर्णादिशक्षसान् ।
त्रिलोकजयिनो हित्वा किं प्रशंसथ रवणिम् ॥ २२॥

śrutvā tu bhāṣitaṁ teṣāṁ munīnāṁ bhāvitātmanām ।
vismayaṁ paramaṁ gatvā rāmaḥ prājñalirabravīt ॥ 21॥

rāvaṇādīnatikramya kumbhakarṇādirākṣasān ।
trilokajayino hitvā kiṁ praśaṁsatha rāvaṇim ॥ 22 ॥

Hearing these words of the wise and enlightened sage, Lord Ram was astonished. He asked him with the palms of his two hands touching each other (i.e. by folding his hands) as a mark of respect [21], ‘Oh sage! Why do you praise Ravana's son (Meghnad) so much instead of praising other demons, especially his father Ravana, who had conquered the three worlds, or Kumbhakarna (his uncle), or any of the other demons? [What is the reason and the mystery behind it, that you have particularly selected Meghnad for lavishing such praise upon him? What was so special with him? Prey, please tell me more about it.] [22] (21-22).

ततस्तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा राघवस्य महात्मनः ।
कुम्भयोनिर्महातेजा रामं प्रीत्या वचोऽब्रवीत् ॥ २३॥
शृणु राम यथा वृत्तं रावणे रावणस्य च ।
जन्म कर्म वरादानं सङ्क्षेपाद्ददतो मम ॥ २४॥
पुरा कृतयुगे राम पुलस्त्यो ब्रह्मणः सुतः ।
तपस्तप्तुं गतो विद्वान् मेरोः पार्श्वं महामतिः ॥ २५॥

tatastadvacanam śrutvā rāghavasya mahātmanah ।
kumbhayonirmahātejā rāmaṁ prītyā vaco'bravīt ॥ 23 ॥
śṛṇu rāma yathā vṛttam rāvaṇe rāvaṇasya ca ।
janma karma varādānam saṅkṣepādvadato mama ॥ 24 ॥
purā kṛtayuge rāma pulastyo brahmaṇah sutaḥ ।
tapastaptum gato vidvān meroḥ pārsvaṁ mahāmatih ॥ 25 ॥

Hearing these words of enquiry from the great Raghav (Lord Ram), sage Agastya, who was radiant and glorious by the virtue of his knowledge and spiritual attainments, replied most affectionately (23)—

[He said—] ‘Oh Lord Ram! Listen to the story of Ravana and his son's birth, their deeds, boons etc. I shall describe them to you in brief (24).

Oh Lord, in some previous era called Krityug or Satyug, a Brahmin's son named Pulastya, who was a wise person, an expert in the scriptures and religion, and very learned and illustrious, went to the Sumeru mountain to do severe Tapa (austerities, penances) (25).

तृणबिन्दोराश्रुमेऽसौ न्यवसन्मुनिपुङ्गवः ।
तपस्तेपे महातेजाः स्वाध्यायनिरतः सदा ॥ २६॥
तत्राश्रमे महारम्ये देवगन्धर्वकन्यकाः ।
गायन्त्यो ननृतुस्तत्र हसन्त्यो वादयन्ति च ॥ २७॥

पुलस्त्यस्य तपोविघ्नं चक्रुः सर्वा अनिन्दिताः ।
ततः क्रुद्धो महातेजा व्याजहार वचो महत् ॥ २८॥

tr̥ṇabindorāśrame'sau nyavasanmunipuṅgavaḥ ।
tapastepe mahātejāḥ svādhyāyanirataḥ sadā ॥ 26॥
tatrāśrame mahāramye devagandharvakanyakāḥ ।
gāyantyo nanṛtustatra hasantyo vādayanti ca ॥ 27॥
pulastyasya tapovighnaṁ cakruḥ sarvā aninditāḥ ।
tataḥ kruddho mahātejā vyājahāra vaco mahat ॥ 28॥

That most exalted and glorious sage took up residence in a humble thatched hut of sage Trinabindu, and constantly involved himself in 'self study' (i.e. he devoted his time and attention in contemplating about the pure consciousness or the 'pure self', and always thought of it; it also implies self study of the scriptures and experimenting with their pronouncements to arrive at the Absolute Truth). He also did severe penances and observed strict austerities (i.e. he did strict Tapa) (26).

In that most attractive and pleasant hermitage, the nymphs, maidens and damsels of the Gods and Gandharvas (celestial musicians) used to frolic around, singing, playing, prancing, dancing, laughing, playing musical instruments, and generally having merry of a time (27).

This created grave disturbance in the serenity of the atmosphere, and it created a hindrance in the austere life of sage Pulastya and the penances that he did so much so that by-and-by he lost his patience and became very annoyed, angry and peeved at their deeds. So ultimately, unable to cope with this nuisance any longer, he indignantly said to them wrathfully (28)—

या मे दृष्टिपथं गच्छेत्सा गर्भं धारयिष्यति ।
ताः सर्वाः शापसंविन्ना न तं देशं प्रचक्रुः ॥ २९॥
तृणबिन्दोस्तु राजर्षेः कन्या तन्नाशृणोद्वचः ।
विचचार मुनेरग्रे निर्भया तं प्रपश्यती ॥ ३०॥

yā me dr̥ṣṭipatham gacchetsā garbham dhārayiṣyati ।
tāḥ sarvāḥ śāpasamvinnā na taṁ deśam pracakramuḥ ॥ 29॥
tr̥ṇabindostu rājarṣeḥ kanyā tannāśṛṇodvacaḥ ।
vicacāra muneragre nirbhayā taṁ prapaśyati ॥ 30॥

'If my sight falls on anyone of you girls, whosoever she might be, she shall become pregnant.'

Becoming scared at this blanket curse, none of them dared again to go near that hermitage.

[The learned sage surely did no mean any improper and immoral act, and this threat of the girls becoming pregnant if they did not leave him alone was meant to scare them away. But after all, a sage's words do not go in vain, and this would be evident with what happened with the daughter of his host Trinbindu.] (29)

But as it so happened because it was the fiat of fate, the daughter of sage Trinbindu, a sage who was most exalted and was literally like a king among sages, unfortunately did not hear it. As a result, she roamed around and frolicked fearlessly in the vicinity of sage Pulastya, glancing at him off and on in a playful manner (which the sage took as an open affront to him and a gesture of impertinence and disobedience, which of course infuriated him no end) (30).

बभूव पाण्डुरतनुर्व्याङ्गितान्तःशरीरजा ।
दृष्ट्वा सा देहवैवर्ण्यं भीता पितरमन्वगात् ॥ ३१॥
तृणबिन्दुश्च तां दृष्ट्वा राजर्षिरमितद्युतिः ।
ध्यात्वा मुनिकृतं सर्वमवैद्विज्ञानचक्षुषा ॥ ३२॥

babhūva pāṇḍuratanurvyāṅgitāntaḥśarīrajā ।
dṛṣṭvā sā dehavaivarnyaṁ bhītā pitaramanvagāt ॥ 31॥
tṛṇabinduśca tāṁ dṛṣṭvā rājarṣiramitadyutiḥ ।
dhyātvā munikṛtaṁ sarvamavaidvijñānacakṣuṣā ॥ 32॥

Because of the curse, she soon became pregnant and turned yellowish (pale), and her breasts developed into prominence.

Seeing her body acquiring unconventional shape and colour, she was terrified of the consequences, and went to her father most hesitantly, being overcome with fear and uncertainty (31).

When Trinbindu, who was most radiant and like a wise king amongst sages (rājarṣiramitadyutiḥ), saw her, he was aghast, and he soon realized, through his enlightened and penetrating sight of wisdom and insight, all that has happened (i.e. he meditated and contemplated for a while, and soon became aware of all the events, including the actions of Pulastya) (32).

तां कन्यां मुनिवर्याय पुलस्त्याय ददौ पिता ।
तां प्रगृह्याब्रवीत्कन्यां बाढमित्येव स द्विजः ॥ ३३॥
शुश्रूषणपरां दृष्ट्वा मुनिः प्रीतोऽब्रवीद्वचः ।
दास्यामि पुत्रमेकं ते उभयोर्वैश्वर्धनम् ॥ ३४॥

tāṁ kanyāṁ munivaryāya pulastyāya dadau pitā ।
tāṁ pragṛhyābravītkanyāṁ bāḍhamityeva sa dvijaḥ ॥ 33॥
śuśrūṣaṇaparāṁ dṛṣṭvā muniḥ prīto'bravīdvacaḥ ।

dāsyāmi putramekaṁ te ubhayorvaṁśavardhanam ॥ 34॥

Father Trinbindu gave that girl (in marriage) to sage Pulastya, and the latter accepted her¹ (33).

[¹Well, that was surely the only wise thing left for Trinbindu to do, to give his daughter to Pulastya in marriage, and equally enough it was the only wise thing for Pulastya to do to accept her as his betrothed.]

Seeing that she diligently, sincerely and devotedly served him, the sage (Pulastya) was very pleased with her, and told her, ‘I shall bless you with a son who shall enhance the glory and fame of both the clans (i.e. the clan of your father Trinbindu, as well as that of your husband, Pulastya)²’ (34).

[²This verse clearly shows that at the time Trinbindu’s daughter appeared to develop all signs of pregnancy, it was merely as a result of sage Pulastya’s curse; no physical relationship existed at that point of time. It was only after their formal marriage that Pulastya had any physical relationship with her as is obvious in this verse where he says that ‘now he would bless her with a son’. Hence, no unwarranted aspersions should be cast on the integrity and character of the illustrious sage Pulastya due to this unfortunate event.]

ततः प्रासूत सा पुत्रं पुलस्त्याल्लोकविश्रुतम् ।
विश्रवा इति विख्यातः पौलस्त्यो ब्रह्मविन्मुनिः ॥ ३५॥
तस्य शीलादिकं दृष्ट्वा भरद्वाजो महामुनिः ।
भार्यार्थं स्वां दुहितरं ददौ विश्रवसे मुदा ॥ ३६॥

tataḥ prāsūta sā putraṁ pulastyāllokaviśrutam ।
viśravā iti vikhyātaḥ paulastyo brahmavinmuniḥ ॥ 35॥
tasya śīlādikaṁ dṛṣṭvā bharadvājo mahāmuniḥ ।
bhāryārthaṁ svāṁ duhitaraṁ dadau viśravase mudā ॥ 36॥

In due course, that girl brought forth (gave birth to) a son who became famous in the three worlds as “Visrawa, the son of Pulastya”, and he grew up to become an expert in the wisdom and the knowledge pertaining to ‘Brahm’, the all-pervading and all-encompassing cosmic form of the Supreme Soul of creation, the Supreme Being and the Cosmic Consciousness (35).

Seeing the most courteous temperament, the civilised manners, the wisdom and intellect as well as the wholly righteous and upright character of Visrawa, sage Bharadvaj was highly impressed, and so he happily gave his daughter to Visrawa in marriage (36).

तस्यां तु पुत्रः सञ्जज्ञे पौलस्त्याल्लोकसम्मतः ।
पितृतुल्यो वैश्रवणो ब्रह्मणा चानुमोदितः ॥ ३७॥
ददौ तत्पसा तुष्टो ब्रह्मा तस्मै वरं शुभम् ।

मनोऽभिलषितं तस्य धनेशत्वमखण्डितम् ॥ ३८॥

tasyāṁ tu putraḥ sañjajñe paulastyālokaśammataḥ ।
pitṛtulyo vaiśravaṇo brahmaṇā cānumoditaḥ ॥ 37॥
dadau tattapasā tuṣṭo brahmā tasmai varaṁ śubham ।
mano'bhilaṣitaṁ tasya dhaneśatvamakhaṇḍitam ॥ 38॥

The 'son of Pulastya' (i.e. Visrawa) produced a son from her, and this son became famed in the three worlds. [His name was 'Kuber', and he later on became a treasurer of the Gods.]

That son (Kuber) was famous, renowned and wise like his father Visrawa, and was even praised by Lord Brahma (the creator) (37).

The latter (Brahma) was much pleased by his severe penances and austerities (Tapa), and as a boon bestowed upon him imperishable, unchallenged, continuous and endless Lordship over prosperity, wealth, pomp, grandeur and majesty (of the whole world) (38).

ततो लब्धवरः सोऽपि पितरं द्रष्टुमागतः ।
पुष्पकेण धनाध्यक्षो ब्रह्मदत्तेन भास्वता ॥ ३९॥
नमस्कृत्याथ पितरं निवेद्य तपसः फलम् ।
प्राह मे भगवान् ब्रह्मा दत्त्वा वरमनिन्दितम् ॥ ४०॥

tato labdhavarah so'pi pitaraṁ draṣṭumāgataḥ ।
puṣpakeṇa dhanādhyakṣo brahmadattena bhāsvatā ॥ 39॥
namaskṛtyātha pitaraṁ nivedya tapasaḥ phalam ।
prāha me bhagavān brahmā dattvā varamaninditam ॥ 40॥

Having acquired the Lordship over wealth and prosperity due to Brahma's boons, he (Kuber) boarded the most fantastic, magnificent and splendorous plane called Pushpak, that was also given to him by Brahma, and came to visit his father (39).

He bowed before his father and told him about the reward that he had got for his doing severe penances. He told his father (Visrawa), 'Lord Brahma (the creator) has blessed me with this excellent boon (40).

निवासाय न मे स्थानं दत्तवान् परमेश्वरः ।
ब्रूहि मे नियतं स्थानं हिंसा यत् न कस्यचित् ॥ ४१॥
विश्रुत्वा अपि तं प्राह लङ्कानाम् पुरी शुभा ।
राक्षसानां निवासाय निर्मिता विश्वकर्मणा ॥ ४२॥

nivāsāya na me sthānaṁ dattavān parameśvaraḥ ।
 brūhi me niyataṁ sthānaṁ hiṁsā yatra na kasyacit ॥ 41 ॥
 viśravā api taṁ prāha laṅkānāma purī śubhā ।
 rākṣasānāṁ nivāsāya nirmitā viśvakarmaṇā ॥ 42 ॥

But (the problem is that) the Lord (i.e. Brahma) has not given me a place to live. So please do tell me a place where I can stay without causing any sort of harm to anybody.' (41).

Visrava replied, 'Vishwakarma (the celestial architect of the heaven) has established (i.e. created; conceived, planned and developed) a city called Lanka for the residence of demons (42).

त्यक्त्वा विष्णुभयादैन्या विविशुस्ते रसातलम् ।
 सा पुरी दुष्प्रधर्षान्यैर्मध्येसागरमास्थिता ॥ ४३॥
 तत्र वासाय गच्छ त्वं नान्यैः साधिष्ठिता पुरा ।
 पित्वादिष्टस्त्वसौ गत्वा तां पुरीं धनदोऽविशत् ॥ ४४॥

tyaktvā viṣṇubhayāddaityā viviśuste rasātalam ।
 sā purī duṣpradharṣānyairmadhyesāgaramāsthitā ॥ 43 ॥
 tatra vāsāya gaccha tvaṁ nānyaiḥ sādhiṣṭhitā purā ।
 pitrādiṣṭastvasau gatvā tāṁ purīm dhanado'viśat ॥ 44 ॥

But the demons have abandoned it due to the fear of Lord Vishnu's wrath, and have shifted to the nether world. That city cannot be easily attacked by any enemy because it is situated in the middle of the ocean. [To wit, Lanka is a very secure city as it is located in the middle of the ocean which forms a natural moat of fathomless depth around its fortified walls, making it an impregnable citadel.] (43).

You go and live there. No one has previously occupied it and has had Lordship over it (except for the demons, but they have already abandoned it long ago out of fear of Lord Vishnu, and so it is lying vacant and uninhabited since long).'

Then, on the orders of his father, the Lord of wealth (i.e. Kuber) went to that city (of Lanka) (44).

स तत्र सुचिरं कालमुवास पितृसम्मतः ।
 कस्यचित्त्वथ कालस्य सुमाली नाम राक्षसः ॥ ४५॥
 रसातलान्मर्त्यलोकं चचार पिशिताशनः ।
 गृहीत्वा तनयां कन्यां साक्षादेवीमिव श्रियम् ॥ ४६॥

sa tatra suciram kālamuvāsa pitṛsammataḥ ।
 kasyacittvatha kālasya sumālī nāma rākṣasaḥ ॥ 45 ॥

rasātalānmartyalokaṃ cacāra piśitāśanaḥ ।
grhītvā tanayāṃ kanyāṃ sākṣāddevīmiva śriyam ॥ 46॥

There, with the consent and approval of his father, he (Kuber) lived for a long time.

Once it so happened that a flesh-eating demon (an ogre) named Sumali came out from the nether world to the surface of the earth. He was accompanied by his youthful, virgin and beautiful daughter who was as charming as goddess Laxmi (the patron goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Lord Vishnu). Sumali wished to roam around on the surface of the earth and show his daughter the sights of the world (45-46).

अपश्यद्धनदं देवं चरन्तं पुष्पकेण सः ।
हिताय चिन्तयामास रक्षसानां महामनाः ॥ ४७॥
उवाच तनयां तत्र कैकसीं नाम नामतः ।
वत्से विवाहकालस्ते यौवनं चातिवर्तते ॥ ४८॥

apaśyaddhanadaṃ devaṃ carantaṃ puṣpakeṇa saḥ ।
hitāya cintayāmāsa rākṣasānāṃ mahāmanāḥ ॥ 47॥
uvāca tanayāṃ tatra kaikasīṃ nāma nāmataḥ ।
vatse vivāhakālaste yauvanaṃ cātivartate ॥ 48॥

He saw Lord Kuber roaming here and there aboard his plane called Pushpak. The great demon Sumali began to ponder about the future good and welfare of the demon race (47).

He said to his daughter named Kaikasi, ‘Oh daughter! The time for your marriage and the days of your youth are passing away in futility (48).

प्रत्याख्यानाच्च भीतैस्त्वं न वरैर्गृह्यसे शुभे ।
सा त्वं वरय भद्रं ते मुनिं ब्रह्मकुलोद्भवम् ॥ ४९॥
स्वयमेव ततः पुत्रा भविष्यन्ति महाबलाः ।
ईदृशाः सर्वशोभाद्या धनदेन समाः शुभे ॥ ५०॥

pratyākhyānācca bhītaistvaṃ na varairgrhyase śubhe ।
sā tvaṃ varaya bhadraṃ te munim brahmakulodbhavam ॥ 49॥
svayameva tataḥ putrā bhaviṣyanti mahābalāḥ ।
īdṛśāḥ sarvaśobhāḍhyā dhanadena samāḥ śubhe ॥ 50॥

But, oh my good daughter (śubhe), no one accepts you because of the fear that you will abandon him (as this is the natural habit of the demon race that their women are most unfaithful and disloyal towards their companions).

Hence, oh you gentle lady (bhadraṁ), you should take the initiative and go and get yourself betrothed to sage Visrawa who is born in the clan of Brahma (i.e. he is born as a Brahmin) (49).

Oh the good lady, let you be blessed (śubhe)! If you do so then you shall give birth to sons who shall be as majestic, excellent and famous besides being brave, valiant and renowned the world over as the Lord of wealth (Kuber) is himself (because they will have the genes similar to Kuber running in their veins).¹ (50).

[¹The demon Sumali reasoned with his daughter that if she somehow she manages to induce sage Visrawa to marry her and beget children from him, then her off-springs will be like Kuber as they will have the same father. If this thing materializes then the lost glory of the demon race could be retrieved. It was too tempting an offer for Kaikasi to refuse, and especially when her father himself endorsed it she was sure it will be for her great good.]

तथेति साऽऽश्रमं गत्वा मुनेरग्रे व्यवस्थिता ।
लिखन्ती भुवमग्रेण पादेनाधोमुखी स्थिता ॥ ५१॥
तामपृच्छन्मुनिः का त्वं कन्याऽसि वरवर्णिनि ।
साब्रवीत्प्राञ्जलिर्ब्रह्मन् ध्यानेन ज्ञातुमर्हसि ॥ ५२॥

tatheti sā"śramam gatvā muneragre vyavasthitā ।
likhantī bhuvamagreṇa pādenādhomukhī sthitā ॥ 51॥
tāmapṛcchanmuniḥ kā tvaṁ kanyā'si varavarṇini ।
sābravītprāñjalirbrahman dhyānena jñātumarhasi ॥ 52॥

Saying 'all right', she went and stood shyly in the hermitage of the sage (Visrawa) with her eyes lowered, her demeanours suggestive of passion, and began scratching at the earth nervously with her toe nails (51).

The sage asked her, 'Oh the one with beautiful features (varavarṇini)! Who are you, and whose daughter are you?'

Kaikasi joined the palms of her hands as a gesture of supplication and replied, 'Oh Brahmin! You can know everything by your transcendental powers of meditation. [To wit, you can learn about me and my intent in coming here to you without asking me, as you are a great sage who has the transcendental powers to know even the most secret of things.]' (52).

ततो ध्यात्वा मुनिः सर्वं ज्ञात्वा तां पूत्यभाषत ।
ज्ञातं तवाभिलषितं मतः पुत्रानभीप्ससि ॥ ५३॥
दारुणायां तु वेलायामागतासि सुमध्यमे ।
अतस्ते दारुणौ पुत्रौ रक्षसौ सम्भविष्यतः ॥ ५४॥

tato dhyātvā muniḥ sarvaṁ jñātvā tāṁ pratyabhāṣata ।
 jñātaṁ tavābhilaṣitaṁ mattaḥ putrānabhīpsasi ॥ 53॥
 dāruṇāyāṁ tu velāyāmāgatāsi sumadhyame ।
 ataste dāruṇau putrau rākṣasau sambhaviṣyataḥ ॥ 54॥

Then the sage meditated and came to know everything about the reason for her visit, and said to her, ‘I have understood the purpose of your visit. You desire sons from me (53).

But, oh the beautiful one (literally, one with a beautiful waist—“sumadhyame”), you have come at an inappropriate time¹, as a result of which your sons would be two fierce demons. [So, is it okay with you?]' (54).

[¹It was evening hours, around twilight, when the sage was engaged in his evening worship routine. This time of the day when the daylight gradually merges into the darkness of the night is not regarded as an auspicious time for conception of a child as it is believed that unholy spirits roam around the world during these hours. So the sage warned Kaikasi that the time was very unsuitable for what she desires of him, even if it is merely in the form of a ‘boon’ that the sage may grant her to please her.]

साब्रवीन्मुनिशार्दूल त्वतोऽप्येवंविधौ सुतौ ।
 तामाह पश्चिमो यस्ते भविष्यति महामतिः ॥ ५३॥
 महाभागवतः श्रीमान् रामभवत्येकतत्परः ।
 इत्युक्ता सा तथा काले सुषुवे दशकन्धरम् ॥ ५४॥
 रावणं विंशतिभुजं दशशीर्षं सुदारुणम् ।
 तद्रक्षोजातमात्रेण चचाल च वसुन्धरा ॥ ५५॥

sābravīnmuniśārdūla tvatto'pyevaṁvidhau sutau ।
 tāmāha paścimo yaste bhaviṣyati mahāmatih ॥ 55॥
 mahābhāgavataḥ śrīmān rāmabhaktyekatatparaḥ ।
 ityuktā sā tathā kāle suṣuve daśakandharam ॥ 56॥
 rāvaṇaṁ viṁśatibhujaṁ daśaśīrṣaṁ sudāruṇam ।
 tadrakṣojātamātreṇa cacāla ca vasundharā ॥ 57॥

She was perplexed, aghast and astonished. She asked the sage, ‘Oh the most exalted sage! Should you also bring forth such sons (i.e. is it ever possible that demons are born out as blessing from an exalted hermit or a sage like you)?’

Then the sage replied to her, ‘After the first born sons (i.e. after the first two sons), the next (i.e. the third) son produced by you shall be most wise, God fearing, pious and a great devotee of the Lord; he would be famous as an honourable and virtuous one, and shall be an ardent follower and devotee of Lord Ram (who would be the supreme Lord himself in a human form).¹’

So in due course of time, she gave birth to the 10-headed and 20-armed son who was exceedingly ferocious as well as vicious; his name was Ravana. As soon as he was born, the earth began to tremble and shake out of fear (56-57).

[Note—¹The sage was in a fix; he realized that Kaikasi was correct in wondering how demonic sons can be produced by the blessing of a great sage. But his words could not go in vain; so he decided to add a sweetener to the bitter pill by tampering his curse to say that the last son would be like a saint by nature though the earlier sons would be like what the sage has already prophesized.]

बभ्रूवर्णाशहेतूनि निमित्तान्यखिलान्यपि ।
कुम्भकर्णस्ततो जातो महापर्वतसन्निभः ॥ ५८॥
ततः शूर्पणखा नाम जाता रावणसौदरी ।
ततो विभीषणो जातः शान्तात्मा सौम्यदर्शनः ॥ ५९॥

babhūvurnāśahetūni nimittānyakhilānyapi ।
kumbhakarnaṣtato jāto mahāparvatasannibhaḥ ॥ 58॥
tataḥ śūrpaṇakhā nāma jātā rāvaṇasodarī ।
tato vibhīṣaṇo jātaḥ śāntātmā saumyadarśanaḥ ॥ 59॥

All the reasons for the torment and destruction of the world appeared to present themselves at that time (i.e. all evil signs became apparent).

After that (i.e. after Ravana) was born Kumbhakarna who had a colossal body that resembled a huge mountain (58).

Thereafter was born Ravana's sister Supernakha, and after her followed Vibhishan (the third son) who was of a calm and peaceful temperament, and his behaviour and demeanours were very pleasant and amiable (59).

[Note—The eldest of the siblings was Ravana; Kumbhakarna was the second brother, and Vibhishan was the third and the youngest. Their sister was Supernakha, the one with gigantic fan-like ears and long knife-like nails.]

स्वाध्यायी नियताहारो नित्यकर्मपरायणः ।
कुम्भकर्णस्तु दुष्टात्मा द्विजान् सन्तुष्टचेतसः ॥ ६०॥
भक्षयन्नृषिसङ्घांश्च विचारातिदारुणः ।
रावणोऽपि महासत्त्वो लोकानां भयदायकः ।
ववृधे लोकनाशाय ह्यामयो देहिनामिव ॥ ६१॥

svādhyāyī niyatāhāro nityakarmaparāyaṇaḥ ।
kumbhakarnaṣtu duṣṭātmā dvijān santuṣṭacetasaḥ ॥ 60॥
bhakṣayannṛṣisaṅghāṁśca vicacārātidāruṇaḥ ।
rāvaṇo'pi mahāsattvo lokānāṁ bhayadāyakaḥ ।

vavṛdhe lokanāsāya hyāmāyo dehināmiva ॥ 61 ॥

He (Vibhishan) was a righteous person. He was contemplative by nature, was always engrossed in self-study, ate little food, and even that with restraint (i.e. he ate with moderation, just enough to survive; he had control over his tongue and never lusted to gratify his sense of taste); he diligently followed the duties assigned to him (i.e. was self-restrained, non-indulgent, diligent, scrupulous, religious and dutiful).

Compared to him, Kumbhakarna was highly evil, wicked and cruel; he roamed around in this world mercilessly killing and devouring pious Brahmins, sages, hermits and mendicants in large numbers, even without any provocation.

In the meanwhile, the eldest of the sons, the fear-inspiring and horribly terrifying Ravana, who was most valiant, strong and brave, began to rise like a killer disease that kills all and spares none, like a contagious epidemic that spreads quickly in the whole worlds (consisting of the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean worlds) (60-61).

(ii) Canto 2, verse nos. 1-62:-

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

श्रीरामवचनं श्रुत्वा परमानन्दनिर्भरः ।
मुनिः प्रोवाच सदसि सर्वेषां तत् शृण्वताम् ॥ १॥
अथ वितेश्वरो देवस्तत् कालेन केनचित् ।
आययौ पुष्पकारूढः पितरं द्रष्टुमञ्जसा ॥ २॥
दृष्ट्वा तं कैकसी तत् भ्राजमानं महौजसम् ।
राक्षसी पुत्रसामीप्यं गत्वा रावणमब्रवीत् ॥ ३॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

śrīrāmavacanam śrutvā paramānandanirbharah ।
muniḥ provāca sadasi sarveṣāṃ tatra śṛṇvatām ॥ 1 ॥
atha vitesvaro devastatra kālena kenacit ।
āyayau puṣpakārūḍhaḥ pitaram draṣṭumañjasā ॥ 2 ॥
dṛṣṭvā taṃ kaikasī tatra bhrājamānam mahaujasam ।
rākṣasī putrasāmīpyam gatvā rāvaṇamabravīt ॥ 3 ॥

[The primary narrator of the story of Lord Ram, known as the epic ‘Ramayana’ from which we have drawn our own narrative of Ravana’s story and the War of Lanka, was Lord Shiva. So, Canto 2 starts with quoting Shiva, who after a brief pause marking the end of Canto 1, has resumed his narration. Shiva was narrating the story of the Ramayana to his consort Parvati.]

Lord Shiva said to Parvati, “Oh Parvati! When Lord Ram wished to hear more of this fantastic story, sage Agastya felt very glad to resume his narration (from where he had stopped in Canto 1), while all those assembled there listened attentively (1).

Agastya said, ‘Once, the Lord of wealth (Kuber) came on his air-plane (called Pushpak) to meet his father (Visrawa) (2).

When the demoness Kaikasi (wife of Visrawa and step-mother of Kuber) saw the most glorious one (Kuber) sitting beside his father, she became jealous, and full of envy she went to her son Ravana and said (3)—

पुत्र पश्य धनाध्यक्षं ज्वलन्तं स्वेन तेजसा ।
 त्वमप्येवं यथा भूयास्तथा यत्नं कुरु प्रभो ॥ ४॥
 तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणो रोषात् प्रतिज्ञामकरोदुत्तमम् ।
 धनदेन समो वापि ह्यधिको वाचिरेण तु ॥ ५॥
 भविष्याम्यम्ब मां पश्य सन्तापं त्यज सुव्रते ।
 इत्युक्त्वा दुष्करं कर्तुं तपः स दशकन्धरः ॥ ६॥
 अगमत्फलसिद्ध्यर्थं गोकर्णं तु सहानुजः ।
 स्वं स्वं नियममास्थाय भ्रातरस्ते तपो महत् ॥ ७॥
 आस्थिता दुष्करं घोरं सर्वलोकैकतापनम् ।
 दशवर्षसहस्राणि कुम्भकर्णोऽकरोत्तपः ॥ ८॥

putra paśya dhanādhyakṣaṁ jvalantaṁ svena tejasā ।
 tvamapyevaṁ yathā bhūyāstathā yatnaṁ kuru prabho ॥ 4॥
 tacchrutvā rāvaṇo roṣāt pratijñāmakaroddrutam ।
 dhanadena samo vāpi hyadhiko vācireṇa tu ॥ 5॥
 bhaviṣyāmyamba māṁ paśya santāpaṁ tyaja suvrate ।
 ityuktvā duṣkaraṁ kartuṁ tapaḥ sa daśakandharaḥ ॥ 6॥
 agamatphalasiddhyartham gokarṇam tu sahanujah ।
 svaṁ svaṁ niyamamāsthāya bhrātaraste tapo mahat ॥ 7॥
 āsthitā duṣkaraṁ ghoraṁ sarvalokaikatāpanam ।
 daśavarṣasahasrāṇi kumbhakarṇo'karottapaḥ ॥ 8॥

Kaikasi provoked her son Ravana by instigating him against Kuber, saying, ‘Look son; look at this Lord of Wealth (Kuber) who is all aglow with his own radiance and glory. So, oh the great one, you must also attempt to do similar things as he has done so as to become similarly glorious and famous.’ (4).

Hearing this, Ravana became offended, irritated and jealous as his mother’s taunting words hurt his ego and self-respect. Thus provoked, he immediately made a stern vow in a haughty manner; addressing his mother he declared, ‘Oh the one with auspicious aspirations and good intentions! Do not have any regrets and do not lament; just wait

and watch. Oh mother! I shall soon, in the very near future, become equal to or even more famous, majestic and powerful than what Kuber is.'

Reassuring his mother, Ravana along with his younger brothers (Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan) went to a place called 'Gaukarna'¹ to do severe penances and austerities (Tapa) to acquire the desired boons. Once there, the three brothers became involved in doing severe, determined and unwavering individual penances, making and living their separate vows very stoutly.

Their 'Tapa' was so severe that it could virtually roast the whole world by its severity. Out of the three, Kumbhakarna did Tapa for 10 thousand years (4-8).

[Note—¹Gaukarna: This was the place where on some previous occasion Parvati had deposited the 'Shiva Lingam', Lord Shiva's symbol, that Ravana had brought from Mt. Kailash along with her as a boon that he obtained from Lord Shiva. Parvati managed to escape from Ravana's clutches with the help of Lord Vishnu, and she also managed to snatch the Shiva Lingam from him while escaping. This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 26-43. It has already been narrated in our Book earlier in Section 2.1 of this Chapter no. 2.]

विभीषणोऽपि धर्मात्मा सत्यधर्मपरायणः ।
 पञ्चवर्षसहस्राणि पादेनैकेन तस्थिवान् ॥ ९॥
 दिव्यवर्षसहस्रं तु निराहारो दशाननः ।
 पूर्णे वर्षसहस्रे तु शीर्षमग्नौ जुहाव सः ।
 एवं वर्षसहस्राणि नव तस्यातिचक्रमुः ॥ १०॥

vibhīṣaṇo'pi dharmātmā satyadharmaparāyaṇaḥ ।
 pañcavarṣasahasrāṇi pādenaikena tasthivān ॥ 9॥
 divyavarṣasahasraṁ tu nirāhāro daśānanaḥ ।
 pūrṇe varṣasahasre tu śīrṣamagnau juhāva saḥ ।
 evaṁ varṣasahasrāṇi nava tasyāticakramuḥ ॥ 10॥

Vibhishan—who was most righteous, pious and a follower of the noble path of truth and virtuousness amongst the three brothers—did Tapa for 5 thousand years by standing on one foot (9).

Ravana, the 10-headed one, fasted for 1 thousand glorious years. Then, on the completion of the thousand years, he offered his own head as offering to the sacred fire. In a similar manner, he repeated the exercise nine more times and, as a result, 9 thousand years passed by (10).

अथ वर्षसहस्रं तु दशमे दशमं शिरः ।
 छेतुकामस्य धर्मात्मा प्राप्तश्चाथ पूजापतिः ।
 वत्स वत्स दशग्रीव प्रीतोऽस्मीत्यभ्यभाषत ॥ ११॥
 वरं वर्य दास्यामि यतो मनसि काङ्क्षितम् ।
 दशग्रीवोऽपि तच्छ्रुत्वा प्रहृष्टेनान्तरात्मना ॥ १२॥

atha varṣasahasraṁ tu daśame daśamaṁ śiraḥ ।
 chettukāmasya dharmātmā prāptaścātha prajāpatiḥ ।
 vatsa vatsa daśagrīva prīto'smītyabhyabhāṣata ॥ 11 ॥
 varaṁ varaya dāsyāmi yatte manasi kāṅkṣitam ।
 daśagrīvo'pi tacchrutvā prahr̥ṣṭenāntarātmanā ॥ 12 ॥

When the 10th thousand year was about to end and Ravana was ready to offer his last head, the noble guardian of the world, Prajapati Brahma (the Creator who cares for the world and its inhabitants) revealed himself before him and said benevolently, 'Oh son; I am pleased with you (11).

Ask for a boon that you desire! I shall give you whatever you wish.' Hearing this, the 10-headed Ravana said most delightfully (12)—

अमरत्वं वृणोमीश वरदो यदि मे भवान् ।
 सुपर्णनागयक्षाणां देवतानां तथासुरैः ।
 अवध्यत्वं तु मे देहि तृणभूता हि मानुषाः ॥ १३॥
 तथास्त्विति पूजाध्यक्षः पुनराह दशाननम् ।
 अग्नौ हुतानि शीर्षाणि यानि तेऽसुरपुङ्गव ॥ १४॥
 भविष्यन्ति यथापूर्वमक्षयाणि च सत्तम ॥ १५॥

amaratvaṁ vṛṇomīśa varado yadi me bhavān ।
 suparṇanāgayakṣāṇāṁ devatānāṁ tathāsuraiḥ ।
 avadhyatvaṁ tu me dehi tṛṇabhūtā hi mānuṣāḥ ॥ 13 ॥
 tathāstviti prajādhyakṣaḥ punarāha daśānanam ।
 agnau hutāni śīrṣāṇi yāni te'surapuṅgava ॥ 14 ॥
 bhaviṣyanti yathāpūrvamakṣayāṇi ca sattama ॥ 15 ॥

'Oh Lord! If you indeed wish to give me the desired boon, then I want immortality. I must not die at the hands of Garuda (the mount of Vishnu; the legendary Eagle representing all sky-borne creatures), serpents (the legendary Sheshnath representing all subterranean creatures), Yaksha (demi-Gods employed by Kuber as his guards representing all spirits and semi-gods), the Gods and the Demons (i.e. all the other inhabitants of the heaven as well as the nether world from where his mother Kaikasi had come; here, referring to other demons who might claims their share in the plunder). The poor humans are matter of no concern for me as they are no better than the humble reed or a blade of grass against my might¹ (i.e. I have no fear from them, and therefore I do not ask protection against them).' (13).

Then the 'lord of his subjects' ("prajādhyakṣaḥ", i.e. Brahma) said 'so shall it be'. He continued to talk with the 10-headed one and said, 'Oh the best among the

demons! All the 9 heads that you had offered to the sacred fire shall grow once again, and oh the honourable one, they can never be destroyed again.’ (14-15).

[Note to verse no. 13:- This over-confidence of Ravana in his might and powers, that he has nothing to fear from humans, proved to be his undoing. There is a lesson to be learnt here—that over enthusiasm, over-confidence, over-belligerence, over-haughtiness and unbridled-arrogance is more often than not the so-called “weak link” in the chain, for it is at this weak point where the chain will snap when it is most unexpected or undesired of. Please see verse no. 56 of this Canto also.]

एवमुक्त्वा ततो राम दशग्रीवं पूजापतिः ।
विभीषणमुवाचेदं पूणतं भक्तवत्सलः ॥ १६॥
विभीषण त्वया वत्स कृतं धर्मार्थमुत्तमम् ।
तपस्ततो वरं वत्स वृणीष्वभिमतं हितम् ॥ १७॥

evamuktvā tato rāma daśagrīvaṁ prajāpatiḥ ।
vibhīṣaṇamuvācedaṁ pūṇataṁ bhaktavatsalaḥ ॥ 16॥
vibhīṣaṇa tvayā vatsa kṛtaṁ dharmārthamuttamam ।
tapastato varaṁ vatsa vṛṇīṣvābhimataṁ hitam ॥ 17॥

Oh Lord Ram! Saying this to Ravana, Prajapati (Brahma)—who is most munificent and benevolent towards his devotees—turned to Vibhishan who was most polite and humble (16).

Brahma said, ‘Oh son Vibhishan! You have done this Tapa to uphold the laws of Dharma, to carry out your duties in accordance with the laws of probity, propriety and righteousness, and to maintain some semblance of law and order in the demon race against all odds that you may have to face (dharmārthamuttamam). Hence, oh son, you may ask for whatever boon you desire.’¹

[¹To wit, Brahma told Vibhishan: “The demon race is known for its evil, sinful and degrading ways, and you are the only one who can keep the flame of Dharma, the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, morality and nobility in thought and conduct, alight against the storm of overbearing spiritual bankruptcy and moral decadence that looms over the horizon of the demon race like a thick bank of dark foreboding clouds that portend doom and destruction. Son, I have great hopes from you. I am aware of your inherent good nature and spiritual inclinations. If ever the demon race is annihilated, you are the only one who will survive to carry forward the illustrious line of your father, the great sage Visrawa, and prevent the line from complete obliteration. So I am pleased with you. Hence, go on and ask whatever you wish from me, for I am sure that you are not going to seek any nonsensical thing like your brother has done.”] (17).

विभीषणोऽपि तं नत्वा पूज्यलिर्वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।
देव मे सर्वदा बुद्धिर्धर्मे तिष्ठतु शाश्वती ।
मा सेचयत्वधर्मं मे बुद्धिः सर्वत्र सर्वदा ॥ १८॥

ततः पूजापतिः प्रीतो विभीषणमथाब्रवीत् ।
 वत्स त्वं धर्मशीलोऽसि तथैव च भविष्यसि ॥ १९॥
 अयाचितोऽपि ते दास्ये ह्यमरत्वं विभीषण ।
 कुम्भकर्णमथोवाच वरं वस्य सुव्रत ॥ २०॥
 वाण्या व्याप्तोऽथ तं प्राह कुम्भकर्णः पितामहम् ।
 स्वप्स्यामि देव षण्मासान् दिनमेकं तु भोजनम् ॥ २१॥

vibhīṣaṇo'pi taṁ natvā prāñjalirvākyamabravīt ।
 deva me sarvadā buddhirdharme tiṣṭhatu śāśvatī ।
 mā rocayatvadharmaṁ me buddhiḥ sarvatra sarvadā ॥ 18॥
 tataḥ prajāpatiḥ prīto vibhīṣaṇamathābravīt ।
 vatsa tvaṁ dharmāśīlo'si tathaiva ca bhaviṣyasi ॥ 19॥
 ayācito'pi te dāsye hyamaratvaṁ vibhīṣaṇa ।
 kumbhakarṇamathovāca varam varaya suvrata ॥ 20॥
 vāṇyā vyāpto'tha taṁ prāha kumbhakarṇaḥ pitāmaham ।
 svapsyāmi deva ṣaṇmāsān dinamekaṁ tu bhojanam ॥ 21॥

Vibhishan bowed humbly before the Creator and said with the palms of his hands touching each other as a sign of prayerful submission, ‘Oh Lord! Let all the faculties of intellect and discrimination of my mind steadfastly follow the path of Dharma, of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety without deviating from it even for a fleeting moment. Let nothing corrupt my mind and heart and influence them so much that they abandon virtuousness and goodness.’ (18).

At this prayer, the guardian of his subjects (Brahma) became extremely pleased, and he said most affectionately to Vibhishan, ‘Oh dear son! You are exemplary in your righteousness, in your noble views, and are no doubt very virtuous. It shall be as you please (19).

Oh Vibhishan! Though you have not asked for it, I nevertheless give you an additional boon of immortality!’

After that, he (Brahma) said to Kumbhakarna, ‘Oh the one who is steadfast in his vows and noble of disposition (**suvrata**)! Ask for a boon.’ (20).

Then Kumbhakarna, who was under the deluding spell of goddess Saraswati, the goddess of speech, wisdom and intellect, was misled to for an absurd boon which defied all credulity. He said, ‘Oh my Great Grandfather (**pitāmaham**)¹! I want to sleep for a continuous period of six months without interruption, and eat only once². [To wit, I wish to enjoy the pleasure of sleep continuously for six months, and then eat my full for one whole day, before going once again to sleep for another six months. And let this cycle go on endlessly.] (21).

[Note—¹Brahma is the ‘Great Grandfather’ of creation as it is from him that the entire creation is born.

²When Brahma learnt about Ravana's wishes as narrated in the previous verses, he felt very alarmed about the future of his creation, even though he could not refuse him the desired boons. He thought that it is better to keep the horrors that were about to come at least reduced by half by limiting them to Ravana alone, instead of doubling the problems by allowing Kumbhakarna too to have a free will to seek anything he wanted. Who knows he may ask for something more horrible than Ravana. So the wise Brahma signalled the Gods to quietly ask Saraswati to cast her magic spell upon Kumbhakarna's mind and intellect by inspiring him to ask for 'sleep'! It was obviously a most absurd boon to ask for after having done so severe Tapa; it wasted all the hardships that Kumbhakarna may have endured during Tapa. This ridiculous and laughable request was like someone wanting a piece of stone when given a chance to get a house full of priceless diamonds for the asking. Brahma of course hastened to grant it without giving a chance for Kumbhakarna to realize his mistake and change his mind.

'Kumbhakarna' is also spelt as 'Kumbhakaran' or 'Kumbhakarana'.]

एवमस्त्विति तं प्राह ब्रह्मा दृष्ट्वा दिवौकसः ।
 सरस्वती च तद्वक्त्रान्निर्गता प्रययौ दिवम् ॥ २२॥
 कुम्भकर्णस्तु दुष्टात्मा चिन्तयामास दुःखितः ।
 अनभिप्रेतमेवास्यात्किं निर्गतमहो विधिः ॥ २३॥

evamastviti taṁ prāha brahmā dṛṣṭvā divaukaśaḥ ।
 sarasvatī ca tadvaktrānnirgatā prayayau divam ॥ 22॥
 kumbhakarnaṣtu duṣṭātmā cintayāmāsa duḥkhitaḥ ।
 anabhipretamevāsyātkiṁ nirgatamaho vidhiḥ ॥ 23॥

Brahma said to him while glancing surreptitiously sideways at the Gods (who were closely watching the proceedings, and at whose behest Saraswati had misled Kumbhakarna in asking for the above ridiculous boon), 'So shall it be'.

As soon as Brahma said so, goddess Saraswati left Kumbhakarna's mouth (i.e. his tongue) and went to the heavens.

[To wit, Brahma looked sideways at the Gods whom he had signaled to ask Saraswati to act swiftly before it was too late. So as soon as Kumbhakarna finished asking for the boon of continuous sleep, Brahma left not time to grant it for he did not wish to give a moment to Kumbhakarna to recover and change his mind. So Brahma immediately said 'okay'. Seeing her job done well, Saraswati immediately withdrew from the scene and went to stand along with the other Gods in the heaven.] (22).

The wicked and evil Kumbhakarna (kumbhakarnaṣtu duṣṭātmā) realised his mistake (that he has been taken for a ride by the Gods, and he hadn't asked for any worthwhile boon), and so he became extremely worried and remorseful. He regretted and lamented gravely—'Alack! Look at the misfortune that has befallen me! How did these words (as asked by him in verse 21) come out from my mouth though I had never desired for such a funny, incredulous and absurd boon?' (23).

सुमाली वरलब्धांस्तान् ज्ञात्वा पौत्रान् निशाचरान् ।
पातालान्निर्भयः प्रायात् प्रहस्तादिभिरन्वितः ॥ २४॥
दशग्रीवं परिष्वज्य वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ।
दिष्ट्या ते पुत्र संवृतो वाञ्छितो मे मनोरथः ॥ २५॥

sumālī varalabdhāmstān jñātvā pautrān nīśācarān ।
pātālānnirbhayaḥ prāyāt prahastādibhiranvitaḥ ॥ 24॥
daśagrīvaṁ pariṣvajya vacanaṁ cedamabravīt ।
diṣṭyā te putra saṁvṛtto vāñchito me manorathaḥ ॥ 25॥

Hearing that his three grandsons have received boons, the demon Sumali came out of the nether world fearlessly, accompanied by Prahasht and other demons (24).

He embraced the 10-headed one (Ravana) and said, ‘Oh son! It is very fortunate and a moment of great joy and an occasion for celebration that your desires have been fulfilled in accordance with my wishes (25).

यद्भयाच्च वयं लङ्कां त्यक्त्वा याता रसातलम् ।
तद्गतं नो महाबाहो महद्विष्णुकृतं भयम् ॥ २६॥
अस्माभिः पूर्वमुषिता लङ्केयं धनदेन ते ।
भ्रातृक्रान्तामिदानीं त्वं प्रत्यानेतुमिहार्हसि ॥ २७॥
साम्ना वाथ बलेनापि राज्ञां बन्धुः कुतः सुहृत् ।
इत्युक्तो रावणः प्राह नार्हस्येवं प्रभाषितुम् ॥ २८॥

yadbhayaṁcca vayaṁ laṅkāṁ tyaktvā yātā rasātalam ।
tadgataṁ no mahābāho mahadvīṣṇukṛtaṁ bhayaṁ ॥ 26॥
asmābhiḥ pūrvamuṣitā laṅkeyaṁ dhanadena te ।
bhrātrākrāntāmidānīm tvaṁ pratyānetumihārhasi ॥ 27॥
sāmnā vātha balenāpi rājñāṁ bandhuḥ kutaḥ suhṛt ।
ityukto rāvaṇaḥ prāha nārhasyevaṁ prabhāṣitum ॥ 28॥

By the fear of whom we had abandoned (deserted and escaped from) Lanka and had gone to the nether world to hide ourselves, oh the brave, strong and courageous one (mahābāho), that fear of Vishnu no longer exists for us (26).

This city of Lanka, which is presently under the control of your step-brother Kuber, was previously inhabited by us. Now you should take it back from him either by mutual understanding (compromise) or by force. [To wit, you should not allow the relationship of a brother come in the way of establishing yourself as a sovereign Lord of the city. If Kuber agrees to hand over the city to you peacefully, so far so good; if he does not, then take it from by force.] (27)

Remember oh son, family members and relatives (the kith and kin) of kings have never been their well-wishers. [To wit, the greatest fear the king faces is jealousy and envy from his next of kin who are, more often than not, scheming and plotting against the king to grab the crown and the powers that come with it, and enjoy the spoils come with kingship. Remember: a king faces the gravest danger from his close relatives; they are like serpents in his own backyard. The king is more often than not betrayed by his own family members who are looking for an opportunity to usurp the crown and grab his authority.]'

When Sumali had said so, Ravana replied, 'You must not say so (28).

वितेशो गुरुरस्माकमेवं श्रुत्वा तमब्रवीत् ।
 प्रहस्तः प्रश्रितं वाक्यं रावणं दशकन्धरम् ॥ २९॥
 शृणु रावण यत्नेन नैवं त्वं वक्तुमर्हसि ।
 नाधीता राजधर्मास्ते नीतिशास्त्रं तथैव च ॥ ३०॥

vitteśo gururasmākamevaṁ śrutvā tamabravīt ।
 prahastaḥ praśritaṁ vākyaṁ rāvaṇaṁ daśakandharam ॥ 29॥
 śṛṇu rāvaṇa yatnena naivaṁ tvaṁ vaktumarhasi ।
 nādhītā rājadharmāste nītiśāstraṁ tathaiva ca ॥ 30॥

The Lord of wealth (Kuber) is our elder brother. [And it would be highly improper to insult him and throw him out of his kingdom for no fault of his. Say father, he has not done any harm to us; it is true as you say that the demons were chased away from Lanka by Lord Vishnu in the past, but what is the crime of Kuber in it; how is he to be blamed for what Vishnu had done to our race? After all, Kuber and myself have the same father, sage Visrawa. My conscience does not fully agree with your suggestions.]'

Hearing this, Prahasht (the crafty demon who had accompanied Sumali from the nether world, see verse no. 24, and who was his chief advisor, and who would later on become the chief advisor and ideologue of Ravana) chided Ravana most politely, and said [29], 'Listen carefully oh Ravana; listen to what I have to say. You must not say such a thing. You have not studied the science of politics, nor do you have proper understanding of the ways of kingship [30]. (29-30)

शूराणां न हि सौभ्रातृ शृणु मे वदतः प्रभो ।
 कश्यपस्य सुता देवा राक्षसाश्च महाबलाः ॥ ३१॥
 परस्परमयुध्यन्त त्यक्त्वा सौहृदमायुधैः ।
 नैवेदानीन्तनं राजन् वैरं देवैरनुष्ठितम् ॥ ३२॥

śūrāṇāṁ na hi saubhrātraṁ śṛṇu me vadataḥ prabho ।
 kaśyapasya sutā devā rākṣasāśca mahābalāḥ ॥ 31॥
 parasparamayudhyanta tyaktvā sauhṛdamāyudhaiḥ ।

naivedānīntanaṁ rājan vairam devairanuṣṭhitam || 32||

There is no sense of brotherhood (or any affectionate emotion) between brave warriors (who are contenders seeking superiority). Oh Lord! Listen to what I have to submit on this subject. The exalted sage Kashyap's sons, the Gods and the Demons, were equally very brave, strong and courageous (31).

But (inspite of their being brothers), they viciously fought each other, having abandoned their affection and fraternity and casting it to the wind. [To wit, though the Gods and the Demons were related by blood as they had a common parent, but when it came to self interest, they were baying for each other's blood, and each demanding the other's skull.]

Oh king! The animosity and hatred that we (the demons) have with the Gods is not something new (for it is old as this creation, well entrenched and in existence from an ancient time).

[To wit, you should not be complacent with regards to Kuber who is a member of the race of Gods. Remember: an underlying feeling of suspicion and lack of faith leading to an inveterate sense of animosity and hatred is inherently present between the Gods and the Demon races; it cannot be erased by merely wishing it away. So be careful: a time may come when Kuber would come to know about your newly acquired boons that make you virtually invincible in this world, and surely he would be jealous of you, and then he would go to Vishnu and team up with all other Gods who will together create a lot of trouble for you. They will not bother whether or not you had wished to maintain peace with Kuber and give him due regard as your step-brother, or that you were so nice that you wished to leave the kingdom of Lanka alone because it belonged to him. It may come to pass that by the time you realize that Gods have no sympathy for you it would be too late. So you must take the initiative now when Kuber and the other Gods are not prepared for defense, and launch your attack to catch the enemy unawares. Well, be wise and learn the trick of the trade of kingdom and how to establish and expand your authority and domain. Say, what was the use of seeking the boons that you asked Brahma to grant you if you still have to run for shelter when the Gods assault you and threaten us demons? Wouldn't it be a shameful act on your part that inspite of having the backing of these marvelous boons we still have to beg for mercy from the Gods?] (32)

[Note—Verse nos. 28-29 clearly indicate that Ravana was not inherently wicked and unscrupulous, nor did he wish to usurp power and right of others. On the contrary he was basically a good and righteous soul who did not want to do anything that was wrong and improper. After all he was a son of a sage, and traits of basic goodness flowed subtly in his blood. But the effect of circumstances, the dictates of providence, and the influence of evil company joined hands to ruin his destiny. Even though initially he was very reluctant to commit an atrocious deed against his step-brother Kuber, but egged on by his own family members, including earlier his mother Kaikasi, and now his maternal grandfather Sumali and his close companion and advisor Prahast, Ravana deviated from goodness to dig his own grave of ruin and destruction. It was their selfish advice given in such a way that made Ravana think that they are his best friends that led him astray.

The lesson here is that all creatures are inherently good and noble. It is their advisors who pretend to be their well-wishers, such as their teachers, parents, guides,

elders, compatriots and peers etc., who can make a devil, a Satan, or a holy spirit and a noble creature out of them.]

पूहस्तस्य वचः श्रुत्वा दशग्रीवो दुरात्मनः ।
तथेति क्रोधताम्राक्षस्त्रिकूटाचलमन्वगात् ॥ ३३॥
दूतं पूहस्तं सम्प्रेष्य निष्कास्य धनदेश्वरम् ।
लङ्कामाक्रम्य सचिवै रक्षसैः सुखमास्थितः ॥ ३४॥

prahastasya vacaḥ śrutvā daśagrīvo durātmanaḥ ।
tatheti krodhatāmārākṣastrikūṭācalamanvagāt ॥ 33॥
dūtaṁ prahastaṁ sampreṣya niṣkāsyā dhanadeśvaram ।
laṅkāmakramya sacivai rākṣasaiḥ sukhamāsthitaḥ ॥ 34॥

Hearing these (instigating and ill-advised) words of the wicked, scheming and pervert (durātmanaḥ) Prahast, the 10-headed Ravana said (angrily and haughtily), ‘It’s alright then. [I will do as you say.]’

His eyes became red with anger, and he immediately reached the Trikuta mountain (on which Lanka was established) (33).

He sent Prahast as his messenger, ejected the Lord of wealth (Kuber) from Lanka, and having snatched the city from him, he established his control over it. He lived happily and in comfort there with his demon ministers and others of the demon race (34).

धनदः पितृवाक्येन त्यक्त्वा लङ्कां महायशाः ।
गत्वा कैलासशिखरं तपसातोषयच्छिवम् ॥ ३५॥
तेन सख्यमनुप्राप्य तेनैव परिपालितः ।
अलकां नगरीं तत् निर्ममे विश्वकर्मणा ॥ ३६॥

dhanadaḥ pitṛvākyaena tyaktvā laṅkāṁ mahāyaśāḥ ।
gatvā kailāśaśikharaṁ tapasātoṣayacchivam ॥ 35॥
tena sakhyamanuprāpya tenaiva paripālitaḥ ।
alakāṁ nagarīm tatra nirmame viśvakarmaṇā ॥ 36॥

The most virtuous Lord of wealth (Kuber) abandoned Lanka, and on the advice of his father (Visrawa), he went to Kailash (the mountainous abode of Lord Shiva) and pleased the Lord (Shiva) by doing severe penances (35).

He established cordial relationship with Lord Shiva, and protected by the latter, he got established for himself a new city called ‘Alkapuri’ with the help of the celestial architect Vishwakarma (36).

[Note—After leaving Lanka to Ravana, Kuber established another great city called ‘Alkapuri’. It was to become a new capital for the Gods.]

दिक्पालत्वं चकारात् शिवेन परिपालितः ।
 रावणो राक्षसैः सार्धमभिषिक्तः सहानुजैः ॥ ३७॥
 राज्यं चकारासुराणां त्रिलोकीं बाधयन् खलः ।
 भगिनीं कालखञ्जाय ददौ विकटरूपिणीम् ॥ ३८॥
 विद्युज्जिह्वाय नाम्नासौ महामायी निशाचरः ।
 ततो मयो विश्वकर्मा राक्षसानां दितेः सुतः ॥ ३९॥
 सुतां मन्दोदरीं नाम्ना ददौ लोकैकसुन्दरीम् ।
 रावणाय पुनः शक्तिममोघां प्रीतमानसः ॥ ४०॥

dikpālatvaṁ cakārātra śivena paripālitaḥ ।
 rāvaṇo rākṣasaiḥ sārdhamabhiṣiktaḥ sahānujaiḥ ॥ 37॥
 rājyaṁ cakārāsuraṇām trilokīm bādhayan khalaḥ ।
 bhaginīm kālakhañjāya dadau vikaṭarūpiṇīm ॥ 38॥
 vidyujjihvāya nāmnāsau mahāmāyī niśācaraḥ ।
 tato mayo viśvakarmā rākṣasānām diteḥ sutaḥ ॥ 39॥
 sutām mandodarīm nāmnā dadau lokaikasundarīm ।
 rāvaṇāya punaḥ śaktimamoghām prītamānasaḥ ॥ 40॥

There, under the protection of Lord Shiva, Kuber became a ‘Dikpal’ (i.e. one who gets guardianship or lordship over one of the four main directions of the celestial compass).

Meanwhile here at Lanka, Ravana got himself anointed as the king of demons, and lived there along with his younger brothers (37).

The evil rascal began to rule over the demons, and started to unleash his rein of terror in the three worlds (the heaven, the earth and the nether worlds).

He betrothed his sister (Supernakha), who was of a very fearful and fierce countenances and sinful demeanours, to a great trickster, a cunning and most illusive demon named Vidyujiwaha (vidyujjihvāya) belonging to the demon family of Kaalkhanjaay (kālakhañjāya).

At that time, a demon named Maye, who was the son of Diti and the architect and builder for the demons, gave his daughter named Mandodari—who was the most beautiful maiden in the whole world consisting of three divisions (heaven, earth and nether world)—in marriage to Ravana.

After that, Maye gave Ravana an invincible and infallible weapon called ‘Shakti’ as a marriage gift. [This ‘Shakti’ was a special weapon devised by Maye, and it matched the Shakti of Indra, the king of Gods, that was designed by Vishwakarma, the designer of the Gods.] (38-40).

वैशेचनस्य दौहित्रीं वृत्रज्वालेति विशुताम् ।
 स्वयन्दत्तामुदवहत्कुम्भकर्णाय रावणः ॥ ४१॥

गन्धर्वराजस्य सुतां शैलूषस्य महात्मनः ।
 विभीषणस्य भार्यार्थे धर्मज्ञां समुदावहत् ॥ ४२॥
 सरमां नाम सुभगां सर्वलक्षणसंयुताम् ।
 ततो मन्दोदरी पुत्रं मेघनादमजीजनत् ॥ ४३॥

vairocanasya dauhitrīm vṛtrajvāleti viśrutām ।
 svayandattāmudavahatkumbhakarṇāya rāvaṇaḥ ॥ 41॥
 gandharvarājasya sutām śailūṣasya mahātmanaḥ ।
 vibhīṣaṇasya bhāryārthe dharmajñāṁ samudāvahat ॥ 42॥
 saramāṁ nāma subhagāṁ sarvalakṣaṇasaṁyutām ।
 tato mandodarī putraṁ meghanādamajījanat ॥ 43॥

Thereafter, Ravana married off Kumbhakarna with Vritajwala (vṛtrajvāleti), who was the daughter of the son of demon Vairochan (vairocanasya) and was brought to him (Ravana) by the latter himself (41).

Likewise, Sarma (saramāṁ)—who was the daughter of great king of Gandharvas (celestial musicians) named Sailush (gandharvarājasya sutām śailūṣasya), and was a very righteous and noble lady, most beautiful, and who possessed all the good virtues and characters one can expect to have (subhagāṁ sarvalakṣaṇasaṁyutām)—was betrothed to Vibhishan.

In due course of time, Mandodari gave birth to a son called Meghnad (42-43).

जातमातृस्तु यो नादं मेघवत्प्रमुमोच ह ।
 ततः सर्वेऽब्रुवन्मेघनादोऽयमिति चासकृत् ॥ ४४॥
 कुम्भकर्णस्ततः प्राह निद्रा मां बाधते प्रभो ।
 ततश्च कारयामास गुहां दीर्घां सुविस्तराम् ॥ ४५॥

jātamātrastu yo nādaṁ meghavatpramumoca ha ।
 tataḥ sarve'bruvanmeghanādo'yamiti cāsakṛt ॥ 44॥
 kumbhakarṇastataḥ prāha nidrā mām bādhate prabho ।
 tataśca kārayāmāsa guhāṁ dīrghāṁ suvistarām ॥ 45॥

As soon as he (Meghnad) was born, he made a loud noise resembling the rumbling and thunder of clouds. That is why every one said he is 'Meghnad' (which literally means one who makes a noise resembling the thunder of clouds) (44).

Then Kumbhakarna told Ravana, 'Oh Lord! I am feeling sleepy.' He got a large cave constructed for himself (so that he can sleep undisturbed) (45).

तत्र सुष्वाप मूढात्मा कुम्भकर्णो विघूर्णितः ।

निद्रिते कुम्भकर्णे तु रावणो लोकरावणः ॥ ४६॥
 ब्राह्मणान् ऋषिमुख्यांश्च देवदानवकिन्नरान् ।
 देवश्रियो मनुष्यांश्च निजघ्ने समहोरगान् ॥ ४७॥

tatra suṣvāpa mūḍhātmā kumbhakarṇo vighūrṇitaḥ ।
 nidrite kumbhakarṇe tu rāvaṇo lokarāvaṇaḥ ॥ 46॥
 brāhmaṇān ṛṣimukhyāṁśca devadānavakinnarān ।
 devaśriyo manuṣyāṁśca nijaghne samahoragān ॥ 47॥

There (in the cave), the ill-witted, dud and foolish (mūḍhātmā) Kumbhakarna slept with a thunderous snore that resonated in all the directions (vighūrṇitaḥ).

When Kumbhakarns fell asleep, Ravana—who literally means one who makes the whole world weep in anguish and feel miserable and distressed (lokarāvaṇaḥ)—unleashed his tyrannical reign by going on a rampage of wanton killing of whosoever he managed to lay his hands upon, such as Brahmins, chief sages, hermits and ascetics, the Gods and the demons (who dared to oppose him), the Kinnars (celestial demi-Gods who are dancers and singers in heaven), the serpents (i.e. reptiles and subterranean creatures) as well as the humans, by searching them out in every nook and corner of the world. He also destroyed the assets of the Gods in heaven. [To wit, Ravana spared none. He ran amok and went berserk with his atrocious deeds.] (46-47).

धनदोऽपि ततः श्रुत्वा रावणस्याक्रमं प्रभुः ।
 अधर्मं मा कुरुष्वेति दूतवाक्यैर्न्यावरायत् ॥ ४८॥
 ततः क्रुद्धो दशग्रीवो जगाम धनदालयम् ।
 विनिर्जित्य धनाध्यक्षं जह्यारोत्तमपुष्पकम् ॥ ४९॥

dhanado'pi tataḥ śrutvā rāvaṇasyākramaṁ prabhuḥ ।
 adharmaṁ mā kuruṣveti dūtavākyaairnyavārayat ॥ 48॥
 tataḥ kruddho daśagrīvo jagāma dhanadālayam ।
 vinirjitya dhanādhyaḥkṣaṁ jahārottamapuṣpakam ॥ 49॥

When the Lord of wealth (Kuber—who was the step-brother of Ravana) heard about Ravana's rash, despotic and tyrannical behaviour, about his misdeeds and misdemeanours, he was extremely aghast and felt very sorry. He therefore sent a messenger (to Ravana) with the sane advice that he should not commit sin and desist from unrighteousness. (48).

This suggestion however annoyed Ravana further; he attacked Kuber's capital (Alkapuri—see verse no. 36) in retaliation, and defeated him. As a booty he snatched the latter's plane called Pushpak (and took it away as a trophy of war) (49).

[Note—Kuber tried to remind Ravana about his family's reputation, that it belongs to the line of great and honourable sages (Pulstya and Visrawa) who have an immaculate

reputation, and are known for their righteousness and goodness. Hence it does not behove of him to act in the most despicable and degrading way that he does as it would sully the name of his father and grandfather. But instead of feeling any sense of guilt, instead of showing any sign of remorse or repentance, Ravana took Kuber's advice as an affront to his ego and authority, angrily muttering that Kuber will do better if he would mind his own business.

So Kuber's missive, sent through a messenger, infuriated Ravana no end, and he decided to first teach Kuber a bitter lesson of his life—to leave Ravana alone and mind his own affairs, and never again try to act smart with him, behaving as he was the torch-bearer of Dharma if he wishes to be left in reasonable peace even if it because he happened to be Ravana's brother—before he would launch his cruel campaign against the other Gods to conquer and subdue them most mercilessly.

So Kuber became Ravana's first target. By vanquishing him and snatching the Puspak plane as a trophy of conquest, Ravana sent a strong and resolute signal to the rest of the Gods, that they should either surrender or face the music.]

ततो यमं च वरुणं निर्जित्य समरेऽसुरः ।
स्वर्गलोकमगातुर्णं देवराजजिघांसया ॥ ५०॥
ततोऽभवन्महद्युद्धमिन्द्रेण सह दैवतैः ।
ततो रावणमभ्येत्य बबन्ध त्रिदशेश्वरः ॥ ५१॥

tato yamaṁ ca varuṇaṁ nirjitya samare'suraḥ ।
svargalokamagātturnaṁ devarājajighāṁsayā ॥ 50॥
tato'bhavanmahadyuddhamindreṇa saha daivataiḥ ।
tato rāvaṇamabhyetya babandha tridaśeśvaraḥ ॥ 51॥

Soon, that demon (Ravana) conquered Yam (the Lord of death) and Varun (the God of water), and then made an assault on the heavens with the intention to kill the king of Gods, Indra, himself (50).

There, he fought a very fierce and pitched battle with Indra and other Gods. The lord of the three worlds (i.e. Indra) was able to out-manuever Ravana; he captured the demon and put him in shackles (51).

तच्छ्रुत्वा सहसागत्य मेघनादः प्रतापवन् ।
कृत्वा घोरं महद्युद्धं जित्वा त्रिदशपुङ्गवान् ॥ ५२॥
इन्द्रं गृहीत्वा बध्वासौ मेघनादो महाबलः ।
मोचयित्वा तु पितरं गृहीत्वेन्द्रं ययौ पुरम् ॥ ५३॥

tacchrutvā sahasāgatya meghanādaḥ pratāpavan ।
kṛtvā ghoram mahadyuddham jitvā tridaśapuṅgavān ॥ 52॥
indram grhītvā badhvāsau meghanādo mahābalaḥ ।

mocayitvā tu pitaram gṛhītvendram yayau puram ॥ 53॥

When the news reached Meghnad, the most famous, powerful, strong and valiant son of Ravana, he came to help his father, and there was a very pitched and fierce battle between the two sides (i.e. between Indra and Meghnad). He (Meghnad) conquered the Gods [52], captured Indra and tied him up. Thus, Meghnad, the most strong and valorous one, got his father freed, and brought Indra as a captive to his own capital (at Lanka) [53]. (52-53)

ब्रह्मा तु मोचयामास देवेन्द्रं मेघनादतः ।
दत्त्वा वरान् बहून्स्तस्मै ब्रह्मा स्वभवनं ययौ ॥ ५४॥
रावणो विजयी लोकान् सर्वान् जित्वा क्रमेण तु ।
कैलासं तोलयामास बाहुभिः परिघोपमैः ॥ ५५॥

brahmā tu mocayāmāsa devendram meghanādataḥ ।
dattvā varān bahūnstasmai brahmā svabhavanam yayau ॥ 54॥
rāvaṇo vijayī lokān sarvān jitvā krameṇa tu ।
kailāsam tolāyāmāsa bāhubhiḥ parighopamaiḥ ॥ 55॥

Brahma (the creator) went and bargained for the freedom of Indra from the clutches of Meghnad by giving the latter a number of boons¹. Having obtained Indra's freedom, Brahma went back to his abode (and Indra went to his kingdom in the heaven) (54).

The victorious Ravana progressively, one after another, conquered all the different Lokas. [To wit, Ravana vanquished all the parts of the world, and subjugated all its inhabitants consisting of all the different species and classes of living beings, the mortal creatures as well as gods, demigods etc.).

Having done so, he had become so confident of and arrogant about his invincibility, might, prowess, potent, valour and punch that he haughtily lifted Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) with his huge, strong and robust arms which were like giant forks² (55).

[Note—¹It was a sort of ransom paid by the grandfather Brahma to liberate Indra from the clutches of his vanquisher, Meghnad. This sort of blackmail was one way in which the demons were able to acquire numerous boons, and then use these boons to further blackmail the Gods and extend their sphere of influence, till it was possible for the complete subjugation and rout of all the Gods.

Refer also to Anand Ramaya, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 78-82.

²Ravana's arms resembled huge forks; their palms and fingers were like the end of a fork with which one scoops up something, while the forearm and biceps were like the handle or the shaft of this gigantic fork. He scooped up the mighty Mt. Kailash with his fork-like hands, using his fingers to dig below the base of the mountain and ease it up from its foundation, and then hold it aloft by balancing it on his spread-out palms that acted like a huge platter or a pedestal on which the mountain rested.]

तत्र नन्दीश्वरेणैवं शप्तोऽयं राक्षसेश्वरः ।
 वानरैर्मनुषैश्चैव नाशं गच्छेति कोपिना ॥ ५६॥
 शप्तोऽप्यगणयन् वाक्यं ययौ हैहयपत्तनम् ।
 तेन बद्धो दशग्रीवः पुलस्त्येन विमोचितः ॥ ५७॥

tatra nandīśvareṇaivam śapto'yaṁ rākṣaseśvaraḥ ।
 vānarairmānuṣaiścaiva nāśaṁ gaccheti kopinā ॥ 56॥
 śapto'pyagaṇayan vākyaṁ yayau haihayapattanam ।
 tena baddho daśagrīvaḥ pulastyena vimocitaḥ ॥ 57॥

There, the sacred bull called Nandi (which is the mount of Shiva) angrily cursed the king of demons (Ravana) in indignation, prophesizing that he would die at the hands of a human and monkeys¹ (56).

But Ravana was so overcome with arrogance, haughtiness and over-confidence in his invincibility (because of the boons which he had received by Brahma in verse no. 13 and his subsequent successes) that he paid no attention to that curse.

Instead of hesitating and trying to find a way out of this hang-man's noose that hung perpetually around his neck, he became more aggressive and belligerent, moving to the capital of Haihairaj (i.e. Sahastrarjun) to subdue him. There Ravana was captured by the latter and kept in captivity. Sage Pulastya (grandfather of Ravana) came to his aid and got him released at that time² (57).

[Note—¹Refer also to Anand Ramaya, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 84-89.

This was the second major setback for Ravana after his first defeat at the hands of Indra as in verse nos. 50-51. His hitherto reckless, aggressive, belligerent and unhindered journey of relentless conquest now left the demon in self-doubt and tenterhooks of suspicion because of the Nandi's curse—from now onwards he became wary and sore affright of humans and monkeys, the humble and apparently inconsequential creatures whom he had hitherto regarded with utter disdain, and whom he treated them as being mere dust which could be trampled underfoot at will, without the guts and the wherewithal to offer even a semblance of resistance to him and his powerful might.

But as providence ordained, this over-confidence on the part of Ravana which made him exempt humans and monkeys while seeking a blanket protection against all his enemies at the time of seeking boons from Brahma proved to be his undoing; it was like the proverbial last straw on the camel's back that made him collapse, for it was this loophole, or a lapse if we shall like to call it so, that Nandi exploited when he cursed Ravana that he will die at the hands of humans and monkeys. Perhaps he regretted now as to why he had haughtily and over confidently overlooked them while he was asking for boons from Brahma in verse no. 13, Canto 2.

Now, who were these 'humans and the monkeys' who would kill Ravana? The story of the Ramayana tells us that the humans were Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, while the monkeys were the residents of the kingdom of Kishkindha of which Sugriv was the king, and they formed the army that the Lord used in the War of

Lanka to defeat and slay all the cruel demons, including Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghnad.

²Refer also to Anand Ramaya, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.]

ततोऽतिबलमासाद्य जिघांसुर्हरिपुङ्गवम् ।
 धृतस्तेनैव कक्षेण वालिना दशकन्धरः ॥ ५८॥
 भ्रामयित्वा तु चतुरः समुद्रान् रावणं हरिः ।
 विसर्जयामास ततस्तेन सख्यं चकार सः ॥ ५९॥
 रावणः परमप्रीत एवं लोकान् महाबलः ।
 चकार स्ववशे राम बुभुजे स्वयमेव तान् ॥ ६०॥

tato'tibalamāsādyā jighāṁsurharipuṅgavam ।
 dhṛtastenaiva kakṣeṇa vālinā daśakandharaḥ ॥ 58॥
 bhrāmayitvā tu caturaḥ samudrān rāvaṇaṁ hariḥ ।
 visarjayāmāsa tatastena sakhyaṁ cakāra saḥ ॥ 59॥
 rāvaṇaḥ paramaprīta evaṁ lokān mahābalaḥ ।
 cakāra svavaśe rāma bubhuje svayameva tān ॥ 60॥

Then he (Ravana) determined to kill the king of monkeys (named Vaali) who was immensely strong and powerful, but the tables were turned on him, and he was captured by Vaali and kept pressed or squeezed under his arm-pit (58).

He (Vaali) took Ravana around the four great oceans, and then released him. Then Ravana made friends with him (i.e. Ravana made a treaty of friendship with Vaali)¹(59).

Oh Lord Sri Ram! In this manner, Ravana could subdue and ruthlessly conquer the whole world by the strength of his arms¹ and began enjoying it himself most delightedly as if it were his unquestioned fiefdom (because he had no opposition of any kind left around from whom to fear) (60).

[Note—¹Refer also to Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.]

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Section 2.3:

Ram Charit Manas

Earlier in Chapter no. 1 we have read about the previous life of Ravana when he was known as the famous king named Pratapbhanu. The Chapter concluded with Doha no. 176 of Ram Charit Manas which observed that though Ravana and his siblings were born in the glorious family of an illustrious sage named Pulastya, but because of the curse of the Brahmins they, however, became epitomes of vices, sinfulness and evil.

Now we shall pick up the thread from where we had left it in that Chapter, and read on with how things developed further for Ravana and others, about their acquiring various boons and then establishing the great Kingdom of Demon race as narrated in the famed epic 'Ram Charit Manas'. The following verses, from Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Doha no. 180 describe these events.

चौ०. कीन्ह बिबिध तप तीनिहुँ भाई । परम उग्र नहिं बरनि सो जाई ॥ १ ॥
 गयउ निकट तप देखि बिधाता । मागहु बर प्रसन्न मैं ताता ॥ २ ॥
 करि बिनती पद गहि दससीसा । बोलेउ बचन सुनहु जगदीसा ॥ ३ ॥
 हम काहू के मरहि न मारें । बानर मनुज जाति दुइ बारें ॥ ४ ॥
 एवमस्तु तुम्ह बड़ तप कीन्हा । मैं ब्रह्माँ मिलि तेहि बर दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

kīnha bibidha tapa tīnihuṁ bhāī. parama ugra nahim barani sō jāī. 1.
 gaya'u nikaṭa tapa dēkhi bidhātā. māgahu bara prasanna mair̥m tātā. 2.
 kari binatī pada gahi dasasīsā. bōlē'u bacana sunahu jagadīsā. 3.
 hama kāhū kē marahim na mārēm. bānara manuja jāti du'i bārēm. 4.
 ēvamastu tumha baṛa tapa kīnhā. mair̥m brahmāṁ mili tēhi bara dīnhā. 5.

All the three brothers (Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan) did severe Tapa (penance) with all sincerity and diligence, employing all means within their reach to attain success in it. Their Tapa was so harsh, strict and intense that it is beyond words to describe it¹. (1)

The Creator (Brahma) was pleased when he observed their Tapa, and he went to them and said, 'Dear, I am very pleased with you. Ask any boon that you desire from me.' (2)

[The Creator had first approached the eldest of the three brothers, Ravana.] The 10-headed one (Ravana) bowed to the Creator most reverentially and caught hold of his feet. Then he said prayerfully, 'Listen, oh the lord of the world. (3) ----

I must not be killed by anyone, except monkeys and human beings².' (4)

Brahma replied, 'So shall it be. You have done severe Tapa by the virtue of it you have met me, Brahma the Creator. So I bless you with this boon that you desire.' (5)

[Note—¹In Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2 we read about the severity of their Tapa. Ravana fasted for one thousand years, at the end of which he offered one of his heads to the sacrificial fire. Then he fasted for another thousand years, offering his second head at the end of this period. He continued with this practice for ten thousand years, and when he was ready to offer his last head, Brahma appeared before him. (Refer: verse nos. 10-11.)

Kumbhakarna did Tapa for ten thousand years, and Vibhishan for five thousand years while standing on the toe of one foot. (Refer: verse nos. 8-9.)

A similar version is found in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 47-50.

²In Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 13, Ravana has been specific in seeking immunity from Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu, representing all sky-borne creatures), Serpents (representing all subterranean creatures and reptiles), Yaksha (demi-gods and spirits), Gods (residents of heaven), Demons (residents of nether world as well as members of his own race who may oppose and challenge his authority).

He thought that if he is granted fearlessness from such powerful forces, then humble monkeys and humans would be like dust for him, for they would never dare to stand before him. This loophole was later used to derive the maximum benefit by the Gods and Lord Vishnu when Ravana went berserk, killing, plundering and ravaging the creation merciless, because the Gods assumed the form of monkeys and Lord Vishnu of a human prince called Lord Ram to finally slay Ravana and eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons.]

पुनि प्रभु कुंभकरन पहिं गयऊ । तेहि बिलोकि मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

जौं एहिं खल नित करब अहारू । होइहि सब उजारि संसारू ॥ ७ ॥

सारद प्रेरि तासु मति फेरी । मागेसि नीद मास षट केरी ॥ ८ ॥

puni prabhu kumbhakarana pahim gaya'ū. tēhi bilōki mana bisamaya bhaya'ū.
6.

jaum ēhim khala nita karaba ahārū. hō'ihī saba ujāri sansārū. 7.

sārada prēri tāsū mati phērī. māgēsī nīda māsa ṣaṭa kērī. 8.

[Then the Lord (Brahma) went to Kumbhakarna. As he saw his colossal form he was confounded and alarmed, wondering what would happen to this creation if all these wicked demons got absolute immunity from punishment and death, because then they will unleash a horrible torrent of torments with impunity, causing untold misery, grief and pain to all the creatures of the creation. This was not acceptable to the Creator, as it was his moral duty to protect the creation and its inhabitants he had himself created; being the great forefather of this creation he was also its patron caretaker and protector, responsible for its security and well-being. He cannot allow his

discretionary powers to grant boons to come in the way of fulfilling his larger duties and responsibilities in this creation. So he was alarmed when he saw Kumbhakarna.

He thought for a while and decided that since he has already granted boons to Ravana and it cannot be reverted, the best he can do now was to limit the damage already done by stopping it from getting doubled by granting unbridled powers to Kumbhakarna. To wit, if he manages Kumbhakarna into asking some inconsequential boon, something nonsense and idiotic, then at least the horrors that the world would face would be reduced by half, as it then would only be limited to Ravana's whims.

Therefore, Brahma signaled Saraswati, the goddess of speech and wisdom, to act swiftly and delude Kumbhakarna's mind so that he asks something foolish and harmless.]

The Lord then went to Kumbhakarna, and seeing him he was filled with dismay. (6)

He thought to himself, "If this colossus fellow eats to his fill every day, the world would starve and there would be famine all around; the earth would become barren and ravished. [To wit, he will eat everything, and there would be nothing left for the rest of the creatures to survive on.]" (7)

So the wise and prudent Creator signaled Saraswati to delude Kumbhakarna's mind, as a result of which he asked for a stupid and ridiculous boon of 'sleeping uninterrupted for a period of six months at a time'¹. (8)

[Note—¹On the single day when he woke up and ate, there was a virtual famine in the whole world, for he ate up everything that was available that day. Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 180.

What did Kumbhakarna eat? Well, a glimpse is available in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64 which says he gobbled up entire buffalos and drank huge cans of wine. The demons in general feasted on all living beings, such as humans, including sages, animals of all denominations, such as the cows and the buffaloes to mention only a few—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chanda line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45.

And how huge was he? He was like a living God of Death, and colossus as a mountain. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 62; and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 65 respectively.)

It was not only 'food' that Brahma had in mind when he inspired Saraswati to prevail upon Kumbhakarna to ask for this absurd boon. As has been noted in the introductory paragraphs, Brahma reasoned that if Kumbhakarna was knocked out into deep slumber, then Ravana would be left alone. He won't be able to cause much nuisance single-handed as he would be able to do if he had an active support of his equally wicked brother Kumbhakarna. So the expected horrors would at least be reduced by half. The physical dimensions of Kumbhakarna's body were exceptionally huge, for he was as colossal as a great mountain. This meant that his physical strength and powers much surpassed that of Ravana.

So therefore, if the two, Ravana and Kumbhakarna, had joined hands in running around berserk, recklessly killing and spreading mayhem in this world, then whatever managed to survive from Ravana's cruelty would also have perished. To wit, Brahma's clever wit in provoking Kumbhakarna into asking a stupid boon of 'sleep' helped the world to survive for a longer period of time than it would have if

both the brothers were actively involved in spreading the horrifying reign of the demons marked by cruelty, terror and dread in this world.]

दो०. गए बिभीषन पास पुनि कहेउ पुत्र बर मागु ।
तेहिं मागेउ भगवंत पद कमल अमल अनुरागु ॥ १७७ ॥

dōhā.

ga'e bibhīṣana pāsa puni kahē'u putra bara māgu.
tēhiṁ māgē'u bhagavanta pada kamala amala anurāgu. 177.

After that, Brahma went to Vibhishan, and said, 'Son, ask for your desired boon.'

He (Vibhishan) asked for a boon that he should have unwavering, undiluted, unhindered and eternal devotion and affection for the lotus-like holy feet of the Lord God¹ (Doha no. 177)

[Note—¹In his previous life, Vibhishan was the chief minister of king Pratapbhanu. His name was 'Dharmaruchi', one who took great interest in the virtues of goodness and righteousness. He was a pious soul, and this great trait in his character came down to him in his current birth as Vibhishan. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 176.]

चौ०. तिन्हहि देइ बर ब्रह्म सिधाए । हरषित ते अपने गृह आए ॥ १ ॥
मय तनुजा मंदोदरि नामा । परम सुंदरी नारि ललामा ॥ २ ॥
सोइ मयँ दीन्हि रावनहि आनी । होइहि जातुधानपति जानी ॥ ३ ॥
हरषित भयउ नारि भलि पाई । पुनि दोउ बंधु बिआहेसि जाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tinahi dē'i bara brahma sidhā'ē. haraṣita tē apanē gr̥ha ā'ē. 1.
maya tanujā mandōdari nāmā. parama sundarī nāri lālāmā. 2.
sō'i mayam̐ dīnhi rāvanahi ānī. hō'ihi jātudhānapati jānī. 3.
haraṣita bhaya'u nāri bhali pāī. puni dō'u bandhu bi'āhēsi jāī. 4.

Brahma went to his abode after granting them their desired boons. Then they (the three brothers) came back home elated and happy. (1)

A demon named 'Maye' (who was the architect of the demon race) had a most beautiful and charming daughter named Mandodari. (2)

He brought her and gave her in marriage to Ravana as he realized that soon the latter would be the ruler of the demon race (and the most powerful one in the whole world). (3)

Ravana was very pleased to get a nice wife for himself. By-and-by he also got his other two brothers married. (4)

[Note—Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 39-43. It says Kumbhararna was married to Vrittajwala, the daughter of demon Virochan, and Vibishan to Sarma, the daughter of Sailush who was a king of the Gandharvas (celestial musicians).

Similar thing has been said in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 44, and 65-66.]

गिरि त्रिकूट एक सिंधु मझारी । बिधि निर्मित दुर्गम अति भारी ॥ ५ ॥
 सोइ मय दानवँ बहुरि सँवारा । कनक रचित मनिभवन अपारा ॥ ६ ॥
 भोगावति जसि अहिकुल बासा । अमरावति जसि सक्रनिवासा ॥ ७ ॥
 तिन्ह तें अधिक रज्ज अति बंका । जग बिख्यात नाम तेहि लंका ॥ ८ ॥

giri trikūṭa ēka sindhu majhārī. bidhi nirmita durgama ati bhārī. 5.
 sō'i maya dānavaṃ bahuri saṃvārā. kanaka racita manibhavana apārā. 6.
 bhōgāvati jasi ahikula bāsā. amarāvati jasi sakranivāsā. 7
 tinha tēm adhika ramya ati baṅkā. jaga bikhyāta nāma tēhi laṅkā. 8.

In the middle of the ocean was a wonderful mountain with three lofty summits. It was called 'Trikut'; it was extensive in dimensions and most difficult to access. (5)

The demon Maye (who was the architect of the demon race) re-constructed and renovated it wonderfully, with full majesty, splendour and glamour. The newly refurbished city had countless majestic gilded palaces that were decorated with priceless gems. (6)

This city was as wondrous and beautiful as the legendary city of the serpents in the subterranean world, known as Bhogawati, as well as the city of Indra, the king of gods, that is known as Amravati. (7)

Nay, this newly founded city of the demons actually much surpassed these two legendary capitals (of the serpents and the demons) in its majesty, splendour and glamour; it was more charming, wondrous, beautiful and glamorous than the two of them. It was impenetrable and most awe-inspiring. Its name was 'Lanka'¹. (8)

[Note—¹This city was earlier the residents of the demons, but they had abandoned it out of fear of Lord Vishnu. They went and started living in the nether world. For some time it was left in ruins, but it was re-build by Kuber, the treasurer of gods, with the help of Vishwakarma. When Ravana assaulted and sacked it, it was once again reduced to rubble. Then Maye re-constructed it much better than what it previously was to convert it into a permanent dwelling place and the capital of the demon race after Ravana ascended to power. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 179 herein below.

Refer also to (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 42-44; and (ii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 13-15.]

दो०. खाई सिंधु गभीर अति चारिहुँ दिसि फिरि आव ।

कनक कोट मनि खचित दृढ़ बरनि न जाइ बनाव ॥ १७८ (क) ॥

हरि प्रेरित जेहिं कलप जोइ जातुधानपति होइ ।

सूर प्रतापी अतुलबल दल समेत बस सोइ ॥ १७८ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

khā'īm sindhu gabhīra ati cārihuṁ disi phiri āva.

kanaka kōṭa mani khacita dṛṛha barani na jā'i banāva. 178 (a).

hari prērita jēhim kalapa jō'i jātudhānapati hō'i.

sūra pratāpī atulabala dala samēta basa sō'i. 178 (b).

The mighty ocean, which is most formidable and deep, forms an un-crossable moat all around this city of Lanka, making it inaccessible and unapproachable.

It had a fort with strong fortified walls and ramparts, decorated with gold and gems. It was so wonderful to behold that its beauty cannot be sufficiently described in words. (Doha no. 178-a)

Whoever is preordained by the will of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being) to become an exceptionally brave, courageous and valiant king of the world, in any of the many eras of creation, lives in this city with his army and subjects. (Doha no. 178-b)

चौ०. रहे तहाँ निसिचर भट भारे । ते सब सुरन्ह समर संघारे ॥ १ ॥

अब तहाँ रहहिं सक्र के प्रेरे । रच्छक कोटि जच्छपति केरे ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

rahē tahāṁ nisicara bhaṭa bhārē. tē saba suranha samara saṅghārē. 1.

aba tahaṁ rahahim sakra kē prērē. racchaka kōṭi jacchapati kērē. 2.

In an earlier time there lived in that city (of Lanka) great demon warriors who were brave and valiant. All of them were defeated or killed in battle by the Gods. (1)

At the behest of Indra (the king of Gods—"sakra"), who had conquered the city, many thousand warriors of Kuber (the Gods' treasurer—"jacchapati") lived in that place at the moment. (2)

दसमुख कतहुँ खबरि असि पाई । सेन साजि गढ़ घेरेसि जाई ॥ ३ ॥

देखि बिकट भट बड़ि कटकाई । जच्छ जीव लै गए पराई ॥ ४ ॥

dasamukha katahuṁ khabari asi pā'ī. sēna sāji gaṛha ghērēsi jā'ī. 3.

dēkhi bikaṭa bhaṭa baḍi kaṭakā'ī. jaccha jīva lai ga'e parā'ī. 4.

Ravana heard of it somehow. So he gathered an army of his demon warriors and launched an assault, besieging the city. (3)

A no-holds fierce battle ensued. When Yaksha, the commander of the garrison appointed by Kuber to protect Lanka, saw the formidable demon army of a ferocious and vicious disposition, he was sore affright, and abandoning the city he fled for his life. (4)

फिरि सब नगर दसानन देखा । गयउ सोच सुख भयउ बिसेषा ॥ ५ ॥
सुंदर सहज अगम अनुमानी । कीन्हि तहाँ रावन रजधानी ॥ ६ ॥

phiri saba nagara dasānana dēkhā. gaya'u sōca sukha bhaya'u bisēṣā. 5.
sundara sahaḥja agama anumānī. kīnhi tahāṁ rāvana rajadhānī. 6.

The victorious Ravana entered the city in triumph. He went around it to inspect it. Observing its magnificence, splendour and majesty, he felt extremely glad. (5)

Realising that it was not only beautiful and pleasant but very secure and safe from intrusion as it was inaccessible from any side (being surrounded by the ocean which formed a deep and huge moat around it), Ravana decided to establish his capital there. (6)

जेहि जस जोग बाँटि गृह दीन्हे । सुखी सकल रजनीचर कीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥
एक बार कुबेर पर धावा । पुष्पक जान जीति लै आवा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhi jasa jōga bāṁṭi gr̥ha dīnhē. sukhī sakala rajanīcara kīnhē. 7.
ēka bāra kubēra para dhāvā. puṣpaka jāna jīti lai āvā. 8.

He distributed the buildings of the city amongst his demon warriors in accordance to their rank and status, and their eligibility. This was welcomed by one and all, making all the demons feel happy and contented.

[To wit, the demons felt obliged to Ravana as he liberally shared the spoils of war with them, like an adroit conqueror who knows how to keep his army in good humour and loyal.] (7)

Once upon a time he launched an attack on Kuber, and snatched his air-plane called Pushpak. He then brought it to Lanka as another trophy of his conquest¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 48-49; and (ii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 69-71.]

दो०. कौतुकीं कैलास पुनि लीन्हेसि जाइ उठाइ ।
मनहुँ तौलि निज बाहुबल चला बहुत सुख पाइ ॥ १७९ ॥
dōhā.

kautukahīm kailāsa puni līnhēsi jā'i uṭhā'i.
manahuṃ tauli nija bāhubala calā bahuta sukha pā'i. 179.

Emboldened by his successive successes, Ravana attacked Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva), and lifted it in his arms as if trying to judge for himself as well as to show others how strong he was. Being successful in it, he felt extremely elated. Then he went away. (Doha no. 179)

[Note—Ravana only lifted Mt. Kailash, but he soon placed it back. With this single feat he sent a signal to the Gods and to everyone else in this creation to be careful with him—for he is extremely strong and powerful inasmuch as he could easily lift Mt. Kailash, and so no one stands any chance against him if they dared to challenge his might.

Ravana was so proud of this singular feat that he boasted of it repeatedly whenever he found a chance to do so. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 22-b; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

चौ०. सुख संपति सुत सेन सहाई । जय प्रताप बल बुद्धि बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥
नित नूतन सब बाढ़त जाई । जिमि प्रतिलाभ लोभ अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sukha sampati suta sēna sahā'ī. jaya pratāpa bala bud'dhi baṛā'ī. 1.
nita nūtana saba bāṛhata jā'ī. jimi pratilābha lōbha adhikā'ī. 2.

Ravana's fortunes were on the ascendance, as his happiness, joy and pleasures, his wealth and prosperity, his sons, army and close attendants, his fame, glory, strength and majesty, his mind and its various faculties, as well as the praise and honour heaped upon him for his exploits—everything kept on increasing with the passage of time. It was like the case of greed and yearnings increasing exponentially with each gain or success that one attains. (1-2)

अतिबल कुंभकरन अस भ्राता । जेहि कहूँ नहिं प्रतिभट जग जाता ॥ ३ ॥
करइ पान सोवइ षट मासा । जागत होइ तिहूँ पुर त्रासा ॥ ४ ॥
जौं दिन प्रति अहार कर सोई । बिस्व बेगि सब चौपट होई ॥ ५ ॥
समर धीर नहिं जाइ बखाना । तेहि सम अमित बीर बलवाना ॥ ६ ॥

atibala kumbhakarana asa bhrātā. jēhi kahūṃ nahim pratibhaṭa jaga jātā. 3.
kara'i pāna sōva'i ṣaṭa māsā. jāgata hō'i tihūṃ pura trāsā. 4.
jauṃ dina prati ahāra kara sō'ī. bisva bēgi saba caupaṭa hō'ī. 5.
samara dhīra nahim jā'i bakhānā. tēhi sama amita bīra balavānā. 6.

His brother was Kumbhakarna; he was so strong, powerful and valiant that no one was ever born in this world to match him in these glorious virtues. (3)

He used to drink a lot of wine and slept for six months at a stretch. (4)

The day he would wake up to eat, it would be a calamitous day for the world as everything would be completely ruined. [To wit, he wiped out everything worth eating, and so the world was left high and dry as if there was a great famine on the day Kumbhakarna ate.]¹ (5)

His valour, courage and steadfastness in the battle-field was so laudable and great that it cannot be described so much so there was not a single warrior in the whole of Lanka (and by implication in the whole of the demon race) who could ever match him in these qualities. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.]

बारिदनाद जेठ सुत तासू । भट महुँ प्रथम लीक जग जासू ॥ ७ ॥
जेहि न होइ रन सनमुख कोई । सुरपुर नितहिं परावन होई ॥ ८ ॥

bāridanāda jēṭha suta tāsū. bhaṭa mahuṁ prathama līka jaga jāsū. 7.
jēhi na hō'i rana sanamukha kō'i. surapura nitahim parāvana hō'i. 8.

Baridnatha (another name for Meghanad, also spelled as Meghnaad) was Ravana's elder son. He was counted as being the first in the rank of great warriors. (7)

No one dared to face him in the battle-field. His name created a virtual stampede in the heaven as every one of the gods ran helter-skelter and scampered for cover by the mere mention of his name. (8)

दो०. कुमुख अकंपन कुलिसरद धूमकेतु अतिकाय ।
एक एक जग जीति सक ऐसे सुभट निकाय ॥ १८० ॥

dōhā.

kumukha akampana kulisarada dhūmakētu atikāya.
ēka ēka jaga jīti saka aisē subhaṭa nikāya. 180.

There were excellent valiant warriors there (in Lanka); some of the names of such great warriors were Durmukha (literally meaning one with an ugly face), Akampan (literally meaning one who never shook in fear), Vajradanta (literally meaning one with teeth that were as strong as Vajra, the strong weapon of Indra, the king of gods), Dhumketu (literally meaning who was like a comet), Atikaye (literally meaning one with a colossus body), etc.

These are but only a few names, for there were countless other matchless warriors like them in Lanka. Every one of them was competent to win the world single-handedly, without assistance. (Doha no. 180)

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Part 1

Chapter 3: The Reign of Dread and Terror Unleashed by Ravana and the Demons

In the previous Chapter no. 2, we have read how the demons, led by their king Ravana, established their kingdom with its capital at Lanka, a magnificent city situated on an island in the middle of the ocean. Initial resounding successes that were compounded by the boons Ravana had received from the Creator made him excessively arrogant and haughty beyond reason. He thought that the time of the demons had arrived, and fate was in their favour after a long time. Confident of his own strength and powers and invincibility, he became belligerent and determined to settle old scores with the Gods and also with the Brahmins due to whose curse he had to become a demon in the first place.

He also decided to go after the blood of sages and all other holy men as he feared that they have such great mystical powers that if he left them alone unharmed then they would team with the Brahmins and Gods, the deemed arch enemies of the demons, and the result would be a formidable force that may obstruct his plans to become the sole sovereign of the world and restore the lost glory of the demon race. A prudent king does not allow even a single seed of dissent or discontent or opposition to remain uncrushed, because a single, seemingly harmless seed might produce a thorny, poisonous plant that would one day prick and kill the same person who had had mercy on it and had spared it from being smothered earlier.

So therefore, Ravana decided to vanquish all Brahmins and Gods, as well as all sages and saintly persons, instilling such fear in their mind and heart that they would dare not raise their heads against him. The demons had always thought that the Brahmins, the Gods and the sages were their greatest enemies, so now that they had a powerful king in the person of Ravana it was the right time for them to assert their authority and reclaim their lost glory and powers.

Like a person who is long deprived of food and longs for even a morsel suddenly gets free access to a larder full of delectable delicacies, at which he lunges greedily and with full force, the demons, who were emboldened by Ravana's extraordinary prowess and powers that were bolstered by the boons of Brahma, and who felt that for far too long they had been subjected to harsh treatment, injustice and unfair deal at the hands of Gods and Brahmins, went amok with full vigour, going on a recklessly spree spreading dread, terror and havoc on all the corners of the earth, killing, plundering and tormenting all and sundry without exception. They wanted to wreak vengeance with full punch and force upon those whom they perceived as their hereditary arch enemies.

In the larger scheme of things, however, the demons' unbridled reign of terror and endless cycle of crimes and vices, excessive sinfulness, decadence and turpitude et al, suited well the Creator, because only when the balloon is full of gas, and when more and more of it is pumped into the balloon till it can't hold any more of this gas that it would finally burst, the Creator waited patiently and bid for time till all the limits of tolerance and forbearance and forgiveness were crossed by the demons, which was when the Creator would have an excuse to find a way to neutralize or

rescind on his own boons without anyone accusing him of any wrong-doing. And so, in due course of time, it did happen that way, because the demons, finding no opposition to them and having acquired immense powers and strength, virtually sledgehammered and bludgeoned their way through this world, reducing Dharma (religion and noble principles) to rubble, and making all the horrified creatures wail and grieve in excess of pain and misery.

In this Chapter no. 3 we shall read all about the way the demons, led by their invincible and haughty king Ravana, had spread terror and dread throughout the creation. Ravana had become a big Hector and Achilles of his time; a big bully and tormentor, a merciless brute, a ruthless and unbridled warrior, a haughty, arrogant and egoist ruler of the world, but at the same time matchlessly brave, bold, valorous, courageous, strong, fearless and mighty, someone invincible and immune to death except for one weakness in his body which made him vulnerable, his Navel, for if someone hit him here with a sharp weapon, such as an arrow, it was destined that Ravana would die, very much like Achilles' Heels.

We will read these developments as narrated in the epic Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas as follows:

Ram Charit Manas

The narration of the demons' reign of terror, and the dread and havoc they created in this world has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181—to Doha no. 183.

चौ०. कामरूप जानहिं सब माया । सपनेहुँ जिन्ह कें धरम न दाया ॥ १ ॥
 दसमुख बैठ सभाँ एक बारा । देखि अमित आपन परिवारा ॥ २ ॥
 सुत समूह जन परिजन नाती । गनै को पार निसाचर जाती ॥ ३ ॥
 सेन बिलोकि सहज अभिमानी । बोला बचन क्रोध मद सानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kāmarūpa jānahiṁ saba māyā. sapanēhuṁ jinha kēṁ dharama na dāyā. 1.
 dasamukha baiṭha sabhāṁ ēka bārā. dēkhi amita āpana parivārā. 2.
 suta samūha jana parijana nātī. ganai kō pāra nisācara jātī. 3.
 sēna bilōki sahaja abhimānī. bōlā bacana krōdha mada sānī. 4.

All the demons were personified forms of worldly passion and lust; they also had the magical ability to assume any form they wished (kāmarūpa)¹.

Besides this, they knew all sorts of wicked tricks, and were experts in the art of creating delusions and hallucinations (jānahiṁ saba māyā).

They never ever dreamt of Dharma (religion, righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility—"sapanēhuṁ jinha kēṁ dharama"), nor of mercy and kindness (na dāyā). (1)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176 where also this unique quality of the demon race has been reiterated.]

One day, while sitting in his royal court, the 10-headed Ravana looked around proudly and saw his huge family consisting of a countless number of demons. (2)

His extensive family consisted of his sons, attendants, kith and kin, and other relatives that were close to him, as well as the innumerable subjects of the demon kingdom that were divided into many other clans, sects and denominations having countless members. (3)

When he observed his huge army, he felt a natural sense of pride. Emboldened by this sight, his ego was stoked; he said very angrily and haughtily, ---- (4)

सुनहु सकल रजनीचर जूथा । हमरे बैरी बिबुध बरूथा ॥ ५ ॥
 ते सनमुख नहिं करहिं लराई । देखि सबल रिपु जाहिं पराई ॥ ६ ॥
 तेन्ह कर मरन एक बिधि होई । कहउँ बुझाइ सुनहु अब सोई ॥ ७ ॥
 द्विजभोजन मख होम सराधा । सब कै जाइ करहु तुम्ह बाधा ॥ ८ ॥

sunahu sakala rajanīcara jūthā. hamarē bairī bibudha barūthā. 5.
 tē sanamukha nahim karahim larāī. dēkhi sabala ripu jāhim parāī. 6.
 tēnha kara marana ēka bidhi hōī. kaha'um̐ bujhā'i sunahu aba sōī. 7.
 dvijabhōjana makha hōma sarādhā. saba kai jā'i karahu tumha bādhā. 8.

[Ravana addressed his generals and courtiers, speaking with a strong hint of vengeance in his voice. He instructed his army, saying in an angry tone marked with vengeance—] ‘Listen all of you demon warriors. The Gods and their followers are our natural enemies¹. (5)

They are so cowardly that they don't fight face to face with their enemies, and as soon as they discover that their adversary is strong, they flee from the place. (6)

There is one way by which they can be annihilated. I shall now tell all of you how to go about it. Listen carefully. (7)

Go and prevent the Brahmins from feeding themselves and making offerings to these Gods through fire sacrifices. Stop them from doing religious practices and performing rituals such as offering oblations, doing ablutions and performing fire sacrifices, as well as other ceremonies such as offering food and water to the spirits of dead ancestors.

[To wit, force the Brahmins and the Gods and the Spirits to starve. These Brahmins are deemed to be representatives of the Gods on earth, so if they starve they will become weak and ultimately die. The offering that these Brahmins make to the fire during the sacrifice provide nourishment to the Gods in heaven; so if you stop these religious practices the Gods too will die of hunger. Just like the Gods, the Spirits too will die of hunger and thirst if no one offers them food and water during ceremonies to mark the dead. So therefore, if we, the demons, wish to eliminate all

opposition to our rule and well-being then it is absolutely essential to weaken the Gods and the Brahmins by making them starve.] (8)

[Note—¹The Gods and the Demons had been natural enemies from the very beginning. The simple reason, without going into the mythological history, is that they represent two absolutely opposite and inimical aspects and virtues in this creation. It is just like the case of day and night; though both form an integral part of life on earth but they can't exist simultaneously—for if it is day then there cannot be night, and if it is night then daylight is out of the picture. It's a natural phenomenon. So, while the Gods represent all that is good, righteous, noble, holy and auspicious in this world, the Demons symbolize just the opposite—i.e. everything that stands for evil, sin and wickedness.

Coming specifically to the case of Ravana and his clan of demons, the special reason for his aggravated hate and spiked antagonism for the Gods, the Brahmins and the holy people attired like the hermits, the sages and the ascetics lie in the history of his previous life when he was king Pratapbhanu, the story which we have already read earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 176.

It was a person disguised as a 'hermit' who had cheated him and maneuvered things in such a wicked way that Pratapbhanu, who was otherwise a noble and righteous king, was cursed to become a demon with his entire family and subjects of his kingdom. Who cursed him? It were the 'Brahmins' who had cursed him, without verifying facts and without determining if he was actually at fault or not. Further, when these proud Brahmins learnt a little while later that the king had no role to play in the circumstances that led them to curse him, they did not make any effort to amend their curse or reduce its intensity so that some soothing balm could be applied over the severe harm that was caused to Pratapbhanu due to the unjust curse that they had so hastily cast upon him. Say, if they could be in such a hurry to give a curse of condemnation on an innocent person, albeit out of misunderstanding or misinformation, why couldn't they ameliorate the suffering of the accursed by giving him a boon to counter the pain and injury caused by the unmerited curse?

Then come the role of the 'Gods'. Though it is true that they had informed the Brahmins that the curse which they had cast on king Pratapbhanu was unjust and unwarranted as the king was at no fault, but the Gods could have told this fact to the Brahmins earlier also—at the time when there was an invisible voice from the sky warning the Brahmins that meat had been mixed in their food, that had made them so angry that they cursed the king to become a mean-eating demon—so that the Brahmins would not have become angry at the king, but instead would have cursed the wicked hermit and his equally wicked friend, the demon, who actually were behind the whole conspiracy.

These developments had an immense psychological impact on Pratapbhanu which shook him to the core, and he determined to teach, when the proper time comes, all these three categories—the Brahmins, the Gods, and all those who were attired as hermits, ascetics and sages—a bitter lesson which they will remember for countless generations to come!

So once Pratapbhanu's soul entered the body of a demon to become Ravana, and Ravana acquired boons of invincibility and unparallel strength from the creator Brahma, he went ahead with his 'teaching' project with unbridled vehemence and excessive wrath known only to a person who seeks retribution with a vengeance as he feels that some great injustice had suddenly been heaped upon him at a time when he

had no wherewithal to protect himself, nor had he been given a chance to stand trial and explain himself.

Ravana's actions and deeds are reminiscent of a volcano suppressed over a long period of time, and then it suddenly bursts forth with a force of intense fury when it finds a crevice or a vent on the surface of the earth to pour out scorching lava that can wipe out entire civilisations, reduce earth to a barren landscape of lifeless rocks, and also boil the cold water of the ocean to where it flows in streams that are bubbling hot like oil spluttering on a pan over the fire place. Like this lava, there was no stopping of Ravana!]

दो०. छुधा छीन बलहीन सुर सहजेहिं मिलिहहिं आइ ।
तब मारिहउँ कि छाड़िहउँ भली भाँति अपनाइ ॥ १८१ ॥

dōhā.

chudhā chīna balahīna sura sahajēhim milihahim ā'i.
taba māriha'uṁ ki chāḍiha'uṁ bhalī bhāṁti apanā'i. 181.

When the Gods would have sufficiently starved, they will become weak and famished. So sooner or later they will come to us (to surrender and beg for mercy); at that time I will either slay them or spare them after fully subjugating them and ensuring their loyalty and allegiance to me. (Doha no. 181)

चौ०. मेघनाद कहूँ पुनि हँकरावा । दीन्ही सिख बलु बयरु बढ़ावा ॥ १ ॥
जे सुर समर धीर बलवाना । जिन्ह कें लरिबे कर अभिमाना ॥ २ ॥
तिन्हहि जीति रन आनेसु बाँधी । उठि सुत पितु अनुसासन काँधी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

mēghanāda kahuṁ puni haṁkarāvā. dīnhī sikha balu bayaru baḥhāvā. 1.
jē sura samara dhīra balavānā. jinha kēm laribē kara abhimānā. 2.
tinahahi jīti rana ānēsu bāṁdhī. uṭhi suta pitu anusāsana kāṁdhī. 3.

He (Ravana) summoned Meghnad (his son), encouraging and motivating him by praising his abilities, valour and strength. Then Ravana advised his son [1], 'All those Gods who pride themselves as being steady and invincible in battle, who are proud of their strength and courage and privileges [2], you must go and defeat them in the battle-field, and then having conquered them and crushed their pride, you must tie them up and bring them here in captivity as trophies of war.'

When his son heard these instructions of his father, he got up immediately to carry them out outright with diligence and vehemence [3]. (1-3)

एहि बिधि सबही अग्या दीन्ही । आपुनु चलेउ गदा कर लीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥
चलत दसानन डोलति अवनी । गर्जत गर्भ स्त्रवहिं सुर रवनी ॥ ५ ॥

ēhi bidhi sabahī agyā dīnhī. āpunu calē'u gadā kara līnhī. 4.
calata dasānana ḍōlati avanī. garjata garbha sravahim sura ravanī. 5.

In this way, after having given appropriate instructions to everyone (i.e. to all his family members, all his commanders, as well as the countless other chiefs of the demon race), Ravana himself got up with a formidable mace in his hand. (4)

When the ten-headed Ravana stoutly set out on his mission of conquest of the world, the whole earth shook under his commanding feet (even as he stomped and stamped angrily on the earth while moving ahead briskly to seek and destroy any opposition that he may encounter on the way).

When he roared, yelled and thundered, those spouses of the Gods in the heaven who happened to be pregnant at the time, they miscarried¹. (5)

[Note—¹A similar thing is reported when Hanuman launched himself, with a great sound of thunder and blast in the skies of Lanka, when he was on his way back to the other side of the ocean where his companions were waiting for his arrival. At that time also, the pregnant women folks of the demons had aborted out of terror. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

रावन आवत सुनेउ सकोहा । देवन्ह तके मेरु गिरि खोहा ॥ ६ ॥
दिगपालन्ह के लोक सुहाए । सूने सकल दसानन पाए ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि पुनि सिंघनाद करि भारी । देइ देवतन्ह गारि पचारी ॥ ८ ॥

rāvana āvata sunē'u sakōhā. dēvanha takē mēru giri khōhā. 6.
digapālanha kē lōka suhā'ē. sūnē sakala dasānana pā'ē. 7.
puni puni singhanāda kari bhārī. dē'i dēvatanha gāri pacārī. 8.

When the Gods heard that Ravana is coming their way angrily, they were terrified out of their wits and scampered for cover, quickly hiding themselves in the many grottos (caves and catacombs) in Mt. Meru (the great mountain in the heaven on the summit of which the Gods had their capital). (6)

When the ten-headed Ravana reached the wonderfully charming and exceedingly pleasant capital city of the 'custodians of the world' (i.e. the God; "digapāla"), he found it abandoned. (7)

He repeatedly roared victoriously like a lion, profusely and vehemently abusing the Gods again and again, shaming them contemptuously, and challenging them for a duel.

[To wit, when Ravana found that the Gods had already run away before his arrival in the heaven, he felt very proud of his own strength and powers as now he was certain that none of them had the stomach to face him. To further humiliate the Gods, who were eternal enemies of the demons, and to demoralize them, to crush their self-respect, and to smother their dignity further, he abused them and taunted them in the most insinuating way he could devise.] (8)

रन मद मत फिरइ जग धावा । प्रतिभट खोजत कतहुँ न पावा ॥ ९ ॥
 रबि ससि पवन बरुन धनधारी । अगिनि काल जम सब अधिकारी ॥ १० ॥
 किंनर सिद्ध मनुज सुर नागा । हठि सबही के पंथहिं लागा ॥ ११ ॥

rana mada matta phira'i jaga dhāvā. pratibhaṭa khōjata katahuṁ na pāvā. 9.
 rabi sasi pavana baruna dhanadhārī. agini kāla jama saba adhikārī. 10.
 kinnara sid'dha manuja sura nāgā. haṭhi sabahī kē panthahim lāgā. 11.

He ran amok and went wild in this world, running briskly from one of its three corners to the other (i.e. to all the parts of the heaven, the earth and the nether world) to find anyone who would dare challenge him, as he was intensely itching for a fight and was maddened with a burning desire for a duel that would spill blood.

But to his dismay, and satisfaction at the same time¹, he did not find one single challenger to his might, anywhere.

[¹He was dismayed because his itch for a battle was irritating him, and he could not find someone against whom he could rub himself to ease this annoying irritation. At the same time he was immensely satisfied to discover that he was the mightiest and the strongest one in the whole creation, someone who has sent even the Gods, who otherwise are very proud of their own powers, authority and strength, shivering for cover out of fear of him, with their wives aborting their embryos! It surely must have granted sadistic comfort to Ravana.] (9)

All the prominent Gods such as the Sun, the Moon, Pawan (Wind-God), Varun (Water-God), Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Agni (Fire-God), Kaal (God of Death and Time), Yamraj (the God of Hell)—all these higher authorities and senior custodians of their respective realms [10], as well as the Kinnars (heavenly dancers), the Siddhas (mystics), human beings, and all the other remaining junior or demi-gods, as well as the Nagas (serpents; the custodians of the nether and subterranean worlds)—Ravana pursued them all relentlessly, without exception [11]. (10-11)

ब्रह्मसृष्टि जहँ लगि तनुधारी । दसमुख बसबर्ती नर नारी ॥ १२ ॥
 आयसु करहिं सकल भयभीता । नवहिं आइ नित चरन बिनीता ॥ १३ ॥

brahmasṛṣṭi jahaṁ lagi tanudhārī. dasamukha basabartī nara nārī. 12.
 āyasu karahim sakala bhayabhītā. navahim ā'i nita carana binītā. 13.

In every corner of the Creator's creation, wherever there lived any living being, verily, every one of them was subjugated by Ravana, and all of them became obedient to him (for fear of their lives). (12)

All the living beings professed their allegiance to him; they obeyed him and came to pay their respects to him by bowing at his feet virtually on a daily basis (i.e. regularly and without fail). (13)

दो०. भुजबल बिस्व बस्य करि राखेसि कोउ न सुतंत्र ।
मंडलीक मनि रावन राज करइ निज मंत्र ॥ १८२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bhujabala bisva basya kari rākhēsi kō'u na sutantra.
maṇḍalīka mani rāvana rāja kara'i nija mantra. 182 (a).

He (Ravana) conquered the whole creation, subjugating everyone and keeping them loyal under the might of his arms; none was left independent as everyone was bound in bonds of allegiance to him.

In this way, there was only one sovereign in the whole of the Creator's realm, and he was the ten-headed Ravana. He ruled with an iron hand; his word was the final law, and whatever he pronounced became the inviolable mandate for one and all. (Doha no. 182-a)

देव जच्छ गंधर्ब नर किंनर नाग कुमारि ।
जीति बरीं निज बाहुबल बहु सुंदर बर नारि ॥ १८२ (ख) ॥

dēva jaccha gandharba nara kinnara nāga kumāri.
jīti barīm nija bāhubala bahu sundara bara nāri. 182 (b).

He forcefully conquered, by the strength of his arms, and then married countless maidens belonging to the a wide genres of gods and humans, such as the many senior Gods, their junior counterparts such as the Yakshas (spirits), Gandharvas (musicians of heaven), humans (of all categories, from the humble man to the mighty kings), Kinnars (dancers of heaven), and Naagas (serpents and rulers of the subterranean and nether worlds).

Not only limiting himself to the maidens of the categories listed above, he forced his marriage upon countless other beautiful girls and virgins wherever he took fancy upon them. (Doha no. 182-b)

चौ०. इंद्रजीत सन जो कछु कहेऊ । सो सब जनु पहिलेहिं करि रहेऊ ॥ १ ॥
प्रथमहिं जिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीन्हा । तिन्ह कर चरित सुनहु जो कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

indrajīta sana jō kachu kahē'ū. sō saba janū pahilēhiṁ kari rahē'ū. 1.
prathamahiṁ jinha kahuṁ āyasu dīnhā. tinha kara carita sunahu jō kīnhā. 2.

Whatever he (Ravana) had instructed his son Indrajeet (Meghnad) to do¹, the latter had done it so quickly that it appeared that he had accomplished his mission even before his father had finished his own campaign. (1)

Now listen to the deeds done by those other demons who were also instructed alongside Meghnad in the beginning². (2)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no.182.]

देखत भीमरूप सब पापी । निसिचर निकर देव परितापी ॥ ३ ॥
 करहिं उपद्रव असुर निकाया । नाना रूप धरहिं करि माया ॥ ४ ॥
 जेहि बिधि होइ धर्म निर्मूला । सो सब करहिं बेद प्रतिकूला ॥ ५ ॥
 जेहिं जेहिं देस धेनु द्विज पावहिं । नगर गाउँ पुर आगि लगावहिं ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhata bhīmarūpa saba pāpī. nīsicara nikara dēva paritāpī. 3.
 karahim upadrava asura nikāyā. nānā rūpa dharahim kari māyā. 4.
 jēhi bidhi hō'i dharma nirmūlā. sō saba karahim bēda pratikūlā. 5.
 jēhim jēhim dēsa dhēnu dvija pāvahim. nagara gā'uṁ pura āgi lagāvahim. 6.

All the demons, individually as well as in groups, were of colossus sizes, very sinful and exceedingly evil, and were inveterate tormentors of the Gods. (3)

Huge hordes of demons unleashed an uncontrolled reign of terror and mayhem all around. They were able to assume magical forms in the way they liked (to carry out their schemes). (4)

They did everything that was against the principles of Dharma (probity, propriety, righteousness and noble thought and conduct) and the Vedas (ancient scriptures) to ensure that they were completely ruined and utterly defiled. (5)

In whichever city, town or village they found Brahmins and cows (symbolizing domesticated animals), they relentlessly set the whole habitations on fire to burn everything down. [To wit, they behaved like an invading army of savages and fiends who kill and plunder and burn just for the sadistic pleasure of it.] (6)

सुभ आचरन कतहुँ नहिं होई । देव बिप्र गुरु मान न कोई ॥ ७ ॥
 नहिं हरिभगति जग्य तप ग्याना । सपनेहुँ सुनिअ न बेद पुराना ॥ ८ ॥

subha ācarana katahuṁ nahim hō'ī. dēva bipra guru māna na kō'ī. 7.
 nahim haribhagati jagya tapa gyānā. sapanēhuṁ suni'a na bēda purānā. 8.

As a consequence, there was no morality, righteousness, propriety and probity left anywhere in the world; no one behaved rightly and all traces of goodness vanished.

No one paid heed to or respected the Gods, the Brahmins or their Guru (teachers; preceptors; guides), treating them with utter disrespect and neglect. (7)

There was no devotion for Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; the Lord God), and neither were there any Yagyas (fire sacrifices), Tapa (penance and austerity) or Gyan

(spiritual wisdom and gnosis; learning and knowledge of the scriptures and other metaphysical branches of knowledge).

No one even dreamt of hearing any of the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (8)

[Note—There was a complete breakdown of law and order; goodness, righteousness and all other virtues evaporated, and these were replaced by sins, vices, evil and perversion that metaphorically turned the green earth into a barren desert.

There were two obvious reasons for this sorry state of affairs to come about. One of course was the direct action of the demons, and the other was an indirect affect. The people realized that if they had to survive and live in reasonable peace then they ought to do the demons' bidding, for otherwise these cruel and remorseless demons would not only kill them but also burn everything down. Hence, as a measure of survival the general populace did what pleased the demons, as in the present frame of time they were the realm's rulers. To do anything that Ravana and his followers did not want was inviting death and destruction voluntarily. Who in his right mind would want it?]

छं०. जप जोग बिरागा तप मख भागा श्रवन सुनइ दससीसा । १ ।
 आपुनु उठि धावइ रहै न पावइ धरि सब घालइ खीसा ॥ २ ॥
 अस भ्रष्ट अचारा भा संसारा धर्म सुनिअ नहिं काना । ३ ।
 तेहि बहुबिधि त्रासइ देस निकासइ जो कह बेद पुराना ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

japa jōga birāgā tapa makha bhāgā śravana suna'i dasasīsā. 1.
 āpunu uṭhi dhāva'i rahai na pāva'i dhari saba ghāla'i khīsā. 2.
 asa bhraṣṭa acārā bhā sansārā dharma suni'a nahim kānā. 3.
 tēhi bahubidhi trāsa'i dēsa nikāsa'i jō kaha bēda purānā. 4.

If the ten-headed Ravana happened to hear that someone was engaged in doing Japa (repetition of Mantras and Lord God's holy name), Yoga (meditation, contemplation), Vairagya (renunciation), Tapa (penance and austerity), or Yagya (fire sacrifice) and offering oblations to the Gods during the process—he would get up instantly himself, rush to that place, and lay to waste everything around, killing or arresting all those who were engaged in these religious activities, and generally plundering the place. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

In this way, the whole world was rife with widespread evil and sinful deeds; no one bothered to hear anything pertaining to Dharma (righteousness, goodness, probity and propriety).

If anyone said or heard the scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, he (Ravana) would terrorize him in many ways, and forced him out of his country (i.e. snatched his home and sent him to the wilderness to suffer and die). (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

सो०. बरनि न जाइ अनीति घोर निसाचर जो करहिं ।

हिंसा पर अति प्रीति तिन्ह के पापहि कवनि मिति ॥ १८३ ॥

sōraṭhā.

barani na jā'i anīti ghōra nisācara jō karahim.
hinsā para ati prīti tinha kē pāpahi kavani miti. 183.

Indeed, it is not possible to describe the extent and intensity of sins and evil deeds that the demons were recklessly perpetrating in this world.

Verily, those who have no morality and sense of propriety worth the name left in them, those who have no conscience left in them at all, say what is the use of talking about the extent of decadence and degradation to which they can fall, and the nadir of evilness and sinfulness to which they could stoop? [To wit, there is no limit or end to it.] (Sortha no. 183)

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Part 1

Chapter 4: Gods and Mother Earth pray to Lord Vishnu to Save them from Ravana's Tyranny; And the Lord's Promise to them

In the previous Chapter no. 3 we have read how the demons led by their invincible king Ravana had spread a ferocious and vicious reign of excessive of terror and mayhem, horrifying the entire creation and causing havoc and torment all around. All good virtues were trampled underfoot, and everything that stood for evil, sin, vice, perversion, decadence and outright immorality took the front stage.

Beyond a certain limit everything is bad. When a certain threshold was crossed, when the things reached a nadir and became simply and absolutely intolerable, when the very existence was in question, then the Gods and Mother Earth decided to approach the Supreme Being to do something to save them from further horrors, grief, torments and humiliation, and to protect this creation from complete annihilation.

So the Lord promised them that he will come down to earth himself in the form of Lord Ram, and do what is necessary to eliminate the scourge of the evil Ravana and his clan of cruel, vicious and ferocious demons. On their part the Gods decided to help the Lord by coming down to the earth by assuming the forms of monkeys and bears, and then join the Lord in his campaign to eliminate the demons and free everyone of their fear.

In this Chapter no. 4 we shall read all about it from (i) Ram Charit Manas (section 4.1), and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan (section 4.2).

Section 4.1:

Ram Charit Manas

When suffering became impossible to bear, and there was the fear of complete breakdown of law and order and annihilation of creation, the Gods, including Brahma the creator, and Mother Earth, all got together and contemplated upon the means by which they could approach Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord who is the protector of this creation. The Gods and Mother Earth sought Lord Vishnu, one of the Gods of the Trinity, as he is the Lord God who is responsible for taking care of the world and ensure its protection and welfare.

While they were huddled together and wondering what next to do and where to go to find Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva came there, and he advised them to pray fervently and with full faith and sincerity right then and there, for they need not go anywhere at all in the search of the Lord because he, being omnipresent and immanent, is present even amongst their midst, and the only thing that would make him reveal himself to them in a visible form is their faith and prayer.

So the Gods and Mother Earth prayed to the Lord fervently, with the utmost sincerity and the greatest supplication that they could command. Lord Vishnu appeared and promised them all help; saying that he would personally come down to earth to tackle Ravana's problem. Then Brahma advised the Gods to help and serve the Lord by assuming the forms of monkeys and bears, with Brahma himself becoming the aged king of bears known by the name of Jamvant. And Lord Shiva did not wish to be left behind in this service, so he became Hanuman. Similarly, all other Gods assumed different forms as monkeys and bears, depending on their position in the hierarchy in the heaven, to serve and help Lord Vishnu.

This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

चौ०. बाढ़े खल बहु चोर जुआरा । जे लंपट परधन परदारा ॥ १ ॥
 मानहिं मातु पिता नहिं देवा । साधुन्ह सन करवावहिं सेवा ॥ २ ॥
 जिन्ह के यह आचरन भवानी । ते जानेहु निसिचर सब प्रानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bārḥē khala bahu cōra ju'ārā. jē lampāṭa paradhana paradārā. 1.
 mānahim mātu pitā nahim dēvā. sādhunha sana karavāvahim sēvā. 2.
 jinha kē yaha ācarana bhavānī. tē jānēhu niscara saba prānī. 3.

During the period when the demons' had established sovereignty over the world and their power and authority were in the ascendance, there was an exponential increase in

the number of villains and scoundrels who were unabashedly wicked, thieves and gamblers, and who greedily coveted the wealth and women of others. (1)

They paid no heed or showed respect to either their own parents or to the Gods; they made saintly people serve them like slaves or servants.

[To wit, these demons had no scruples or morality. They feared none, and treated all with utter disdain.] (2)

[Lord Shiva said to Parvati to whom he is narrating this story—] Oh Bhavani! All those who exhibit the traits briefly outlined in the foregoing verses¹ should be regarded as ‘demons’.

[To wit, even if the concerned creature is not in the physical form that is usually identified with an ugly, hideous, fearsome and horrifying form of a demon, even if the creature has a pleasant countenance and a attractive visage that seems sweet to the eye, but if that creature’s acts and deeds are anywhere close to the way demons have been described in these verses, then let it be known for sure that that particular creature is a demon in disguise.] (3)

[Note—¹The notorious character of demons, their despicable nature and the evil deeds that define them have been outlined briefly in the verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1, 8 that precede Doha no. 181; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

अतिसय देखि धर्म कै ग्लानी । परम सभित धरा अकुलानी ॥ ४ ॥

गिरि सरि सिंधु भार नहिं मोही । जस मोहि गरुअ एक परद्रोही ॥ ५ ॥

सकल धर्म देखइ बिपरीता । कहि न सकइ रावन भय भीता ॥ ६ ॥

atisaya dēkhi dharma kai glānī. parama sabhīta dharā akulānī. 4.
giri sari sindhu bhāra nahim mōhī. jasa mōhi garu'a ēka paradrōhī. 5.
sakala dharma dēkha'i biparītā. kahi na saka'i rāvana bhaya bhītā. 6.

When Mother Earth observed that there was an extreme decline of morality, ethics and righteousness, when she was alarmed at the level of decadence to which the society had stooped, and when all the parameters of Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility and goodness) were violated and trampled upon (by the demons and their followers), she felt sore affright and became extremely restless¹.

[¹The Earth was terrified as she did not know what to do and how to get rid of the scourge symbolized by the demons. She was agitated because she is like a ‘mother’ for this creation; for it is in the symbolic womb of the Earth that all living beings have their origin, and it is Earth that nourishes and sustains them all from their cradle to their grave. Even for the trees and the organisms low down in the hierarchy of creation, Earth is not only their dwelling place but also their sustainer and nourisher. So therefore, even as a mother feels extremely annoyed, sorry and agitated if her children go out of her hands to cause unwarranted and intolerable nuisance and mischief everywhere, when Mother Earth saw the kind of mayhem and chaos that the demons unleashed in this world, and utter disregard for any principles and scruples

that they exhibited, creating extreme torment, suffering and hardship for the rest of the inhabitants of the Earth, she was gravely hurt and remorseful. Mother Earth could not cope with this sort of suffering any longer; the sinfulness and evilness and cruelty and horror that prevailed on her surface was unbearable for her. The demons were like a poisonous thorn stuck deep into her bosom, bleeding her, tormenting her and constantly rubbing salt over her sore wounds, day in and day out.] (4)

Mother Earth thought to herself, ‘I do not regard the mighty mountains, the great rivers and the endless ocean as any kind of weight on my self, and I do not feel inconvenienced or oppressed by them, but someone who is malevolent towards others, someone who torments and causes suffering and pain to others, is a weight that I can’t bear, for I feel suffocated by such creatures’ presence.’ (5)

Earth observed that all the principles of Dharma had been corrupted so much so that not even a trace of any of the principles of goodness, righteousness and probity remained in their primal form.

[The situation had become so serious and alarming that—] Everyone (i.e. even the sages and seers, the mystics and the gods et al) was so terrified of Ravana that no one dared speak a word (against him, nor raise any objection or opposition to his misdeeds). [To wit, the whole world was so terrified of Ravana’s wrath that they thought it better to keep quiet. Even the so-called keepers of Dharma, such as the sages, seers and the gods, too preferred to keep mum.] (6)

धेनु रूप धरि हृदयँ बिचारी । गई तहाँ जहँ सुर मुनि झारी ॥ ७ ॥
निज संताप सुनाएसि रोई । काहू तें कछु काज न होई ॥ ८ ॥

dhēnu rūpa dhari hṛdayaṁ bicārī. ga’ī tahāṁ jahaṁ sura muni jhārī. 7.
nija santāpa sunā’ēsi rō’ī. kāhū tēm kachu kāja na hō’ī. 8.

After contemplating over the matter a lot, Earth decided to assume the form of a cow. Then she went to a place where other great sages and the gods had already assembled¹. (7)

She wept bitterly and narrated her tale of woes. But no one had any solution or and answer for her predicaments; everyone, the great sages as well as the mighty gods, listened to Earth helplessly, and none could or would offer a solution to her (because they were in the same state of confusion and consternation as the Earth)². (8)

[Note—¹When Earth saw that she had no hope from anyone else because no one would stand up against Ravana and the demons to invite their cruel wrath, she decided to do something herself. So she assumed the form of a ‘cow’ and went to place where all the great sages and gods had got together in a huddle. They too were worried, and so they secretly assembled at some out-of-sight place at which the demons had yet not paid any attention. These sages and gods were discussing the same matter that had created so much consternation for the Earth, and it was of finding a way to get rid of this problem of the demons led by Ravana.

²Earth did not know that these powerful sages, seers and gods were as helpless as her. In fact, they had assembled at a place precisely for discussing this problem of Ravana, and how to find a way out it. So when she wept and sought their help, they kept quiet and pleaded helplessness. It has already been said that Ravana had forcefully subjugated sages and gods after getting boons from Brahma. Refer: (i) Doha no. 181 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-3, 6-13 that precede it; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 183.]

छं०. सुर मुनि गंधर्वा मिलि करि सर्बा गे बिरंचि के लोका । १ ।
 सँग गोतनुधारी भूमि बिचारी परम बिकल भय सोका ॥ २ ॥
 ब्रह्माँ सब जाना मन अनुमाना मोर कछू न बसाई । ३ ।
 जा करि तैं दासी सो अबिनासी हमरेउ तोर सहाई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

surā muni gandharbā mili kari sarbā gē birañci kē lōkā. 1.
 saṁga gōtanudhārī bhūmi bicārī parama bikala bhaya sōkā. 2.
 brahmāṁ saba jānā mana anumānā mōra kachū na basā'ī. 3.
 jā kari tairi dāsī sō abināsī hamarē'u tōra sahā'ī. 4.

All those who had assembled to discuss the matter—such as the Gods, the learned Munis (sages) and the Gandharvas (demi-gods)—went together to the abode of Brahma, the creator. [The immediate matter that concerned them all was Ravana and his army of demons who had spread their atrocious rule of horror and grief which had made life hell for all living beings. The gods were representatives for all those who were suffering at the hands of the cruel and wicked demons, and they went to the Creator to seek his help and advice to find out a way of their predicament.] (Chanda line no. 1)

They were accompanied by earth which was extremely terrified, worried and sad; she was in the form of a 'cow'. (Chanda line no. 2)

When Brahma learnt everything about the gravity of the matter, he felt that the situation was beyond his ability and power to either mend or control; he was dismayed that he has to concede his helplessness in being able to render any help in this matter. (Chanda line no. 3)

[Brahma's attention was drawn specially to the pitiable condition of earth who was in the form of a cow. He felt extremely sorry and worried for her, but though he had great sympathy and empathy he was distressed that he could not help her in the least. However, being wise and elderly in creation, Brahma had great experience of similar situations from the past. Upon deep contemplation he felt that inspite of all odds there was still a ray of hope left. So he turned to earth and advised her as follows—]

Brahma advised earth, which was in the form of a cow, 'He who is immortal and eternal, and whom you serve as a maid (i.e. the Supreme Lord whose command you obey most faithfully)—well, that (merciful and gracious) Lord will surely be of help

to you, as well as for us. [To wit therefore, let us all join hands to pray to that Lord and seek his blessing and intervention. I tell you all truly that it is the only feasible solution for our predicament.]’ (Chanda line no. 4)

सो०. धरनि धरहि मन धीर कह बिरंचि हरिपद सुमिरु ।
जानत जन की पीर प्रभु भंजिहि दारुन बिपति ॥ १८४ ॥
sōraṭhā.

dharani dharahi mana dhīra kaha birañci haripada sumiru.
jānata jana kī pīra prabhu bhañjihi dāruna bipati. 184.

Brahma the creator (birañci) told earth, ‘Oh Earth! Have patience and courage; contemplate upon and remember the holy feet of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu).

The gracious and merciful Lord understands the pain and grief in the heart of his devotees. So he will immediately take cognizance of your prayers and initiate steps to eliminate the very cause that is tormenting you so much and giving you such extreme misery.’ (Sortha no. 184)

[Note—It ought to be noted here that Brahma has addressed Mother Earth specifically, and makes no mention of others who were with her, such as the Gods, the sages and the Gandharvas. It clearly means that he was much moved by her pitiful condition. Since earth is the dwelling place of all living beings in this world, her miserable condition represented the horrors and torments faced by every single creature of Brahma’s creation.

Brahma is the ‘creator’ and the ‘grandfather’ of this creation, and he had himself assigned Mother Earth the duty to take care of the day-to-day sustenance of his creation. So it is but natural that when he saw Mother Earth, who is his own representative, coming to him in utter distress with her grievances and complain to him that his creation is being subjected to immense torture, he will be duty-bound to give her a special audience.

This episode also shows that the Creator is more concerned about the welfare and well-being of the humble subjects of his creation than he is for those who highly placed in the hierarchy of creation. To wit, Brahma is very worried about the suffering of ordinary creatures who live an ordinary life on earth, creatures who have no high contacts and who are not high-profile individuals like the gods, the sages and the gandharvas who had accompanied mother earth. Brahma knew very well that these gods, sages and gandharvas etc. are capable of taking care of themselves, but the poor creatures whom earth represents are absolutely helpless and hapless, and therefore they need special attention.

That is why Brahma paid special attention to the complaint of Mother Earth, and addressed her personally. Obviously all the Gods, Munis and Ghandharvas who were with Earth too heard what Brahma said, and everyone decided to jointly pray to the Supreme Being to intervene and save them from more horrors and sufferings.]

चौ०. बैठे सुर सब करहिं बिचारा । कहँ पाइअ प्रभु करिअ पुकारा ॥ १ ॥

पुर बैकुंठ जान कह कोई । कोउ कह पयनिधि बस प्रभु सोई ॥ २ ॥
 जाके हृदयँ भगति जसि प्रीति । प्रभु तहँ प्रगट सदा तेहिं रीति ॥ ३ ॥
 तेहिं समाज गिरिजा मैं रहेऊँ । अवसर पाइ बचन एक कहेऊँ ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

baiṭhē sura saba karahim bicārā. kahaṁ pā'i'a prabhu kari'a pukārā. 1.
 pura baikunṭha jāna kaha kō'ī. kō'u kaha payanidhi basa prabhu sō'ī. 2.
 jākē hṛdayaṁ bhagati jasi prīti. prabhu tahaṁ pragaṭa sadā tēhim rīti. 3.
 tēhim samāja girijā maim rahē'ūṁ. avasara pā'i bacana ēka kahē'ūṁ. 4.

[Now the crucial thing was to find out where the Supreme Lord was, how to find him, so that a request can be made to him to save the world from the horrors of Ravana and his race of demons.]

All the Gods and others who were with them (i.e. the sages, the Gandharvas, Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder etc.) sat down to ponder over the matter of how and where to find the Supreme Lord so that they can plead before him and request him for help. (1)

Someone in the assembly advised that the Lord resides in the heaven known as Vaikuntha so they must make haste to go there, while someone else said that the Lord lives in the middle of the celestial Ocean (called the “payanidhi”, literally the endless treasury of water, where Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath, the celestial serpent, as the latter floats on the surface of this vast ocean). (2)

The fact is that it is an established principle that the Lord always reveals himself in response to devotion and the extent of affection and faith that a devotee has in his heart.

[To wit, there is no need to go anywhere in search of the Supreme Being, for he is omnipresent and all-pervading. The only single requirement to make the Lord reveal himself is to have high level of devotion, affection and faith in him. The term ‘extent’ indicates that the greater is the intensity of devotion, affection and faith that the devotee has in his heart, the easier it is for him to make the Lord manifest himself.] (3)

[Lord Shiva, who was also present during the confabulation, told Parvati to whom he is narrating this episode—] “Listen Girija (Shiva’s consort)! I was also present in that assembly. When I found an opportunity, I spoke up and gave them an advice. (4)

हरि व्यापक सर्वत्र समाना । प्रेम तें प्रगट होहिं मैं जाना ॥ ५ ॥
 देस काल दिसि बिदिसिहु माहीं । कहहु सो कहाँ जहाँ प्रभु नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 अग जगमय सब रहित बिरागी । प्रेम तें प्रभु प्रगटइ जिमि आगी ॥ ७ ॥
 मोर बचन सब के मन माना । साधु साधु करि ब्रह्म बखाना ॥ ८ ॥

hari byāpaka sarbatra samānā. prēma tēm pragaṭa hōhim maim jānā. 5.
 dēsa kāla disi bidisiḥu māhīm. kahahu sō kahāṁ jahāṁ prabhu nāhīm. 6.

aga jagamaya saba rahita birāgī. prēma tēm prabhu pragaṭa'i jimi āgī. 7.
mōra bacana saba kē mana māmā. sādhu sādhu kari brahma bakhānā. 8.

[Lord Shiva said—] I told them that Lord Hari (Vishnu) is omnipresent, immanent and all-pervading in this creation; he is present everywhere in an even manner. I (Shiva) know for certain (by my personal experience) that he reveals himself in response of the affection of his devotees. (5)

Tell me if there is a single place, time, direction and quarter of this creation where the Lord is not present. In all sooth and without gainsay, the Lord is present everywhere, at all times, and in every imaginable situation in this creation. (6)

The Lord pervades this creation from the within and the without, for he is revealed in the form of the animate as well as the inanimate components of this creation. In spite of this, he is separate and detached from this creation¹.

[¹This is the great paradox with the Supreme Being—that though on the one hand it is said that every single entity in this creation is a revelation of the Lord in its individual form, that the creation itself is an image of the Supreme Being who is also known as 'Brahm', yet on the other hand the Lord himself is distinct and different from any one or all the entities of creation taken together.]

The Lord manifests himself everywhere as if by magic if there is devotion and affection for him just fire that can be ignited with the firewood anywhere if the conditions are right².

[²The 'fire element' is inherently present in the firewood in a latent form, for it ordinarily remains invisible and dormant. When the right conditions prevail, such as when the firewood is vigorously rubbed and a little air is available, this hidden fire suddenly emerges in a visible form. Likewise, the Supreme Being is present in an invisible form everywhere in this creation. It simply requires devotion, faith and affection for the Lord to make him reveal himself instantly.] (7)

These words (advice) of mine were well-received by one and all. Brahma praised me and welcomed this advice by an applause, saying 'well said, well said indeed'." (8)

दो०. सुनि बिरंचि मन हरष तन पुलकि नयन बह नीर ।
अस्तुति करत जोरि कर सावधान मतिधीर ॥ १८५ ॥

dōhā.

sunī birañci mana haraṣa tana pulaki nayana baha nīra.
astuti karata jōri kara sāvadhāna matidhīra. 185.

When Brahma the creator heard these words (of Lord Shiva), he felt exhilarated in his heart; his body was thrilled and tears began to roll down from his eyes.

Then he joined his hands in a prayerful mode, stabilized his mind, and began to offer his sincere prayers to the Lord carefully.

छं०. जय जय सुरनायक जन सुखदायक प्रनतपाल भगवंता । १ ।

गो द्विज हितकारी जय असुरारी सिंधुसुता प्रिय कंता ॥ २ ॥
 पालन सुर धरनी अद्भुत करनी मरम न जानइ कोई । ३ ।
 जो सहज कृपाला दीनदयाला करउ अनुग्रह सोई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaya jaya suranāyaka jana sukhadāyaka pranatapāla bhagavantā. 1.
 gō dvija hitakārī jaya asurārī sindhusutā priya kantā. 2.
 pālana sura dharanī adbhuta karanī marama na jāna'i kō'i. 3.
 jō sahaja kṛpālā dīnadayālā kara'u anugraha sō'i. 4.

[Brahma offered his prayers to the Supreme Being with these words—]

‘Glory to the Supreme Lord¹ who is the Lord of all the Gods, who gives joy and comfort to his devotees, and who grants unquestioned protection to all those who come to him to surrender and seek refuge! Glory to him; glory to such a Supreme Being! (Chanda line no. 1)

[¹In the next stanza we will read that the Supreme Being to whom this prayer is being offered is Lord Vishnu, the husband of Laxmi—“sindhusutā priya kantā”.]

You are a benevolent benefactor of the cows (representing all humble and harmless creatures), the Brahmins (representing the elderly, learned and wise ones in the society).

Glory to the Lord who is an enemy of the demons (representing the evil, sinful, cruel and dark forces of creation), and who is the dear husband of the daughter-of-the-ocean (i.e. goddess Laxmi)! [This last statement means that the ‘Lord’ and the ‘Supreme Being’ to whom Brahma and the other Gods are offering their prayers is Lord Vishnu as he is the consort of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. She is called the ‘daughter-of-the-ocean’ because she had her origin in the ocean when it was being churned by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of immortality.] (Chanda line no. 2)

You are the sustainer and the protector of the gods and the earth. No one can know your mysteries or the secret behind your wonderful maverick deeds. [To wit, the ways of the Lord are beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals. Nay, even the gods fail to understand them.] (Chanda line no. 3)

Oh Lord, who by his very nature and habit most gracious, compassionate and benevolent, please be kind upon us (the gods and the earth with all its inhabitants). [Oh Lord, we are suffering horribly under the atrocities unleashed by Ravana and his army of demons. So we most humbly plead with you to save us and grant us your protection.] (Chanda line no. 4)

जय जय अबिनासी सब घट बासी व्यापक परमानंदा । ५ ।
 अबिगत गोतीतं चरित पुनीतं मायारहित मुकुंदा ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहि लागि बिरागी अति अनुरागी बिगतमोह मुनिबृंदा । ७ ।
 निसि बासर ध्यावहिं गुन गन गावहिं जयति सच्चिदानंदा ॥ ८ ॥

jaya jaya abināsī saba ghaṭa bāsī byāpaka paramānandā. 5.
 abigata gōṭitaṁ carita punītaṁ mājārahita mukundā. 6.
 jēhi lāgi birāgi ati anurāgi bigatamōha munibṛndā. 7.
 nisi bāsara dhyāvahiṁ guna gana gāvahiṁ jayati saccidānandā. 8.

Glory to the Lord who is imperishable and eternal, who dwells in the inner-self of all living beings in the form of their Atma (which is pure consciousness), who is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent, and who is an embodiment of supreme bliss, felicity and beatitude. (Chanda line no. 5)

The Lord is beyond comprehension; no one knows or understands either who he is or his mysterious ways. He is beyond the perception or reach of the sense organs¹ (and none of these sense organs of perception are able to perceive anything about the Lord).

The deeds and actions as well as the stories that are related to his different manifestations—all of them are holy and divine.

The Lord is free from all Maya (delusions and its affect), and so he is the one who grants the nectar of immortal bliss and happiness².

[¹There are five gross organs of perception in the body: ears that hear, eyes that see, tongue that tastes, skin that feels, and nose that smells. A person knows anything about the world with the help of one or more of these organs. This stanza affirms that the Supreme Being cannot be understood by employing any of these gross instruments. Besides these five gross organs of perception, there is the mind and the intellect which also act as organs of perception, but at a subtler level. The Lord is beyond their reach too.

²This stanza clearly means that ‘Maya’, or the different kinds of worldly delusions and infatuations, is the root cause of all sorts of unhappiness and sorrow that torment a living being. Since the Lord is unaffected by Maya, he is therefore an eternal source of happiness and bliss.] (Chanda line no. 6)

It is for the love of the Lord and his sake that those who wise and enlightened renounce the gross world and its material temptations, and then they sincerely strive to develop deep and unwavering devotion and affection for him within their heart. (Chanda line no. 7)

Such wise and enlightened sages, hermits and ascetics pursue the Lord; they always think of him, remember him, constantly contemplate and meditate upon him, and sing his glories and invoke his divine name, day and night.

Glory to this honourable and great Lord who is Truth and eternal Consciousness personified, and who is truly an embodiment of infinite bliss, felicity and beatitude. (Chanda line no. 8)

जेहिं सृष्टि उपाई त्रिबिध बनाई संग सहाय न दूजा । १ ।

सो करउ अघारी चित हमारी जानिअ भगति न पूजा ॥ १० ॥

जो भव भय भंजन मुनि मन रंजन गंजन बिपति बरूथा । ११ ।

मन बच क्रम बानी छाड़ि सयानी सरन सकल सुर जूथा ॥ १२ ॥

jēhim sṛṣṭi upā'ī tribidha banā'ī saṅga sahāya na dūjā. 9.
 sō kara'u aghārī cinta hamārī jāni'a bhagati na pūjā. 10.
 jō bhava bhaya bhañjana muni mana rañjana gañjana bipati barūthā. 11.
 mana baca krama bānī chāḍi sayānī sarana sakala sura jūthā. 12.

The Supreme Lord who created this three dimensional world¹ all by himself, without anyone to help him at all [line no. 9] ---

---Let this Lord, who is a destroyer of sins and evil forces of creation, also listen to our humble prayers offered with the greatest supplication by us, and relieve us of all our worries and fears (for we are humble and we do not even know how to offer worship or prayers to him in the proper way; so let the Lord forgive us for our incompetence in the manner in which we offer this prayer to him) [line no. 10]². (Chanda line nos. 9-10)

[¹This creation is said to be of 'three dimensions' because it has three basic types of Gunas or qualities in it: viz. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna. The 'Sata Guna' represents the positive qualities of virtuousness, righteousness and goodness in their best forms; the 'Tama Guna' is the opposite of the Sata Guna and represents everything that is dark, negative, evil and sinful; the 'Raja Guna' stands for those qualities that are combinations of these two, and therefore the median quality that acts as a balancing force. In some way or the other, these three qualities are represented by the three basic types of inhabitants of this world—the 'gods' and the 'demons' at the two extremities, and the 'humans' somewhere in the middle.

²Brahma wishes to request the Supreme Lord that he should not pay any attention to the words which are being used in the prayer that the former is saying, for no one is so skilled that he can boast of saying a prayer that is perfect and of the highest mark. It pleases the Lord to be humble and unpretentious before him, and so even Brahma—who had created the Vedas, the primary scriptures, and as such cannot be regarded as unlettered or unskilled—decided to become humble and unpretentious before the Supreme Being.]

The Supreme Lord who destroys the fetters represented by this gross mortal world and its many delusions and miseries, the Lord who provides joy and bliss to the Mana (mind and heart) of sages, seers and hermits, the Lord who destroys troubles and ill-fortunes [line no. 11]---

---We the Gods have come to take shelter in the holy feet of such a Lord with all humility in our command, without any pretension or right to privileges of any kind in any of our thoughts, words and deeds (i.e. we are extremely honest in our prayers of supplication and in our request for protection from the Lord) [line no. 12]. (Chanda line nos. 11-12)'

सारद श्रुति सेषा रिषय असेषा जा कहूँ कोउ नहिं जाना । १३ ।
 जेहि दीन पिआरे बेद पुकारे द्रवउ सो श्रीभगवाना ॥ १४ ॥
 भव बारिधि मंदर सब बिधि सुंदर गुनमंदिर सुखपुंजा । १५ ।
 मुनि सिद्ध सकल सुर परम भयातुर नमत नाथ पद कंजा ॥ १६ ॥

sārada śruti sēṣā riṣaya asēṣā jā kahum̐ kō'u nahim̐ jānā. 13.
 jēhi dīna pi'ārē bēda pukārē drava'u sō śrībhagavānā. 14.
 bhava bāridhi mandara saba bidhi sundara gunamandira sukhapuñjā. 15.
 muni sid'dha sakala sura parama bhayātura namata nātha pada kañjā. 16.

No one has ever known or understood the mysteries of the Lord—not even Sarada (goddess Saraswati who is the patron of knowledge, wisdom and intelligence), the Srutis (Vedas, the most ancient scriptures that are repositories of knowledge), Seshnath (the legendary serpent-god who is said to be very close to Lord Vishnu, and who has thousand hoods symbolizing someone who has a thousand-fold knowledge of any thing), the Rishsis (great sages and seers) and the Ashesas (the remaining sages such as the mystics, hermits, ascetics etc.) are able to know the Lord. (Chanda line no. 13)

Oh the Supreme God whom the Vedas proclaim as the one who loves all those who are humble, distressed, downtrodden and lowly—please be kind to have pity on us and take merciful cognizance of our precarious situation. (Chanda line no. 14)

You are metaphorically like the great Mt. Mandrachal¹ for the purpose of overcoming the fear arising out of this vast ocean-like mortal world of transmigration; you are charming and appealing in all possible ways; you are a treasure-trove of all the excellent virtues and the best of qualities; and you are a fountain-head of eternal bliss, joy and peace.

[¹Mt. Mandrachal was used as a churning rod by the Gods and the Demons to churn the celestial ocean in the beginning of creation to produce the ambrosia of immortality. This ambrosia was called 'Amrit', and it removed the fear of death. This metaphor is used to imply that the Lord can remove all sorts of fears that the creature has in this mortal world.] (Chanda line no. 15)

All of us—all the sages and seers and hermits, all the mystics as well as the gods who are extremely terrified and sore with fright—bow and surrender ourselves at your holy lotus-like feet².

[²Though the gods and the sages have not expressly said that they are terrified of Ravana and are being tormented by the demons for which purpose they have come to the Supreme Being to ask him to protect them from this scourge and eliminate the demons, but it is understood and expected from the Lord that he knows everything even without telling him clearly. So the gods and sages thought it wiser and more prudent to limit themselves to just offering their obeisance and prayers, and leave the rest of the things to the Supreme Being himself.

Another reason for not specifically mentioning Ravana and the demons was to avoid provoking them openly because there were chances that some spy might be watching them and he would go and report everything to Ravana. If that happens then Ravana would either kill all of them outright for complaining against him, or at least make life a burning hell for them by hounding them and subjecting them to endless tortures even before the Supreme Being can find time to put into effect his promises. So the gods and sages decided to maintain secrecy and show discretion while offering their prayers.] (Chanda line no. 16)

दो०. जानि सभय सुरभूमि सुनि बचन समेत सनेह ।
गगनगिरा गंभीर भइ हरनि सोक संदेह ॥ १८६ ॥

dōhā.

jāni sabhaya surabhūmi suni bacana samēta sanēha.
gaganagirā gambhīra bha'i harani sōka sandēha. 186.

Realising that the Gods and the Earth were sore affright, terrorized and extremely distressed, and hearing their prayerful entreaties made with the greatest of affection and reverence, an invisible Being spoke from the sky (heaven) in a deep-sounding and resonating voice that removed their grief, worries and doubts. (Doha no. 186)

[Note—This was the Supreme Being known as ‘Brahm’ speaking himself—refer Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187 herein below.

The Lord’s voice was grave, deep and resounding like the distant rumble of thunder, and as it reverberated all over the place it sent cheers in the rank of the gods and made earth smile in joy. It is because when the gods and the earth heard this voice they felt reassured as it clearly indicated that their prayers have been answered by the Supreme Lord, and the Lord wants to be responsive to their pleas. This was half battle won for the gods and the earth, for they were sure that if the Lord has chosen to respond to them and reply to their prayers then he will also make sure that their prayers are answered in an adequate way, that their requests are satisfactorily attended to, and they don’t have to go empty-handed and rejected from his doorstep.]

चौ०. जनि डरपहु मुनि सिद्ध सुरेसा । तुम्हहि लागि धरिहउँ नर बेसा ॥ १ ॥
अंसन्ह सहित मनुज अवतारा । लेहउँ दिनकर बंस उदारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jani ḍarapahu muni sid'dha surēsā. tumhahi lāgi dhariha'uṁ nara bēsā. 1.
ansanha sahita manuja avatārā. lēha'uṁ dinakara bansa udārā. 2.

[The unknown voice of in the sky, which was actually the Supreme Lord speaking, said in reassuring words—] ‘Oh sages, mystics and gods¹, don’t be afraid at all. I shall assume a human form for your sake. (1)

I shall take birth myself as a human being, along with my fractions that would also manifest themselves alongside me (ansanha sahita)², in the glorious Solar Race (of Ayodhya) that is renowned for its liberal ways in magnanimity, benevolence, charity and graciousness (dinakara bansa udārā)³. (2)

[Note—¹The Lord has addressed the sages, the mystics and the then the gods in that order. It is because this is the order in which these exalted ones had mentioned themselves to the Supreme Lord while concluding their prayers—refer: Chanda line no. 16 herein above.

²When the Lord says that he will come down to earth accompanied by his fractional parts it simply means that he will be accompanied by his assistants or close associates to help him fulfill the promises he has made to the gods, sages and earth.

Had the Lord so wished he could have come alone and slay the demons and their leader Ravana by his mere wish, for there is nothing in this creation which is impossible for him or beyond his abilities, but that would have gone against the boons granted to Ravana by Brahma—that he would only be killed at the hands of a human being. In deference to this boon the Lord was obliged to act like an ordinary human being in order to keep the sanctity of Brahma's words, and so he needed assistance. He could not act like some super-man having some super-natural power to slay Ravana.

It is the way of the world that even the mightiest and ablest of kings need assistance of many ministers and administrators to run his kingdom, as well as commanders and a huge garrison of soldiers to maintain peace and order in his kingdom; the king is not a magician who can do things by swinging a magic wand! So therefore, if the Lord were to act like a human being in order to slay Ravana and keep his words to the gods etc. then he had to refrain from doing anything that is beyond any man to do.

Besides this, it was imperative for the Supreme Being to maintain top secrecy in putting his plans into practice lest Ravana would get a hint and quickly undo everything before the Lord can even initiate any action. Hence, the Lord had to act perfectly like an ordinary human being, not giving any single hint about who he actually was. When we read the story of the Ramayana we will realize that the Lord had taken strict precautions in this matter—never for even once did he let anyone know that he was the Supreme Being and possesses supernatural powers.

That said, the Supreme Being had to consciously delegate some of his own powers and authority to entities that appeared to be separate and distinct from him, but were actually the Lord's own fractional forms that were his own image, in order to play his role as a human to perfection. It was done with the express purpose to maintain utmost secrecy of the project. It was done so as to make it appear, at least on the surface that the Lord's powers and abilities were limited like an ordinary man, and that his ultimate slaying of Ravana and elimination of the cruel demons were the natural culmination of a long sequence of events that started when Lord Ram was sent to the forest due to family intrigue over the crown of the kingdom, and which went on to the point when Sita, Ram's wife, was kidnapped by Ravana, compelling Lord Ram to go to Lanka in an effort to free his wife, which is something any other honourable man would have done himself, and which led to the fierce war of Lanka and the slaying of Ravana and other cruel demons who had been tormenting the gods, sages and earth.

So now, the question arises 'who were these fractional forms of the Supreme Being who had accompanied him when he manifested himself as a human being'?

This question can be answered at two levels, viz. the metaphysical and the mythological. We shall briefly glance at both of them.

At the time creation, when Brahm, the personified form of the cosmic super Consciousness, decided to initiate the process of creation, it metamorphosed into three cosmic forms to carry out this gigantic task smoothly. It was the first instance of the principle of 'delegation of authority' when some Superior Authority decides to do something great and extraordinary, and in order to attain success in this enterprise this Authority divides the main task into its smaller components, assigning one component

to one of the many junior authorities that are appointed by it to specifically carry out a specific job.

This mechanism helped Brahm to regulate the entire process and also maintain self-discipline because though the three forms into which Brahm transformed itself were in fact the same Brahm operating at different levels and carrying out different tasks. It helped Brahm to easily maintain control over the developments, as for all practical purposes these three forms were distinct from Brahm and independent Authorities in their own right, and so a close watch could be kept on their functioning. In case one of these forms failed to function properly then remedial methods could be initiated, leaving the others to carry out their duties in the normal way.

Since the three primary forms into which the supreme Brahm metamorphosed himself, albeit different and distinct from Brahm, were however the same Supreme Being operating through these forms, and so therefore it is said that these three forms or Authorities of creation were the ‘fractional parts’ of Brahm.

And who were these three Authorities? The stupendous task of ‘creation of this world’ had three basic steps—viz. first was creation, then came its sustenance and protection, and finally its conclusion. The form of Brahm responsible for the first step, i.e. ‘creation’, was called Brahma, the creator. The form of Brahm responsible for the second step, i.e. ‘sustenance and protection of the creation’, was called Vishnu, the sustainer and protector. And finally, the form of Brahm responsible for the third step, i.e. ‘conclusion of creation’, was called Shiva, the concluder. Thus came into being the ‘Trinity of Gods’.

The Supreme Being now wished to devise a device by which this creation could be created from nothing, because in the beginning there was nothing but pure cosmic Consciousness. Brahm had to ‘imagine’ in his mind that there is something called ‘creation’, because actually there was nothing. Hence the Upanishads say that ‘this world is merely an image, that it is an imagination of the mind’.

To wit, the supreme Brahm employed his ‘Shakti’, or his dynamic power, to create an imaginary thing in order to give shape to this world. This Shakti was called ‘Maya’, meaning delusion, as it created an illusion of reality when there was none!

The supreme Brahm used this Maya for another reason too. He wished his creation to be self-sustaining and keep on rolling on its own account, without his day-to-day role. So he created ‘Maya’ and its associated components. What then do stand for? They represent worldly delusions, ignorance, temptations, infatuations, desires, greed, and all other such negativities that are associated with this gross mundane world. This ensured that the creatures that would be produced in the course of evolvment of creation would be able to keep themselves so engrossed in a make-belief world in which that they would procreate themselves in the erroneous belief that they are masters of their own destiny and are the ones who can create, sustain and destroy at their own free will—till of course the time comes when the Supreme Authority decides that his creation has become a monster, a Frankenstein, at which time he assumes the role of the ‘concluder’ to bring an end to the grand drama.

So the fourth component that was also a fraction of Brahm was ‘Maya Shakti’, the dynamic power to create delusions at the cosmic level, because without this Shakti nothing could be achieved.

With this primary background understanding we conclude that when Brahm, the Supreme Being, assured the gods, the sages and the earth that he would come to help them with his fractions to assist him, he meant that he himself would assume the form of Lord Ram, the one who would play the main role in the elimination of

Ravana and the demons, and his other subtle forms such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva along with Maya too would come in different forms to assist him.

So therefore it was the Supreme Being known as Brahm who became Lord Ram. He had three brothers—Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. ‘Bharat’ was the one who took care of the welfare of the world, and therefore he stood for Lord Vishnu; ‘Laxman’ was the one who was an embodiment of all excellent virtues, and so he stood for Lord Shiva, and like Shiva, Laxman was also very dear to Lord Ram; and ‘Shatrughan’ was a destroyer of enemies symbolizing ignorance and delusions, and since knowledge helps to eliminate these negative factors, he stood for Brahma, the creator of the Vedas. {Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193, and (ii) Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 40-41.

Then there was Sita, the wife of Lord Ram. She was the other assistant of the Lord and who played a pivotal role in helping the Lord fulfill his divine mission. It was Sita’s abduction by Ravana which became the excuse for Lord Ram to eliminate Ravana. Who then was she? From the metaphysical perspective she represented Maya, the cosmic Shakti that enabled Brahm to carry out his wishes as outlined herein above.

The supreme Brahm succeeded in his mission of creation with the help of his Maya Shakti, and in a similar way his human incarnation Lord Ram succeeded in his mission of eliminating Ravana by employing the services of Sita—because Sita had played a dynamic and central role in the fulfillment of this mission, as it was Sita’s abduction by Ravana that set in motion a chain of events that ended with his slaying by Lord Ram.

There is another view about the form in which the Supreme Being revealed himself along with his fractional parts as indicated in this verse. According to Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 55-58, (a) Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of this creation, became Lord Ram; (b) the Seshnath, who is the celestial serpent on whose coiled body Vishnu reclines on the surface of the primordial ocean and who supports the earth on his thousand hoods, became Laxman; (c) Vishnu’s weapon called Chakra, the serrated discus he hold, became Bharat; and (d) Vishnu’s conch became Shatrughan. Meanwhile, ‘earth’ herself became Sita—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, (a) Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-72; and (b) Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 41-44.

³The Solar Race of Ayodhya is honoured as being very charitable and liberal because it had countless kings who became famous for their graciousness and merciful disposition as well as for liberal attitude towards charity, magnanimity and benevolence.

Lord Ram taking birth in the ‘Sun’ race is a metaphoric way of saying that the Lord’s glories and virtues were as splendid and radiant as the sun itself. It also means that even as the sun removes all darkness by its mere presence, the advent of Lord Ram removed all darkness symbolized by the wicked, evil and sinful forces in this creation that the demons represented. Even as sunrise immediately dispels fear of ghosts and phantoms that lurk in the darkness of the night, the presence of Lord Ram in this world eliminated all the fear from the dark forces that create delusions, ignorance and all other such negative factors that cause immense horror, grief, misery and consternation in the mind and heart of creatures of this world.]

कस्यप अदिति महातप कीन्हा । तिन्ह कहूँ मैं पूरब बर दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
 ते दसरथ कौसल्या रूपा । कोसलपुरीं प्रगट नरभूपा ॥ ४ ॥
 तिन्ह कें गृह अवतरिहउँ जाई । रघुकुल तिलक सो चारिउ भाई ॥ ५ ॥

kasyapa aditi mahātapa kīnhā. tinha kahūṁ maim pūraba bara dīnhā. 3.
 tē dasaratha kausalyā rūpā. kōsalapurīm pragata narabhūpā. 4.
 tinha kēm gr̥ha avatariha'uṁ jāī. raghukula tilaka sō cāri'u bhāī. 5.

Sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) in some ancient time, and at that time I had already given them a word to become their son¹. (3)

They (Kashyap and Aditi) have appeared as king Dasrath and his queen Kaushalya in the kingdom of 'Kaushal Puri' (Ayodhya). (4)

I shall go and take birth in their royal household in the form of his four sons who would be the glory of the race of king Raghu² (5)

[Note—¹It ought to be remembered here that the wheel of creation continues to rotate in a cyclic form and in a rhythmic manner. The measurement of time at the cosmic scale is mind-boggling. It would suffice for our purpose here to say that in every cycle of creation there is a manifestation of Lord Ram, and in each generation there is a unique reason for it. This fact is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

It is believed that in three of these cycles—each being called a 'Kalpa' and each divided into four divisions known as Yugas, viz. the Sata (which was the first era), the Treta (in which Lord Ram was born), the Dwapar (in which Kishna was born) and Kali Yugas (the present era)—Lord Vishnu had blessed sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi that he would assume the form of their sons, while in the fourth Kalpa he blessed Manu and Satrupa.

The Lord here refers to that Kalpa in which sage Kashyap lived (as clearly indicated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123), while in another Kalpa he manifested due to the boon he had given to Manu and Satrupa (as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 152).

²Earlier it was said that the Lord took birth in the Solar Race, and now it is said that he took birth in the Raghu Race. The idea is that originally this race descended from the Sun God, and hence got its name. But in due course and with the passage of time a great king by the name of Raghu was born in it; this particular king was so great and glorious and his rule so magnificent that the world henceforth began to identify the Solar Race after the name of this king in order to honour his memory and name. So it came to be that the Solar Race became the Race of king Raghu, or the 'Raghu-Race'.

The four sons of king Dasrath were Lord Ram, and his three brothers Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan.]

नारद बचन सत्य सब करिहउँ । परम सक्ति समेत अवतरिहउँ ॥ ६ ॥
हरिहउँ सकल भूमि गरुआई । निर्भय होहु देव समुदाई ॥ ७ ॥

nārada bacana satya saba kariha'uṁ. parama sakti samēta avatariha'uṁ. 6.
hariha'uṁ sakala bhūmi garu'āī. nirbhaya hōhu dēva samudāī. 7.

I shall also be able to prove true the words of sage Narad¹. I shall manifest myself with my cosmic powers (so that I can successfully eliminate the powerful demons led by Ravana). (6)

Oh Gods, be reassured and feel freed from fear, for I shall surely eliminate all that is burdensome for earth and free her from this encumbrance. (7)'

[Note—¹'Narad's words': Once sage Narad had cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being. The Lord now wishes to fulfill that curse so that the sanctity of Narad's words is upheld. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 139.]

गगन ब्रह्मबानी सुनि काना । तुरत फिरे सुर हृदय जुड़ाना ॥ ८ ॥
तब ब्रह्माँ धरनिहि समुझावा । अभय भई भरोस जियँ आवा ॥ ९ ॥

gagana brahmabānī suni kānā. turata phirē sura hṛdaya juṛānā. 8.
taba brahmāṁ dharanihi samujhāvā. abhaya bhaī bharōsa jiyāṁ āvā. 9.

When the gods thus heard Brahm's words of reassurance thus spoken from the sky (heaven), they were immensely relieved in their hearts, and being now confident of salvation and protection from their horrors, they immediately turned back. (8)

Then the creator Brahma addressed earth and explained to her the ramifications and implications of words of Brahm, advising her to feel fearless from now onwards. At this assurance from Brahma the earth felt free from the burden of fear and terror that had made her suffer her till now. (9)

दो०. निज लोकहि बिरंचि गे देवन्ह इहइ सिखाइ ।
बानर तनु धरि धरि महि हरि पद सेवहु जाइ ॥ १८७ ॥
dōhā.

nija lōkahi birañci gē dēvanha iha'i sikhā'i.
bānara tanu dhari dhari mahi hari pada sēvahu jā'i. 187.

Then Brahma went back to his abode after advising all the Gods that they should all assume the forms of monkeys and go down to live on earth so that they can serve the holy feet of Lord Hari (Vishnu) when he manifests himself there. (Doha no. 187)

[Note—This Doha clearly establishes that the ‘monkeys’ who formed the formidable army that helped Lord Ram in his campaign of Lanka in which the Lord eliminated Ravana and the rest of the cruel demons were none others than these Gods themselves.]

चौ०. गए देव सब निज निज धामा । भूमि सहित मन कहूँ बिश्रामा ॥ १ ॥
जो कछु आयसु ब्रह्माँ दीन्हा । हरषे देव बिलंब न कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ga'e dēva saba nija nija dhāmā. bhūmi sahita mana kahum̃ biśrāmā. 1.
jō kachu āyasu brahmām̃ dīnhā. haraṣē dēva bilamba na kīnhā. 2.

After being assured by Brahm that the Lord would come down personally to eliminate the cause of their sufferings, all the Gods went back to their respective abodes. Together with Mother Earth, all the Gods found peace in their hearts, and their minds became calm. (1)

The Gods were very happy to implement the advice given to them by Brahma, and they did not waste time in doing what they were told to do. [And what did Brahma advise them? In Doha no. 187 we read that Brahma had advised the Gods to assume the form of monkeys and go down to earth to help the Supreme Lord when he goes there in the form of a human being to eliminate the demons.] (2)

बनचर देह धरी छिति माहीं । अतुलित बल प्रताप तिन्ह पाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
गिरि तरु नख आयुध सब बीरा । हरि मारग चितवहिं मतिधीरा ॥ ४ ॥
गिरि कानन जहँ तहँ भरि पूरी । रहे निज निज अनीक रचि रूरी ॥ ५ ॥

banacara dēha dharī chiti māhīm. atulita bala pratāpa tinha pāhīm. 3.
giri taru nakha āyudha saba bīrā. hari mārāga citavahim̃ matidhīrā. 4.
giri kānana jahaṁ tahaṁ bhari pūrī. rahē nija nija anīka raci rūrī. 5.

The Gods assumed the forms of countless ‘forest dwellers’¹ (monkeys, bears) and came to live on earth. These creatures had stupendous strength and astounding valour. (3)

All of them were brave warriors. Their weapons consisted of mountains (huge rocks and boulders), trees, and their own nails (that were long and sharp).

After descending upon earth they waited patiently, keeping an eager watch the path and bidding for the time when Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram) would come that way. (4)

All of them spread over the earth, living on mountains and in forests, wherever they liked and in whatever way they fancied. (5)

[Note—¹It is very interesting to note here that the actual word used in the text is “banacara”. This word clearly means ‘those who move around in the forest’, ‘the

forest dwellers'. It is not said at all that the gods became 'monkeys or bears'. The word "banacara" could also mean forest dwelling tribes who were expected to be naturally fierce, ruthless and brave because of the harsh and tough environ of the wilds in which they lived all their lives.

But the convention is that the forest dwellers, the "banacaras", who helped Lord Ram and formed his army were 'monkeys and bears', i.e. that they 'were not humans'. Why is it so; what led our ancient chroniclers to decide that the gods had assumed the form of 'monkeys and bears'?

Well, the simple and straightforward answer is this: Ravana had been granted a boon that he can be killed only by a human being and monkeys, and no one else would ever be able to cause his death. So it was determined that besides Lord Ram, who was in the physical form of a human being, all the others who played a pivotal role in causing Ravana's death must have been monkeys, and their close companions the bears, and no one else. Hence, it was concluded by ancient narrators that the word 'banacara' indeed referred to the forest dwelling creatures such as monkeys and bears alone, and not to any others.

But in reality these 'banacaras' were forest tribes. Their physical features, body-hair, countenance, manners, language, habits, dwelling places, custom and culture were so strikingly different from those who lived in the north of the Vindya mountains that when the latter came in contact with the former they called them monkeys and bears because of their unconventional life-style and visage. But I doubt very much that they were actually animals called monkeys and bears.]

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Section 4.2:

Adhyatma Ramayan

Now we shall read this episode from Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan'. It is narrated in its Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 6-32.

भूमिभरिण मग्ना दशवदनमुखाशेषरक्षोगणानां
धृत्वा गोरूपमादौ दिविजमुनिजनैः साकमब्जासनस्य ।
गत्वा लोकं रुदन्ती व्यसनमुपगतं ब्रह्मणे प्राह सर्वं
ब्रह्मा ध्यात्वा मुहूर्तं सकलमपि हृदावेदशेषात्मकत्वात् ॥ ६॥

bhūmirbhāreṇa magnā daśavadanamukhāśeṣarakṣogaṇānāṃ
dhṛtvā gorūpamādaū divijamunijanaiḥ sākamabjāsanasya ।
gatvā lokam rudantī vyasanamupagataṃ brahmaṇe prāha sarvaṃ
brahmā dhyātvā muhūrtaṃ sakalamapi hṛdāvedaśeṣātmakatvāt ॥ 6॥

Once upon a time, mother earth, who was weary and tormented by the burden of Ravana and other demons, took the form of a cow, and accompanied by the gods and the exalted sages went to the abode of Lord Brahma (the creator). There, she wept and narrated her tales of woes to Brahma.

Then Brahma sat in meditation for one ‘Muhurta’ (i.e. a period of time equivalent to < 1 hour; or 48 minutes; literally meaning for a short while) and knew by inspiration the way and means by which earth’s torments and worries could be ended because he is all knowing and omniscient (6).

तस्मात्क्षीरसमुद्रतीरमगमद् ब्रह्माथ देवैर्वृतो
देव्या चाखिललोकहृत्स्थमजरं सर्वज्ञमीशं हरिम् ।
अस्तौषीच्छ्रुतिसिद्धनिर्मलपदैः स्तोत्रैः पुराणोद्भवैः
भक्त्या गद्गदया गिरातिविमलैरानन्दबाष्पैर्वृतः ॥ ७॥

tasmātkṣīrasamudratīramagamad brahmātha devairvṛto
devyā cākhilalokahr̥tsthamaḥjaram sarvajñamīśam harim ।
astauṣicchruṭisiddhanirmalapadaiḥ stotraih purāṇodbhavaiḥ
bhaktyā gadgadayā girāativimalairānandabāṣpairvṛtaḥ ॥ 7॥

Thereafter, accompanied by all the gods, Brahma took the earth with him and went to the shore of the ‘ocean of milk’ (Kshirsagar, the abode of Lord Vishnu). There he worshipped and praised Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu)—who pervades the whole world, is all-knowing, omniscient and wise, and is free from all delusions—with a humble voice that was suffused with devotion and sweet to hear, with the eyes filled with tears of joy and bliss, and a body that was thrilled.

Brahma prayed to the Lord in accordance with the sanctions of the Vedas as his submission was in the form of hymns called Stotras that were like the verses used to praise and honour the Lord in the Purans (ancient mythological books that describe the stories associated with the various manifestations of the Supreme Being). (7).

ततः स्फुरत्सहस्रांशुसहस्रसदृशप्रभः ।
आविरासीद्भरिः प्राच्यां दिशां व्यपनयन्स्तमः ॥ ८॥
कथञ्चिद्दृष्टवान् ब्रह्मा दुर्दर्शमकृतात्मनाम् ।
इन्द्रनीलप्रतीकाशं स्मितारस्यं पद्मलोचनम् ॥ ९॥
किरीटहारकेयूरकुण्डलैः कटकादिभिः ।
विभ्राजमानं श्रीवत्सकौस्तुभप्रभयान्वितम् ॥ १०॥

tataḥ sphuratsahasrāṁśusahasrasadr̥śaprabhaḥ ।
āvirāsiddhariḥ prācyāṁ diśāṁ vyapanayanstamaḥ ॥ 8॥
kathañciddṛṣṭavān brahmā durdarśamakṛtātmanām ।
indranilapratikāśam smitāsyam padmalocanam ॥ 9॥
kirīṭahārakeyūrakuṇḍalaiḥ kaṭakādibhiḥ ।
vibhrājamānaṁ śrīvatsakaustubhaprabhayānvitam ॥ 10॥

Then Sri Hari (Vishnu)—who was as splendid and radiant as thousands of luminescent suns shining together—manifested himself in the eastern horizon, removing or dispelling the darkness of all the directions of the world as he revealed himself (8).

Sri Hari—who is most difficult to behold by sinners and those who lack any goodness and auspiciousness in them (because the Lord's form is so holy and divine that evil ones can't perceive it)—was seen by Brahma with the greatest of difficulties. [It does not mean that Brahma was not holy himself, but it is merely a figure of speech to emphasise how brilliant the form of the Lord was that it even blinded Brahma, the creator of this mortal world.]

His glowing and radiant complexion was dark like the sapphire worn by Indra (the king of Gods). His face had a sweet and pleasant smile, and his eyes were large and attractive like a lotus flower in full bloom (9).

He (Lord Hari or Vishnu) was adorned by a crown, a tiara, a necklace or a garland, armlets and bracelets, ear-rings, large finger-rings, and other magnificent ornaments. The Lord's majesty was enhanced by the presence of the foot-prints of sage Bhṛigu that are marked on his chest, as well as by the unique gem known as the 'Kaustav Mani' that too adorned his chest (in the form of a pendant that the Lord wears). [The Kaustav Mani is a rare gem that is worn exclusively by Lord Vishnu.] (10).

स्तुवद्भिः सनकाद्यैश्च पार्षदैः परिवेष्टितम् ।

शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मवनमालाविराजितम् ॥ ११॥

स्वर्णयज्ञोपवीतेन स्वर्णवर्णाम्बरेण च ।

श्रिया भूम्या च सहितं गरुडोपरि संस्थितम् ॥ १२॥

हर्षगद्गदया वाचा स्तोतुं समुपचक्रमे ॥ १३॥

stuvadbhiḥ sanakādyaiḥ pāṛṣadaiḥ pariveṣṭitam ।

śaṅkhacakraḡadāpadmavanamālāvīrajitam ॥ 11॥

svaṇṇayajñopavītena svaṇṇavarṇāmbareṇa ca ।

śriyā bhūmyā ca sahitaṃ gaṛuḡopari saṁsthitaṃ ॥ 12॥

harṣagaḡgadayā vācā stotuṃ samupacakrame ॥ 13॥

Sankadi and other sages were singing the eulogies of the Lord and had surrounded him from all the sides. He was looking most glorious and resplendent with a conch, a discus, a mace and a lotus (one each in his four hands respectively) as well as the garland of flowers around his neck (11).

He was adorned by a golden sacred thread, and a Pitambar (a silken yellow body wrapping seamless garment worn by Vishnu). He was accompanied by Laxmi and mother earth, was astride Garud (the legendary eagle which is his mount). Seeing his stupendously beautiful image, Brahma began to sing his praises and glories with a throat choked with extreme delight and overcome with emotions (12-13).

ब्रह्मोवाच

नतोऽस्मि ते पदं देव पूणबुद्धीन्द्रियात्मभिः ।
 यत्त्विन्त्यते कर्मपाशाद्धृदि नित्यं मुमुक्षुभिः ॥ १४॥
 मायया गुणमय्या त्वं सृजस्यवसि लुम्पसि ।
 जगतेन न ते लेप आनन्दानुभवात्मनः ॥ १५॥
 तथा शुद्धिर्न दुष्टानां दानाध्ययनकर्मभिः ।
 शुद्धात्मता ते यशसि सदा भक्तिमतां यथा ॥ १६॥

brahmovāca
 nato'smi te padam deva prāṇabuddhīndriyātmabhiḥ ।
 yaccintyate karmapāśāddhṛdi nityam mumukṣubhiḥ ॥ 14॥
 māyayā guṇamayyā tvam sṛjasyavasi lumpasi ।
 jagattena na te lepa ānandānubhavātmanah ॥ 15॥
 tathā śuddhirna duṣṭānām dānādhyayanakarmabhiḥ ।
 śuddhātmata te yaśasi sadā bhaktimatām yathā ॥ 16॥

Brahma said, 'Oh Lord! I bow my head at your holy feet which are remembered and concentrated upon regularly by the seekers of emancipation and salvation who wish to free themselves from the shackles of their deeds both past and present, and which they do sincerely with their whole being, intellect and mind, heart and sense organs (14).

You create, sustain and annihilate this world through the medium of your dynamic powers that create delusions (known as Maya), and these powers are aided by the three Gunas¹ (specialties, qualities—Satvic, Rajsic and Tamsic) that are so characteristic of this creation—but, being an embodiment of supreme bliss and contentment, you do not yourself get attached, involved, effected or engrossed in any of the things that either the Maya or the Gunas produce (15).

[¹The three Gunas are the primary qualities that are inherently present in all living beings. A combination of them in different permutations and ratios decide the basic nature, temperament, attitude and character of an individual. The various delusions created by this world affect the individual alongside the affect of these Gunas. But inspite of the fact that all these things are created by Brahm, and also that this creation is an image of Brahm, but the great mystery and wonder of Brahm that makes him so unique is that he remains detached from everything.]

Oh Lord! The purity of heart and inner-self that is achieved by the devotees who are devoted and dedicated to you and have constant and unwavering love (respect) for your pure and holy fame and glories, are not achieved (or received) by those persons who are darkened, pervert, wicked and of a malignant and tarnished heart and inner-self inspite of their doing charities, studying (the scriptures) and other auspicious and noble deeds (16).

अतस्तवाङ्घ्रिर्मै दृष्टश्चित्तदोषापनुत्तये ।
 सद्योऽन्तर्हृदये नित्यं मुनिभिः सात्वतैर्वृतः ॥ १७॥
 ब्रह्माद्यैः स्वार्थसिद्ध्यर्थमस्माभिः पूर्वसेवितः ।
 अपरोक्षानुभूत्यर्थं ज्ञानिभिर्हृदि भावितः ॥ १८॥

atastavāṅghrime dr̥ṣṭaścittadoṣāpanuttaye ।
 sadyo'ntarhṛdaye nityaṃ munibhiḥ sātvatāirvṛtaḥ ॥ 17॥
 brahmādyaiḥ svārthasiddhyarthamasmābhiḥ pūrvasevitaḥ ।
 aparokṣānubhūtyartham jñānibhirhṛdi bhāvitaḥ ॥ 18॥

Hence, those lotus-like feet of yours which are regularly concentrated upon (i.e. remembered) by devoted sages and seers in their hearts—I have had a divine view (Darshan) of them so as to enable me to destroy the faults and malignant tendencies of my heart and inner-self instantaneously (17).

Earlier too we Brahma and other Gods had served these lotus-like (holy and divine) feet of yours in order to fulfill (or serve) our self interests while wise sages and hermits had constantly concentrated upon it in their hearts with the avowed aim of experiencing you first hand (i.e. directly and presently) (18).

तवाङ्घ्रिपूजानिर्मल्यतुलसीमालया विभो ।
 स्पर्धते वक्षसि पदं लब्ध्वापि श्रीः सपत्निवत् ॥ १९॥
 अतस्त्वत्पादभक्तेषु तव भक्तिः श्रियोऽधिका ।
 भक्तिमेवाभिवाञ्छन्ति त्वद्भक्ताः सारवेदिनः ॥ २०॥
 अतस्त्वत्पादकमले भक्तिरेव सदास्तु मे ।
 संसाराऽऽमयतप्तानां भेषजं भक्तिरेव ते ॥ २१॥

tavāṅghripūjānirmālyatulasīmālayā vibho ।
 spardhate vakṣasi padaṃ labdhvāpi śrīḥ sapatnivat ॥ 19॥
 atastvatpādabhakteṣu tava bhaktiḥ śriyo'dhikā ।
 bhaktimevābhivāñchanti tvadbhaktāḥ sāravedinaḥ ॥ 20॥
 atastvatpādakamale bhaktireva sadāstu me ।
 saṃsārā"mayataptānāṃ bheṣajaṃ bhaktireva te ॥ 21॥

Oh Vibho (omnipresent, all-pervading, all-powerful, huge, magnanimous, glorious) Lord! Though Laxmi has found a place in your heart, she nevertheless feels jealous and envious of a garland of Tulsi leaves which is offered at your feet as if the latter was her competitor (or, a co-wife)¹ (19).

You have greater affection for the devotees who have devotion and respect towards your lotus-like feet than you have for Laxmi. That is why those devotees who have realised your essence and true nature have desire (or ask) for your Bhakti (pure devotion, dedication, worship, affection, surrender and refuge with you, your blessings etc.) only to the exclusion of all other boons (20).

Therefore, Oh Lord, let me have eternal, unwavering devotion and dedication in your lotus-like holy feet because for those diseased persons afflicted by the disease of this mundane existence (such as spiritual, moral, physical, ethical and attitudinal depravation, corrupted thoughts, intellect and discrimination, perverse and pervert mind etc.), your devotion and worship is the only remedy (21).'

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is very fond of the leaves of the Tulsi plant (Basil plant; its botanical name is *ocymum sanctum*). This fondness of the Lord causes heartburn to Laxmi though she is so much loved by the Lord. The story of how Tulsi became so much favourite of Lord Vishnu in brief is as follows:

It is said to have been born out of the tears of bliss and happiness of Lord Vishnu at the time when the pitcher containing the Amrit, the ambrosia of bliss and eternity, had emerged from the ocean when the latter was churned by the gods and the demons. The leaves of this plant are used to sanctify food offered to Lord Vishnu, and the dried wood of the tree is used for fire sacrifices, during cremation rites and also for making beads of the prayer rosary. In a personified form, Tulsi is regarded as a goddess very dear to Vishnu.

According to another legend, there was a demon named Jaalandhar who had a chaste wife named Brinda (pronounced as 'Brindaa'). Lord Shiva had tried his best to kill him but failed due to the spiritual powers and the strength of chastity vow of his wife Brinda. At that time Lord Vishnu had broken her vows of chastity and loyalty towards her demon husband by stratagem, and when Brinda came to know about it she cursed Vishnu that he would become a stone. Vishnu accepted the curse with respect because he knew that Brinda was immaculate and was not at fault, but it was necessary to violate her vows so that her cruel demon husband could be killed. So instead of counter-cursing or showing his wrath, Vishnu blessed her and said that even in his form as a stone he would still have the greatest of respect for her and keep her over his head as a token of this. Vishnu thus became a stone known as 'Shaligraam' and Brinda became the Tulsi plant whose leaves are always placed on the top of the Shaligraam to worship the Lord.

There was no way to kill this cruel demon except to violate the chastity vow of Brinda. In order to take care of peace and welfare of the rest of the world, and to maintain law and order in creation for which he was duty-bound, Lord Vishnu had no choice but to disguise himself as the demon to violate the honourable lady's chastity. But having done this and allowing Lord Shiva to kill the demon, Vishnu had blessed her with a boon that in the form of 'Tulsi' (the holy Basil plant) she would be absolutely necessary to sanctify all food offered to the Lord, and he would wear her on top of his Shaligram-form. This Shaligram form of the Lord is the curse that Brinda cast upon the Lord when she realised what had happened. She cursed him to become a stone.

The Shaligram is a rounded piece of smooth stone, generally black in colour that is found on the banks of the holy river Narmada. Shaligram has a great symbolic value—it denotes the formless shape of the Supreme Being, a form that has no specific features as a hand or a head. It is more like an egg in its shape, symbolizing the cosmic egg from which the rest of the creation has emerged.

Worship of Lord Vishnu as the cosmic Lord who is without attributes and forms is done in the Shaligram in a symbolic manner. But for this worship, leaves of the Tulsi plant (Basil plant) are an absolute necessity to mark this event and the fact that the magnanimous Lord had to do something that was wrong but necessary for the larger welfare and interest of his creation because that was also his duty and responsibility. The Lord was ready to suffer ignominy and the curse of becoming a stone that rolls and tosses about in the current of the river, literally condemned to lead a life that is virtually as gross and inane as a worthless stone, just in order to uphold the requirements of Dharma that the wrongdoer must be punished even if it means one has to suffer himself in the process. But the Lord knew that Brinda was

immaculate and irreproachable, so he blessed her that since she had accepted him as her husband, the Lord is ready to accept her as his eternally beloved one.

For the Lord, accepting and elevating Brinda to the same pedestal as his celestial divine consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was a kind and loving gesture towards Brinda that she is not only pardoned for cursing the Lord to become a stone but also accepted by him as his most beloved one who is deemed to be so close and essential for the Lord that his worship would never be completed with her symbolic presence in the form of the Tulsi leaves.

The story is referred to in Doha no. 395 and 188 in the book Dohawali written by saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas.

According to the Shiv Puran, Rudra Sanhita, Khanda 5 (Uddha Khanda), Cantos 36-40, there was a demon named Shankha-chud, and his chaste wife was called Tulsi. Lord Shiva as well as the great goddess of death Mahakaali had tried their best to slay this demon, but were unsuccessful. It was then that Lord Vishnu had made Tulsi fall from grace by some trick so that ultimately Shiva, as Rudra, was able to kill him. When Tulsi came to know about the trick played upon her by Vishnu, she cursed him to become a stone. Lord Shiva counter-cursed her that she would become a river known as 'Gandaki'. But Lord Vishnu intervened and forgave her, and said that he willingly accepts her curse as well as her as his symbolic consort. So it happened that Vishnu became a stone known as 'Shaaligram' that is found in this river, and Tulsi became a tree that grew on its bank. The leaves of this 'Tulsi' tree is regarded as the only thing that is acceptable to Lord Shaaligram—a metaphoric way of saying that Lord Vishnu can only be pleased by the touch of Tulsi.]

इति ब्रुवन्तं ब्रह्माणं बभाषे भगवान् हरिः ।
किं करोमीति तं वेधाः प्रत्युवाचातिहर्षितः ॥ २२॥
भगवन् रावणो नाम पौलस्त्यतनयो महान् ।
राक्षसानामधिपतिर्मदतवरदर्पितः ॥ २३॥
त्रिलोकीं लोकपालान्श्च बाधते विश्वबाधकः ।
मानुषेण मृतिस्तस्य मया कल्याण कल्पिता ॥ २४॥

iti bruvantaṁ brahmāṇaṁ babhāṣe bhagavān hariḥ ।
kiṁ karomīti taṁ vedhāḥ pratyuvācātihaṛṣitaḥ ॥ 22॥
bhagavan rāvaṇo nāma paulastyatanayo mahān ।
rākṣasānāmadhipatirmaddattavaradarpiṭaḥ ॥ 23॥
trilokīṁ lokapālānśca bādhati viśvabādhakaḥ ।
mānuṣeṇa mṛtistasya mayā kalyāṇa kalpitā ॥ 24॥

Brahma, who had been singing the glories and praises of Lord Hari as above, was asked by him—‘What shall I do for you?’ Then Brahma replied to him most delightedly (22)—

‘Oh Lord God! Ravana, the grand son of Pulastya and son of Visrawa, is the king of demons. On the strength of my blessings (or boons), he has become extremely haughty and arrogant (as well as tyrannical and invincible) (23).

He has created hurdles (problems) for the whole universe, and has tormented the three Lokas (terrestrial, subterranean and celestial worlds) and the three Lokpals (patron Gods of these three divisions of the world). Oh Lord who is an embodiment of all forms of auspiciousness and goodness in this creation! I have destined (determined) his (Ravana's) death in the hands of a human. Therefore, oh Lord, you should assume a human form and slay that creature who has become an enemy of Gods (24).'

अतस्त्वं मानुषो भूत्वा जहि देवरिपुं प्रभो ॥ २५॥

श्रीभगवानुवाच

कश्यपस्य वरो दत्तस्तपसा तोषितेन मे ।
याचितः पुत्रभावाय तथेत्यङ्गीकृतं मया ।
स इदानीं दशरथो भूत्वा तिष्ठति भूतले ॥ २६॥

atastvaṃ mānuṣo bhūtvā jahi devaripuṃ prabho ॥ 25॥

śrībhagavānuvāca

kaśyapasya varo dattastapasā toṣitena me ।
yācitaḥ putrabhāvāya tathetyaṅgīkṛtaṃ mayā ।
sa idānīm daśaratho bhūtvā tiṣṭhati bhūtale ॥ 26॥

The Lord God (Vishnu) said, 'Being pleased by the severe austerities and penances (Tapa) done by Kashyap, I had given him a boon. He had desired me to manifest myself as his son; then I had said 'all-right', and had accepted his proposal. Presently, he is present in the form of king Dasrath on this earth (in the city of Ayodhya) (25-26).

तस्याहं पुत्रतामेत्य कौसल्यायां शुभे दिने ।
चतुर्धाऽऽत्मानमेवाहं सृजामीतरयोः पृथक् ॥ २७॥
योगमायापि सीतेति जनकस्य गृहे तदा ।
उत्पत्स्यते तया सार्धं सर्वं सम्पादयाम्यहम् ।
इत्युक्त्वान्तर्दधे विष्णुर्ब्रह्मा देवानथाब्रवीत् ॥ २८॥

tasyāhaṃ putratāmetya kausalyāyām śubhe dine ।
caturdhā'atmānamevāhaṃ sṛjāmītarayoḥ pṛthak ॥ 27॥
yogamāyāpi sīteti janakasya gṛhe tadā ।
utpatsyate tayā sārdhaṃ sarvaṃ sampādayāmyaham ।
ityuktvāntardadhe viṣṇurbrahmā devānathābravīt ॥ 28॥

I shall manifest myself (i.e. be born) in his household in four distinct forms as his four sons in an auspicious and proper time from the womb of Kaushalya and other two mothers (27).

At the same time, my ‘Yogmaya’ (my delusion-creating cosmic dynamic powers that originate from me) will take birth in the form of Sita in the household of king Janak. I shall take her with me and finish off all your works (or fulfill all your desires and needs).’

Saying this, Lord Vishnu vanished from sight. Thereafter, Brahma said to the other Gods (28)—

ब्रह्मोवाच

विष्णुर्मनुषरूपेण भविष्यति रघोः कुले ॥ २९॥

यूयं सृजध्वं सर्वेऽपि वानरेष्वंशसम्भवान् ।

विष्णोः सहायं कुरुत यावत्स्थास्यति भूतले ॥ ३०॥

इति देवान् समादिश्य समाश्वास्य च मेदिनीम् ।

ययौ ब्रह्मा स्वभवनं विज्वरः सुखमास्थितः ॥ ३१॥

brahmovāca

viṣṇurmānuṣarūpeṇa bhaviṣyati raghoḥ kule ॥ 29॥

yūyaṃ sṛjadhvaṃ sarve'pi vānareṣvaṃśasambhavān ।

viṣṇoḥ sahāyaṃ kuruta yāvatsthāsyati bhūtale ॥ 30॥

iti devān samādiśya samāśvāsyā ca medinīm ।

yayau brahmā svabhavanam vijvaraḥ sukhamāsthitaḥ ॥ 31॥

Brahma said, ‘Lord Vishnu shall manifest himself as a human in Raghu’s clan. All of you should also reproduce yourselves as sons in the form of monkeys (in the monkey race) and till the time Vishnu remains on the earth, you should continue to serve him (29-30).’

Having thus ordered (advised) the Gods and consoling the earth, Brahma went back to his own abode and lived happily without any further worries (31).

देवाश्च सर्वे हरिरूपधारिणः स्थिताः सहायार्थमितस्ततो हरेः ।

महाबलाः पर्वतवृक्षयोधिनः प्रतीक्षमाणा भगवन्तमीश्वरम् ॥ ३२॥

devāśca sarve harirūpadhāriṇaḥ sthitāḥ sahāyārthamitastato hareḥ ।

mahābalāḥ parvatavṛkṣayodhinaḥ pratīkṣamāṇā bhagavantamīśvaram ॥ 32॥

Here, all the Gods assumed the form of most valorous and strong monkeys who were adept (proficient) at fighting, using mountains (i.e. large boulders, rocks) and trees as their weapons. They lived and roamed about here and there on this earth waiting for the time when they would be needed to help and serve the Lord God (32).

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Part 2

Abduction of Sita by Ravana, Her Discovery by Hanuman, And the Burning of Lanka.

(With Roman Transliteration of Verses, English Exposition and Notes)

Part 2 of this Book has the following Chapters:

Chapter 5: The Story of Sita's abduction by Ravana. This Chapter is divided into the following Sections:

- Section 5.1.1 {Why Ravana Stole Sita} Adhyatma Ramayan;
- Section 5.1.2 {Why Ravana Stole Sita} Anand Ramayan;
- Section 5.1. {Why Ravana Stole Sita} Ram Charit Manas;
- Section 5.2.1 {The story of Sita's abduction} Ram Charit Manas;
- Section 5.2.2 {The story of Sita's abduction} Adhyatma Ramayan.
- Section 5.2.3 {The story of Sita's abduction} Geetawali Ramayan

Chapter 6: The Search for Sita, and her Discovery as a Captive of Ravana in Lanka.

Chapter 7: The Burning of Lanka by Hanuman.

Up till now, in Part 1, we have read the story of Ravana's previous birth when he was the great king Pratapbhanu, how unfortunately he was cursed to become a demon, his birth and the various boons he and his siblings acquired, the way he established the kingdom of the demon race with its capital at Lanka, how he conquered the whole world, subjugating everyone from the mighty gods and the great hermits and sages to the humblest of creatures on earth, unleashing a cruel reign of terror, misery and pain with such impunity and recklessness that there seemed to be no one strong enough to oppose him and challenge his authority. The situation became so frighteningly alarming and precarious that when Mother Earth, the Gods and the Sages could no longer cope with it they decided to jointly approach Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, with a prayer to protect them and all other creatures of the world who were horribly suffering under the cruelty, mayhem and terror spread by the demons.

On this prayer, the Lord promised them that he will come down personally to put things in order, and that for this purpose he will become a human being in the form of Lord Ram. He will be accompanied by his cosmic powers in its various forms to enable him to carry out the job successfully. On their part, the Gods decided to help

the Lord by coming down to earth in the form of monkeys and bears on the advice of Brahma, the patriarch of creation.

In due course of time, Lord Vishnu manifested himself as Lord Ram as the prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya. Close associates of Lord Vishnu accompanied him in the form of his brothers (Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan), and the Lord's cosmic dynamic power that is known as Shakti too accompanied him in the form of his wife Sita.

The Lord took every possible precaution to ensure that this secret is not leaked and a hindrance is created in the main objective of the Lord's coming to earth in the form of a human being—which was to eliminate Ravana and the cruel demons who had been causing immense suffering, misery and torment to the gods, earth, sages and other creatures of this world. The secrecy had to be maintained so that Ravana is not warned that the Supreme Lord has finally decided to bring him to notice and get rid of him. There were chances that if this secret was leaked then Ravana would go hide somewhere where it is not possible for a human to go, and then the whole enterprise would be defeated.

It goes to the credit of Ravana however, that inspite of all the precautions everyone took—right from Lord Vishnu to the gods, the earth and the sages—he did become aware that Lord Vishnu has come down to slay him. But instead of fleeing he decided that it was a sort of a boon for him—because by this time he had realized that his soul is trapped in a body that is gravely sinful, and it is impossible for him to ensure deliverance, salvation and emancipation of his soul unless he manages somehow to free the soul from the cage in which it is trapped, i.e. to bring about the death of his body that has become hugely evil and sinful, and thus release the soul from its captivity.

The wise, intelligent and clever Ravana pondered over the matter seriously, and he concluded that there is no better way to make this happen than to get himself slayed at the hands of the Supreme Lord himself. This will be good for him from all accounts—because he was sure that anyone who dies at the hands of the Lord is sure and certain to find deliverance, salvation and emancipation because the Lord is so merciful, kind and compassionate that he cannot let the soul of anyone whom he touches perish. Ravana knew that with his sinful body it is not possible for him to pursue any spiritual path as prescribed in the scriptures, and so this path of voluntarily getting killed by the Supreme Lord is the best and the easiest way for him to free his soul from the fetters of his gross, mortal and sinful body, and allow it to attain eternal bliss, felicity and beatitude when it attains oneness with the Supreme Soul.

Getting killed by the Lord will not only ensure deliverance of his own soul but it will also result in the liberation of the souls of countless other demons who are also unfortunately trapped in their sinful bodies like him due to the curse to which his entire family as well as the subjects of his kingdom were subjected to in some ancient time.

Ravana determined that this was his chance to get Mukti and Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), and since it has come knocking at his door he must not let it pass even by mistake. So he grasped it, and he even did so eagerly! That is why, no matter who or in what ever way anyone tried to persuade him not to provoke Lord Ram and engage in a war with him, he wouldn't listen to anybody but stuck stubbornly to his decision. On the face it appeared a reckless and arrogant act, but on close examination it was a well-thought out plan for attaining liberation and deliverance of the souls of all the demons en-masse.

So in due course of time, Lord Vishnu manifested himself as Lord Ram in the household of king Dasrath of Ayodhya, a famous kingdom of that time. Lord Ram had three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. The Lord was married to Sita, the daughter of king Janka of Janakpur.

The Lord had to devise an excuse by which he could not only fulfill the words given by him to the earth, the gods and the sages but also carry out his duty, as the supreme Lord-Protector of the world, to liberate the world from the tyranny and cruelty of the demons. In order to give effect to this plan it was necessary for the Lord to move out of the comfort of a royal palace at Ayodhya and go to the forest and then onwards to the heart of the 'land of the demons'. Once in the demon heartland, the Lord had to devise a means by which a situation is created that gives the Lord an excuse to eliminate the demons.

So it was planned that the Lord's cosmic Shakti, i.e. the Lord's cosmic dynamic powers that had accompanied the Lord in the form of his wife Sita, would now play a pivotal role. Hence, Sita concealed her original form and left behind an image, an apparition that was exactly like hers. The Lord who controls the entire creation and the thoughts and actions of all living beings now maneuvered the things in such a way that Sita was abducted by Ravana and kept captive at Lanka. This gave Lord Ram the much-needed break to launch a campaign that ultimately led to the elimination of Ravana and his cruel demon companions at the end of the fierce epic War of Lanka.

Though on the face of it Ravana appeared to be a lustful demon who was so pervert, immoral and unscrupulous that he would kidnap another person's wife and hold her a prisoner in his capital, but the fact is that he saw in this enterprise his only means of finding liberation and deliverance from the evil body of a demon in which his soul was unfortunately trapped. Ravana determined that by getting killed at the hands of Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, he would surely find emancipation and salvation for himself. Ravana was aware that his whole life had been spent in doing evil things and he was so accustomed to it that it was well-nigh impossible for him to pursue any of the spiritual means by which a creature's soul can find eternal peace, beatitude, felicity and bliss. He knew that if he missed this golden opportunity then his soul would be condemned for ever.

So therefore, Ravana established animosity with Lord Ram with a determined purpose in mind. How was he to be sure that Lord Ram would actually slay him, thereby helping him get rid of his evil body and provide his soul eternal liberation and emancipation? Well, Ravana, being wise, clever and sagacious, decided that if he managed to bring Sita to Lanka, albeit on the pretext of abducting her but actually with an intent to use this apparently an evil deed as a means to seek his own spiritual welfare and deliverance of his soul, then Lord Ram would be compelled to come to Lanka to fight with him in an attempt to free her. That is why Ravana showed Sita the same respect and kept her with full honours that he would have shown to his own mother if he was to bring her to his palace from somewhere outside. To wit, Ravana had treated Sita with great respect internally, though from the outside he had behaved like an evil demon who found pleasure in stealing other person's wife.

Ravana must have felt overjoyed at the prospect of having the great privilege of seeing the Lord of the World right in front of his eyes, engage with him in a duel for days together on an equal footing like two warriors making a stiff bargain for superiority, minutely observing all the facial expressions of the Lord and feeling blissful at the rare opportunity of observing the Lord up so close, a privilege that even great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics are denied, and though fighting with him on

the outside yet being constantly able to pray and bow to him internally, spending each moment of his residual existence in this mortal world in the thought of the Lord.

Indeed and without gainsay, it was surely a sort of meditation for Ravana—as all throughout the war his entire mind was completely engaged in the thoughts of Lord Ram just like an ascetic does while doing Yoga (meditation). And what a fortunate death would it be when he would breathe his last with the divine sight of the Lord before his eyes. And as it turned out eventually, at the time of death Ravana's soul emerged from his body in the form of a brilliant shaft of light and entered into the body of Lord Ram—signifying the merger of Ravana's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation represented by Lord Ram, a rare achievement that gave Ravana eternal rest and peace.

Since our Book is themed on the epic 'Story of Ravana and the War of Lanka', we shall skip all the developments after Lord Vishnu manifested as Lord Ram in Ayodhya, the Lord's childhood and adulthood days, his marriage with Sita, the plans by his father to appoint him as the Regent of the kingdom, and everything turning sour due to some family intrigue which led to Lord Ram being exiled to the forest for fourteen years. Lord Ram was accompanied by Sita, his wife, and Laxman, his younger brother. By-and-by they came to a place known as Panchavati, a part of the dense forest near the banks of the river Godavari that was uninhabited but where stood a cluster of five tall trees that provided adequate shelter. Lord Ram chose this place for its solitude and natural beauty to spend some time with Sita and Laxman.

One day Supernakha, the sister of Ravana, came that way while wondering in the forest. She was smitten by Lord Ram's charm, and wished to marry him. So she disguised herself as a beautiful lady and tried to tempt the Lord. In order to punish her, and also to give effect of the Grand Plan by which Ravana and others were to be got rid of, Lord Ram had her nose and ears chopped off. Infuriated, she first sought help from the demons Khar and Dushan, but these two demons were killed with their armies in the ensuing battle. Then Supernakha went to complain to Ravana and asked him to seek revenge. This set the ball rolling, for the chain of developments that unfolded now went on and on in an irretrievably manner.

Ravana sought the help of Marich and forced him to become a deer with a golden hide so that he could kidnap Sita as a retribution for his sister Supernakha's deformation by Lord Ram. He brought her and kept her captive in his royal garden at Lanka.

Lord Ram was first heart-broken, absolutely dejected and so despaired that he lost all hopes of ever seeing Sita again. But soon the Lord recovered himself and got his acts together, and in this his brother Laxman acted as his best friend and finest companion as he gave moral support to the Lord and encouraged him not to lose hope, for losing hope would give them nothing but keeping it alive may still pave the way for success in getting back Sita sometime in the future.

So the two brothers started on the long-drawn search for Sita through a wild and intractable forest. They came to the 'country of the monkeys' known as Kishkindha. Here Lord Ram befriended Sugriv, the prince of the monkey kingdom, and he also met some of the best comrades he had, such as Hanuman, Angad, Jamvant etc. Sugriv promised Lord Ram all help in finding Sita. A huge mission was launched with this aim, with different teams sent to different directions to search for Sita. One such team had Hanuman, Angad and Jamvant as its members. This party went in the south direction and reached the shore of the mighty ocean which stopped their progress and stood as a formidable barrier before them. The party met one vulture

named Sampati who told them that he could see that Sita was kept captive under a tree in the garden of Lanka, because vultures have great sights and can see small things from great distances.

So the location of Sita was finally decided, but it had to be verified and a personal meeting with her must be arranged so that the next phase of operation to free her could be launched. So then there arose the question of going across the ocean and meeting her. Hanuman was assigned this task. He leapt from this side of the ocean, cruised over its surface and landed at Lanka. There he met Sita and conveyed Lord Ram's message to her, promising to her that her freedom was just a matter of time now as he would go back to the Lord and arrange for his coming to her rescue. In the meantime she must show resilience, courage and patience. Then, to set the stage for the spectacular events that were to unfold soon, as well as to punish Ravana and provoke him into a direct conflict with Lord Ram, Hanuman burnt Lanka to ashes.

This singular event of the Burning of Lanka has been magnificently and dramatically narrated in Tulsidas' classics (Ram Charit Manas and Kavitawali) and also by Veda Vyas (in Adhyatma Ramayan).

We will be reading all about these events in this Part 2 of our Book.

Chapter 5: The Story of Sita's abduction by Ravana

Section 5.1.1:

Adhyatma Ramayan

{Why Ravana Stole Sita}

In Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramyan', we read about the reason why Ravana abducted Sita in its (a) Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 57-61; (b) Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65; (c) Uttar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 29-42, 54-59; (d) Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 11.

Now let us read the text as follows:

(a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 57-61:-

Once it so happened in the forest that Ravana's sister, whose name was Supernakha, tried to trap Lord Ram with her lustful gestures of passion and lust, telling him that she wanted to marry the Lord. Obviously Lord Ram rebuked and rebuffed her. Supernakha, being a wicked demoness, then attacked Sita, Lord Ram's wife, and tried to kill her. At this point Lord Ram had to intervene as he had no choice left. He was so annoyed at her indiscretion and wild nature that he advised his younger brother Laxman to cut off her ears and nose as a punishment, so that wherever this wicked demoness would go everyone would come to know about her wicked deeds, shameless nature and evil character.

Having been thus deformed, Supernakha became very furious, and she first tried to avenge her insult by asking the demons Khar and Dushan to kill Lord Ram.

The two attacked the Lord with a huge army of ferocious and vicious demons, were Lord Ram wiped out all of them single-handedly. Supernakha was astonished and extremely peeved; seething with revenge she then went angrily to Ravana, her brother and the mighty king of the demon race, to ask him to seek retribution against the Lord for the grave humiliation that the whole demon race has been subjected to. Supernakha told Ravana that this was not merely her personal injury but it was an open insult of the entire demon race as well as a challenge to them, and if he neglected it then his own reputation would be at stake.

When Ravana heard everything, he became pensive. Upon deep contemplation he veered round to the view that only the Supreme Being would be bold, strong and courageous enough to challenge him by deforming his sister. He had already subjugated all the gods and semi-gods, and they were so terrified of him that surely none of them can have the guts to do what was done to Supernakha.

Ravana concluded that in all probability Lord Ram was a human manifestation of the Supreme Lord, and if that is the lucky case then finally the chance of his redemption has arrived. He must not miss this golden opportunity to get liberation and deliverance for his soul; so he must do something so that his body of a demon is killed by the Lord, which will set his soul free from this evil cage and ensure it gets eternal emancipation and salvation. He was so anxious to see this noble enterprise reach its final conclusion that he kept this intuitive feeling a top secret in his heart.

To give effect to his grand plan, Ravana decided to bring Sita to Lanka so that Lord Ram would have to come over and fulfill his wishes to get killed by the Lord.

Since he had an inner feeling that Lord Ram was no ordinary human prince who had to spend his days in the forest with his wife and brother due to some reason, but was actually the Supreme Being himself in this form, so when he brought Sita to Lanka he did so with great caution, showing her great respect mentally and treating her like he would have treated his own mother.

श्रुत्वा तत्सूक्तवाक्यैश्च दानमानादिभिस्तथा ।
आश्वास्य भगिनीं राजा प्रविवेश स्वकं गृहम् ।
तत्र चिन्तापरो भूत्वा निद्रां रात्रौ न लब्धवान् ॥ ५७॥

śrutvā tatsūktavākyaīśca dānamānādibhistathā ।
āśvāsyā bhaginīm rājā praviveśa svakam grham ।
tatra cintāparo bhūtvā nidrām rātrau na labdhavān ॥ 57॥

Hearing what Supernakha had to narrate, the demon king Ravana consoled his sister in many ways, assuaging her feeling of grave humiliation and injury, and assuring her of swift retribution with words that were sweet and pleasant to hear. He also gave her many gifts in order to calm her down and show that she was welcomed.

After reassuring her, Ravana retired to his own palace, but he was so extremely perturbed and full of worry and consternation that he could not sleep at all that night. (57)

एकेन रामेण कथं मनुष्यमात्रेण नष्टः सबलः खरो मे ।
भ्राता कथं मे बलवीर्यदर्पं युतो विनष्टो बत राघवेण ॥ ५८॥

ekena rāmeṇa katham manuṣyamātreṇa naṣṭaḥ sabalaḥ kharo me ।
bhrātā katham me balavīryadarpayuto vinaṣṭo bata rāghaveṇa ॥ 58॥

During the night he pondered over the matter deeply and debated over it to himself, thinking thus—‘It is very surprising and a strange occurrence, and a matter of great concern and wonder, that a lonely and ordinary-looking human being who is born in king Raghu's family of Ayodhya, a prince who is known by the name of Sri Ram, would be able to slay my brother Khar, who was endowed with immense strength, valour and bravery, along with his ace army of demons¹. (58)

[Note—¹It so happened that Supernakha had first approached the demons Khar and Dushan, and asked them to attack and kill Lord Ram in order to avenge for her insult. The two demons led a huge army of ferocious and vicious demons who attacked the Lord at once with vengeance. In the battle that ensued, the entire army, along with both Khar and Dushan, were eliminated. It was then that Supernakha had fled to Lanka to appeal to Ravana. When Ravana heard the details he was utterly bewildered as he knew how strong and powerful these demons were, and it was definitely not within the means of any human being to kill the entire demon army even during a full-fledged battle with the help of a well trained and armed army. But Lord Ram had achieved this spectacular success single-handedly, and it was no short of a miracle to actually have done so. This event is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos.18-35

This made Ravana feel extremely uneasy and worried. He wondered whether it was true that the prophesy made earlier that his end would be at the hands of a human being is finally coming to fruition. So he tossed and turned in his bed, unable to rest that night.]

यद्वा न रामो मनुजः परेशो मां हन्तुकामः सबलं बलौघैः ।
सम्प्रार्थितोऽयं द्रुहिणेन पूर्वं मनुष्यरूपोऽद्य रघोः कुलेऽभूत् ॥ ५९॥

yadvā na rāmo manujaḥ pareśo māṃ hantukāmaḥ sabalaṃ balaughaiḥ ।
samprārthito'yaṃ druhiṇena pūrvaṃ manuṣyarūpo'dya raghoḥ kule'bhūt ॥ 59॥

In all probabilities it appears that Sri Ram is a personification of Supreme Being himself, who has, on the prayers (request) of Brahma, the creator, in some previous time, manifested himself in a human form in king Raghu's dynasty of Ayodhya, to kill me along with my army of demons by employing an army of monkeys specifically arranged for the purpose. (59)

वध्यो यदि स्यां परमात्मनाहं वैकुण्ठराज्यं परिपालयेऽहम् ।
नो चेदिदं राक्षसराज्यमेव भोक्ष्ये चिरं राममतो व्रजामि ॥ ६०॥

vadhyo yadi syāṃ paramātmānaḥaṃ vaikunṭharājyaṃ paripālaye'ham ।
no ceditaṃ rākṣasarājyameva bhokṣye ciraṃ rāmamato vrajāmi ॥ 60॥

If I am indeed killed by the Parmatma (the Supreme Lord) himself, then surely enough I shall enjoy the kingdom of heaven (i.e. I will find deliverance from this gross mundane world and go to heaven).

On the other hand, if Ram is not the Supreme Being as I doubt but an ordinary human prince, then I will be easily able to overcome him and take revenge for my sister's insult as well as the killing of Khar and Dushan and their demon army. If this turns out to be the case then I will continue to enjoy the kingdom of the demons and be their unchallenged sovereign for a long time to come. [I will also be able to retrieve the lost honour of the demons which has now been put under severe test after my sister's public humiliation and the killing of the demon army led by Khar and Dushan.]

Therefore I stand to gain both the ways. Hence, I will certainly go to Sri Ram and have a face-off with the Lord (to decide this matter once and for all).' (60)

इत्थं विचिन्त्याखिलराक्षसेन्द्रो रामं विदित्वा परमेश्वरं हरिम् ।
विरोधबुद्ध्यैव हरिं प्रयामि द्रुतं न भवत्या भगवान् प्रसीदेत् ॥ ६१॥

ittham vicintyākhilarākṣasendro rāmaṁ viditvā parameśvaraṁ harim ।
virodhabuddhyaiva hariṁ prayāmi drutaṁ na bhaktyā bhagavān prasīdet ॥
61॥

Ravana, who was a king of the whole of the demon race, deeply contemplated over the matter thus, and coming to the conclusion that Lord Sri Ram was none other than true a personification of the Parmatma, known by the name of Hari (Lord Vishnu), himself, he decided that he will go near the Lord even with a pretension of enmity, ill-will and maliciousness, because for him to do it (i.e. approach Lord Ram) with Bhakti (spiritual devotion) or with any other noble qualities such as righteousness and spiritualism, is very difficult.

Ravana also felt that his life had been so sinful and vile that the Lord cannot be easily pleased with him by the method of Bhakti or good virtues.

[In the first place, he will not be able to practice these eclectic spiritual paths as he is not at all accustomed to leading a spiritual life of goodness and righteousness, and in the second place, it is too late for him even if he decides to do it now. By any measure, if he is able to maneuver things now in such a way that he comes close to the Supreme Being in a way best known to him and to which he is well accustomed, i.e. by creating animosity and ill-will and hatred, then the same objective of his spiritual welfare would be easily and comfortably achieved when the Lord slays his evil body to set his soul free. It was therefore easy and practical for Ravana to fight with Lord Ram in order to attain his liberation and deliverance rather than attempting to pursue any other spiritual methods towards this end.] (61)

[Note—In Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65 we read that Ravana had kept Sita with great respect. We will read it herein below.

This proves that though outwardly Ravana had played his role as a truly vicious, ferocious and ruthless tyrant who was demon, both cruel and belligerent, yet internally he was at peace with himself, sure in the conviction that finally, his redemption, emancipation and salvation was at hand, and that too in a manner that suited his mental temperament and tendencies of a demon. The deliverance for which

mystics, ascetics, sages, hermits, seers, saints had to do so much austerities and penances was available to him virtually on a platter without the incumbent sufferings and hardships. Further, the Lord is attainable by honest and sincere confession, and not by deception, and Ravana wins the game hands down on this count.]

(b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65:-

ततः समुद्रमुल्लङ्घ्य लङ्कां गत्वा स रावणः ।
स्वान्तःपुरे रहस्ये तामशोकविपिनेऽक्षिपत् ।
राक्षसीभिः परिवृतां मातृबुद्धान्वपालयत् ॥ ६५॥

tataḥ samudramullaṅghya laṅkāṃ gatvā sa rāvaṇaḥ ।
svāntaḥpure rahasye tāmaśokavipine'kṣipat ।
rākṣasibhiḥ parivṛtāṃ mātṛbuddhyānvapālayat ॥ 65॥

Eventually (after abducting Sita), Ravana crossed the ocean and reached Lanka. There in his palace, he placed her (Sita) in a secluded place called ‘Ashok Van (a garden of Ashoka trees; or a garden which was so beautiful and comfortable that it removed all the sorrows)’.

He appointed demonesses to guard Sita; and he protected her and kept a strict vigil on her as if she was his own mother (mātṛbuddhyānvapālayat)¹.

[To wit, Ravana made sure that Sita was made as comfortable in the given situation as it was practically feasible.] (65).

[Note—¹The fact that Ravana had shown the same respect to Sita as he would have shown his own mother in case he was forced by circumstances to keep her in confinement in his garden has also been narrated in almost a similar language in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, stanza no. 1 of verse no. 126, and verse no. 139. We have already read this version of the story in Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.1 of our Book where the story of Ravana from the Anand Ramayan has been narrated in its entirety.]

(c) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 29-42, 54-59:-

अथान्यां सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि कथां राम त्वदाश्रयाम् ।
सीता हता यदर्थं सा रावणेन दुरात्मना ॥ २९॥
पुरा कृतयुगे राम पूजापतिसुतं विभुम् ।
सनत्कुमारमेकान्ते समासीनं दशाननः ।
विनयावनतो भूत्वा ह्यभिवाद्येदमब्रवीत् ॥ ३०॥

athānyāṃ sampravakṣyāmi kathāṃ rāma tvadāśrayām ।
sītā hṛtā yadartham sā rāvaṇena durātmanā ॥ 29॥

purā kṛtayuge rāma prajāpatīsutaṁ vibhum ।
 sanatkumāramekānte samāśīnaṁ daśānanaḥ ।
 vinayāvanato bhūtvā hyabhivādyedamabravīt ॥ 30 ॥

[Sage Agastya said to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord Ram, now I shall narrate to you one more story that concerns you, and it will enlighten you about the reason why the wicked demon Ravana had abducted Sita. (29)

Once upon a time, during the Satyug (the first of the 4-Yuga celestial cycle of creation and destruction), Ravana, the 10-headed one, approached Brahma's son Sanatkumar who was sitting alone, and said to him most politely¹ (30)—

[Note—¹Refer also to Part 1, Chapter 2, Section no. 2.1 of our Book where this episode of Ravana meeting sage Sanatkumar has been narrated in full in verse nos. 120-126 (stanza no. 1).]

को न्वस्मिन् प्रवरो लोके देवानां बलवत्तरः ।
 देवाश्च यं समाश्रित्य युद्धे शत्रुं जयन्ति हि ॥ ३१॥
 कं यजन्ति द्विजा नित्यं कं ध्यायन्ति च योगिनः ।
 एतन्मे शंस भगवन् प्रश्नं प्रश्नविदांवर ॥ ३२॥

ko nvasmin pravaro loke devānām balavattaraḥ ।
 devāśca yaṁ samāśritya yuddhe śatruṁ jayanti hi ॥ 31 ॥
 kaṁ yajanti dvijā nityaṁ kaṁ dhyāyanti ca yoginaḥ ।
 etanme śaṁsa bhagavan praśnaṁ praśnavidāṁvara ॥ 32 ॥

‘Who is that God who is deemed to be the best amongst all the Gods; who is that God who is the bravest, the strongest and the most valiant amongst them all, and by seeking whose protection (or shelter) all the other Gods are able to vanquish all their enemies and opponents in a battle? (31)

Whom do the Brahmins adore, worship and pay their homage to, and who is the Great One who is the subject of meditation that is done by Yogis (ascetics)?

Oh Lord! You are the best amongst those who know the answers to all possible questions (i.e. you are an expert in general knowledge and possess extraordinary wisdom, and I think that you are the best person who can answer my questions). Hence, please answer my query (to remove my confusions in the matter).’ (32)

ज्ञात्वा तस्य हृदिस्थं यत्तदशेषेण योगहृक् ।
 दशाननमुवाचेदं शृणु वक्ष्यामि पुत्रक ॥ ३३॥

jñātvā tasya hṛdisthaṁ yattadaśeṣeṇa yogadr̥k ।
daśānanamuvācedaṁ śṛṇu vakṣyāmi putraka ॥ 33॥

Sage Sanatkumar thought over the matter, and by the intuitive feeling that this wise and sagacious sage inherently possessed, which was aided by the mystical power of being able to have a deep insight into things and be able to read the mind of the other person that he had acquired by the virtue of doing Yoga (meditation), he immediately realized the intention of Ravana in asking these questions¹.

He said to Ravana, ‘Listen son. I am answering your questions. (33)

[Note—¹Sage Sanatkumar realized that the secret intention of Ravana in asking these questions was quite different from what it appears to be on the face of it. Apparently Ravana seems to have asked this question to determine which senior God he must now vanquish in order to establish his unchallenged and unquestioned sovereignty over the whole of heaven and the rest of the creation; if he succeeds in subjugating the Supreme God who is the Lord of this creation, then surely and certainly there would be no one to challenge his authority any longer. He has been doing it for a long time—picking one God after another and vanquishing them one by one. Yet the secret intention of Ravana was quite different.

But his real motivation was different, and it was noble. By now Ravana had understood that the evil life he has been living will condemn his soul forever, for he was learned and wise enough to realize that no matter what boon he had got or may get in the future yet it is an irrevocable law of creation that whosoever has taken a birth must die, and when this happens the destiny of that creature depends upon the deeds done by him during his lifetime; no one is immortal and no one can escape the result of his deeds.

Though he had enjoyed all the worldly privileges and material gains that a creature can possibly have in this mortal world, and more so because he had the backing of the boons granted to him which made him a de-facto sovereign Authority in the world whom not even the Gods could challenge, but internally he had, of late, begun to harbour a secret fear for the doomed destiny of his soul. When he was alone he would think over the matter and become pensive and worried. He decided that he must do something if he wished that his soul could rest in peace in his final days.

He had also realized that it is not possible for him to pursue any of the paths enumerated in the scriptures by which the soul attains liberation and deliverance, and all possible means of emancipation and salvation seemed to be blocked for him. Therefore, he must now adopt a path which best suits him—pursue his spiritual objectives not by any of the holy and righteous means designated by the scriptures, such as Yoga (meditation), Yagya (sacrifices), Tapa (austerity and penance), Dhyan (contemplation), Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), Puja (worship), Vairagya (renunciation), Gyan (gnosis, acquiring spiritual wisdom and enlightenment), and etc., but by following the path that seems to be his natural habit, the path of wickedness and evil done to such an extreme extent that it would force the Supreme Lord to come to him to provide him with deliverance from his sinful body of a demon, and thereby liberate his soul. Further, since he would die at the hands of the Supreme Being who is most gracious, merciful, kind, compassionate and benevolent, it is absolutely certain that the Lord would take care of the welfare of his soul—i.e. he would be granted emancipation and salvation, even if it is done by default, because no one can go to hell in the presence of the Lord, and no one’s soul is ever condemned by the

Lord, for it the Lord himself had declared and solemnly affirmed that he is responsible for the spiritual welfare of all those who come to him in any way and under any condition!

To wit, sage Sanatkumar could read the thoughts of Ravana when he asked these questions. The sage felt glad that Ravana wished to meet the Supreme Being with the noble intention, albeit a secret one, of silent self-surrender before the Lord and seeking the blessing of liberation and deliverance for his soul. The sage took pity on Ravana, and was happy that he would be able to play the vital role of a spiritual guide to help a fallen creature (in this case Ravana) to discover the path of redemption in a way that suits his inclinations and temperament the best.]

भर्ता यो जगतां नित्यं यस्य जन्मादिकं न हि ।
 सुरासुरैर्नुतो नित्यं हरिर्नारायणोऽव्ययः ॥ ३४॥
 यन्नाभिपङ्कजाज्जातो ब्रह्मा विश्वसृजां पतिः ।
 सृष्टं येनैव सकलं जगत्स्थावरजङ्गमम् ॥ ३५॥
 तं समाश्रित्य विबुधा जयन्ति समरे रिपून् ।
 योगिनो ध्यानयोगेन तमेवानुजपन्ति हि ॥ ३६॥

bhartā yo jagatām nityam yasya janmādikam na hi ।
 surāsurairnuto nityam harirnārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ ॥ 34॥
 yannābhipaṅkajājāto brahmā viśvasṛjām patiḥ ।
 sṛṣṭam yenaiva sakalam jagatsthāvarajaṅgamam ॥ 35॥
 tam samāśritya vibudhā jayanti samare ripūn ।
 yogino dhyānayogena tamevānujapanti hi ॥ 36॥

He who always sustains and nourishes the whole creation, he who neither takes birth nor dies, he who is eternally adored, worshipped and honoured by the Gods as well as the demons alike, he who is imperishable, eternal, never-changing and stable—the name of this Supreme Lord of the world is Sri Narayan Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu). (34)

Even Brahma, the creator of this whole creation, had been born out of the divine lotus that had emerged out of his (Lord Vishnu's) navel¹.

It is this Lord Hari (Vishnu) who has created this whole world consisting of animate as well as inanimate things, i.e. a world so varied and diverse in its constituents that on the one hand it has entities that show apparent signs of vibrant life by the virtue of their movement, such as the animals and birds, and on the other hand it has such entities as trees and mountains that are immobile and show no apparent signs of any life in them but are nevertheless components of equal importance in this creation. (35)

It is 'his' strength relying upon which the Gods conquer all their enemies in any battle; it is 'his' holy name that the Yogis (ascetics) repeat during their religious practices such as meditation and contemplation; and it is 'he' who is worshipped, glorified and honoured by them.' (36).

[Note—¹It has been said in the Purans, the ancient mythological narratives of the Hindu religion, that a lotus emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu as he was reclining on the coiled body of Seshnath, the celestial serpent who floated on the surface of the Kshirsagar, the ocean of milk that existed at the beginning of creation. This lotus had a long stem, and atop it sat Brahma who would become the ‘creator of the physical world’. That implies that Lord Vishnu existed prior to Brahma, and he was the primary Being, or the Supreme Being, from whom everything else was born.

From the metaphysical perspective as elucidated in the Upanishads, this Supreme Being is called ‘Brahm’, and he is nothing but pure cosmic supreme Consciousness in a personified form. It is this ‘Consciousness’ that metamorphosed into three primary forms known as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder—who form the three Gods of the Trinity. Actually it is the same supreme Brahm, or the same cosmic Consciousness, that is playing three different roles—of creation, its sustenance, and its conclusion in three distinct forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. To wit, these three Gods were the first revelation of Brahm. Since Brahma was born first, he assumed the name of his own parent, i.e. ‘Brahm’ became ‘Brahma’. Vishnu is placed in the center of the Trinity Gods—to imply that he is ‘central’ to the entire spectrum of Gods and creation. Shiva is placed last, i.e. he is the third God of the Trinity, to indicate that he stands for the ‘end’ of this vast creation.]

महर्षेर्वचनं श्रुत्वा प्रत्युवाच दशाननः ।
 दैत्यदानवरक्षांसि विष्णुना निहतानि च ॥ ३७॥
 कां वा गतिं प्रपद्यन्ते प्रेत्य ते मुनिपुङ्गव ।
 तमुवाच मुनिश्रेष्ठो रावणं राक्षसाधिपम् ॥ ३८॥

maharṣervacanam śrutvā pratyuvāca daśānanaḥ ।
 daityadānavarakṣāṁsi viṣṇunā nihatāni ca ॥ 37॥
 kām vā gatiṁ prapadyante pretya te munipuṅgava ।
 tamuvāca muniśreṣṭho rāvaṇam rākṣasādhipam ॥ 38॥

Hearing these words of the great sage Sanatkumar, the 10-headed Ravana asked once again, ‘Oh exalted sage! What is the fate of those demons, devils, ogres and all others who are like Satan, if they are killed by Vishnu?’¹

[¹Ravana wanted to be certain of his destiny by asking this question. This question itself proves that before he decided to create animosity with Lord Vishnu, who had manifested in the form of Lord Ram, he wished to be certain about the fate of those who were killed by the Lord.]

Then the sage, who was the best amongst the sages (i.e. Sanatkumar), replied to Ravana, the king of demons (37-38)—

दैवतैर्निहता नित्यं गत्वा स्वर्गमनुत्तमम् ।
 भोगक्षये पुनस्तस्माद्भ्रष्टा भूमौ भवन्ति ते ॥ ३९॥
 पूर्वार्जितैः पुण्यपापैर्म्रियन्ते चोद्भवन्ति च ।
 विष्णुना ये हतास्ते तु प्राप्नुवन्ति हरेर्गतिम् ॥ ४०॥

daivatairnihatā nityaṁ gatvā svargamanuttamam ।
 bhogakṣaye punastasmādbhraṣṭā bhūmau bhavanti te ॥ 39॥
 pūrvārjitaiḥ puṇyapāpaimriyante codbhavanti ca ।
 viṣṇunā ye hatāste tu prāpnuvanti harergatim ॥ 40॥

‘When they (the demons etc.) are killed by other Gods (i.e. when they are slayed by any other God except Lord Vishnu), they go to a heaven which is the best amongst all the places to go after death. There, they live for as long as their destiny determines for their heavenly abode. After this period, they revert back (or fall back) to the terrestrial world (the earth) where they had lived prior to their death. (39)

As a result, they fall back and get sucked into the cycle of birth and death like any other creature who takes birth and die repeatedly in a virtually endless cycle that makes them oscillate between this world and the next depending upon the deeds, whether evil or good, done by them in a particular life.

On the contrary, those who die at the hands of Lord Vishnu do not enter this cycle, and instead, they attain liberation and deliverance from the grip of this vicious cycle; they get emancipation and salvation, and find eternal happiness by residing in the supreme abode of the Lord himself—i.e. they find eternity for their soul by merging it with the supreme Soul represented by the Lord himself.¹ (40)

[Note—¹To wit, when any creature, no matter how evil or sinful it may have been, dies at the hands of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, then such fortunate creatures do indeed attain the exalted abode of the Lord himself, because when the Lord frees the soul of such creatures from the cage of their sinful bodies he also makes sure that the soul would never have to suffer again by getting trapped into another sinful body.

The Lord feels obliged to grant emancipation and salvation to the creature whom he kills because he feels that in spite of the creature being sinful and evil he has after all come to him in order to fight with him, and how can anyone who gets so close to the Lord as to fight with him at close quarters not be rewarded for this rare privilege of being so close to the Supreme Being? Say, how can something remain dark in the light of the sun; how can a caring father turn away his face away when he sees his son in great misery, irrespective of the fact that this son had been creating a lot of mischief for him throughout his life?

Verily indeed, the Supreme Being, when he sees the lamentable state of the evil creature at the time of its death, is so much moved that he forgets about the creature’s follies and mischief, and instead shows his basic nature of being a forgiving and benevolent Lord who overlooks all the shortcomings of everyone and is always willing to grant them pardon.

The Lord takes pity on this dying creature whom he was forced to kill because this individual had become a scourge for the whole world and was tormenting all other creatures of this creation. Since all the creatures are the subjects of the Lord’s kingdom, he was forced to intervene to eliminate one individual in order to ensure peace and safety for all others. And therefore, though this sinful creature does not deserve any consideration or mercy, yet the Lord is so benevolent, forgiving, kind and merciful that he can’t but desist from overlooking all the follies and sins of the

creature at least for once, and grant the latter's soul the benefit of the Lord's divine grace and the largesse of the Lord's blessings at the time of death.]

श्रुत्वा मुनिमुखात्सर्वं रावणो हृष्टमानसः ।
योत्स्येऽहं हरिणा सार्धमिति चिन्तापरोऽभवत् ॥ ४१॥
मनःस्थितं परिज्ञाय रावणस्य महामुनिः ।
उवाच वत्स तेऽभीष्टं भविष्यति न संशयः ॥ ४२॥

śrutvā munimukhātsarvaṁ rāvaṇo hr̥ṣṭamānasah ।
yotsye'haṁ hariṇā sārddhamiti cintāparo'bhavat ॥ 41॥
manaḥsthitam parijñāya rāvaṇasya mahāmuniḥ ।
uvāca vatsa te'bhiṣṭam bhaviṣyati na saṁśayaḥ ॥ 42॥

Hearing these words from the mouth of the sage (śrutvā munimukhātsarvaṁ), Ravana was very pleased and he felt glad internally.

After contemplating for some time and debating upon the matter in his mind he decided that he will certainly fight with Sri Hari¹.

[¹To wit, Ravana took a firm decision in his mind that he will purposely create ill-will, hatred and enmity with Lord Vishnu which would definitely lead to a confrontation with the Lord, and ultimate death at his hands. Say, how fortunate would he be, thought Ravana, to get killed by the Lord, as this would ensure liberation and deliverance of his soul without any effort on his part and without any question about his past deeds asked.] (41)

The great sage had an insight into the thought processes of Ravana, and so he said, 'Oh son! There is no doubt that your wishes shall be fulfilled!'²

[²Refer: Verse no. 33 herein above.] (42)

अथवा द्रष्टुमिच्छा ते शृणु त्वं परमेश्वरम् ।
त्रेतायुगे स देवेशो भविता नृपविग्रहः ॥ ५४॥
हितार्थं देवमर्त्यानामिक्ष्वाकूणां कुले हरिः ।
रामो दाशरथिर्भूत्वा महासत्त्वपराक्रमः ॥ ५५॥

athavā draṣṭumicchā te śṛṇu tvaṁ paramēśvaram ।
tretāyuge sa deveśo bhavitā nṛpavigrahaḥ ॥ 54॥
hitārtham devamartyānāmikṣvākūṇāṁ kule hariḥ ।
rāmo dāśarathirbhūtvā mahāsattvaparākramaḥ ॥ 55॥

Sage Sanatkumar further advised Ravana as follows: 'Now, listen—if you indeed have a sincere desire to have a holy vision of the Supreme Lord, then that Lord of Gods shall manifest (or take birth) in the body (or in the form) of a king [54] for the benefit and welfare of both the Gods as well as the humans. The Lord shall be born as

a son of king Dasrath who is a descendent in the family of the great king Ikshwaku of Ayodhya.

Then (i.e. when this happens in the near future) Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu) shall be called by the name of Lord Sri Ram, who shall be most truthful, righteous, noble, mighty, powerful, valiant, famous and glorious in all respects [55]. (54-55)

पितुर्नियोगात्स भ्रात्रा भार्यया दण्डके वने ।
विवरिष्यति धर्मात्मा जगन्मात्रा स्वमायया ॥ ५६॥
एवं ते सर्वमाख्यातं मया रावण विस्तरात् ।
भजस्व भक्तिभावेन सदा रामं श्रिया युतम् ॥ ५७॥

piturniyogātsa bhrātrā bhāryayā daṇḍake vane ।
vicariṣyati dharmātmā jaganmātrā svamāyayā ॥ 56॥
evaṁ te sarvamākhyātaṁ mayā rāvaṇa vistarāt ।
bhajasva bhaktibhāvena sadā rāmaṁ śriyā yutam ॥ 57॥

That righteous and noble Lord shall, on the instructions of his father, wander in the forest called Dandakaranya along with his brother (Laxman) and consort (Sita) who is, in reality, the Mother of the entire creation as well as a manifested form of the Lord's Maya (i.e. the Lord's cosmic powers of creating delusions). (56)

Oh Ravana! In this way, I have briefly told you the essential facts of the matter. Now you should constantly worship and adore (i.e. remember and have faith in) Lord Sri Ram along with his divine consort Laxmi (in the form of Sita); you must do so with sincerity of devotion, and you must have full conviction, faith and belief in this matter¹. (57)

[Note—¹Sage Sanatkumar, as has been previously noted in verse nos. 33 and 42, had already been aware of Ravana's hidden desires—that he wanted to ensure liberation and deliverance of his soul by some mean. When Ravana learnt that those who are killed by Lord Vishnu find eternal liberation as stated by Sanatkumar in verse no. 40, he decided that it is the best option for him as it suits his temperament and way of life, for he loves fighting and action as opposed to peaceful means of obtaining salvation and emancipation. The all-knowing sage could read his inner thoughts, so he now tells Ravana how to go about his mission and attain success in it.

It is clear by now that Ravana was fully aware who Lord Ram and Sita were when he decided to abduct the latter and fight with the former in due course of time. He knew that Lord Ram was in fact Lord Vishnu, and Sita was the Lord's Maya or goddess Laxmi personified. So though outwardly Ravana acted like a highly pervert, immoral, sinful and wicked demon during the entire episode starting with the abduction of Sita and leading up to the fierce war of Lanka which ultimately ended in his death at the hands of Lord Ram, internally he was very glad that it is happening the way he had planned already—as he had voluntarily selected this means of attaining liberation and deliverance for himself as well as for all other demons who stood by him and were faithful to him.

Remember: Not all demons died during the war, even Ravana's own brother Vibhishan lived. Ravana ensured that all those who were extremely sinful like him should free their souls first, as those who had some goodness left in them would be able to attain emancipation on their own accord when their time comes, so they can wait.]

अगस्त्य उवाच ।

एवं श्रुत्वासुराध्यक्षो ध्यात्वा किञ्चिद्विवर्त्य च ।

त्वया सह विरोधेप्सुर्मुमुदे रावणो महान् ॥ ५८॥

युद्धार्थं सर्वतो लोकान् पर्यटन् समवस्थितः ।

एतदर्थं महाराज रावणोऽतीव बुद्धिमान् ।

हतवान् जानकीं देवीं त्वयात्मवधकाङ्क्षया ॥ ५९॥

agastya uvāca ।

evam śrutvāsuraādhyaṅśo dhyātvā kiñcidvicārya ca ।

tvayā saha virodhepsurmumude rāvaṇo mahān ॥ 58॥

yuddhārthī sarvato lokān paryaṭan samavasthitaḥ ।

etadartham mahārāja rāvaṇo'tīva buddhimān ।

hṛtavān jānakīm devīm tvayātmavadhakāṅkṣayā ॥ 59॥

Sage Agastya (who was the primary narrator of these events) said to Lord Ram, 'Oh Ram! After hearing what Sanatkumar had told him, the king of demons, the great Ravana, pondered over it for some time, and finally decided that he would pretend to have enmity with you.

Having decided thus (to be your enemy), he felt extremely glad and delighted in his heart¹. (58)

He (Ravana) roamed about in this whole world waiting eagerly for the time when he can fight a battle with you. So therefore, oh Great King (Lord Ram), Ravana, who was very wise, had abducted goddess Sita purposely with the express desire to get killed at your hands.' (59)

[Note—¹Ravana was extremely glad and delighted because it was an easy way for him to achieve emancipation and salvation with a body of a demon destined to do evil deeds and follow unrighteous path. By opposing Sri Ram, he will have cleverly played his part of the drama to perfection even as Sri Ram had played his own part as a human. Ravana was spared the trouble of severe hardships undergone by sages and hermits when they did Yoga, Dhyan, Tapa, Yagya, etc.

All spiritual paths that provide liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature and grant eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity to his soul were almost closed for Ravana. His life and deeds were so sinful and fallen that he had no chance ever of redemption. He was so much accustomed to doing wrong and wicked deeds that stealing a person's wife and fighting with him if he seeks her back were something that suited him well. So he chose this easy path for his redemption, instead of trying other paths in which he was bound to fail. This easy

path would be in accordance to his nature and temperament as it would allow him to enjoy the comforts of the material world and the sensual pleasures of the body while at the same time ensuring his salvation by getting killed by Lord Ram.

His determination to get killed by Lord Ram as a means of obtaining liberation and deliverance for his soul is clearly evident on numerous occasions when he refused the advice given by those very close to him, such as Vibhishan and Kumbhakarna (his brothers), Mandodari (his wife), and some of the other elderly demons such as Kalnemi, Malyawan, Marich etc., to return Sita to Lord Ram to avoid the ruinous war. This is also why he was so reckless, brazen and stubborn in his approach.

In this context one can refer to the following verses of Adhyatma Ramayan: (i) Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61, (ii) Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 30-32, (iii) Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65, (iv) Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 55-61.]

(d) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-11.

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

एकदा ब्रह्मणो लोकादायान्तं नारदं मुनिम् ।
पर्यटन् रावणो लोकान् दृष्ट्वा नत्वाब्रवीद्वचः ॥ १॥
भगवन् ब्रूहि मे योद्धुं कुत्र सन्ति महाबलाः ।
योद्धुमिच्छामि बलिभिस्त्वं ज्ञातासि जगत्त्रयम् ॥ २॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

ekadā brahmaṇo lokādāyāntaṁ nāradaṁ munim ।
paryaṭan rāvaṇo lokān dṛṣṭvā natvābravīdvacaḥ ॥ 1॥
bhagavan brūhi me yoddhum kutra santi mahābalāḥ ।
yoddhumicchāmi balibhistvaṁ jñātāsi jagattrayam ॥ 2॥

Lord Shiva said to his consort—‘Oh Parvati! While wandering in the different worlds, one day Ravana saw the celestial sage Narad coming from the Brahma Loka (the abode of Brahma, the creator of this gross physical world). He bowed before the sage and politely said to him¹ (1), ---

---‘Oh Lord! I wish to fight a duel with those who are very brave, strong and courageous. You are well acquainted with the three worlds (the celestial, terrestrial and subterranean worlds). So please tell me who is fit and strong enough to fight with me.’ (2)

[Note—¹Ravana’s meeting with sage Narad has also been narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 126 (stanza no. 2)—139. This is included in our Book in Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.1.]

मुनिर्ध्याऽऽत्वाह सुचिरं श्वेतद्वीपनिवासिनः ।
 महाबला महाकायास्तत्र याहि महामते ॥ ३॥
 विष्णुपूजारता ये वै विष्णुना निहताश्च ये ।
 त एव तत्र सञ्जाता अजेयाश्च सुरासुरैः ॥ ४॥

munirdhyā'tvāha suciraṁ śvetadvīpanivāsinaḥ ।
 mahābalā mahākāyāstatra yāhi mahāmate ॥ 3॥
 viṣṇupūjāratā ye vai viṣṇunā nihatāśca ye ।
 ta eva tatra sañjātā ajeyāśca surāsuraiḥ ॥ 4॥

The sage thought for a while and replied, ‘Oh the wise one (mahāmate)! Inhabitants of an island called ‘Shweta-Dwip’ (literally, the island inhabited by fair-skinned people) are very strong and brave; they are robust, and possess huge and powerful bodies. You should go there (3).

Those who constantly (regularly and consistently) worship and adore Lord Vishnu, or those who had been killed by him earlier with his own hands—they are the only ones who have taken birth there.

They cannot be won or subdued by anyone, neither by the Gods, nor by the demons.’ (4)

श्रुत्वा तद्रावणो वेगान्मन्त्रिभिः पुष्पकेण तान् ।
 योद्धुकामः समागत्य श्वेतद्वीपसमीपतः ॥ ५॥
 तत्प्रभाहततेजस्कं पुष्पकं नाचलततः ।
 त्यक्त्वा विमानं प्रययौ मन्त्रिणश्च दशाननः ॥ ६॥

śrutvā tadrāvaṇo vegānmantribhiḥ puṣpakeṇa tān ।
 yoddhukāmaḥ samāgatya śvetadvīpasamīpataḥ ॥ 5॥
 tatprabhāhatatejaskaṁ puṣpakaṁ nācalattataḥ ।
 tyaktvā vimānaṁ prayayau mantriṇaśca daśānanaḥ ॥ 6॥

Hearing this, Ravana, along with his ministers, immediately boarded the plane called Pushpak and went near the island called Shweta-Dwip¹. (5)

The plane lost its flying powers in the face of a brilliant radiation emanating from that island. So, Ravana left the plane and the ministers behind, and went ahead on his own (alone, on foot). (6)

[Note—¹This episode of Ravana going to the Shweta-Dwip when told about it by sage Narad, and the developments that occurred there have also been narrated in exactly the same way as is being narrated here in Adhyatma Ramayan, in the ‘Anand Ramayan’, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 127-139.

For reference, the reader should see Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.1 of this Book.]

प्रविशन्नेव तद् द्वीपं धृतो हस्तेन योषिता ।
 पृष्ठश्च त्वं कुतः कोऽसि प्रेषितः केन वा वद ॥ ७॥
 इत्युक्तो लीलया स्त्रीभिर्हसन्तीभिः पुनः पुनः ।
 कृच्छ्राद्धस्ताद्विनिर्मुक्तस्तासां स्त्रीणां दशाननः ॥ ८॥

praviśanneva tad dvīpaṁ dhr̥to hastena yoṣitā ।
 pr̥ṣṭaśca tvaṁ kutaḥ ko'si preṣitaḥ kena vā vada ॥ 7॥
 ityukto līlayā strībhirhasantībhiḥ punaḥ punaḥ ।
 kṛcchrāddhastādvīnirmuktastāsāṁ strīṇāṁ daśānanaḥ ॥ 8॥

Scarcely had he entered the island when a woman caught hold of his hands and asked, 'Tell me who are you? Where have you come from? Who has sent you here?' (7)

In this manner, many women joked, teased, and poked fun at him, and he managed to free himself from them with great difficulty. [Surely, Ravana must have felt extremely embarrassed, exasperated and humiliated at this treatment. All his self-pride, ego and dignity bit dust.] (8)

आश्चर्यमतुलं लब्ध्वा चिन्तयामास दुर्मतिः ।
 विष्णुना निहतो यामि वैकुण्ठमिति निश्चितः ॥ ९॥
 मयि विष्णुर्यथा कुप्येतथा कार्यं करोम्यहम् ।
 इति निश्चित्य वैदेहीं जहार विपिनेऽसुरः ॥ १०॥
 जानन्नेव परात्मानं स जहारावनीसुताम् ।
 मातृवत्पालयामास त्वत्तः काङ्क्षन् वधं स्वकम् ॥ ११॥

āścaryamatulaṁ labdhvā cintayāmāsa durmatih ।
 viṣṇunā nihato yāmi vaikunṭhamiti niścitaḥ ॥ 9॥
 mayi viṣṇuryathā kupyettathā kāryaṁ karomyaham ।
 iti niścitya vaidehīm jahāra vipine'suraḥ ॥ 10॥
 jānanneva parātmānaṁ sa jahārāvanīsutām ।
 mātṛvatpālayāmāsa tvattaḥ kāṅkṣan vadhaṁ svakam ॥ 11॥

He was extremely perturbed and astonished at seeing all this, and that wicked fellow thought to himself, 'I shall die at the hands of Vishnu and be sure to go to Vaikunth (the abode of Lord Vishnu)'¹.

[¹Why? Because then, when time comes, I shall also take birth in this magnificent place, and become as strong and invincible as the inhabitants living here. Sage Narad has told me that those who are killed by Lord Vishnu reside here, so therefore I too must get myself killed by Vishnu so that I too would come to live here.

Indeed, the people of this extraordinarily wonderful land are more powerful than me as is evident from the courage and fearlessness shown by their ordinary women folk. Why, no other living creature in this world would have ever dreamt of treating me with such causal approach and with lack of any fear as these ladies have done just now. Surely they are more powerful and strong than what we demons are. They have treated me with complete disdain, and they I felt helpless when they grasped my hands in a vice-like grip. Oh my; how much insulted do I feel. Shame to me and to the demon race that I could not take revenge for the humiliation I was subjected to for the first time in my life by these ordinary women. Woe to me, and shame to my claim to being the mighty king of the demon race since I could not protect even my own self-respect!] (9)

So I must do something which will enrage Lord Vishnu and incite him against me.’

That demon had stolen Vaidehi (Sita) from the forest because of this decision (that he would do things that would make Lord Vishnu so angry that the Lord would come and kill him). (10)

Oh Lord Sri Ram! Desirous of getting himself killed at your hands (because you are an incarnation of Lord Vishnu), he had purposely abducted Sita.

[Being fully aware that he is bringing the cosmic Mother of this creation, who was the divine consort of Lord Vishnu who himself is the Supreme Being, and not an ordinary princess of a human prince when he abducted Sita, Ravana took all precautions to ensure that she is shown all due regard and honour that befits her exalted stature as Mother Goddess.]

So therefore, when he brought her to Lanka he took great care to look after her as if she was his own mother while she was in his captivity even as he knew, while taking her away, that you are not an ordinary human but the Parmatma, the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Soul and cosmic Consciousness personified. [This being the case, he was sure that Sita was none other than goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu.]² (11)

[Note—² (i) The fact that he kept Sita with due regard to her as his own mother and divine goddess is also clear earlier in Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse 65. Please also refer to my note in verse no. 58, Canto 3 of Uttar Kand. (ii) Verse no. 9-11 describe the first-hand experience of Ravana as to what sort of place he expects to live in if he dies at the hands of Vishnu; see verse nos. 3-4.

So, he became all the more determined to brazenly follow his chosen path of confrontation with Vishnu, because he thought that even if emancipation, deliverance and salvation was not possible for him inspite of dying at the hands of Vishnu due to the treasury of sins and misdeeds that he has accumulated, then at least he will enjoy life ‘King-size’ in this Shweta-Dwip!]

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Section 5.1.2:

Anand Ramayan

The Anand Ramayan gives a version of the reason why Ravana stole Sita that is exactly like the one we have read herein above in Adhyatma Ramayan in the previous Section 5.1.1.

The reader must have already read Anand Ramayan's version in detail in this Book, in Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.1 where the full story of Ravana from Anand Ramayan has been narrated. To be specific, this subject is described in Anand Ramayan's Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 120-139 where we read about Ravana's meeting with the two great sages Sanatkumar and Narad.

Since Anand Ramayan's version has already been narrated earlier as stated herein above, we will skip it here in order to avoid repetition, and move on to the next Section 5.1.3 which describes why Ravana stole Sita as explained in another classic version of the story, i.e. in Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas.

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Section 5.1.3:

Ram Charit Manas

Goswami Tulsidas' great classic story of Lord Ram's life and time, called the epic Ram Charit Manas, gives the reason why Ravana decided to abduct Sita in its Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

The reason given in Ram Charit Manas is the same as the one given in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 57-61. We have already read about Adhyatma Ramayan in the previous Section 5.1.1, and so now we shall read the version from Ram Charit Manas herein below. The reader should note that the context is also the same in both these Ramayans, viz. Supernakha's entreaty with Ravana to take revenge upon Lord Ram who had deformed and gravely insulted her by cutting off her nose and ears, something that had resulted in humiliation of the entire demon race, and if Ravana neglects it for any reason whatsoever then it would certainly adversely affect his reputation and dignity.

Ravana became excessively alarmed, and intuitively he realized that there is much more than what meets the eye. After all it was not a joke for someone to openly challenge his authority by insulting his own sister Supernakha, and then when the demons Khar and Dushan, who were Ravana's maternal aunt's sons whom he had assigned the task to protect the outer borders of his vast demon kingdom from intrusion by outsiders, went to intercede on behalf of Supernakha with an army of the choicest demons who were known for their ferocity and mercilessness, they too were killed with the whole of the demon army. So therefore, Lord Ram, who had done all this single-handed, is surely and certainly not an ordinary human being.

That means, thought the pensive Ravana, is it true that the Supreme Being has finally decided to come down to earth to kill him and uphold the sanctity of the prophesy of Brahma that had ensured that some human being would one day kill him in spite of his otherwise being immune to death from any other source (refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 51-53/1), or that of Nandi, the mount of Shiva, who had also cursed him that one day he would be killed by a human being

(refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 84-89), or of king Anaranya of Ayodhya who had cursed Ravana that one of his descendants would crush his pride and kill him (refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 226-118).

The past came to haunt Ravana like a ghost baring its teeth and tongue dripping blood in the frightening dark of the dooms-day night.

Now let us see what Ram Charit Manas says:-

चौ०. सुर नर असुर नाग खग माहीं । मोरे अनुचर कहँ कोउ नाही ॥ १ ॥
 खर दूषन मोहि सम बलवंता । तिन्हहि को मारइ बिनु भगवंता ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

sura nara asura nāga khaga māhīm. mōrē anucara kahañ kō'u nāhīm. 1.
 khara dūṣana mōhi sama balavantā. tinahi kō mārā'i binu bhagavantā. 2.

[When Supernakha told Ravana everything that had happened and how Lord Ram had rebuked and insulted her by chopping-off her ears and nose, and after that how he had slayed the entire demon army led by her cousin brothers Khar and Dushan, Ravana became very worried and thoughtful.

He could not sleep that night (Doha no. 22) and had a hunch that his days are finally numbered as the Supreme Being appears to have come personally to kill him. So he wondered—]

‘Verily indeed, amongst the gods, the humans, the demons, the serpents (representing all the terrestrial creatures) and the birds (representing all those who live in the sky, such as the demi-gods, spirits etc.)—none of them, not a single living being for that matter, have the power and the ability to stand against any of my followers (i.e. any of the demons who serve me). No one can face any one of my followers; that is for sure. (1)

Khar and Dushan¹ were as strong and valiant as I am; say who can kill them except the Lord God himself. (2)

[Note—¹Khar and Dushan were the sons of Ravana’s maternal aunt—refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse no. 62. They were assigned the task of protecting the outer borders of the demon kingdom, and were stationed in the formidable forest known as Dandakaranya from where Lord Ram stayed with his wife Sita and brother Laxman at the time of Supernakha’s deformation and the subsequent abduction of Sita by Ravana.

Khar and Dushan had sought revenge for the insult of their sister Supernakha by attacking Lord Ram with a huge army of ferocious, vicious and battle-hardened demons. The Lord had easily and quickly eliminated all of them. This story is narrated in full in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20; and in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-35.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 180 that also reiterates this fact that all the members of the demon race of which Ravana was the king were stunningly strong and invincible in their own rights, and every single demon was so

powerful and valiant that he could virtually conquer the whole world single-handedly.]

सुर रंजन भंजन महि भारा । जौं भगवंत लीन्ह अवतारा ॥ ३ ॥
तौ मैं जाड़ बैरु हठि करऊँ । प्रभु सर प्रान तजें भव तरऊँ ॥ ४ ॥

sura rañjana bhañjana mahi bhārā. jaum̐ bhagavanta līnha avatārā. 3.
tau maim̐ jā'i bairu haṭhi kara'ūṁ. prabhu sara prāna tajēm̐ bhava tara'ūṁ. 4.

This being the case, and if my suspicions are not without foundation that it is indeed true that the Supreme Being who is the provider of happiness to the Gods and the Lord who removes the fear of the burden of the mundane world and its associated miseries and torments from the heart and the mind of all living being—if that Lord God has actually manifested himself (in the human form of Lord Ram), (3) ---

---Then I will surely go and establish animosity with him willingly, and without a second thought about it, so that I would be killed by the Lord's arrows, and thereby attain deliverance from this mundane gross world of transmigration. (4)

होइहि भजनु न तामस देहा । मन क्रम बचन मंत्र दृढ़ एहा ॥ ५ ॥
जौं नररूप भूपसुत कोऊ । हरिहउँ नारि जीति रन दोऊ ॥ ६ ॥

hō'ihī bhajanu na tāmasa dēhā. mana krama bacana mantra dṛṛha ēhā. 5.
jaum̐ nara rūpa bhūpasuta kō'ū. hariha'ūṁ nāri jīti rana dō'ū. 6.

My body is so sinful and vile that I neither can I worship the Lord with it nor can I have devotion for him through its medium. I am very certain about it, and I am convinced of this fact in my mind and heart. So therefore, I will resolutely carry out my decision honestly, and I will do anything needed to be done by my words and deeds that my objective is achieved.

[To wit, now that I am convinced that the Supreme Lord has come personally to kill me, an event that is sure to liberate my soul that is trapped in this vile body of mine and provide it with deliverance, no matter what happens I will stick to my decision and do everything within my means that the Lord does kill me. I will go to any extent, even if it is an action that is most contemptible like stealing Sita, but I will go about it nevertheless with a greater good of my soul in view.] (5)

On the other hand, if Ram is not what I think him to be, i.e. if he is an ordinary human prince instead of being a personified form of the Supreme Being, then I will keep his wife after abducting her and vanquishing the two (Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) in the battle-field.¹ (6)

[Note—¹These two verses, verse nos. 5 and 6, lay the ground for the rest of the story. Ravana had two things in his mind—one was to find deliverance if Lord Ram happened to be the Supreme Being, and the other was to usurp another woman as was his habit if the husband turns out to be an ordinary human being. This doubt in the

mind of Ravana proved to be a virtual boon for the rest of the world as well as for the soul of the huge demon race.

For had Ravana had alone fought with Lord Ram in his hermitage at Dankakarnya itself before trying to take away Sita, then surely the Lord would have killed him as he did Khar and Dushan. In this case the rest of the demons would have escaped death, and that would have meant two things—one, the scourge of the demons would have remained intact because other close kins of Ravana, such as his fierce son Meghanad, and his brother Kumbhakrana would have survived to lead the demon race, and they would have continued unabated the reign of terror started by Ravana. And secondly, none of their souls would have had the golden opportunity to find liberation and deliverance from the cage of the demon body in which all of them were trapped.

But as it fortunately turned out, Ravana took away Sita to Lanka, and this forced Lord Ram to go to Lanka to launch a fierce war to rescue her. And in this war almost the entire demon race was eliminated. This ensured that the burden the earth faced from the cruelty and horrors spread by the demons under the command of Ravana ended once and for all in its entirety. But as it happens in all wars, not all demons died, for some who did not side with Ravana and did not participate in the war managed to live. The chief amongst such demons who survived the war was Vibhishan, Ravana's own younger brother who had sided with Lord Ram at the beginning of the war. This ensured that only the good demons survived to carry on the lineage of the great sages Pulastya and Visrawa to which Ravana and his line of demons belonged, instead of complete annihilation.

There is another way of looking at the decision which Ravana took—to take away Sita to Lanka instead of fighting Lord Ram in the forest itself. He had learnt of the fate of Khar and Dushan, and he was also aware that they had a huge army to support them. All of them were killed by Lord Ram. This scared the wits out of Ravana, and he could not muster sufficient courage to face Lord Ram alone in the battle-field. Besides this, he thought that if indeed Lord Ram is the Supreme Being as he was almost sure the Lord was, then why not let the other demons too have the benefit of liberation and deliverance at no extra effort by forcing them all to die in the battle fighting the Lord. For Ravana was sure that the Supreme Lord is so merciful and compassionate that he cannot allow any single demon to go to hell if the latter is killed in a battle in which the Lord himself is a participant.

Ravana correctly deduced that the nearness with the Lord itself is a blessing par-excellence in itself, and no soul can ever remain condemned if it happens to have the shadow of the Lord fall upon it. So in this aspect Ravana proved himself to be selfless and gracious king of the demon race in as much as he ensured the spiritual welfare of all the demons instead of thinking of the deliverance of his soul alone.]

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Section 5.2.1:

Ram Charit Manas

{The story of Sita's abduction by Ravana}

In the previous section we have read why Ravana had actually abducted Sita, the wife of Lord Ram. Now we shall commence a detailed narration of all the developments that are related to Sita's abduction, and the subsequent events that culminated finally in the epic War of Lanka that led to the killing of Ravana along with his close associates and the demon army which he commanded.

For the purpose of narration of the events linked to the abduction of Sita by Ravana we shall read from two well-known classical narration of the story of Lord Ram, viz. Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas which we shall read here in Section 5.2.1, and Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas which will follow in the next Section 5.2.2.

In 'Ram Charit Manas' this story is detailed in Aranya Kand (or Canto 3), from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 22; and from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 29.

Now, let start reading this fascinating part of our Story:-

सूपनखा रावन कै बहिनी । दुष्ट हृदय दारुन जस अहिनी ॥ ३ ॥
 पंचबटी सो गइ एक बारा । देखि बिकल भइ जुगल कुमारा ॥ ४ ॥
 भ्राता पिता पुत्र उरगारी । पुरुष मनोहर निरखत नारी ॥ ५ ॥
 होइ बिकल सक मनहि न रोकी । जिमि रबिमनि द्रव रबिहि बिलोकी ॥ ६ ॥

sūpanakhā rāvana kai bahinī. duṣṭa hṛdaya dāruna jasa ahinī. 3.
 pañcabaṭī sō ga'i ēka bārā. dēkhi bikala bha'i jugala kumārā. 4.
 bhrātā pitā putra uragārī. puruṣa manōhara nirakhata nārī. 5.
 hō'i bikala saka manahi na rōkī. jimi rabimani drava rabihi bilōkī. 6.

There was a female demon named Supnakha¹ (or 'Supernakha') who was a sister of Ravana (the notorious king of the demons with his capital at Lanka). She was very wicked and foul in her heart, and was extremely cruel like a poisonous snake. (3)

One day she went to Panchavati² where Lord Ram dwelled with his wife Sita and brother Laxman (during the days of his forest sojourn). When she saw the two handsome princes (Lord Ram and Laxman) she was overcome with lust and passion (as is the wont of demons who have neither any self-control over their carnal desires, nor any trace of morality and scruples worth the name). (4)

[The crow-sage Kaagbhusund told Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former to listen to the divine story of Lord Ram as follows—] Oh Urgari (literally the one who is an enemy of serpents)³! It is said that a woman (who is wanton and lacking in morals and scruples) is liable to get easily sexually aroused at the sight of a man who is handsome and charming, irrespective of who he is, whether he be her brother, father or even a son. [This applied specially to Supernakha as she was a 'demoness' by birth, and so was inherently inclined to be exceedingly promiscuous, immodest and sexually pervert.] (5)

So, enchanted by the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram, Supernakha lost control over herself; she became very uneasy as she was unable to restrain the overbearing desire of lust and passion that overwhelmed her mind and heart. It is like the case of the gem known as ‘Suryakantamani (or the “rabimani”)⁴’ which starts glowing automatically and radiating brilliant light in the presence of sun though the sun is not at all aware that the gem even exists. (6)

[Note—¹This demoness got her name ‘Supernakha’ because she had large nails which were as wide as a winnow-fan. It also may mean one who has broad ears and long nails like that of a winnowing fan. ‘Supa’ = the winnowing fan or a winnow-basket; ‘Nakha’ = nails. Supernakha lived in the Dandakarnya forest, a dense, wild and intractable forest that was infested with ferocious animals and demons, and it separated the continent of ancient India into the Northern part that was civilized and the Southern territories that were mostly wild and inhabited by tribals and aboriginal people.

According to Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse no. 61, Ravana, her brother, got her married to a demon named Vidyujjihva and gifted the Dandakaranya forest to her as a marriage gift. (Refer: Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.1 of this Book.) In due course of time she became a widow, and then Ravana sent the demons Khar, Dushan and Trishira to protect her as she was now alone in a dense forest.

Being a demon by birth, Supernakha had a natural tendency to be immoral, wanton and promiscuous in her behaviour; she would roam around the world seeking sexual gratification. For this she would assume any form that suited her, and as soon as her lust was satisfied she moved on to hunt for a new prey in fresher grounds. It was during one of her such wanderings that she sighted Lord Ram and Laxman and fell for their exceptional charms and heavenly beauty.

Ravana had sent Khar and Dushan to this forest with another aim too—it was to guard the frontiers of his demon kingdom in the north which lay just south of the Vindhya Mountain range and north of the kingdom of Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey race. Khar and Dushan were sons of Ravana’s maternal aunt. A huge army of demons were in their command.

Lord Ram, along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, had come to reside at a place called Panchavati deep inside this forest. It is here that one day Supernakha saw the Lord, and was so extremely enthralled by the Lord’s charm and beauty that, being a pervert demoness who had no moral scruples worth the name, ventured to propose marriage to him.

²Panchavati—This was like an oasis, with a lot of greenery and vibrant bird and insect life, in the middle of the otherwise desolate and barren tract of land consisting of a formidably horrifying forest that had no life except thorny plants and poisonous trees and creepers extending to the horizon in dense clusters. Panchavati was situated near the banks of the river Godavari which flowed through the forest, and was around 24-25 miles from the hermitage of sage Agastya. This place is located near the modern city of Nasik in Maharashtra state of India.

It was so named as it had five (“Pancha” = five) huge banyan trees (“Vat” = banyan tree) that grew almost in a circle so as to provide shade over a large area that they covered. This made the place very welcoming as it was cool, comfortable and relaxing as well as congenial for a long stay. Its proximity with the river Godavari was an added bonus. So Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman decided to spend some time

here. Actually this spot was advised to them by Sage Agastya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede Doha no. 18.

Refer to Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 2-3 that describes how she discovered that Lord Ram lived in Panchavati. It so happened that one day while wondering in the forest she saw the marks of Lord Ram's feet on the ground. These marks were like the lotus flowers and had signs of a goad and mace inside them; such marks are unique to the sole of the feet of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. They are so attractive and divine by their nature that anyone who sees them even once is pulled towards them automatically as iron is to a magnet. Actually this is the mystical way of the Lord by which his devotees are attracted naturally towards him even without their conscious knowledge, and by this means the merciful and kind Lord finds an excuse to ultimately grant liberation and deliverance to his devotees from this mundane gross world of transmigration.

³This episode is being narrated by the crow-sage Kagbhusund to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former to hear the divine story of Lord Ram. Hence, the narrator address the listener as “uragārī”—i.e. an enemy of serpents, because Garud, the celestial Eagle and the mount of Lord Vishnu, is a sworn enemy of poisonous serpents and gobbles them all up very easily.

⁴The word “rabimani” has two parts—viz. ‘rabi’ meaning the sun, and ‘mani’ meaning a gem; it is also called ‘Suryakantamani’ because it emanates rays of light in the presence of the sun. It is often called a ‘sun-stone’ too, and is probably a sort of crystal of the size of a small pebble that glows brilliantly in sunlight.

This metaphor is used here to imply that just like a sun-stone begins to automatically emanate light on its exposure to the sun, a woman's natural passion and desire for love arises instinctively when she is exposed to a man whom she regards as being handsome and charming. She would then find it quite difficult to restrain her mind and heart from developing some sort of longing for this man she takes fancy to.]

रुचिर रूप धरि प्रभु पहिं जाई । बोली बचन बहुत मुसुकाई ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह सम पुरुष न मो सम नारी । यह सँजोग बिधि रचा बिचारी ॥ ८ ॥
 मम अनुरूप पुरुष जग माहीं । देखेउँ खोजि लोक तिहु नाहीं ॥ ९ ॥
 तातें अब लगि रहिउँ कुमारी । मनु माना कछु तुम्हहि निहारी ॥ १० ॥

rucira rūpa dhari prabhu pahim jā'ī. bōlī bacana bahuta musukā'ī. 7.
 tumha sama puruṣa na mō sama nārī. yaha saṁjōga bidhi racā bicārī. 8.
 mama anurūpa puruṣa jaga māhīm. dēkhē'uṁ khōji lōka tihu nāhīm. 9.
 tātēm aba lagi rahi'uṁ kumārī. manu mānā kachu tumhahi nihārī. 10.

Hence, she assumed a charming form of a beautiful young lady¹ and went to the Lord (Sri Ram). Once there, she spoke very sweetly, with a broad and enticing smile on her face. (7)

She told Lord Ram thus: ‘Indeed there is no man (as handsome and charming) as you are, and neither is there any other woman who is as alluring as me (in beauty and charm). It looks that the creator had made great deliberations before he made the two

of us, for it is obvious that he made us for each other, and then devised this opportunity for our meeting. (8)

I had been searching in the three worlds (heaven, earth and nether worlds) for a man befitting me, and for whom I may develop a liking, but to no avail; for in all sooth I could not find a single individual who would suit me². (9)

This is the reason I have remained a virgin till now. However, after seeing you I feel enchanted. I seem to have developed a natural sense of attraction and longing for you, for I have begin to love you, which makes my mind and heart convinced, to some extent, that at last I have found someone who is suitable to become my companion as he seems compatible to me and suitable to my tastes³. (10)

[Note—¹Supernakha knew that she was an ugly demoness, and so therefore if she goes and proposes to Lord Ram in her original form it is sure that he will reject her. So she assumed the form of a beautiful lady.

²This acknowledgement by Supernakha—that she had been roaming freely in the world searching for a man to marry, which implies that she gazes intently at all the men she meets, looking him up and down like a customer examines a cattle for sale in the cattle-market, and even testing them by brief flings of pretended romance—shows that she was a lady with an extremely loose character and low morals. To wit, she has revealed her bad and immoral character unwittingly herself, for no lady of good birth and family would roam around alone looking for a mate like the way Supernakha had done; it's vulgar and promiscuous.

³By saying that she is satisfied by Lord Ram's personality 'to some extent' shows that she has kept the option open—because as soon as her lusts would be satisfied she would make an exit from the relationship citing the reason that her partner did not suit her 'completely'. So she has warned Lord Ram to be careful of her intentions by saying that she has found some comfort in him only to some degree; not fully, but partially.]

सीतहि चितइ कही प्रभु बाता । अहइ कुआर मोर लघु भ्राता ॥ ११ ॥
गइ लछिमन रिपु भगिनी जानी । प्रभु बिलोकि बोले मृदु बानी ॥ १२ ॥
सुंदरि सुनु मैं उन्ह कर दासा । पराधीन नहिं तोर सुपासा ॥ १३ ॥
प्रभु समर्थ कोसलपुर राजा । जो कछु करहिं उनहि सब छाजा ॥ १४ ॥

sītahi cita'i kahī prabhu bātā. aha'i ku'āra mōra laghu bhrātā. 11.
ga'i lachimana ripu bhaginī jānī. prabhu bilōki bōlē mṛdu bānī. 12.
sundari sunu mairi unha kara dāsā. parādhīna nahim tōra supāsā. 13.
prabhu samartha kōsalapura rājā. jō kachu karahim unahi saba chājā. 14.

Lord Ram glanced towards Sita (to indicate to Supernakha that he had a wife, and so could not accept her proposals). Then he answered her, saying, 'My younger brother (Laxman) is a bachelor yet (as he has no wife who accompanies him in the forest; so if you do wish to marry, go and propose to him)¹.

[Oh enchantress, listen. I am a married man, and have a loyal wife with me. How is it possible, then, that I can become your companion. No, it isn't possible under any condition; it would be totally unrighteous and unethical to even imagine of this evil thought. Look, you will never succeed in seducing me, take it for granted. However, if you still persist, I give you an option—my younger brother has not brought his wife along, and you can try your seductive tricks on him if you manage to succeed. So go to him.]’ (11)

Then she went to Laxman, who recognized her to be the sister of their enemy (Ravana). He glanced at Lord Ram (to get a hint of what the Lord wants), and then said to her sweetly, (12) ---

---‘Oh beautiful and enchanting lady! Look, I am a mere servant or an attendant of him (i.e. of Lord Ram)². Since I am not independent, you will not feel comfort that you expect from my company (as a servant or an attendant has to do what his Lord wills, and his time and energy is occupied in serving his Lord). (13)

Lord Ram is the king of Ayodhya and is all-able. Whatever he does is well suited to him. [So you would do well to become the Lord's companion as he is a king, and you will have greater pleasures and comforts like a queen enjoys if you keep his company as compared to me who is not free but bound by my Lord's commands.] (14)

[Note—¹The word Lord Ram used for his younger brother Laxman is “ku'āra”; it means a boy, a young man, a prince; it also means one who is unmarried.

It is remarkable that Lord Ram has called Laxman a ‘Kumar (ku'āra)’. Of course he was a young prince and was like the Lord's son*, and of course he was indeed a young boy. But was he ‘unmarried’? Yes of course; from the practical point of view Laxman was indeed leading a life of a bachelor, the life of a ‘Kumar (ku'āra)’, during the fourteen years that he spent with Lord Ram in the forest, though he was married and a wife named Urmila that he left behind at Ayodhya at the time of accompanying Lord Ram and Sita to the forest. By leading a life of strict celibacy for fourteen long years Laxman had made a great personal sacrifice to serve his beloved Lord Ram and look after the Lord's personal safety, needs and comforts in the forest like a faithful follower and a loyal servant is expected to do; it was also the advice given by Laxman's mother to him#. It was a sort of severe Tapa (penance and austerity) that Laxman did, and this Tapa bestowed upon him the natural powers that come to a person who does Tapa. To wit, by the virtue of this ‘Tapa’, i.e. observance of strict vows of celibacy, both physical and mental, Laxman acquired special mystical powers of stupendous proportions that enabled him to easily overcome all the formidable hurdles and the fiercest of enemies that he and Lord Ram had to face in the forest.

In all sooth therefore, Lord Ram wasn't wrong when he called his younger brother a ‘Kumar (ku'āra)’. It was in fact an honour that the Lord granted to his younger brother; it was an acknowledgement on the part of the Lord of the sacrifices that Laxman had made for his sake, and for the cause of the gods.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 75 along with Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

The situation is simple and uncomplicated. There are two princes and one lady in that lonely place in the depth of the forest, and no other soul is seen anywhere around. When Supernakha approached Lord Ram disguised as a young virgin, it is but common sense that Lord Ram immediately knew that there was something wrong and suspicious as no ordinary woman would be found in the middle of an un-inhabited forest which was infested with fierce demons and wild animals. Hence, the presence of a lonely woman, who could move freely and fearlessly in a horrifying forest merely in search of a mate, itself was something exceptionally impossible to believe and incongruous enough to raise a grave suspicion about her true identity and real intentions.

Another reason why Lord Ram could instantly realize that there was something gravely wrong with this lady is that Sita was with him, and still Supernakha proposed to him—something that no sensible woman, who is a stranger, would do in the presence of another woman of the household. Besides this, no formal introductions were made by Supernakha and no time was given by her for some kind of close acquaintance to develop with the inhabitants of the hermitage before she could have gathered courage to propose; she just came in uninvited and bluntly said ‘I want to make love to you’. It is absolute nonsense and uncivilized to do so. So surely Lord Ram knew that this lady was great imposter out to cheat and trap him.

So the Lord looked towards Sita to indicate to Supernakha that he is ‘not available as he has a wife with him’. But obviously Laxman had no companion—so she was free to propose to him.

Does this mean that Lord Ram was testing his brother’s character? No, no; it is not that at all. The Lord knew that Laxman had an immaculate character; the Lord was only trying to tease Supernakha and make her get angry so that the Lord’s divine mission of eliminating the cruel demons could be started. And as the things developed, everything went according to the Lord’s planning, for soon Supernakha became furious and the Lord asked Laxman to cut off her nose and ears to punish her for her impertinent behaviour when she threatened to kill and eat Sita. This was the spark that ignited the fire that reduced to ashes the scourge of the demon race.

²In verse no. 11 Lord Ram has glanced at Sita to convey a silent message that he has a wife with him. Now, in verse no. 12 Laxman glanced at Lord Ram with the same intent to tell Supernakha in verse no. 13 that he is not a free man himself as he is a servant of the Lord. If Lord Ram is engaged to Sita and therefore cannot entertain Supernakha, Laxman says that he too is engaged as an attendant to serve his Lord Ram, and hence he too is not free to entertain her.]

सेवक सुख चह मान भिखारी । ब्यसनी धन सुभ गति बिभिचारी ॥ १५ ॥

लोभी जसु चह चार गुमानी । नभ दुहि दूध चहत ए प्रानी ॥ १६ ॥

sēvaka sukha caha māna bhikhārī. byasanī dhana subha gati bibhicārī. 15.
lōbhī jasu caha cāra gumānī. nabha duhi dūdhā cahata ē prānī. 16.

[Laxman supported his contention that he is not a free man to do whatever he wishes to do because he is like a servant of Lord Ram, and a servant is never free, by citing some examples of how certain things are impossible under certain situations. He cited the following examples to dissuade Supernakha from her pursuit—]

A servant who desires comfort and happiness, or a beggar who expects honour and respect, or a person addicted to some sort of vice (such as gambling, drugs, wine, women etc.) wishing to accumulate wealth, or a promiscuous and lascivious man wanting a good fate for himself (i.e. a good name and honour after death) [15], or a greedy man hoping to have a good name and fame, or a messenger who is egoist and haughty wishing to be successful in his mission, or a doubtful man who is uncertain of what he does and aims for hoping to achieve any of the four celebrated fruits in life¹—well, all such persons are so utterly stupid that they expect to get milk by milking the sky [16]²! [Therefore, you, Supernakha, should abandon any hope of getting a positive response from me.]’ (15-16)

[Note—¹The four best fruits or rewards that one gets for success in life are the following: (i) Artha = financial well-being; (ii) Dharma = fame got by being righteous and noble; (iii) Kaam = fulfillment of all worldly desires; and (iv) Moksha = spiritual welfare by way of salvation and emancipation of the soul.

²Laxman tries to convince Supernakha that she should not expect any happiness even if he accepts her proposal because he is servant of Lord Ram, and anyone who serves another should not expect the joy and pleasures that comes with freedom. If a person who is under an obligation to serve someone expects joy and happiness that comes to a free man then he is an outright fool like the case of the persons listed in these two verses.

To wit, it is impossible for a diligent servant to have personal comfort and pleasure as he is always on his toes to carry out the orders of his master. He does not know when the master would summon him and order him with a task to be done.

Similarly, a man who has stretched out his hand before someone to beg for something should never expect to have any respect for himself; by begging he is deemed to have forfeited his dignity and self-respect.

A man addicted to some bad habit such as gambling, betting, drugs, wine and women would spend all his money in the pursuit of his vices; he would even pawn his family heirlooms to satisfy his addiction. This makes it impossible for him to accumulate any wealth.

A man coveting other persons’ wives and women can never hope to live in peace in this world, and when he dies his soul never rests in peace either; his conscience pricks him all through his life; he is reviled while alive, and he is condemned even after death.

A greedy and covetous person is never at peace, and this nature of his makes him impulsively do things that bring ill-fame and dishonour to him.

A messenger must be calm and poised and cool-headed, for if he is haughty and arrogant and loses his self-restraint he is certain to ruin the chances of attaining success in the mission for which he has been sent by his lord as an emissary.

A person who is not resolute and determined and focused on the task at hand, a person who is not certain of the correctness of the path he has chosen for himself, a person who does not even know the goal he is expected to reach, and a person who is not confident in his steps, and dithers and demurs every now and then—such persons never attain success in any enterprise.

Verily indeed, they are vainly trying to draw milk from the sky. To wit, they are merely day-dreaming and building castles in the sky, hoping for things that can never materialize.]

पुनि फिरि राम निकट सो आई । प्रभु लछिमन पहिं बहुरि पठाई ॥ १७.
लछिमन कहा तोहि सो बरई । जो तून तोरि लाज परिहरई ॥ १८ ॥

puni phiri rāma nikaṭa sō ā'ī. prabhu lachimana pahim bahuri paṭhā'ī. 17.
lachimana kahā tōhi sō bara'ī. jō tṛna tōri lāja parihara'ī. 18.

At being thus rebuffed by Laxman, she (Supernakha) came back to Lord Ram. The Lord sent her to Laxman once again¹. (17)

Laxman then sternly rebuked her, saying that only a person who has no shame, dignity and self-respect worth the name in him would ever think of marrying her. (18)

[Note—¹Supernakha was so maddened by passions that she lost all sense of self-respect and modesty. She ran to and fro between the two brothers like a shuttle-cock. She was rebuked by Lord Ram as well as by Laxman.]

तब खिसिआनि राम पहिं गई । रूप भयंकर प्रगटत भई ॥ १९ ॥
सीतहि सभय देखि रघुराई । कहा अनुज सन सयन बुझाई ॥ २० ॥

taba khisi'āni rāma pahim ga'ī. rūpa bhayaṅkara pragaṭata bha'ī. 19.
sītahi sabhaya dēkhi raghurā'ī. kahā anuja sana sayana bujhā'ī. 20.

Then (when Laxman finally rebuked and insulted her by saying that only a shameless man would think of marrying her), she became extremely peeved and frustrated. Fretting and fuming in anger, she resumed her original fearful form of an abhorable demoness and went once again to Lord Ram. (19)

As Supernakha approached the Lord of Raghus (Lord Ram; raghurā'ī) menacingly, the Lord observed that Sita was very terrified. So he made a sign to his younger brother (Laxman) with a subtle movement of his eyes¹. (20)

[Note—¹By now Supernakha has shown her true form—a fierce demoness with a huge body and sharp pointed nails. She lunged fearfully at Lord Ram and Sita in order to attack them. This scared Sita out of her wits. Then Lord Ram glanced at Laxman and winked at him to signal to him to punish the demoness. And how did Laxman punish Supernakha? This is narrated in Doha no. 17 herein below.

The Lord had to first prove to Sita and the world that the fine lady whom the Lord would punish is not an ordinary woman but a demoness. So he made her go to and fro between himself and Laxman so she gets mad with anger, and this would help reveal her true identity—that of a fierce and cruel demoness. Now when the punishment would be carried out, no one would raise a finger against Lord Ram or Laxman for having harmed an ordinary human lady.

Supernakha was now attacking Lord Ram and Sita with a vengeance, and surely in this situation it became necessary for Lord Ram to act in self defense. If he

did not do anything, Supernakha would have certainly injured Sita with her dagger-like nails.]

दो०. लछिमन अति लाघवँ सो नाक कान बिनु कीन्हि ।

ताके कर रावन कहँ मनौ चुनौती दीन्हि ॥ १७ ॥

dōhā.

lachimana ati lāghavaṁ sō nāka kāna binu kīnhi.
tākē kara rāvana kahaṁ manau cunautī dīnhi. 17.

Laxman, on getting a hint from Lord Ram, swiftly cut-off the ears and nose of Supernakha, and by this singular act he (as well as Lord Ram) had virtually challenged Ravana¹. (Doha no. 17)

[Note—¹Supernakha's deformation was an open challenge thrown to the demon king Ravana, who also happened to be her brother, to come and settle scores with Lord Ram and Laxman if he dares to do so. This event of cutting of Supernakha's nose and ears laid the foundation of the war that would ultimately lead to the slaying of Ravana and elimination of the cruel demons for which Lord Vishnu had to come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to fulfill his promise made to the Gods and Mother Earth.

The Lord had to find an excuse using which he would be able to complete his mission on earth, and Supernakha unwittingly provided this excuse to the Lord.

Every action of the Lord God is for the long-term good of a living being though in the beginning it looks very bad for him. Lord Ram wished to pull Supernakha back from her evil ways of being excessively promiscuous and highly morally degraded as she has accepted herself that she went around the world searching and testing for men who would fit to be her husband. It goes without saying it in clear terms that she must have established conjugal relationships with countless males in order to ascertain whether they suited her or not. It is obviously highly immoral and shameful to do so, but she did it. So the Lord got her deformed so that now onwards no male would be attracted to her, and she would be forced to abandon her immoral life, and instead, lead a life of restraint and abstinence.

There is an ancient text called 'Garga Sanhita' in which a detailed story of Supernakha is narrated. It is said here that since Lord Ram cannot refuse to fulfill the desire of anyone who comes to him seeking anything, he was obliged to live up to his own vows and reputation on this count. Though the Lord had to refuse Supernakha's proposals during this particular point of time, but he had to recompense her for it. So the Lord blessed her that in his next incarnation as Lord Krishna during the next Yuga (era) known as Dwapar, he would oblige her. It is believed that Supernakha became the celebrated Kumbha, the old hunchback, whom Lord Krishna blessed during his manifestation.]

चौ०. नाक कान बिनु भइ बिकरारा । जनु स्रव सैल गेरु कै धारा ॥ १ ॥

खर दूषन पहिं गइ बिलपाता । धिग धिग तव पौरुष बल भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāka kāna binu bha'i bikarārā. janu srava saila gēru kai dhārā. 1.
khara dūṣana pahim̐ ga'i bilapātā. dhiga dhiga tava pauruṣa bala bhrātā. 2.

With her nose and ears chopped-off, she looked most fearsome and horrifying, and blood poured out from her gashed body like thick streams of deep ochre colour gushing out from the crevices of a huge mountain. (1)

Weeping and lamenting woefully, she rushed to Khar and Dushan (her protectors and cousin brothers), cursing and swearing at them, 'Woe to you both the brothers; shame betide to your manhood and valour; fie upon you.' (2)

तेहिं पूछा सब कहेसि बुझाई । जातुधान सुनि सेन बनाई ॥ ३ ॥
धाए निसिचर निकर बरूथा । जनु सपच्छ कज्जल गिरि जूथा ॥ ४ ॥
नाना बाहन नानाकारा । नानायुध धर घोर अपारा ॥ ५ ॥
सूपनखा आगें करि लीनी । असुभ रूप श्रुति नासा हीनी ॥ ६ ॥

tēhim̐ pūchā saba kahēsi bujhā'ī. jātudhāna suni sēna banā'ī. 3.
dhā'ē nīsicara nikara barūthā. janu sapaccha kajjala giri jūthā. 4.
nānā bāhana nānākārā. nānāyudha dhara ghōra apārā. 5.
sūpanakhā āgēm̐ kari līnī. asubha rūpa śruti nāsā hīnī. 6.

They were stunned when they saw the horrible condition of their sister. Upon enquiry she narrated the whole episode to them and explained the cause of her misery.

When they (Khar and Dushan) heard everything, they immediately summoned an army (of demons, to seek revenge). (3)

A huge army of fierce demons swarmed around in multiple groups and launched a ferocious and vicious attack. They appeared like huge winged mountains of dark soot covering the entire length and breadth of the sky, from one end to the other of the horizon. [The demon army covered the whole sky and moved forth rapidly like foreboding dark clouds that appear before a severe thunder-storm.] (4)

The demons rode different types of vehicles, and they had various shapes and sizes. They held multiple types of weapons, were countless in numbers, and were exceedingly fierce and horrifying. (5)

They kept Supernakha in the vanguard of the attacking force, and this portended an evil omen for them as she had an inauspicious form without a nose and ears¹. (6)

[Note—¹Supernakha was in the front of the attacking demon forces as she wanted to tell Lord Ram and Laxman that she has now come to settle a score with them quickly. She was extremely angry and burning with rage; she wished to lead from the front to show the two brothers who she actually was, to show them that they had played with fire while rebuking and deforming her, and that now they would have to pay a heavy price for their act. By being in the front she wished to signal that it was she who has come to seek revenge for her insult and deformation, and that she was a powerful lady who had a mighty army at her command.]

But in the process something else was not taken into account by the mad demons who were destined to doom by providence—and it was that Supernakha's deformed body was an evil sign before the commencement of battle. Everyone looks for a good omen before starting on a mission, and in this case unfortunately the sign was bad. Had the demons been wise and left with any common sense they would have not allowed her to be in the front of the army as she had had an evil and ominous form with blood gushing out of her wounds and with her ears and nose cut-off. This form is never considered auspicious and good omen for any enterprise, let alone a decisive battle where death and destruction stares in the face.

In the final analysis, perhaps this evil form of Supernakha decided the course of the battle between the demons and Lord Ram which was soon to follow—as this evil omen had already decided the fate, which was defeat and complete extermination of those who willingly and voluntarily invited death by foolishly holding this evil sign of Supernakha's inauspicious form as an insignia, a mascot or a coat-of-arm of the army.

Indeed, Supernakha played a pivotal role in the destruction of the demon race as it was she whose lustful actions had sowed the seed that culminated in the epic War of Lanka that led to the killing of Ravana.

One cannot fail to observe here that after all it was a woman's secret and suppressed desire for sensual gratification that had burst out into the open in the form of a volcanic eruption symbolized by the battle that would ensue now between Lord Ram and the demons Khar and Dushan, and later on transform into a no-holds barred war that resulted in the annihilation of her own family.]

असगुन अमित होहिं भयकारी । गनहिं न मृत्यु बिबस सब झारी ॥ ७ ॥
गर्जहिं तर्जहिं गगन उड़ाहीं । देखि कटकु भट अति हरषाहीं ॥ ८ ॥
कोउ कह जिअत धरहु द्वौ भाई । धरि मारहु तिय लेहु छड़ाई ॥ ९ ॥

asaguna amita hōhiṃ bhayakārī. ganahiṃ na mṛtyu bibasa saba jhārī. 7.
garjahiṃ tarjahiṃ gagana uṛāhiṃ. dēkhi kaṭaku bhaṭa ati haraṣāhiṃ. 8.
kō'u kaha ji'ata dharahu dvau bhāī. dhari mārahu tiya lēhu chaṛāī. 9.

Manifold bad omens appeared then, and they were horrifying and pretenders of doom. But the demon hordes were so overwhelmed by the call of destiny that destined their death that they paid no heed to any sign that should normally have warned them of their impending doom. (7)

They yelled and jumped madly as they moved swiftly across the sky (to attack Lord Ram). When one group of demons saw the others groups of demons in an excited mood, they too became exhilarated (as if they were going on a picnic to celebrate some great event)¹. (8)

Some of them instigated others by commanding that they must catch the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) alive, and then snatch their lady (Sita) after killing them both². (9)

[Note—¹The demons were so confident of themselves and their might that they had no fear of anything. They thought that it would be literally a cake-walk for them to

vanquish Lord Ram and Laxman and snatch Sita from them. They did not realize that they were walking into their own graves!

²They wanted to kill their enemies, which in this case were Lord Ram and Laxman, as a prudent military strategy because if an enemy is allowed to escape or is spared death then there were great possibilities that he would create some sort of mischief for the conqueror at a later date.

We have proof of this in the story of the Ramayan itself. Lord Ram had spared Marich from death at the time of protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. The Lord had used a headless arrow to hit Marich, and this arrow flung him to a remote island near Lanka where Marich lived in fear of the Lord. Later on Marich was forced by Ravana to become a deer with a golden hide in order to abduct Sita. Had Lord Ram slayed Marich at that time then perhaps the event that led to the abduction of Sita by Ravana would have been avoided.]

धूरि पूरि नभ मंडल रहा । राम बोलाइ अनुज सन कहा ॥ १० ॥
लै जानकिहि जाहु गिरि कंदर । आवा निसिचर कटकु भयंकर ॥ ११ ॥
रहेहु सजग सुनि प्रभु कै बानी । चले सहित श्री सर धनु पानी ॥ १२ ॥

dhūri pūri nabha maṇḍala rahā. rāma bōlā'i anuja sana kahā. 10.
lai jānakihi jāhu giri kandara. āvā nisicara kaṭaku bhayaṅkara. 11.
rahēhu sajaga suni prabhu kai bānī. calē sahita śrī sara dhanu pānī. 12.

The whole firmament was filled with dust due to the advancing demon army. [It was like the case of a severe thunder-storm that is usually preceded by a blinding dust-storm in the dry plains that see the first rain of the season.]

Lord Ram called his brother (Laxman) and said to him—(10)

‘Brother, take Janki (Sita) along and go inside the cave of the mountain. Look, a fierce demon army is approaching rapidly¹. (11)

Be alert and careful.’

Hearing the words (instructions) of the Lord, he (Laxman) went away with Sita as directed; he held his bow and arrow at the ready (to meet any eventuality)². (12)

[Note—¹Lord Ram knew that the battle that was to happen now would be spine-chilling, and it would be so horrifying and bloody that Sita would die of terror if she had to witness it. Besides this, it would be an added burden upon him during the thick of battle if his attention was diverted for the safety of Sita; he would not be able to focus entirely on the enemy if Sita was around. Further, seeing her, the demons would create more problems for him than imagined. So the Lord decided that it was prudent to keep Sita out of sight. And there was no safer place to hide than a cave.

²Lord Ram had sent Laxman with Sita in order to give her protection in case some demon got the wind where she is kept. Secondly, since Laxman was the one who had cut-off the nose and ears of Supernakha, the Lord wished to remove him from sight so as to avoid the chances of his being singled out by the vicious and ferocious demons

for direct attack. In his absence the chances were that the demons would be confused as to who was the real culprit who had deformed Supernakha, and the confusion and disorder in their ranks about the proper target to attack would give Lord Ram the much needed time to finish them off before they gather their wits together.]

देखि राम रिपुदल चलि आवा । बिहसि कठिन कोदंड चढ़ावा ॥ १३ ॥

dēkhi rāma ripudala cali āvā. bihasi kaṭhina kōdaṇḍa carḥāvā. 13.

Now, when Lord Ram observed that the demon horde has finally arrived, the Lord smiled¹ and raised his most formidable and powerful bow, stringing it to make it ready for attack (i.e. to shoot arrows at the attacking enemy). (13)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram smile? He wondered as to how the luck has favoured him, and how Providence plays its game. The Lord's mission was to eliminate the cruel demons, and he had come all the way from heaven for this purpose. He had traveled barefoot from his capital at Ayodhya to the distant lands of the Dandakarnya forest. It would have been very cumbersome and difficult and impractical to find the demons who were either scattered around the vast realm of the earth or lived in their fortified city of Lanka across the ocean. Luck so favoured the Lord that now he would not have to take the trouble of going to them to kill them, for they have come on their own to jump into the pit of a raging fire which destiny had lit for them in the form of battles with the Lord.

Providence is indeed so powerful a force that it can bring together at the same spot elements that under ordinary circumstances are poles apart, elements that can never ever be expected to interact begin to have a close encounter under the compelling influences of Providence.

Another reason for the Lord smiling is that he was amused as to how a single woman could be the cause of a huge calamity.]

छं०. कोदंड कठिन चढ़ाई सिर जट जूट बाँधत सोह य्यों । १ ।

मरकत सयल पर लरत दामिनि कोटि सों जुग भुजग ज्यों ॥ २ ॥

कटि कसि निषंग बिसाल भुज गहि चाप बिसिख सुधारि कै । ३ ।

चितवत मनहुँ मृगराज प्रभु गजराज घटा निहारि कै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina carḥā'i sira jaṭa jūṭa bāṁdhata sōha kyōm̐. 1.

marakata sayala para larata dāmini kōṭi sōm̐ juga bhujaga jyōm̐. 2.

kaṭi kasi niṣaṅga bisāla bhuja gahi cāpa bisikha sudhāri kai. 3.

citavata manahuṁ mrgarāja prabhu gajarāja ghaṭā nihāri kai. 4.

When Lord Ram stringed his bow to make it ready and lifted his arms to tie his long matted hairs into a tight tuft on his head, it seemed that two serpents are engaged in a duel with countless streaks of lightening emanating from the top of a mountain of emerald¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

The Lord girded up his quiver at his waist, held his formidable bow in his long arms, and sharpened his arrows as he gazed steadily at his enemy (the attacking army of the demons) as if a lion (“mṛgarāja”; the lord of the animals) watches at a huge horde of wild elephants (gajarāja) advancing towards it like a bank of dark clouds (ghaṭā)². (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, the ‘two serpents’ are represented by the Lord’s two arms; the ‘mountain of emerald’ is the Lord’s dark-complexioned radiant body; the ‘summit’ is his head; and the ‘countless streaks of lightening’ represent the dazzle of the stringed bow and the sharpened arrows that reflected sunlight. As the Lord’s arms are lifted to tackle the strands of hairs and tie them tightly on the head into a tuft, the bow and the arrow in the Lord’s hands swung and swayed in all directions, producing streaks of light that gave an impression that two serpents were combating with each other even as streaks of lightening strike at them atop a mountain of emerald.

²The lion is not afraid of the elephant; when an elephant approaches a lion menacingly, the latter never runs away out of fear, but cleverly maneuvers its moves so as to overcome even a wild and mad elephant. The lion would swiftly jump on the back of its victim and dig its sharp teeth and claws into the head and the back of the neck of the victim, without giving the elephant a chance to understand what is happening, then gnawing and biting at its flesh and tearing out its nerves till it is dead.

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is compared to the fearless lion that is ready to pounce upon his enemy, the elephant; and the demon army is compared to the huge horde of wild elephants that is running wildly towards the lion in order to crush it to death.

Since the demons are approaching the Lord via the path of the sky they are compared to the dark clouds rolling up the horizon in a menacing manner.]

सो०. आइ गए बगमेल धरहु धरहु धावत सुभट ।

जथा बिलोकि अकेल बाल रबिहि घेरत दनुज ॥ १८ ॥

sōraṭhā.

ā'i ga'e bagamēla dharahu dharahu dhāvata subhaṭa.
jathā bilōki akēla bāla rabihi ghērata danuja. 18.

Demon warriors who were colossal in size and most terrifying in their demeanours came rushing at the Lord, shouting ‘catch him; catch him’. The sight resembled the event when fierce demons close in on the rising sun to grab it, finding it alone and still of a tender age (a young sun which is yet not powerful or hot enough to burn the demons by its sheering heat)¹. (Sortha no. 18)

[Note—¹The demons, who are called ‘Nishachar’, meaning nocturnal creatures, for they love darkness as well as evil that it symbolizes, have a natural aversion to sunlight. So as soon as they see the sun rising in the horizon they try to grab it, but they can’t go too close to the sun because though it is still young and cool it is still hot enough to scorch them as soon as they come too close to it. So though the demons lunge at the rising sun to destroy it in its nascent stage but they fail in their attempt and recoil when they face the sun’s heat.

In the present case as applied to Lord Ram and the attacking army of demons, Lord Ram is the 'young sun' as he is alone and young in age, while the enemy is like the 'demons who try to destroy the rising sun' but recoil in horror as soon as they come too close to it due to the sun's natural heat that goes on increasing with the passage of every moment.

According to ancient mythological accounts, there is a story attached to this metaphor. It is narrated in an ancient text called 'Hemadri' as well as in the 'Vishnu Puran', Part 2, Section 8, verse nos. 50-57. Briefly it is as follows:-

A great demon race is called 'Mandeha'; they are supposed to be twenty-thousand in numbers. These demons had a curse-cum-blessing from the creator Brahma that they would have to die everyday though their bodies would remain imperishable. It's such a paradoxical curse indeed, resulting in a situation whereby these demons die and take birth daily, and in an attempt to escape death they try to kill the sun so that they won't have to die.

Therefore the story goes that these demons called Mandeha attacked the sun when it rose in the morning so that they won't have to die at the end of the day and suffer the agony of death and taking a birth again the next day. Now it so happened that Brahmins used to offer oblations to the rising sun in the morning while chanting the famed Gayatri Mantra, which is a spiritual formula specially formulated for worshipping the sun, and it is one of the most powerful Mantras with intense cosmic energy encrypted in its words. When water was sprinkled at the sun while muttering this Mantra, its drops became so highly charged with energy that they became like hot arrows, and when they fell on the attacking demons who surrounded the infant sun it resulted in these demons getting scorched and scalded as if boiling water was poured on them. The rising sun thus remained unharmed. But due to Brahma's blessing that their bodies won't die, these demons were revived once again before the end of the day. So in the evening they attacked the sun once again to ensure that it does not rise in the next morning.

This mythological story is cited here to describe the scene when Lord Ram stood surrounded by fierce demons who wanted to kill him but could not venture close enough due to the Lord's inherent dynamism and spiritual energy which repelled them like the heat of the sun and the spiritual powers of the Gayatri Mantra.]

चौ०. प्रभु बिलोकि सर सकहिं न डारी । थकित भई रजनीचर धारी ॥ १ ॥
 सचिव बोलि बोले खर दूषन । यह कोउ नृपबालक नर भूषन ॥ २ ॥
 नाग असुर सुर नर मुनि जेते । देखे जिते हते हम केते ॥ ३ ॥
 हम भरि जन्म सुनहु सब भाई । देखी नहिं असि सुंदरताई ॥ ४ ॥
 जद्यपि भगिनी कीन्हि कुरूपा । बध लायक नहिं पुरुष अनूपा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu bilōki sara sakahim na ḍārī. thakita bha'ī rajanīcara dhārī. 1.
 saciva bōli bōlē khara dūṣana. yaha kō'u nṛpabālaka nara bhūṣana. 2.
 nāga asura sura nara muni jētē. dēkhē jitē hatē hama kētē. 3.
 hama bhari janma sunahu saba bhā'ī. dēkhī nahim asi sundaratā'ī. 4.
 jadyapi bhaginī kīnhi kurūpā. badha lāyaka nahim puruṣa anūpā. 5.

When the demon army saw the Lord (Ram) they were so much stunned (by the Lord's majesty, charm, beauty and the aura of divinity that emanated from him) that they could not shoot even a single arrow at him, and they developed a cold feet as soon as they came near the Lord.

[To wit, Khar and Dushan, the commanders of the demon army, as well as their demon soldiers were absolutely stumped and awe-struck at the magnificent sight of the Lord that charmed them to such an extent that they stood as if paralysed on their path, and gazed at the Lord in stunned amazement.] (1)

Khar and Dushan summoned their chief minister and confided in him about their amazement, 'He (Lord Ram) appears to be a princely jewel in the entire human race.

[To wit, our opponent, i.e. Lord Ram, does not seem to be an ordinary person; we are of the view that this gentleman is the best human we have ever seen or met in our whole lives. Surely he is some exceptional person, for just look at his magnetic personality and divine aura the like of which we have never ever encountered in our lives. He is surely someone who not deserve the rough treatment we are about to hand out to him. We have developed a tender feeling for him.] (2)

We have seen, we have vanquished and we have killed countless creatures till now, such as the Naags (serpents who rule the subterranean world), the Asurs (demons who dared to oppose us), the Surs (the gods), the Nars (human beings), and Munis (sages and hermits), --- (3)

---But oh brothers, listen. We must admit that we have never ever seen such grandness of majesty and such astounding beauty throughout our lives; never indeed since our births have we ever seen such a magnificent sight as we behold now! (4)

We are of the view that though it is true that he (Lord Ram) has deformed our sister (Supernakha) but he is surely not worthy of dying as he is indeed peerless.

[To wit, we are not able to suppress the tender feeling that has aroused in our hearts for this prince and become so heartless as to kill him cruelly. Though it is true that we are demons yet we too have at least some rudimentary form of sentimental feeling of tenderness present in our hearts. We feel hesitant to be rough and cruel towards this prince. One thing more—now we see why our sister fell for this prince! When he has charmed us so much then it is but natural that he must have enthralled our sister and captivated her imagination manifold times more as she is a woman after all. After all, it was our sister who had approached this prince and tried to impose her will on him, which may have annoyed him so much that he was provoked to deform her as punishment. We know that our sister has an immoral and promiscuous nature, and so the blame for this sorry affair also has to be shared by her. We are of the view that this prince could be excused if he agrees to pay some form of compensation to us for disfiguring our sister. So let us see what happens before deciding further what has to be done.] (5)

देहु तुरत निज नारि दुराई । जीअत भवन जाहु द्वौ भाई ॥ ६ ॥

मोर कहा तुम्ह ताहि सुनावहु । तासु बचन सुनि आतुर आवहु ॥ ७ ॥

dēhu turata nija nāri durā'ī. jī'ata bhavana jāhu dvau bhā'ī. 6.
mōra kahā tumha tāhi sunāvahu. tāsū bacana suni ātura āvahu. 7.

So therefore, if he gives us his woman (i.e. Sita, Lord Ram's wife), whom he has hidden from us somewhere, then we shall let the two brothers go back alive to their place (from where they came to this forest).

[To wit, if this prince, i.e. Lord Ram, is ready to pay the penalty for disfiguring our sister then we can let the two brothers off without any harm. And this penalty is this: they have to surrender the lady who accompanies them, and whom they have hidden somewhere from us because they feared that we would immediately grab her even before they could try to protect her. This shows that they are sore affright of our might, for as soon as they harmed our sister they realized their mistake and guessed rightly that she would go back and call for revenge, in which case her companions are sure to attack with full force those who had harmed her. So the elder prince, i.e. Lord Ram, was clever enough to decide to send the main culprit, his younger brother Laxman who had actually cut-off our sister's nose and ears, and the lady, i.e. Sita, into hiding so as to get them out of harm's way and protect them from immediate retribution should we arrive to seek revenge. Well, well; it is now clear that they are on the defensive and on the back-foot, for otherwise they wouldn't have hidden their woman, and neither would have the main culprit who had deformed our sister, i.e. the younger prince (Laxman) gone into hiding. Hence, if the two brothers agree to our condition then we shall not harm them and let them go back to their homes. And what is deal: They must give us the lady who accompanies them to settle this matter amicably.] (6)

[Khar and Dushan instructed their ministers as follows—] So therefore, go to him (Lord Ram) and convey our message. Then listen to what he has to say, and come back to us quickly. (7)'

दूतन्ह कहा राम सन जाई । सुनत राम बोले मुसुकाई ॥ ८ ॥
हम छत्री मृगया बन करहीं । तुम्ह से खल मृग खोजत फिरहीं ॥ ९ ॥
रिपु बलवंत देखि नहिं डरहीं । एक बार कालहु सन लरहीं ॥ १० ॥
जद्यपि मनुज दनुज कुल घालक । मुनि पालक खल सालक बालक ॥ ११ ॥

dūtanha kahā rāma sana jā'ī. sunata rāma bōlē musukā'ī. 8.
hama chatrī mrgayā bana karahīm. tumha sē khala mrga khōjata phirahīm. 9.
ripu balavanta dēkhi nahīm ḍarahīm. ēka bāra kālahu sana larahīm. 10.
jadyapi manuja danuja kula ghālaka. muni pālaka khala sālaka bālaka. 11.

The messengers immediately went to Lord Ram and conveyed the message of the demons to him. When the Lord heard it he smiled¹, and replied, --- (8)

[¹Why did the Lord 'smile'? Lord Ram 'smiled' because the demons' proposal was so absurd that no man of self-respect would ever agree to it. Besides that, the Lord 'smiled' that he would soon fulfill the wish of the demons, which was that they wanted to have Sita, because in a little while Ravana would come to abduct Sita and take her away to Lanka, and the Lord would allow him to do so; for the Lord fulfills the wishes of all, even his enemies! Further, there is one more reason for the Lord

‘smiling’: he was amused that these demons have themselves shown him the way by which the Lord could easily eliminate them and fulfill the promise he had made earlier to the Gods and Mother Earth. And this ‘way’ was to use Sita as a medium by which the Lord’s mission could be successfully accomplished. Perhaps this is why after this incident the Lord thought over the matter and decided to let Sita go with Ravana voluntarily—so that he could go to the citadel of the demons at Lanka and finish them off there itself before they find time and are able to gather their wits to spread all over the earth and escape him.]

--- ‘We are Kshatriyas (warriors) who roam in the forest to hunt wicked and cruel animals (or creatures) like you (the demons). (9)

We are not afraid at all that the enemy is mighty strong and powerful. In fact if Kaal (death itself personified) itself comes to us to challenge us we would gladly accept it and boldly face it in a battle. (10)

Though we are humans but you must note it that we are reputed to be destroyers of cruel and wicked creatures represented by the demon race; we are also protectors of hermits, sages and seers, and we find pleasure in tormenting and teasing wicked fellows like those children who would playfully puncture and cut small insects and worms to derive enjoyment from such acts.

[To wit, though we are young and tender to look at, but we are made of a sterner stuff than what you think of. We are not going to be so easily brow-beaten by you and your boastful bluster that you will kill us by the mere force of your numbers. Come, we accept your challenge for a duel.] (11)

जौं न होइ बल घर फिरि जाहू । समर बिमुख मैं हतउँ न काहू ॥ १२ ॥
 रन चढ़ि करिअ कपट चतुराई । रिपु पर कृपा परम कदराई ॥ १३ ॥
 दूतन्ह जाइ तुरत सब कहेऊ । सुनि खर दूषन उर अति दहेऊ ॥ १४ ॥

jaum̐ na hō'i bala ghara phiri jāhū. samara bimukha maim̐ hata'um̐ na kāhū.
 12.

rana caḍhi kari'a kapaṭa caturā'ī. ripu para kṛpā parama kadarā'ī. 13.
 dūtanha jā'i turata saba kahē'ū. suni khara dūṣana ura ati dahē'ū. 14.

Look; if you do not have the courage (to fight with me) then go back home. I do not attack anyone who turns around and shows his back in the battle-field.

[To wit, I don't harm a coward. So if your lords, Khar and Dushan, are trying to make peace with me because they are afraid of dying in a battle with me, and to hide their fear they are pretending to be reasonable and avoid a confrontation by offering to strike a ridiculous bargain, that we give away our lady to our enemies if we wish to go back alive, then listen—I don't harm cowards. If you can't face me then go back peacefully and without fear, for I am not going to shoot you in your back.] (12)

After launching an open war and challenging one's opponent for a duel, then trying wicked means to avoid confrontation and playing smart by pretending to be merciful

on one's enemy or opponent, is nothing but high degree of cowardice and fearfulness.

[To wit, once your lords Khar and Dushan, who are known demons who lack any mercy and compassion in their hearts, launched an attack on us, why are they now worried about our going back home alive? Why can't they kill us if they can and then take our lady as a trophy of battle if they have the guts to do so instead of offering to make a deal with us that we voluntarily submit our lady to them for the fear of our own lives? Say, which warrior worth his salt and name would agree to such a funny and outright ridiculous proposal? So go to your lords and tell them to go back instead of their telling us to go back!] (13)

The messengers went back immediately and conveyed Lord Ram's message to the demons Khar and Dushan. The Lord's answer burnt their heart and set it afire.

[To wit, there was nothing more humiliating for the demons than the Lord's answer that implied that they were cowards and afraid to fight with him. This rebuke infuriated them no end, and it was like pouring oil in the fire of hate that was already smouldering in their hearts.] (14)

छं०. उर दहेउ कहेउ कि धरहु धाए बिकट भट रजनीचरा । १ ।
सर चाप तोमर सक्ति सूल कृपान परिघ परसु धरा ॥ २ ॥
प्रभु कीन्हि धनुष टकोर प्रथम कठोर घोर भयावहा । ३ ।
भए बधिर व्याकुल जातुधान न ग्यान तेहि अवसर रहा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ura dahē'u kahē'u ki dharahu dhā'ē bikaṭa bhaṭa rajanīcarā. 1.
sara cāpa tōmara sakti sūla kṛpāna parigha parasu dharā. 2.
prabhu kīnhi dhanuṣa ṭakōra prathama kaṭhōra ghōra bhayāvahā. 3.
bha'ē badhira byākula jātudhāna na gyāna tēhi avasara rahā. 4.

[When the emissaries came back and conveyed to the demons Khar and Dushan the stern reply that Lord Ram had given to their message, they were extremely infuriated as never in their lives had they ever been subjected to such a scalding rebuke.]

Their (Khar-and-Dushan's) hearts burnt in the fire of revenge, and they ordered their demon soldiers 'go and catch him forthwith'. At this order, fierce demon warriors lunged forward at the Lord (Sri Ram) [1]; they were armed to the teeth with formidable weapons such as arrows, bows, iron clubs, lancets, spears, scimitars and double-edged swords, maces and heavy battle-axes [2]. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

The Lord (Sri Ram) wished to first issue a warning signal to these mad demons (before actually launching his counter-attack)¹, and so he twanged his stringed bow loudly, with a reverberating sound that was terrifying and deafening. (Chanda line no. 3)

This twang of the bow sent shivers through the spine of the attacking demon warriors who became deaf by its shrill sound that stunned them out of their wits and made them so sore agitated with fright that they virtually lost consciousness of themselves, and so dazed that they lost bearing of their surroundings². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram wished to warn his attackers first of the fate that stares them on their face should they continue with their misadventure under the influence of death so that later on no one would raise a finger at the Lord that he should have given his enemy a chance to escape death.

²The twang of the Lord's bow was so loud and shrill that for some time the demons became stupefied and deaf in their ears; and this terrified them a lot as never in their lives had they ever had the chance to face an enemy who would fearlessly stand his ground against their onslaught. These demons were accustomed to seeing their enemies fleeing from them in terror as soon as they heard of their arrival, and not even the mighty gods had the guts to face them. So they did not expect such a welcome at the hands of a human being, Lord Ram, as they had faced now. This situation in itself was sufficient to cause enough consternation and heart-burn for the demons, and when the Lord pulled the strings of his bow to release it with a mighty twang, the shock waves struck the demons like a sledge-hammer. They were taken aback, and swooned and stumbled in their path.]

दो०. सावधान होइ धाए जानि सबल आराति ।
 लागे बरषन राम पर अज सज बहु भाँति ॥ १९ (क) ॥
 तिन्ह के आयुध तिल सम करि काटे रघुबीर ।
 तानि सरासन श्रवन लागि पुनि छाँड़े निज तीर ॥ १९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

sāvadhāna hō'i dhā'ē jāni sabala ārāti.
 lāgē baraṣana rāma para astra sastra bahu bhāṁti. 19 (a).
 tinha kē āyudha tila sama kari kāṭē raghubīra.
 tāni sarāsana śravana lagi puni chāṁṛē nija tīra. 19 (b).

The attacking demons realized that their opponent was not an easy target who could be rushed over and crushed so effortlessly, and that the enemy was strong, formidable and powerful. So these demons gathered their wits together and became alert while resuming their attack with renewed vigour.

They began showering countless types of missiles and weapons of all sorts upon Lord Ram with a vengeance. (Doha no. 19-a)

The brave Lord of the Raghus ("raghubīra"; Lord Ram) neutralized and destroyed all the weapons and missiles of the demons by cutting them into small splinters as small as sesame seeds. [To wit, Lord Ram rapidly shot arrows so powerful and effective that almost immediately fragmented the missiles etc. shot by the demons at the Lord.]

After having effectively neutralized the arms of the demon forces, the Lord went into an offensive mode, pulling the string of his bow back to his ears (to make it as taut as possible) and then shooting his own volley of arrows at the virtually disarmed (and demoralised) demon army. (Doha no. 19-b)

छं०. तब चले बान कराल । फुंकरत जनु बहु ब्याल ॥ १ ॥

कोपेउ समर श्रीराम । चले बिसिख निसित निकाम ॥ २ ॥
 अवलोकि खरतर तीर । मुरि चले निसिचर बीर ॥ ३ ॥
 भए क्रुद्ध तीनिउ भाइ । जो भागि रन ते जाइ ॥ ४ ॥
 तेहि बधब हम निज पानि । फिरे मरन मन महुँ ठानि ॥ ५ ॥
 आयुध अनेक प्रकार । सनमुख ते करहिं प्रहार ॥ ६ ॥

chanda.

taba calē bāna karāla. phuṅkarata janū bahu. 1.
 kōpē'u samara śrīrāma. calē bisikha nisita nikāma. 2.
 avalōki kharatara tīra. muri calē nisicara bīra. 3.
 bha'e krud'dha tīni'u bhā'i. jō bhāgi rana tē jā'i. 4.
 tēhi badhaba hama nija pāni. phirē marana mana mahum̐ ṭhāni. 5.
 āyudha anēka prakāra. sanamukha tē karahim̐ prahāra. 6.

The terrible arrows shot by the Lord sped forth like so many hissing serpents flying through the air. (Chanda line no. 1)

When Lord Ram became infuriated in battle, countless formidable arrows of immensely terrifying nature shot forth in rapid volleys. (Chanda line no. 2)

Seeing the sharp arrows coming directly at them with terrifying speed, the horrified demon warriors turned their backs and ran for their lives, scattering like nine pins here and there. (Chanda line no. 3)

The three demon brothers (Khar, Dushan and Trishira) became extremely exasperated and angry when they saw their army running away from the battle-field; they shouted at the retreating demon warriors, warning warned them of dire consequences if they ran away, saying 'mind everyone of you; if anyone runs away from the battle-field, we will kill him ourselves'¹.

At this stern warning and realizing that their death was certain if they tried to escape from the battle, the retreating demons turned once again towards the battle-field (to launch a fresh attack on the Lord in a last-ditch attempt in a do-or-die situation)². (Chanda line nos. 4-5)

They attacked the Lord from the front with renewed vigour, shooting many types of weapons and missiles at him. (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—¹The three demon brothers had stationed themselves strategically on the three sides of the battle-field to monitor the developments on the ground. They had sent their advance troops for the first wave of attack, holding back reserves for the second assault should the first fail. When they saw that their warriors were turning on their heels to escape death, they were angry and dumb-founded as never before had they ever faced such a situation in the battle-field, especially more remarkable and astonishing because in this case their opponent was a single person and not an army. They must have rubbed their eyes to make sure that what they were wide awake and not seeing dream, but the stark reality of the battle-field!

²The poor demon soldiers had no choice: death was certain for them, either as brave warriors who die fighting, or as cowards who would be put to death by their commanders Khar, Dushan and Trishira if they tried to flee. So they wisely chose to die at the hands of Lord Ram, embracing death like true warriors. This decision had its own rewards—for when the Lord slayed them he also ensured the deliverance of their souls, a benefit these demon warriors would have been denied had they died at the hands of their vile and fallen masters Khar, Dushan and Trishira. This fact is expressly endorsed in Doha no. 20-a herein below.]

रिपु परम कोपे जानि । प्रभु धनुष सर संधानि ॥ ७ ॥
छाँड़े बिपुल नाराच । लगे कटन बिकट पिसाच ॥ ८ ॥
उर सीस भुज कर चरन । जहँ तहँ लगे महि परन ॥ ९ ॥
चिक्करत लागत बान । धर परत कुधर समान ॥ १० ॥
भट कटत तन सत खंड । पुनि उठत करि पाषंड ॥ ११ ॥
नभ उड़त बहु भुज मुंड । बिनु मौलि धावत रुंड ॥ १२ ॥
खग कंक काक सृगाल । कटकटहिं कठिन कराल ॥ १३ ॥

ripu parama kōpē jāni. prabhu dhanuṣa sara sandhāni. 7.
chāmṛē bipula nārāca. lagē kaṭana bikaṭa pisāca. 8.
ura sīsa bhuja kara carana. jahaṁ tahaṁ lagē mahi parana. 9.
cikkarata lāgata bāna. dhara parata kudhara samāna. 10.
bhaṭa kaṭata tana sata khaṇḍa. puni uṭhata kari pāṣaṇḍa. 11.
nabha uṛata bahu bhuja muṇḍa. binu mauḷi dhāvata ruṇḍa. 12.
khaga kaṅka kākā sṛgāla. kaṭakaṭahim kaṭhina karāla. 13.

Observing that the enemy has become excessively aggressive and furious, daring to die in a no-holds barred conflict, Lord Ram mounted his specially empowered arrows known as ‘Narach (nārāca)’ and shot multitudes of them at the infuriated enemy. The result was that the evil demons began to be cut into pieces. (Chanda line nos. 7-8)

Torn and sliced pieces of their chests, heads, shoulders, arms and legs flew everywhere and landed on the ground (like so many meteors striking the earth). (Chanda line no. 9)

The demon warriors yelled horrifyingly when they were hit by the sharp arrows that pierced their bodies and cut-off their heads even as their dismembered torsos fell on the ground with a heavy resounding thud like so many mountains collapsing (into rubble, after an explosion). (Chanda line no. 10)

The bodies of the demon warriors were chopped into hundreds of pieces, but still they got up again to fight by the power of deception (pāṣaṇḍa) that they possessed. (Chanda line no. 11)

Many arms and heads were flying through the sky (like so many meteors and unknown flying objects); and countless headless trunks were running helter-skelter on the ground in the battle-field (like so many phantoms). (Chanda line no. 12)

Flesh eating birds such as vultures, kites and crows, as well as animals such as jackals and hyenas wrangled for their share of flesh in a blood-curdling and cruel manner. (Chanda line no. 13)

[Note—The spine-chilling and gut-churning scene of death, destruction and horror that is usually observed in any battle-field has been brought alive here. Later on when we read the war at Lanka such horrifying scenes would once again be described with exceptional clarity.

More of it follows in the verses herein below.

This Chanda is called a 'Tomar Chanda'. It is unique form of poetic composition that suits narration of battle scenes as 'Tomar' is also the name of a weapon. It is an iron club that is employed to bludgeon the enemy to death; it is also the name of the battle-ram used to break through the gate and walls of enemy forts. A 'Tomar Chanda' has four lines in each stanza, and each line has 12 Matras or syllables of the Hindi language. However, the last stanza is odd. In our present Chanda it will be noted that the last stanza consists of only one line, i.e. Chanda line no. 13.

When this Chanda is recited it resembles the fast paced, staccato rhythm like that of the beating of war drums.]

छ०. कटकटहिं जंबुक भूत प्रेत पिसाच खर्पर संचहीं । १ ।
 बेताल बीर कपाल ताल बजाइ जोगिनि नंचहीं ॥ २ ॥
 रघुबीर बान प्रचंड खंडहिं भटन्ह के उर भुज सिरा । ३ ।
 जहँ तहँ परहिं उठि लरहिं धर धरु धरु करहिं भयकर गिरा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kaṭakaṭaḥim jambuka bhūta prēta pisāca kharpara sañcahīm. 1.
 bēṭāla bīra kapāla tāla bajā'i jōgini nañcahīm. 2.
 raghubīra bāna pracaṇḍa khaṇḍaḥim bhaṭanḥa kē ura bhuja sirā. 3.
 jahaṁ tahaṁ parahim uṭhi larahim dhara dharu dharu karahim bhayakara girā. 4.

Jackals and hyenas howled and wrangled with each other¹; ghosts, devils and other forms of spirits and fiends (bhūta prēta pisāca) collected blood and flesh in hollowed-out skulls of fallen warriors.

[¹Refer: Chanda line no. 13 of the previous group of Chandas herein above.]
 (Chanda line no. 1)

Phantoms² (bēṭāla) picked up skulls of dead warriors in their hands and struck them like one strikes cymbals; and female phantoms called Yoginis³ (jōgini) danced merrily around.

[²According to the Purans, the 'Vetals', or phantoms, are a sort of ghosts who are believed to be superior to ordinary ghosts. They usually live in the cremation

grounds. They are also said to be attendants of Lord Shiva, the third God of the Trinity who is responsible for the conclusion of creation, and therefore, symbolically of death.

³Yoginis are a sort of female phantoms who reside in cremation grounds and rush to battle-fields where they dance merrily at the spectacle of death and destruction; according to legend they are a form of goddess Kali, the goddess of death, as well as of Durga, the goddess of war.] (Chanda line no. 2)

Lord Raghubir's (i.e. Lord Ram's) fierce and potent arrows are striking hard at their targets, cutting into pieces the chests, shoulders and heads of the demon warriors⁴.

[⁴Refer: Chanda line no. 8 of the previous group of Chandas herein above.] (Chanda line no. 3)

These dismembered parts of the warriors fall here and there on the ground in the battle-field; then they rise once again, stumbling and tottering, to fight; shouting and yelling terribly: 'catch them; grab them'⁵.

[⁵Refer: Chanda line nos. 9-11 of the previous group of Chandas herein above.] (Chanda line no. 4)

अंतावरीं गहि उड़त गीध पिसाच कर गहि धावहीं । ५ ।

संग्राम पुर बासी मनहुँ बहु बाल गुड़ी उड़ावहीं ॥ ६ ॥

मारे पछारे उर बिदारे बिपुल भट कहँरत परे । ७ ।

अवलोकि निज दल बिकल भट तिसिरादि खर दूषन फिरे ॥ ८ ॥

antāvarīm gahi uṛata gīdha pisāca kara gahi dhāvahīm. 5.

saṅgrāma pura bāsī manahuṁ bahu bāla guṛī uṛāvahīm. 6.

mārē pachārē ura bidārē bipula bhaṭa kahaṁrata parē. 7.

avalōki nija dala bikala bhaṭa tisirādi khara dūṣana phirē. 8.

Vultures catch hold of one end of the dead warriors' intestines and fly away with it, while devilish spirits and fiends hold the other end of the intestines and try to drag them away. (Chanda line no. 5)

This sight gives the impression that so many children of a town symbolized by the battle-field are flying kites and vying with each other to gain an upper hand in their competitive bid¹.

[¹In this imagery, the vultures are the 'kites' because they are air-borne, the phantoms are the 'children' who are running on the ground trying to fly their kites, and the intestines are the 'strings' of these kites, one end of which is attached to the kite symbolized the vultures and the other end is in the hand of the phantoms who symbolize children.] (Chanda line no. 6)

Countless demon warriors were killed, had their hearts torn out and chests sheared, and were bludgeoned to the ground; so many of them are yet not dead, for they lie in the battle-field wailing, groaning and moaning half-alive. (Chanda line no. 7)

Observing the distressful condition of their forces, the three demon commanders Khar, Dushan and Trishira turned their attention to Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 8)

सर सक्ति तोमर परसु सूल कृपान एकहि बारहीं । ९ ।
 करि कोप श्रीरघुबीर पर अगनित निसाचर डारहीं ॥ १० ॥
 प्रभु निमिष महँ रिपु सर निवारि पचारि डारे सायका । ११ ।
 दस दस बिसिख उर माझ मारे सकल निसिचर नायका ॥ १२ ॥

sara sakti tōmara parasu sūla kṛpāna ēkahi bārahīm. 9.
 kari kōpa śrīraghubīra para aganita nisācara ḍārahīm. 10.
 prabhu nimiṣa mahuṁ ripu sara nivāri pacāri ḍārē sāyakā. 11.
 dasa dasa bisikha ura mājha mārē sakala nisicara nāyakā. 12.

Countless demons started raining various types of fierce weapons, such as powerful arrows, clubs, spears, spikes, battle-axes, tridents and swords (sara sakti tōmara parasu sūla kṛpāna) angrily on Lord Ram all at once (ēkahi bārahīm)¹.

[¹Refer: Doha no. 19, along with Chanda line no. 2 that precede it, and Chanda line no. 6 that follow it.] (Chanda line nos. 9-10)

The Lord (Sri Ram) neutralized all the missiles (sara nivāri) of the enemy very swiftly in a few moments (or seconds; “nimiṣa mahuṁ”); and then he retaliated with his own volley of powerfully potent arrows (pacāri ḍārē sāyakā)².

[²Refer: Doha no. 19 herein above.] (Chanda line no. 11)

He (Lord Ram) shot ten arrows at the heart of each of the demon commanders, and all these arrows slammed home with precision. (Chanda line no. 12)

महि परत उठि भट भिरत मरत न करत माया अति घनी । १३ ।
 सुर डरत चौदह सहस प्रेत बिलोकि एक अवध धनी ॥ १४ ॥
 सुर मुनि सभय प्रभु देखि मायानाथ अति कौतुक कस्यो । १५ ।
 देखहि परसपर राम करि संग्राम रिपुदल लरि मर्यो ॥ १६ ॥

mahi parata uṭhi bhaṭa bhirata marata na karata māyā ati ghanī. 13.
 sura ḍarata caudaha sahasa prēta bilōki ēka avadha dhanī. 14.
 sura muni sabhaya prabhu dēkhi māyānātha ati kautuka karyō. 15.
 dēkhahīm parasapara rāma kari saṅgrāma ripudala lari maryō. 16.

The demon warriors fall to the ground, but get up mysteriously to fight once again. They were employing deceptive techniques of which they were masters¹.

[¹Refer: Chanda line nos. 10-11 that precede this present group of Chandas, and follow Doha no. 19 herein above.] (Chanda line no. 13)

The gods (who were watching the proceedings from the heaven) became worried and sore affright as they saw that these wicked spirits (“prēta”; the fiendish spirits of dead

demons) who knew countless tricks were fourteen thousand in number, while the Lord of Ayodhya (“avadha dhanī”; Lord Ram) was alone and fighting these multitudes single-handedly. (Chanda line no. 14)

When the Lord (Sri Ram) realized that the gods and sages had got terrified, he revealed his own masterly skill at creating deceptions [15] by which all the demons were misled to think that their companions were Lord Ram, and therefore they fought with each other and killed one another without the Lord’s slightest intervention [16]!

[To wit, the demon warriors saw Lord Ram everywhere around them. So they killed their own friends and other demon warriors in the belief that they were killing their enemy Lord Ram. By employing this maverick trick the Lord was able to get rid of the demon army quickly without any further effort.] (Chanda line nos. 15-16)

[Note—This Chanda is called a ‘Geetika Chanda’. It is so called as it can be sung melodiously with a sonorous voice, like a ‘song’, a ‘Geet’. This sort of composition is soothing for the nerves as compared to the previous style called Tomar Chanda which is a war song that excites and arouses the nerves.]

दो०. राम राम कहि तनु तजहिं पावहिं पद निर्बान ।
करि उपाय रिपु मारे छन महुँ कृपानिधान ॥ २० (क) ॥
हरषित बरषहिं सुमन सुर बाजहिं गगन निसान ।
अस्तुति करि करि सब चले सोभित बिबिध बिमान ॥ २० (ख) ॥

dōhā.

rāma rāma kahi tanu tajahim pāvahim pada nirbāna.
kari upāya ripu mārē chana mahuṁ kṛpānidhāna. 20 (a).
haraṣita baraṣahim sumana sura bājahim gagana nisāna.
astuti kari kari saba calē sōbhita bibidha bimāna. 20 (b).

All the demons died while pronouncing the (holy) name of Lord Ram repeatedly (rāma rāma kahi tanu tajahim), which granted their souls instant liberation and deliverance (pāvahim pada nirbāna)¹.

By this means the Lord who is a treasury of mercy and compassion (kṛpānidhāna) was quickly able to slay all the enemies. (Doha no. 20-a)

When the demons were eliminated, the gods showered flowers over the victorious Lord from the sky (heaven), and played their trumpets to celebrate the happy occasion.

All the gods offered their prayers and sung eulogies lauding the glories of the Lord; then they went back to their respective abodes aboard different types of wonderful air-planes. (Doha no. 20-b)

[Note—¹When the demons began to hallucinate and each one of them saw that he was surrounded by multiple forms of Lord Ram, their enemy, all of them were astonished and terrorized beyond measure. Out of fear and astonishment they began to shout ‘Ram, Ram’. But this proved a boon for them and their souls, as this word ‘Ram’ is not merely an ordinary name but a divine Mantra, which is a mystical formula used

during spiritual practices to attain emancipation and salvation of the soul. Thus, even unwittingly, the soul of these demons got liberation from their evil bodies, and they found deliverance from the cycle of birth and death in this gross world of transmigration.

This is why Lord Ram is called ‘krpānidhāna’; the Lord ensured that even his enemies, though they were evil and sinful, should get the reward of coming close to him and saying his holy name ‘Ram’. And the best blessing that a creature can be granted is liberation from the horrors of life with its endless miseries and pains in this world of transmigration. Deliverance of the creature’s soul is the best spiritual reward that one can ever have, and the merciful Lord Ram granted this rare privilege to these demons.

The gracious Lord had no personal enmity with any one of these demons for he knew that their souls were inherently pure, and it was their bodies that were sinful. And when the body was slain and the soul liberated from its captivity, it regained its holiness and purity once again by uttering the holy Mantra ‘Ram, Ram’ which is all-purifying and the most holy of all the holy Mantras. Incidentally, it ought to be noted that according to the Upanishads, especially the ‘Ram Tapini Upanishad’ and the ‘Ram Rahasya Upanishad’ of the Atharva Veda tradition, this word ‘Ram’ is also called a ‘Tarak Mantra’, i.e. a spiritual formula that grants liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation to the creature. So when the demons uttered “Ram” while dying, they got a reward that is inherent in and integral to this holy Mantra—and it was deliverance of their soul.]

चौ०. जब रघुनाथ समर रिपु जीते । सुर नर मुनि सब के भय बीते ॥ १ ॥
तब लछिमन सीतहि लै आए । प्रभु पद परत हरषि उर लाए ॥ २ ॥
सीता चितव स्याम मृदु गाता । परम प्रेम लोचन न अघाता ॥ ३ ॥
पंचबटीं बसि श्रीरघुनायक । करत चरित सुर मुनि सुखदायक ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jaba raghunātha samara ripu jītē. sura nara muni saba kē bhaya bītē. 1.
taba lachimana sītahi lai ā'ē. prabhu pada parata haraṣi ura lā'ē. 2.
sītā citava syāma mṛdu gātā. parama prēma lōcana na aghātā. 3.
pañcabaṭīṁ basi śrīraghunāyaka. karata carita sura muni sukhadāyaka. 4.

When Lord Ram, the Lord of the line of kings descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya (raghunātha), vanquished the enemy (i.e. the demons) in the battle, all the gods, the humans and the sages (who lived in terror of these demons) became fearless¹. (1)

When the battle was over, Laxman brought Sita to where the Lord was. He fell at the feet of the Lord who cheerfully raised him and embraced him². (2)

Sita affectionately looked at the dark-complexioned and delicate form (syāma mṛdu gātā) of Lord Ram, feeling exhilarated and full of joy so much that tears of affection welled up in her eyes that were unable to satisfy her as she gazed at her beloved Lord intently (nor were they able to restrain these tears from coming out and sliding down her cheeks)³. (3)

In this way, Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) lived in Panchavati and did many deeds that gave a lot of joy and happiness to the gods and the sages. (4)

{Thus ends the episode that describes the slaying of the demons Khar, Dushan etc. as well as the deformation of Supernakha that sowed the seed and prepared the ground for the ultimate elimination of Ravana and the rest of the evil, sinful and cruel demons.}

[Note—¹The word for Lord Ram used here is “raghunātha”, i.e. the ‘Lord of the Raghu line of kings’. This word signifies the importance of Lord Ram slaying the cruel demons who had been endlessly tormenting humble creatures, because it indicates that though there had been otherwise great and excellent kings in this dynasty but no one had been able to free their subjects from the horror of the demons till now; it was Lord Ram who was the first to do so.

Another important point to note is that this incident took place deep inside a dense and uninhabited forest called Dandakaranya; only sages, hermits and ascetics lived in such secluded places in order to pursue their religious objectives without disturbance from the hustle and bustle of life in this world. The news of the arrival of Lord Ram had already spread like wildfire in the forest, and all the hermitages around the place had become aware of the Lord’s presence. Prior to coming to the Panchavati area where this battle with the demon army took place, the Lord had visited the hermitage of sage Agastya, and it was the sage who had himself advised the Lord to spend time here. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede Doha no. 13.}

So therefore everyone was alert; all important developments related to the Lord was eagerly heard and shared; and all the news spread quickly through the different hermitages by the word-of-mouth means. Hence, Supernakha’s deformation and the subsequent elimination of a major part of the demon forces led by well-known commanders Khar, Dushan and Trishira who were deputed by the king of the demon race, i.e. Ravana, to guard the outer fringes of the demons’ extended kingdom, was something so significant and epochal that it could not be kept secret for long. Whenever a fierce battle is fought, there is so much noise and clamour caused by the clash of energetic enemies as well as arms and armaments of all sorts and varieties, and so huge an amount of dust is raised up into the sky, that those living miles away become aware of this calamitous event, and it cannot pass unnoticed.

So, the news of this first-of-its kind and rarest-of-rare development when a single prince would eliminate an entire army consisting of blood-thirsty, ferocious and vicious demons of countless numbers who were armed to the teeth, and who yelled at the top of their lung-power and raised hell by their spine-chilling war-cries, could not have remained unknown amongst the sages, seers, hermits and ascetics, and their disciples, who lived in hermitages far and near. As for the gods, they had personally witnessed the battle from the sky. {Refer: Doha no. 20-b herein above.}

²Laxman had been instructed by Lord Ram to take Sita and hide inside a cave for the purpose of their safety. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 10-13 that precede Doha no. 18 herein above.}

Once the battle ended and the din-and-dust subsided, Laxman came out of the cave with Sita, and returned happily to Lord Ram. He fell at the Lord’s feet in joy even as the Lord picked him up and embraced him affectionately.

³To wit, Sita felt so extremely fortunate and happy that Lord Ram was not harmed by the onslaught of the fierce demons who had attacked him from all the sides. While inside the cave she must have heard the deafening clatter of the battle-field, and would have peeped out a little to actually see and imagined much more of what may have been actually happening on the ground. She was extremely nervous and sore affright, fearing of the worst. So it is natural that when she saw her beloved Lord Ram virtually unscathed she felt very fortunate and filled with joy.

She closely observed the body of Lord Ram to see if there were any wounds. It is such a remarkable thing and a miraculous one at that, that though a torrent of sharp weapons had been raining on the Lord mercilessly, no serious sign of a wound was to be observed. Sita was overwhelmed with emotions; she could not stop gazing at the Lord both in love as well as in admiration. Tears moistened her eyes, and no matter how hard she would try to restrain them some drops must have involuntarily slid down her cheeks.

The fact that Lord Ram's delicate body was not wounded in the fierce attack of the demons itself proved that the Lord was no ordinary human being, but that he was a Divine Being, the Supreme Lord of the world himself in a human form.

The Lord pulled off this miracle without anyone being suspicious of his true form because there was no one present to observe the battle that took place in the deep forest; the demons who were witnesses had all died, and the gods of course knew who the Lord actually was, so there was no chance of this secret leaking to alert the demon king Ravana that the prince whom he will face in the future and who will eventually kill him is not a human being but the Supreme Being himself.

We will read soon, however, that Ravana did become suspicious of the Lord's true identity for he knew that it is impossible for anyone to kill Khar, Dushan and Trishira along with their huge army, but he was still in doubt. Had he known that Lord Ram's body did not suffer any wounds, he would have been certain of the Lord's Divinity and in all probability he would either had run away to hide somewhere or surrendered without resistance. In both the cases, the main objective of the Lord for which he had come down to earth from heaven, which was to eliminate the demons and save the earth and its creatures from their horrors and torments would not have been fulfilled, for the merciful Lord would not kill anyone who has either surrendered or has cowardly run away from the battle-field. In this eventuality, the mission would have remained unaccomplished.]

धुआँ देखि खर दूषन केरा । जाइ सुपनखाँ रावन प्रेरा ॥ ५ ॥
 बोली बचन क्रोध करि भारी । देस कोस कै सुरति बिसारी ॥ ६ ॥
 करसि पान सोवसि दिनु राती । सुधि नहिं तव सिर पर आराती ॥ ७ ॥

dhu'āñ dēkhi khara dūṣana kērā. jā'i supanakhāñ rāvana prērā. 5.
 bōlī bacana krōdha kari bhārī. dēsa kōsa kai surati bisārī. 6.
 karasi pāna sōvasi dinu rātī. sudhi nahim tava sira para ārātī. 7.

{Now starts the second phase of the story—when Supernakha went to instigate Ravana against Lord Ram, pleading with him to take revenge for her deformation and the killing of her cousin brothers Khar and Dushan along with their army.}

When Supernakha observed the dust that was raised when Khar and Dushan fell dead on the ground, she slithered away from there surreptitiously, and went straight to Ravana to incite him¹. (5)

Once there, she spoke to him angrily with a shrill voice and a provocative tone, admonishing him sternly: ‘Woe to you as you have forgotten about and have neglected the condition of your realm and wealth. (6)

You drink and get intoxicated enough to sleep day and night; for you are unaware that a formidable enemy is right up at your head (“tava sira para”; knocking at your doorstep)². (7)

[Note—¹Where did Supernakha meet Ravana? Well, it was in his court, in full view of the demon courtiers who were in attendance, and not privately inside his palace. This will be clear shortly below in Doha no. 21-b.

²To wit, you are so stupid that you think that you have no enemy as you have conquered the gods and their king Indra. In your over-confidence of invincibility and deluded to think that there is no one powerful enough to challenge your might, you drink and sleep all day and night so much so that you have neglected the demon kingdom and do not take regular report of what is happening in your realm. Look—a formidable enemy is right up knocking at your very gate, ready to usurp your kingdom and push you out into oblivion, and yet you sleep soundly as if everything was fine. Aren’t for example you aware that the mighty Khar and Dushan are dead in battle, and their entire army is finished? How stupid you are!]

राज नीति बिनु धन बिनु धर्मा । हरिहि समर्पे बिनु सतकर्मा ॥ ८ ॥
 बिद्या बिनु बिबेक उपजाएँ । श्रम फल पढ़ें किएँ अरु पाएँ ॥ ९ ॥
 संग तें जती कुमंत्र ते राजा । मान ते ग्यान पान तें लाजा ॥ १० ॥
 प्रीति प्रनय बिनु मद ते गुनी । नासहिं बेगि नीति अस सुनी ॥ ११ ॥

rāja nīti binu dhana binu dharmā. harihi samarpē binu satakarmā. 8.
 bidyā binu bibēka upajā'ēṁ. śrama phala paṛhēm ki'ēṁ aru pā'ēṁ. 9.
 saṅga tēm jāti kumantra tē rājā. māna tē gyāna pāna tēm lājā. 10.
 prīti pranaya binu mada tē gunī. nāsahīṁ bēgi nīti asa sunī. 11.

[Supernakha gave some instances of well known and time-tested maxims to impress upon Ravana that importance and urgency of being vigilant.]

Kinghood without knowledge of politics, accumulation of wealth without virtues, doing good deeds without offering them to Lord Hari (the Lord God) [8], acquiring knowledge without having the wisdom and the ability to judiciously employ this knowledge—are all in vain. To wit, all these activities fail to produce the desired result if not done properly and in accordance to these axioms. [9] (8-9)

Further, it is also heard (i.e. it is a well-known proverb) that all the following persons come to ruin: viz. (a) a person who has renounced the world but keeps company of

some sort, (b) a king who is given bad advice, (c) a person who has knowledge and enlightenment but also has pride, ego and haughtiness (as these negative traits dilute and corrupt as well as neutralize the gain obtained by the former), (d) a person who drinks wine and hopes to maintain dignity, decorum and self-respect [10], (e) a person who claims to be friendly but lacks sincerity and affection for his companion, and (f) a person who has expertise or skill but at the same time is haughty and arrogant—all such persons unwittingly negate whatever positive value that might be attached to their good virtues [11]. (10-11)

[Note—Supernakha was Ravana's sister, so she was within her rights to preach him on these principles, though this glorious lecture was more to instigate him and provoke him to take revenge on Lord Ram than to actually wish for his good.]

सो०. रिपु रुज पावक पाप प्रभु अहि गनिअ न छोट करि।

अस कहि बिबिध बिलाप करि लागी रोदन करन ॥ २१ (क) ॥

sōraṭhā.

ripu ruja pāvaka pāpa prabhu ahi gani'a na chōṭa kari.
asa kahi bibidha bilāpa kari lāgī rōdana karana. 21 (a).

One must never underestimate the danger arising from an enemy, a disease, fire, sins, an able lord or master, and serpent in the erroneous belief that they are small and trifling (and can be easily handled). [For no one can know or predict what great danger and inconvenience any of these aforesaid entities can cause to a person who is not sufficiently alert about them.]

Saying this, she (Supernakha) wailed, lamented and wept inconsolably in a variety of ways. (Sortha no. 21-a)

दो०. सभा माझ परि ब्याकुल बहु प्रकार कह रोइ।

तोहि जिअत दसकंधर मोरि कि असि गति होइ ॥ २१ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

sabhā mājha pari byākula bahu prakāra kaha rō'i.
tōhi ji'ata dasakandhara mōri ki asi gati hō'i. 21 (b).

She fell on the ground in the middle of the court (of Ravana), extremely agitated and crying woefully. Lamenting and grieving, she asked Ravana scornfully, 'Say, oh the ten-headed one (Ravana), should I be subjected to this pitiful and miserable condition while you are alive?'¹

[¹“To wit, aren't you ashamed of yourself, tell me, that your sister has been deformed and her ears and nose cut off by a stranger who has openly insulted you by humiliating your sister? Is he not challenging your majesty by killing your demon cousins Khar and Dushan, and annihilating their army single-handedly? And you drink and sleep as if nothing has happened. Wake up before it's too late.”] (Doha no. 21-b)

चौ०. सुनत सभासद उठे अकुलाई । समुझाई गहि बाँह उठाई ॥ १ ॥
कह लंकेस कहसि निज बाता । केइँ तव नासा कान निपाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunata sabhāsada uṭhē akulāī. samujhāī gahi bām̐ha uṭhāī. 1.
kaha laṅkēsa kahasi nija bātā. kē'iṁ tava nāsā kāna nipātā. 2.

When the courtiers of Ravana heard about the most unfortunate development that arising out of Supernakha's deformation and the subsequent decimation of the demon army led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira, an event that pointed to some grave danger of a calamitous nature that stared the demon race on its face, they were all dumbstruck and perplexed; they got up with a start, and were sore agitated (because they could not believe what they heard).

Ravana, meanwhile, tried to politely reassure his sister, and lifted her from the ground by holding her arms. (1)

The king of Lanka ("laṅkēsa"; Ravana) asked her, 'Tell me what actually happened; who has cut off your nose and ears?'¹ (2)

[Note—¹In the previous verses Supernakha has not told Ravana what had actually happened that led to her disfiguring and the subsequent death of the demon warriors led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira. She was so much agitated and extremely angry when she arrived in a great huff and burst into the court of Ravana breathlessly, panting and puffing and cursing and wailing in grief as if some great calamity has befallen the demons, and though she was its first victim yet she managed to survive the ordeal to come to report to Ravana even as other warrior demons who dared challenge the enemy had perished. This was meant to drive home the urgency of the situation and set alarm bells ringing.

Ravana and his courtiers were so much taken aback at this sudden and unexpected turn of events that they were left speechless. It was beyond their remotest imagination that the ferocious sister of their powerful Lord Ravana, the invincible king of the demon race, and who herself was strong enough to fend for herself and destroy her tormentor, if there was any, who would be stupid enough to challenge her, would one day be reduced to such a pitiful and helpless condition that she would have her body disfigured by having her nose and ears chopped off, with deep wounds from which flowed thick hot blood that had yet not dried to form crusts. This singular unbelievable sight was enough to chill the atmosphere into a death-like graveyard, and paralyse every demon courtier present at the moment in the court of Ravana.

No one dared to move; Ravana stepped forward from his throne and politely lifted up his sister from the ground where she lay prostrate writhing in agony and anger, showing empathy for her and soothing her nerves with kind words, hinting to her that he will surely take revenge on her behalf, but first she must tell him what had actually happened.]

अवध नृपति दसरथ के जाए । पुरुष सिंघ बन खेलन आए ॥ ३ ॥
समुझि परी मोहि उन्ह कै करनी । रहित निसाचर करिहिं धरनी ॥ ४ ॥

जिन्ह कर भुजबल पाइ दसानन । अभय भए बिचरत मुनि कानन ॥ ५ ॥
 देखत बालक काल समाना । परम धीर धन्वी गुन नाना ॥ ६ ॥
 अतुलित बल प्रताप द्वौ भ्राता । खल बध रत सुर मुनि सुखदाता ॥ ७ ॥

avadha nṛpati dasaratha kē jā'ē. puruṣa siṅgha bana khēlana ā'ē. 3.
 samujhi parī mōhi unha kai karanī. rahita nisācara karihahiṁ dharanī. 4.
 jinha kara bhujabala pā'i dasānana. abhaya bha'ē bicarata muni kānana. 5.
 dēkhata bālaka kāla samānā. parama dhīra dhanvī guna nānā. 6.
 atulita bala pratāpa dvau bhrātā. khala badha rata sura muni sukhadātā. 7.

[Supernakha replied—] ‘They (i.e. those who have caused so much horror for me and killed my cousins and their army) are the sons of the king of Ayodhya¹. They are like lions amongst the human beings, and it appears that they have come to the forest to hunt. (3)

I have observed their attitude, and from their behaviour and actions I have a firm conviction that they are out to destroy the demon race and eliminate all of them from the surface of the earth². (4)

Oh the ten-headed One (i.e. Ravana). Sages, seers and hermits (who are so afraid of you that they remain away from view and live a subdued life of subjugation) have recently become fearless on account of their support and strength of arm³. (5)

On the face of it they look like young adolescent boys, but this is a mirage as in reality they are extremely courageous and valiant, experts in archery as they are skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, and are endowed with countless other excellent qualities⁴. (6)

In all sooth and without gainsay, these two brothers indeed have no match for their strength, glory, gallantry and valour. It is certain that they are determinedly engaged in the slaying of the demons, and granting joy and happiness to the sages, seers and hermits (and I have no doubt about it)⁵. (7)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 17 earlier in this narration. In this verse Laxman has told Supernakha who Lord Ram was—i.e. he was the prince of Ayodhya, and since he was the Lord’s brother (Chaupai line no. 11), it also identified him as another prince of Ayodhya.

²⁺⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 19. Here, Lord Ram has told the messenger of Khar and Dushan this thing—that they are born as Kshatriyas, the warrior race, and roam around in the forest looking for devils like these demons whom they are willing to engage and kill, like children who playfully kill insects by pricking them to death, in order to maintain peace and tranquility on earth as well as to give relief to holy men such as sages and hermits.

Supernakha had been by the side of Khar and Dushan when they had attacked Lord Ram with the demon army. So when their messenger came back to report to them the answer given by Lord Ram, it is sure she had heard it. This is how she came to know about the determination of the two brothers.

³To wit, Supernakha tried her best to provoke Ravana by throwing an open challenge to him when she said: “The sages, seers and hermits whom you had subjugated by the might of your arms have now lost all fear; they roam around boldly in the forest defying your authority, as if sneering at you and challenging you to come and try harming them if you dare. Say, is this defiance acceptable to you? Your power structure and authority are crumbling, and if everyone starts losing fear of you like these sages are currently doing, then say what majesty will be left for you to boast of like the way you presently do so often?”

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 19. Even the otherwise emotionless and cruel demons Khar and Dushan were struck by the ethereal charm of Lord Ram and Laxman; they had for a moment all but forgotten about the humiliation their sister Supernakha had undergone at the first divine sight of the two brothers.]

सोभा धाम राम अस नामा । तिन्ह के संग नारि एक स्यामा ॥ ८ ॥
 रूप रासि बिधि नारि सँवारी । रति सत कोटि तासु बलिहारी ॥ ९ ॥
 तासु अनुज काटे श्रुति नासा । सुनि तव भगिनि करहिं परिहासा ॥ १० ॥
 खर दूषन सुनि लगे पुकारा । छन महुँ सकल कटक उन्ह मारा ॥ ११ ॥
 खर दूषन तिसिरा कर घाता । सुनि दससीस जरे सब गाता ॥ १२ ॥

sōbhā dhāma rāma asa nāmā. tinha kē saṅga nāri ēka syāmā. 8.
 rūpa rāsi bidhi nāri saṁvārī. rati sata kōṭi tāsū balihārī. 9.
 tāsū anuja kāṭē śruti nāsā. suni tava bhagini karahim parihāsā. 10.
 khara dūṣana suni lagē pukārā. chana mahum sakala kaṭaka unha mārā. 11.
 khara dūṣana tisirā kara ghātā. suni dasasīsa jarē saba gātā. 12.

His name is ‘Ram’, and very handsome, being an epitome of beauty and charm¹. With him is a lady with a dark-complexion (saṅga nāri ēka syāmā). (8)

This particular lady is a virtual treasury of beauty and charm; indeed the Creator (‘Vidhi’) had painstakingly endowed her with these glorious and excellent physical qualities, for a hundred-thousand ‘Ratis’² appear to have been sacrificed in order to create her². (9)

His (i.e. Lord Ram’s) younger brother (Laxman) has cut my nose and ears; when they heard that I am your sister they laughed at me (to tease me with excessive sarcasm in their voice and expression)³. (10)

When I rushed to Khar and Dushan to call them to my rescue, and they immediately responded by scurrying to take revenge with the full might of their army, he (Lord Ram) had killed the entire demon force quickly in a few moments.’ (11)

When the ten-headed Ravana heard that Khar-Dushan and Trishira had been killed, he was so extremely indignant, peeved and angry that his body literally burnt as if on fire. [To wit, this was a personal affront on his self-respect and dignity that was too

much for him to cope with silently. He wringed his hands and cursed under his breath, resolving to seek retribution.] (12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 19 where we read Khar and Dushan too had made a similar observation.

²‘Rati’ is the patron goddess of physical beauty and charm; she is the consort of Kaamdeo, the god of love and beauty.

³Now we see that Supernakha has started telling lies. Lord Ram and Laxman had never laughed at her, irrespective of whose sister she was. She was hell-bent on instigating Ravana, and so would use all tricks she could think of to accomplish her objective. By telling Ravana that her tormentors had teased her more because she happened to be his sister she touched a raw nerve; it had now turned into a matter of ego, of self-respect and dignity of the king of the demons, when such an insinuation is made against him in full public court as was the case presently.

Ravana had never in his imagination thought that one fine day he would be forced to hear such indignities being heaped on his name, with such bold impunity! So it is but natural that he was filled with an extreme feeling of indignation and hate.]

दो०. सूपनखहि समुझाइ करि बल बोलेसि बहु भाँति ।
गयउ भवन अति सोचबस नीद परइ नहिं राति ॥ २२ ॥

dōhā.

sūpanakhahi samujhā'i kari bala bōlēsi bahu bhāṁti.
gaya'u bhavana ati sōcabasa nīda para'i nahin rāti. 22.

He (Ravana) comforted Supernakha in various ways, telling her about his strength and powers to reassure her that she would be fully revenged¹.

Then he went to his palace, lost in deep thought and pondering gravely on the implication of what he had heard. He was so overcome with worry that he could not sleep that night². (Doha no. 22)

[Note—¹Refer Doha no. 21-b herein above where Supernakha has asked Ravana if it was ever possible that she would suffer this kind of extreme misery while he was alive. So here Ravana answers that doubt of hers by telling her not to worry as he is strong and powerful enough to teach her tormentors a bitter lesson while avenging for the humiliation to which she has been subjected.

²Ravana lay wide awake in the night, wondering if it is ever possible for a human being to kill such formidable demon warriors as Khar, Dushan and Trishira. He concluded that since this is not feasible under any circumstance, it is sure and certain that the Supreme Being has finally arrived to eliminate the demons and free the earth from their ruthless cruelty.

This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23. For details see Section 5.1.3 herein above in this Chapter no. 5.]

चला अकेल जान चढ़ि तहवाँ । बस मारीच सिंधु तट जहवाँ ॥ ७ ॥
 इहाँ राम जसि जुगुति बनाई । सुनहु उमा सो कथा सुहाई ॥ ८ ॥

calā akēla jāna caḍhi tahavāṁ. basa māṛica sindhu taṭa jahavāṁ. 7.
 ihāṁ rāma jasi juguti banāī. sunahu umā sō kathā suhāī. 8.

[After long contemplation and deep thought, Ravana decided to act proactively. He had no choice left: If he demurred and let this event go unchallenged, it would clearly mean submission and defeat even without a fight, which would make him a coward and show him in utterly poor light. For any brave warrior worth his name and salt, this eventuality is equivalent to death, if not worse. And on the other hand, if he went on the offensive there were two options that could happen—one was that he would die at the hands of the Supreme Being, for no one except the Supreme Lord could kill him, and so find emancipation and salvation for himself; and the other option was that he would conquer his opponent, the two human princes who have dared to challenge him, and restore the dignity and honour of his name and glory. So both ways he had nothing to lose, thought he wisely indeed. So therefore—]

He (Ravana) boarded his air-plane all alone and went to the place near the shore of the ocean where Marich lived¹. (7)

Lord Shiva (who is the primary narrator of this wonderful story of Lord Ram) told his consort Uma (or Parvati), ‘Listen Uma. Now I shall tell you about the most interesting but mysterious device that Lord Ram devised (to carry forward his mission of eliminating the demons) back here in his hermitage (where Supernakha was deformed by Laxman and the demon army was killed by the Lord). (8)

[Note—¹Marich and other demons had come to defile the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. Lord Ram had killed all of them, but he had shot Marich with a headless arrow; so he escaped death but was flung afar to an island in the middle of the ocean where he lived in fear of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

It was here that Ravana had gone to engage Marich to give shape to his plans to kidnap Sita.

Why did Ravana, who was reputed to fear none, not even the powerful gods, choose to go alone? This is clear in the previous Chaupai line no. 1-3 where we read his extreme sense of bewilderment when he learnt that the mighty demons Khar and Dushan, who were comparable to him in gallantry, valour, strength and power, would be killed by a single human being; and so he deduced that their killer is not an ordinary human as he apparently appears to be, but the almighty Supreme Being who has finally come to remove the suffering of the earth caused by the demons by eliminating them.

Since he was a king of the demon race he kept a close watch over all the developments on earth, to ensure that no one would dare to raise a challenge to him and his writ remained steady in all the corners of the earth. So his messengers must have surely briefed him about the slaying of Tadka, Subahu and other demons earlier, at the time Lord Ram had gone to protect the sacred fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra; but Ravana did not give their killing any great importance as he thought

that the sage must have become exceedingly angry at them for defiling his fire sacrifice and may have taken the help of some warrior king to get rid of the offenders. Besides this, that area where Tadka etc. were killed was far away from Lanka and beyond the outer boundaries of the realm over which Ravana had the unquestioned sway of his authority. So he chose to look the other way.

But Khar, Dushan and Trishira were demons of a different mould, for they equaled Ravana in all respects of strength, power and abilities. More than that, the geographical area where they were killed was closer home, raising the dangerous spectre of an enemy in the back-yard who could attack any time. So when Ravana heard from Supernakha of their killing, along with their formidable army of able and most ferocious and vicious demon warriors, by a single person (Lord Ram), he was absolutely stunned and caught by a fierce grip of fear.

To wit, he became exceedingly alarmed. He prudently thought that if he takes his huge army when he goes to retaliate it would not be a wise thing as this is sure to raise a mighty din because the demons won't go quietly, they would yell and shriek even as they leave Lanka, which would let everyone in the city know where they are headed to, and in case they meet the same fate as the army of Khar and Dushan, what face would Ravana then have to show his citizens. Should this happen, it would be like being buried alive for him for he had never known defeat, and he had always returned from his campaigns a victor.

This unseemly event would have left him defenseless and most highly embarrassed in front of his own subjects; he would become an object of ridicule and laugh, and aside of losing self-respect and dignity he will have to face prospect of losing confidence of his subjects. The demons obeyed Ravana more out of fear of punishment for disobedience than out of any sense of respect for him; so once they find that their king has become vulnerable there were chances of revolt or mutiny.

Therefore he thought that it would be wise and prudent to avoid an immediate direct confrontation with Lord Ram in a remote area which is far away from his fortified fort at Lanka, and it would be wiser and militarily far-sighted to manipulate things to his advantage by compelling his enemy to come to his fort at Lanka, as then he would have all the strategic advantages of being on his own turf rather than far away in an alien land.

There were other reasons also for Ravana choosing to go alone to kidnap Sita. He was aware that many in his own family as well as in the city of Lanka were antagonized against him and internally hoped for his doom. One was his own brother Vibhishan whose devotion for Lord Vishnu, whom Ravana treated as his arch enemy, was well known; and later on Vibhishan did join Lord Ram when he was publicly rebuked by Ravana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8 where we read that it was Vibhishan who had disclosed to Hanuman the place where Sita was kept at Lanka; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Doha no. 41 where Ravana insulted Vibhishan and the latter decided to join Lord Ram's camp in disgust.}

His other brother Kumbhakarna was also not one of his admirers, for during the battle when Ravana asked him to pick up arms and go fight Lord Ram, Kumbhakarna had strongly admonished Ravana for his evil intentions which are sure to bring destruction upon him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 64 where Kumbhakarna has not only chided Ravana for his madness but has also praised Vibhishan for joining Lord Ram.}

Amongst his citizens also there were many who did not like his unwarranted confrontation with Lord Ram for the sake of a woman. Once sterling example is that of the old demoness Trijata who had openly predicted Ravana's death and victory for Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.}

Ravana was aware of this situation; so he feared that if it was disclosed that he is going on a mission to abduct Sita and fight her husband Lord Ram if he obstructs, then there were fair chances that one of his brothers would make a coup-d-etat and usurp his crown while he was away, and he would be joined by those demons who were quietly against his rule but kept quiet out of fear till the opportune time came. This would have been catastrophic for Ravana. So he decided to keep his plans strictly confidential.]

दो०. लछिमन गए बनहिं जब लेन मूल फल कंद ।

जनकसुता सन बोले बिहसि कृपा सुख बृंद ॥ २३ ॥

dōhā.

lachimana ga'e banahim jaba lēna mūla phala kanda.

janakasutā sana bōlē bihasi kṛpā sukha bṛnda. 23.

When Laxman had gone to the forest to collect firewood and edible roots and fruits, Lord Ram, who is a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion, smilingly told Sita, the daughter of Janak, as follows --- (Doha no. 23)

[Note—It is clear from this Doha that whatever Lord Ram confided with Sita was not known to Laxman. And what was this secret? It is narrated in the verses that follow herein below.

Two things are to be noted here: viz. (i) Lord Ram kept his plan for the future secret from Laxman, as he spoke about it to Sita when Laxman had gone away to the forest to collect firewood and eatables, and (ii) the Lord smiled while speaking to Sita.

The answer to the first question, 'why did Lord Ram kept the plan secret from Laxman', is that the Lord wanted Laxman to behave in an absolutely normal way as if the developments that would soon take place were great misfortunes that have suddenly come to haunt the two brothers. This would serve two purposes: one, the demons won't get any hint that everything is stage-managed with the sole aim of eliminating them because Laxman's reactions and attitude would be genuinely like a person going through the throes of a horrifying experience while already enduring the painful destiny devised for him by the cruel Creator; and second, it would help Laxman's excellent character and wonderful virtues such as courage, resilience, loyalty, faith, devotion, gallantry, valour and glory to shine through.

The second question is: 'why did the Lord smile'? The Lord smiled because what was to follow was though very unusual and unconventional but willingly undertaken by the Lord in order to carry out his duty as the Supreme Lord of the world to eliminate the cruel demons so that the reign of terror they had spread all over could be ended, and the subjects of his kingdom could live in peace. Lord Ram smiled because he would now need Sita's active cooperation in the events that would soon

unfold, events that ordinarily would be too repulsive and abhorable for Sita even to think of let alone her actively participating in them, such as her allowing herself to be abducted by Ravana and being held captive by him in his palace at Lanka, but it was absolutely essential to do it so that the Lord could carry out his master-plan of eliminating the scourge of the demons and protect the future of this world from their continuing reign of horrors and torments.

The Lord smiled so as to assure Sita that though the events that will unfold now onwards would make it necessary for both the Lord and Sita to behave like ordinary human beings who are in deep distress, but she must rest in peace that all of it is pre-planned by the Lord, and therefore there is no need for her to worry for her safety or get unduly alarmed mentally. It's a thing to be enjoyed by her like one enjoys a sport.]

चौ०. सुनुहु प्रिया ब्रत रुचिर सुसीला । मैं कछु करबि ललित नरलीला ॥ १ ॥

तुम्ह पावक महुँ करहु निवासा । जौ लागि करौं निसाचर नासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu priyā brata rucira susīlā. mair̥m kachu karabi lalita naralīlā. 1.
tumha pāvaka mahum̐ karahu nivāsā. jau lagi karaum̐ nisācara nāsā. 2.

Lord Ram told Sita, 'My dear, listen. You have been steadfastly loyal to me and strict in your vows of fidelity, and you have indeed been most courteous and virtuous (and there is no doubt about it)¹.

However, I (who am the Supreme Lord of this world) have to perform certain fascinating acts like an ordinary human being (in order to fulfill my divine mandate due to which I had been constrained to come down to earth in the form of a human)².
(1)

During the time I am engaged in eliminating the demons, you must dwell in the 'fire element' (tumha pāvaka mahum̐ karahu nivāsā)³. ' (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram wished to reassure Sita, his chaste and loyal wife, that the drama which is to play out soon—during which the Lord would maneuver things in such a mysterious way that when the demon king Ravana would abduct her the Lord would not be able to save her—will never mean at all that he doubts her integrity and devotion to him. His leaving her for sometime and allowing her to be taken away by the demon king Ravana is part of the grand plan by which the Lord wished to eliminate the evil demons; so it has to be acted out to perfection because greater issues are at stake, and personal emotions should not be allowed to ruin the grand plan.

²The divine mandate of Lord Ram was to free the earth from the horrors and cruelty unleashed by the evil demons. It was a promise Lord Vishnu had made to the Gods and Mother Earth. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186 to Doha no. 187.}

Since the demon king Ravana had obtained a boon from Brahma, the creator, that he would not be killed by anyone except a human being, it was imperative for Lord Ram to act perfectly like a human being in order to uphold the sanctity of

Brahma's words. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 177.}

This is the primary reason why all the acts and deeds of Lord Ram were like those of an ordinary person.

This is also one of the reasons why he kept Laxman out of the game-plan, so that Laxman may never act in a supernatural way in a huff when faced with some anxious moments, and give a hint about the Lord's true identity, no matter how grave and distressful the situation may be, for it would have surely alerted the demons who would have then escaped forthwith and go into hiding. If that happened, the Lord's strategy would have collapsed, and he would have failed to eliminate all of them in one go.

Lord Ram's doubts about Laxman disclosing the reality of who Sita and Ram were was not totally unfounded as Laxman was known to be of a short-temper, and when he got angry he did not bother about the consequences of what he said. There are earlier evidences for it when Laxman lost his patience when he thought some harm would come to his beloved Lord. We have instances to prove this point. For example, during the 'bow breaking ceremony' at Janakpur when no body had been able to lift and break the bow that would have entitled him to marry Sita, and so it appeared that she would have to remain unmarried, king Janak was extremely distressed and he had expressed his anguish by lamenting that the earth has become devoid of a true warrior. At that time Laxman rose up angrily to counter Janak and sternly rebuke him publicly for making this disparaging remark when Lord Ram was present in the assembly and had yet not been given a chance to try his hand at the bow. It was an august assembly and a solemn occasion, when all the great kings and princes of the time had assembled, and Janak was himself a wise king of great repute who was old enough to be shown due respect that Laxman would have shown to his own father king Dasrath. So to rebuke king Janak publicly was not something that can be regarded as being polite and good mannered by any account on the part of Laxman; yet he vented his anger without bothering about decorum and niceties of behaviour. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254.}

Immediately after this incident came another occasion when Laxman's short-temper was revealed. It so happened that no sooner had Lord Ram broken the bow than sage Parashuram arrived angrily to punish him who has dared to break Lord Shiva's bow, because the sage regarded Shiva as his revered deity. At that time also Laxman fearlessly faced Parashuram and boldly answered him back, going to the extent of teasing and rebuking him with impunity so much so that the whole assembly trembled in fear for it was something most unexpected as one is not supposed to stand up and answer a great sage on his face. By-and-by, Lord Ram intervened and sorted out the matter, calming the sage and preventing any further damage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

A third occasion for such exhibition of anger by Laxman was at the time when Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, had come to the forest to meet the Lord and try persuading him to go back to his capital. Bharat was accompanied by a huge entourage, and Laxman thought that he was coming to fight and get rid of them, i.e. Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, in the forest while they were alone and without the support of any army, after which Bharat would be able to rule, unopposed, over the kingdom. So he got up and vehemently criticized Bharat without waiting to ascertain the facts, and declared that he would kill all of them single-handedly if Lord Ram

would give him the signal. In this instance also Lord Ram intervened to calm him down, telling him that his fears were totally unfounded and uncalled for as Bharat was not the type of brother Laxman thinks him to be. Even the gods advised Laxman to act with wisdom. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233.}

To wit, Lord Ram thought it prudent to keep his plan secret from Laxman so as to avoid it being leaked by him if he gets annoyed and frustrated at the demons.

See also note appended to Doha no. 23 herein above; and Chaupai line no. 5 herein below.

³The advice of Lord Ram for Sita to dwell in the ‘fire element’ is very interesting and has great significance; it is more than what meets the eye.

The Beej Mantra (the essential spiritual formula by which any deity is known and worshipped, and which represents that particular deity’s cosmic energy and powers) for Lord Ram is the Sanskrit word ‘Rām’ (pronounced as Raang). Now, this is also the Beej Mantra for the Fire God, or the ‘fire element’ at the subtle level. So by advising Sita to abide in the ‘fire’, Lord Ram has ensured that she lives safely in the protection of the Fire God. The ‘fire’ is the most potent force in creation; it can reduce anything to ashes if it goes wild. So when Sita is protected by this cosmic fire, no harm would ever come to her.

There are other reasons as well for Lord Ram asking Sita to live in the protection of the ‘fire’. Soon Ravana would abduct her, and if she lives surrounded by the fire element it would ensure that her purity and holiness would not at all be compromised when Ravana takes her away and holds her captive in Lanka.

The all-knowing Lord Ram knew that soon Hanuman would burn Lanka, and so it was necessary to give Sita the shield of the fire element so that she does not get scorched in the searing heat at that time.

This very incident, of Sita entering the ‘fire’ to live there till the demons were eliminated, proves that she was not an ordinary human being, for no living human can ever hope to survive after entering fire. Though Sita had a visible body that resembled a woman, but her true form was ethereal and subtle, and it coincided with the form of the ‘fire element’ in its energy and dynamism.

So the merger, Sita and Fire, was as natural and seamless as two separate samples of burning fire coming close to coalesce with each other. When two candles are held so close that their wicks touch each other, we see only one flame; and when these two candles are separated again their flames too light up and burn independently. Likewise, when the demons were all finally killed and the Lord’s mission was accomplished, Sita remerged from the ‘fire element’ to have an independent existence.

And for how long did Sita live inside the fire element? It was for ‘one year’—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 3.]

जबहिं राम सब कहा बखानी । प्रभु पद धरि हियँ अनल समानी ॥ ३ ॥

निज प्रतिबिंब राखि तहँ सीता । तैसइ सील रूप सुबिनीता ॥ ४ ॥

लछिमनहूँ यह मरमु न जाना । जो कछु चरित रचा भगवाना ॥ ५ ॥

jabahiṁ rāma saba kahā bakhānī. prabhu pada dhari hiyaṁ anala samānī. 3.
nija pratibimba rākhi tahaṁ sītā. taisa'i sīla rūpa subinītā. 4.

lachimanahūṁ yaha maramu na jānā. jō kachu carita racā bhagavānā. 5.

When Lord Ram had clearly explained everything to her, Sita enshrined the Lord in her heart and entered the fire¹. [Later on when the mission of elimination of the evil demons has been successfully accomplished, she would remerge from the fire to regain her original physical form.] (3)

Sita left behind an ‘image’ (or a reflection, a shadow, an apparition; “nija pratibimba”) that completely resembled her in form, manners, politeness and other characters. (4)

Even Laxman did not know anything about this mysterious event as devised by the Lord (Sri Ram)². (5)

[Note—¹An interesting episode regarding this ‘image or apparition of Sita’ is narrated in Skanda Puran, Vaishnav Khand (part), Bhumi-Varaaha (section). This story is that there was a Rishi Kanya (the daughter of an illustrious sage) named Veda-vati. She was meditating upon Lord Vishnu when Ravana saw her; he forcefully tried to take her away but she burnt herself in the sacrificial fire to save her honour. The Fire God became very angry and decided to use her to destroy Ravana. So at the time Sita voluntarily entered the fire, the Fire God brought Veda-vati, who was disguised to resemble Sita in all possible ways, and kept her in Sita’s place to fulfill his vows of using her to kill Ravana. At the end of the War of Lanka, Sita was brought by the Fire God and handed over to Lord Ram, and at that time he prayed to Lord Ram to bless Veda-vati as she had not only played a crucial role in helping the Lord accomplish his mission but had also assumed the form of Sita for a while which entitles her to be accepted by the Lord. Then the Lord blessed her that during Kali-yuga (the fourth era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction) she would become a non-placental daughter of Akash (the ‘sky’), and at that time she would be accepted by him in his cosmic form. ‘Non-placental’ implies that she won’t have a gross physical form like ordinary creatures, and would have an ethereal form that coincides with the subtle form of her parent, i.e. the ‘sky as an element’.

²See notes appended to Doha no. 23 and Chaupai line no. 1 herein above. When even Laxman was unaware of these developments, there is no question that any of the gods knew it, except of course the Fire God in whose custody Sita was kept.]

दसमुख गयउ जहाँ मारीचा । नाइ माथ स्वारथ रत नीचा ॥ ६ ॥
नवनि नीच कै अति दुखदाई । जिमि अंकुस धनु उरग बिलाई ॥ ७ ॥
भयदायक खल कै प्रिय बानी । जिमि अकाल के कुसुम भवानी ॥ ८ ॥

dasamukha gaya'u jahāṁ māricā. nā'i mātha svāratha rata nīcā. 6.
navani nīca kai ati dukhadāī. jimi aṅkusa dhanu uraga bilāī. 7.
bhayadāyaka khala kai priya bānī. jimi akāla kē kusuma bhavānī. 8.

Meanwhile, Ravana went to Marich’s place and bowed his head before the latter, as he was very selfish and most wicked¹. (6)

There is an axiom that when an evil and wicked person bows and shows undue respect to someone it portends great sorrows and misfortunes for the latter just like the cases when the goad is held at an angle (just before it is struck viciously at the enemy), the bow is bent (i.e. its string is pulled tight before an arrow is shot at the enemy), the serpent twists its body and stoops with its head low (just before it flings itself on the enemy and bites him viciously with its fangs), or the cat crouches (just before lunging forward and grabbing its victim, such as a rat, firmly between its sharp teeth). (7)

The seemingly friendly words of a person who is inherently wicked, vile and pervert are as dangerous and fearful as the blooming of flowers without the proper season². (8)

[Note—¹Ravana never bowed before anyone, let alone another demon, all of whom he regarded as his subjects, for he was known to be exceedingly haughty and rough in his interaction with one and all. So when he acted most politely and in a friendly manner at the time of meeting Marich, the latter became alarmed as this was not in Ravana's nature, and he guessed rightly that there was something serious that is yet hidden from view, and a very grave development is in the offing. Ravana acted meekly because he was driven by selfish needs, which was to take the help of Marich to kidnap Sita. We will soon read that this show of politeness was short-lived because when Marich tried to dissuade Ravana from the misadventure he had planned, the latter threatened to kill him if he did not comply.

²When some natural calamity is about to occur, unusual things begin to happen. And one such thing is blooming of un-seasonal flowers. For example, if flowers that are usually seen during the winter months grow during the summer, it indicates that the earth is cooling faster than expected, and with an early onset of winter, the cycle of seasons would be disrupted. This is definitely not a good sign by any account.

So when Ravana acted humbly by speaking sweetly to Marich, it signaled to the latter that things are very bad, and some ominous news waits to be told.]

दो०. करि पूजा मारीच तब सादर पूछी बात ।

कवन हेतु मन व्यग्र अति अकसर आयहु तात ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

kari pūjā mārīca taba sādara pūchī bāta.

kavana hētu mana byagra ati akasara āyahu tāta. 24.

Marich welcomed his guest (Ravana) by worshipping him (to show his respect). Then he said respectfully, 'My dear (tāta). Tell me, what is the reason you have come here alone so urgently (without even announcing yourself); you look extremely agitated and very distressed.' (Doha no. 24)

चौ०. दसमुख सकल कथा तेहि आगें । कही सहित अभिमान अभागें ॥ १ ॥

होहु कपट मृग तुम्ह छलकारी । जेहि बिधि हरि आनौं नृपनारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dasamukha sakala kathā tēhi āgēm. kahī sahita abhimāna abhāgēm. 1.
hōhu kapaṭa mṛga tumha chalakārī. jēhi bidhi hari ānaum nṛpanārī. 2.

Ravana, the ten-faced one (dasamukha), who was shameless and was driven by ill-fate, haughtily narrated all the developments to him (Marich). (1)

Then he came straight away to the point, commanding Marich: ‘You must assume the form of a deer so that I can take away the wife of the king¹ (“nṛpanārī”; Sita, the wife of Lord Ram).’ (2)

[Note—¹Supernakha had already told Ravana that the two brothers were the sons of the king of Ayodhya—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 22.

So Ravana now refers to Lord Ram as a ‘king’ because he would ascend the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya when he returned home.

Why did Ravana plan to take away Sita instead of fighting the two brothers in the forest itself if his only aim was to take revenge for his sister’s humiliation and the killing of the demon army led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira? The probable reasons are the following:

It is said in Valmiki’s Ramayana that when the demon named Akampan reported to Ravana about the killing of Khar, Dushan etc., he wished to go immediately to fight with and punish Lord Ram and Laxman for it. But Akampan warned him that the two brothers were not like others whom Ravana had so easily subdued in the past, and it is for certain that he will himself be defeated if he fought alone with the two brothers. So it would be wiser for him to steal their woman and force them to come to his fort at Lanka where he would have the support of his extensive army of most powerful demons as well as his own family members such as his invincible son Meghnad who had defeated Indra, the king of gods, and his brother Kumbhakarna who had the strength of thousands of wild elephants. Ravana therefore decided to play safely and avoid a direct confrontation with Lord Ram in the forest; so he instead brought Sita to Lanka to force his enemy to come to his own battle-field where he would have an upper hand by all means.

Akampan reasoned that since Lord Ram loved his wife Sita exceedingly, so when he discovers that she has gone away, and chances of him ever recovering her was extremely remote, he would die of grief; and Laxman would follow suit because he was too devoted to his loving brother to survive the agony of separation from him. The added bonus of this scheme was that Ravana would have a lady (Sita) who was peerless in beauty and charm. This strategy suited Ravana very well, so he decided to abduct Sita instead of fighting with the two brothers. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 31, verse nos. 21-33.}

We have read earlier in our present narrative that Supernakha had told Ravana about the fate of Khar and Dushan etc., as well as about the exceptional valour of Lord Ram and Laxman, and about the beauty of Sita. When Ravana heard what happened to Khar, Dushan etc. he became hesitant because he knew that it was not an easy thing to kill them. He therefore could not gather enough courage to confront someone who had killed Khar-Dushan etc. And upon hearing of the beauty of Sita his old habit of being lustful and promiscuous resurfaced once again, motivating him to

surreptitiously bring Sita to his palace. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23.}]

तेहिं पुनि कहा सुनहु दससीसा । ते नररूप चराचर ईसा ॥ ३ ॥
तासों तात बयरु नहिं कीजै । मारें मरिअ जिआएँ जीजै ॥ ४ ॥

tēhiṁ puni kahā sunahu dasasīsā. tē nararūpa carācara īsā. 3.
tāsōm tāta bayaru nahim kījai. mārēm mari'a ji'ā'ēm jījai. 4.

Then Marich spoke once again, 'Listen oh ten-headed Ravana! He (Lord Ram) is actually the Lord of the whole world that consists of animate beings as well as inanimate entities, who has revealed himself in a human form¹. (3)

Oh my dear (tāta). You must not create enmity with someone who is so powerful that death and life occur by his mere wish. (4)

[Note—¹This is exactly what Ravana had himself deduced; and now Marich has endorsed it. So Ravana became all the more convinced of the Lord's divinity, and hence all the more determined to get himself killed by the Lord so that he can attain deliverance and emancipation for his soul. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23 herein above.]

मुनि मख राखन गयउ कुमारा । बिनु फर सर रघुपति मोहि मारा ॥ ५ ॥
सत जोजन आयउ छन माहीं । तिन्ह सन बयरु किऐँ भल नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

muni makha rākhana gaya'u kumārā. binu phara sara raghupati mōhi mārā. 5.
sata jōjana āya'uṁ chana māhīm. tinha sana bayaru ki'ēm bhala nāhīm. 6.

These two young princes had gone to protect the fire sacrifice of the sage (Vishwamitra). When I went to defile it, Lord Ram had shot a headless arrow at me¹. (5)

I was immediately flung for a hundred Yojans² by its force and landed on this remote island. I tell you in good faith that it is not a good idea at all to become an enemy of such a person. (6)

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 210.

² 1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles. This figure is a median one because according to some scales 1 Yojan is either 4 miles or 16 miles. 4 multiplied by 2 = 8; and 16 divided by 2 = 8.]

भइ मम कीट भृंग की नाई । जहँ तहँ मैं देखउँ दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥
जौं नर तात तदपि अति सूर । तिन्हहि बिरोधि न आइहि पूरा ॥ ८ ॥

bha'i mama kīṭa bhṛṅga kī nā'ī. jaham̐ tahaṁ maim̐ dēkha'uṁ dō'u bhā'ī. 7.
jaum̐ nara tāta tadapi ati sūrā. tinhahi birōdhi na ā'ihī pūrā. 8.

I was so stunned and struck with fear that ever since that time I see the two brothers all around me wherever I look. It is like the case of an insect that is captured by a wasp and held captive by it¹. (7)

Even in the rare chance of them being human beings, it is sure and certain that they are invincible, being extremely valiant, strong and powerful. In all sooth and without gainsay therefore, it is not sensible and practical to create enmity with them as it is impossible to conquer them. (8)

[Note—¹The wasp catches hold of an insect and keeps it in its nest. Then the wasp hovers over the prey and hums around it constantly so much so that in due course of time the insect too turns into a wasp at the mental level and begins to hum in way that synchronizes with the humming of the wasp.

Likewise, Marich was so terrified of Lord Ram and Laxman that he feared them every moment of his life. This means that he remembered them every second so much so that every now and then he would think that either Lord Ram or Laxman have arrived to kill him. Even a slight movement of the leaf of a tree, or a bird flying overhead, or the rustling of the wind would send shivers down his spine. To wit, Marich's life was overwhelmed by the thoughts of Lord Ram and Laxman. This situation granted an unexpected advantage to Marich—for it transformed fear into a sort of constant remembrance of the Lord, which, to wit, was like his doing meditation constantly.

So Marich unwittingly got transmewed into a devotee of Lord Ram from being a vile demon that he had earlier been, just like the insect that becomes one in likeness of the wasp in due course of time.]

दो०. जेहिं ताड़का सुबाहु हति खंडेउ हर कोदंड ।
खर दूषन तिसिरा बधेउ मनुज कि अस बरिबंड ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

jēhim tāṛakā subāhu hati khaṇḍē'u hara kōdaṇḍa.
khara dūṣana tisirā badhē'u manuja ki asa baribaṇḍa. 25.

There is no gainsay in the fact that the he who had slayed the ferocious demoness Tadka and the equally ferocious demons Subhau etc.¹, and had broken the sturdy bow of Lord Shiva, which no one amongst the strong warrior of the world, who had always prided themselves about the might of their arms, could as much as even shift an inch, forget about lifting and breaking it², and had then proved his valour and strength beyond a trace of doubt by slaying the mighty demons Khar-Dushan³, can never be an ordinary human being, for no human has ever had the guts or the wherewithal to even confront these worthy demons let alone kill them single-handed. (2)

[To wit, a gentleman who has accomplished such remarkable feat is surely endowed with supernatural; whatever be the case he is certainly not an ordinary prince as you may be inclined to think.] (Doha no. 25).

[Note—¹Tadka was the mother of Marich; she had attacked Lord Ram and Laxman when they had accompanied sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice. Lord Ram had accomplished the stunning feat of killing her with a single arrow. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209.

²This event is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.

³A little later, when Subahu and Marich etc. had attacked the Lord, he had shot a ‘fire-arrow’ that burnt Subahu, and then he shot Marich with a headless arrow that flung him to the center of the ocean where Ravana visited him presently. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 210.]

चौ०. जाहु भवन कुल कुसल बिचारी । सुनत जरा दीन्हिसि बहु गारी ॥ १ ॥
गुरु जिमि मूढ़ करसि मम बोधा । कहु जग मोहि समान को जोधा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jāhu bhavana kula kusala bicārī. sunata jarā dīnhisi bahu gārī. 1.
guru jimi mūr̥ha karasi mama bōdhā. kahu jaga mōhi samāna kō jōdhā. 2.

So it would be wise for you to go back home if you are concerned about the welfare of your race.’

Upon hearing these words (of Marich), he (Ravana) was scorched by the fire of anger and hate, and he strongly rebuked the advisor by abusing him for showing the impertinence that he had just dared to exhibit.

[To wit, this good and prudent advice by Marich, vouchsafed with all sincerity and integrity, was however taken as a personal insult by Ravana who treated it as a direct affront to his authority, strength and powers by one of his own race, whom he had trusted all along as being one of his loyal soldiers. Now this fellow Marich appears to be an advocate of the enemy; he was deriding his own king, Ravana, and praising his enemy, Lord Ram. Obviously this was an intolerable a proposition, and it poured oil in the already fire of revenge burning inside the demon king. He anger was further stoked and he sternly warned Marich by using abusive language.] (1)

‘Oh you stupid devil of a fellow; you preach me as if you are my Guru (teacher). Tell me, if you dare, who in this world is as strong and valiant a warrior as me?

[To wit, you are not a novice, nor an ordinary demon. You are well acquainted with my matchless powers which have made even the gods bow and surrender before me. How dare you then say such things to me to scare me off my projected plans? I am not accustomed to hear lectures, nor am I habituated to imagine fear when none exists. Mind you; you will pay a heavy price if you refuse to heed to my commands, which I had been polite enough, in deference to your age and seniority, to wrap in words that sounded like I was making a request, for I could have ordered you straight

away without giving you a chance to give a long lecture to me, something I have always detested.] (2)

तब मारीच हृदयँ अनुमाना । नवहि बिरोधें नहिं कल्याना ॥ ३ ॥

सज्जी मर्मी प्रभु सठ धनी । बैद बंदि कबि भानस गुनी ॥ ४ ॥

taba mārīca hr̥dayaṁ anumānā. navahi birōdhēm nahim̐ kalyānā. 3.
sastṛī marmī prabhu saṭha dhanī. baida bandi kabi bhānasa gunī. 4.

Then Marich thought to himself about an axiom that says that it is to no one's welfare to create enmity with the following nine persons [3]: --- an armed opponent who is skilled in the use of the weapon (*sastṛī*), he who knows one's closely held secret (*marmī*), an able and powerful lord or master (*prabhu*), a utterly foolish person who lacks even basic scruples and has no knowledge of the affairs (*saṭha*), a rich person of influence (*dhanī*), a medicine man (*baida*), a slave, who is also a flatterer, who would willingly betray one before his lord if it suits him (*bandi*), a expert poet and singer (*kabi* --- *gunī*), and a cook who is an expert in his art (*bhānasa gunī*) [4]. (3-4)

[Note—These nine persons are not to be relied upon; one should not confide too much in them for if due to some reason, howsoever inconsequential it may be, they become hostile, or they decide that they have something to gain by betraying even their best of friends, then they will have no regret in back-stabbing anyone, though on the face they would continue to maintain a fictitious show of friendship and warmth as previously.

For instance, if a person picks up an argument with a man who is armed and whom he had known for a long time, and this argument becomes nasty due to some reason so much to make his armed acquaintance lose his control, there are fare chances that he would draw his weapon to settle scores, though he would later repent for it throughout his life.

A rich person of influence and a powerful lord too are very dangerous, for no one knows when they would decide to get someone out of the way.

It is wisely said that “an intelligent man, or a man of scruples, is a better enemy than a hundred fools as friends”; because it is possible to reason with the former but impossible to do so with the latter who would cause more problems than solving any.

A poet or a singer, if he is offended by someone, may spring a surprise by reciting a taunting couplet or singing some lines of a song that are loaded with sarcasm at a gathering that would be directly aimed at the person who has offended them; it may cause a laugh and jeering in the audience which would be extremely humiliating for the person concerned; rather it would bury him in shame, and if he is a man of any worth it would be like actually injuring him with a mortal wound.

A person who knows someone else's secret would blackmail him if it serves his vested interests at some point of time, without regret that such behaviour is an outright violation of the strict vows of confidentiality that were vouchsafed earlier.

Similarly, if one angers a personal cook or a personal physician, and by some misadventure they decide to take revenge, they would poison that person so secretly that no one would know what had actually happened that led to this catastrophe, as that person would be already dead by the time investigation starts, if any at all, for an

expert cook or a doctor would know the method of administering a poison that takes effect slowly, bringing about the person's death a long time from the moment the poison was actually used on him.]

उभय भौंति देखा निज मरना । तब ताकिसि रघुनायक सरना ॥ ५ ॥
उतरु देत मोहि बधब अभागें । कस न मरौ रघुपति सर लागें ॥ ६ ॥

ubhaya bhāṁti dēkhā nija maranā. taba tākisi raghunāyaka saranā. 5.
utaru dēta mōhi badhaba abhāgēm. kasa na marauṁ raghupati sara lāgēm.
6.

When Marich saw that either way his death was certain, he decided to seek refuge in the holy feet of Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram). (5)

He thought to himself, 'If I answer him (Ravana) back, he is sure to kill me. Then if my death has finally arrived, why should I not die at the hands of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) by being shot with his arrows?'¹ (6)

[Note—¹To wit, Marich became certain that if he refused to cooperate with Ravana, he is sure to kill him; and if he followed his orders and became a deer then Lord Ram would go after him and shoot him down. In this scenario it would be wiser for him to die at the hands of Lord Ram as this death would ensure that his soul finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and he would attain eternal beatitude and peace; for it is evident from what Marich has advised Ravana that he was sure that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being but the promised manifestation of the Supreme Being that would bring an end to the evil demon race.

How was Marich so certain of Lord Ram's reality? Well, when his mother Tadka was killed by the Lord by a single arrow, sage Vishwamitra had offered his worship to him and taught him some esoteric knowledge that only the sage was acquainted with. Vishwamitra was no ordinary sage; he was a 'great sage' who had a transcendental reach and could know the developments taking place in all the three dimensions of time, the past, the present and the future. He had known that the Supreme Being has manifested in the form of Lord Ram from the very beginning, and the killing of Tadka confirmed his beliefs. After death, Tadka was granted liberation and deliverance by Lord Ram. Marich had observed all these developments first hand as he was also one of the demons who had been living in the same forest as Tadka and was constantly defiling the fire sacrifice of the sage; he had also seen his mother's fate, and the sage worshipping the Lord. So nothing was hidden from him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 206; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 209.}

So what Ravana only guessed about Lord Ram (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23 earlier), Marich was convinced of it.]

अस जियँ जानि दसानन संग । चला राम पद प्रेम अभंगा ॥ ७ ॥
मन अति हरष जनाव न तेही । आजु देखिहउँ परम सनेही ॥ ८ ॥

asa jiyam̐ jāni dasānana saṅgā. calā rāma pada prēma abhaṅgā. 7.
mana ati haraṣa janāva na tēhī. āju dēkhiha'uṁ parama sanēhī. 8.

Realising this truth in his heart, he accompanied the ten-headed Ravana to where Lord Ram was; he had developed a steady affection for the holy feet of the Lord deep inside himself. (7)

He was exceedingly joyous and exhilarated in his mind and heart (Mana) but he managed not to reveal his excitement; he was lost in a reverie, thinking thus: 'Today I am going to see him whom I love so much indeed'¹. (8)

[Note—¹When finally Marich decided that that opportunity has come which would give him a chance to go where his mother had gone and be united with her, and in the process also ensure his own salvation and emancipation, his steps were quick and resolute; his legs seems to have developed wings. He was happy that he has been selected by providence to play a crucial role in the fulfillment of the Supreme Being's mandate; it was an honour and not a curse. After all, all living beings have to die one day; then why not die for the Lord, serving him and his noble cause?

So therefore, Marich was very cheerful and willing; he was not like someone going to the guillotine, but like someone going to accept a prize.

But he knew that Ravana's intention was different; so he played wisely by keeping his joy to himself.]

छं०. निज परम प्रीतम देखि लोचन सुफल करि सुख पाइहौं । १ ।
श्री सहित अनुज समेत कृपानिकेत पद मन लाइहौं ॥ २ ॥
निर्बान दायक क्रोध जा कर भगति अबसहि बसकरी । ३ ।
निज पानि सर संधानि सो मोहि बधिहि सुखसागर हरी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija parama prītama dēkhi lōcana suphala kari sukha pā'ihauṁ. 1.
śrī sahita anuja samēta kṛpānikēta pada mana lā'ihauṁ. 2.
nirbāna dāyaka krōdha jā kara bhagati abasahi basakarī. 3.
nija pāni sara sandhāni sō mōhi badhihi sukhasāgara harī. 4.

[Marich had, by this time, realized that his salvation lay only in surrendering before Lord Ram, who was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being himself. He developed affection for Lord Ram and began treating the Lord as his dearest friend. These verses show that a natural and inalienable bond of affection and endearment exist between a creature's individual soul and the universal Soul of this creation; it's a natural bond that ties the creature, the off-spring, to the Supreme Being who is the Father of all who have come into being in this family called 'creation' that He heads.

So therefore, when he agreed to accompany Ravana to where Lord Ram was, he was overwhelmed with the loving idea of meeting Lord Ram, the beloved of his soul; and like a beloved lost in the thoughts of the lover while on the way to meet the latter, Marich too was lost in a reverie of ecstasy and sweetness of imagination of what was to come soon. It ought to be noted here that the element of fear and the prospect of getting injured by an arrow was not at all in the mental radar of Marich;

on the contrary it was a moment of celebration for him; it was a final journey leading to his deliverance and emancipation from this mortal life of a demon for which he had been waiting all through his life. Hence there was nothing to regret or fear; rather it was a momentous journey that ought to be celebrated and cherished.]

Marich was lost in a reverie of ecstasy, thinking sweetly of the moments when— ‘I shall make myself fortunate and feel exceedingly exhilarated by seeing my beloved (Lord Ram) till my eyes are filled with this pleasant sight. (Chanda line no. 1)

Indeed, I shall fix my attention on the holy feet of the Lord who is an abode of mercy and compassion, the Lord who is accompanied by Sita and his younger brother (Laxman)¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Oh my good fortune; I am so lucky even to think that I shall go and seek refuge with the Lord who is so merciful and kind that even his apparent anger provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature, and whose Bhakti (devotion) is so exceptionally graceful that it even goes to the extend of making the Lord willfully submit himself to the command of his devotees²! (Chanda line no. 3)

It is this same Lord who is an ocean of bliss and beatitude, who will aim an arrow at me and shoot me with his own hands (to ensure that I don’t miss the chance of discarding this vile body of mine as a demon, and find liberation from it; the Lord would make sure that my soul gets instant deliverance; that I am provided emancipation and salvation at the first opportunity). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Marich’s soul desired to pay its homage to the Supreme Lord in all the forms in which the Lord has manifested; he wanted his worship to be complete in all respects. So therefore, instead of fixing his mind only on Lord Ram, he remembered even Laxman and Sita who are fractional parts of the Supreme Being, for Sita represented the Lord’s ‘Shakti’, or the Lord’s dynamic cosmic energy, and Laxman represented ‘Seshnath’, the Lord’s that form that supports the world from below. In the story of the Ramayan, Laxman had played a pivotal role as Lord Ram’s closest aide and comrade-in-arm; so without him the Lord was half. Marich was indeed very wise as he left nothing to chance.

²When the Lord becomes angry he will shoot an arrow to kill; but in this apparent show of anger there is hidden mercy for the creature as this killing frees the soul from the cage of the gross body which had become so sinful and evil. The merciful Lord’s anger is also a blessing in disguise; it is not like the anger of ordinary masters or lords who punish their servants or subordinates only physically, without bothering about their long-term good.

Bhakti or devotion is an excellent medium by which the Lord can be attained by a devotee. It is a tool that is very dear to the Lord himself. The spiritual value of Bhakti has been sung at many places in Ram Charit Manas. A glimpse of its importance and glory can be had in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.]

दो०. मम पाछें धर धावत धरें सरासन बान ।
 फिरि फिरि प्रभुहि बिलोकिहउँ धन्य न मो सम आन ॥ २६ ॥
 dōhā.

mama pāchēm dhara dhāvata dharēm sarāsana bāna.
 phiri phiri prabhuhi bilōkiha'uṁ dhan'ya na mō sama āna. 26.

Indeed without gainsay, there is no one as lucky as myself—because I shall turn back repeatedly and see the Lord pursuing me with an arrow in his hands to shoot me (but he would hesitate to do so even as he keeps playing hide and seek with me so as to allow me the beautiful chance of enjoying that wonderful sight for a long time).¹ (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹In his ecstatic state of the mind, Marich imagines how he will run ahead of the Lord who will follow him from behind with an arrow in hand. The Lord would not shoot him down instantly, for he would have done so if he had so wished. But why would the Lord take his time in shooting down Marich? It would be in deference to Marich's own wish—that he would like to enjoy the divine sight of the Lord pursuing him, a sight that would fill him with immense joy and beatitude. So therefore, the Lord allowed time for Marich to have his heart-full viewing of the Lord's divine form pursuing him with a bow and an arrow in hand, and of course with a smile on his face and compassion in his eyes, for that is what Marich had longed for, and the merciful Lord wished to fulfill the last wishes of Marich as it is the natural wont of the Lord to fulfill all desires of his devotees.]

चौ०. तेहि बन निकट दसानन गयऊ । तब मारीच कपटमृग भयऊ ॥ १ ॥
 अति बिचित्र कछु बरनि न जाई । कनक देह मनि रचित बनाई ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

tēhi bana nikaṭa dasānana gaya'ū. taba mārīca kapaṭamṛga bhaya'ū. 1.
 ati bicitra kachu barani na jāī. kanaka dēha mani racita banāī. 2.

When the ten-headed Ravana went near that forest (where Lord Ram dwelt at Panchavati, and where Supernakha was deformed), Marich immediately assumed the false form of a deer (mārīca kapaṭamṛga bhaya'ū)¹. (1)

That deer had a strange but marvelously wonderful form that defies description. It had a golden hide that was dotted with sparkling spots as if it was studded with priceless gems². (2)

[Note—¹Marich created a delusion that gave the impression that he was a deer. Demons had that power by which they could assume any form they wished. Supernakha had, as we have already seen, employed this magical power to become a beautiful lady in order to deceive Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181 which reiterate this fact about the demons.

²It is observed even today that in the geographical area where Lord Ram had his hermitage at that time, a place known as Panchavati that falls in the present-day state of Maharashtra in western India, a special type of deer is found; it has a yellow skin that is richly dotted with silvery white spots; its face differs from other deer, and its underbelly is coloured light blue. Locally it is called a ‘Chital’. This animal is exclusive to this region. So perhaps it was one of such rare species of deer that Marich transformed himself into.

It is also possible that Lord Ram, being so merciful and considerate, had granted this boon to the dying Marich that the form which he had assumed will be immortalized in a new species of deer that would now onwards become common to that particular region.]

सीता परम रुचिर मृग देखा । अंग अंग सुमनोहर बेष्टा ॥ ३ ॥

सुनहु देव रघुबीर कृपाला । एहि मृग कर अति सुंदर छाला ॥ ४ ॥

सत्यसंध प्रभु बधि करि एही । आनहु चर्म कहति बैदेही ॥ ५ ॥

sītā parama rucira mṛga dēkhā. aṅga aṅga sumanōhara bēṣā. 3.
sunahu dēva raghubīra kṛpālā. ēhi mṛga kara ati sundara chālā. 4.
satyasandha prabhu badhi kari ēhī. ānahu carma kahati baidēhī. 5.

Sita saw this most fascinating deer whose body was extremely beautiful to look at; this sight charmed her a lot and it caught her fancy. (3)

She called out to Lord Ram and said, ‘Oh Lord (dēva); oh the merciful and kind Lord of the Raghus (raghubīra kṛpālā); listen! This deer has a very beautiful hide. (4)

Oh Lord, you are true to your words (satyasandha prabhu)¹; so kill this deer and bring its hide for me. (5)

[Note—¹Sita’s observation is quite significant here. Earlier, in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 24 we read that Lord Ram had shared with Sita the secret plan by which he wished to eliminate the sinful demons, and now the time appears to have come to give effect to that master-plan. Sita wished to indicate to Lord Ram that she is willing to cooperate with the Lord, and though the events that would now unfold will force her to be separated from her beloved Lord and get kidnapped by the demon Ravana, but she wishes to cheerfully undergo this test as it would help Lord Ram to successfully accomplish his divine mandate.

She thought that perhaps the Lord would hesitate to go after the deer as he knew the consequences of this action, but since the suffering and difficulties that would follow need to be endured for larger good of the world it was necessary for the Lord to shed his reluctance and go ahead with the plan.

So in order to pre-empt chances of Lord Ram’s hesitating in taking proactive action on this crucial matter, Sita reminded him that “he must live up to his reputation of being true to his words”. And what was that word? It was the word that the Lord Vishnu had given to the Gods and Mother Earth that he would come down to this mortal world to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

The Lord had reiterated his resolve to eliminate the demons once again before the many forest dwelling sages and hermits who had accompanied him during his passage through the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

The next verse no. 6 explicitly says so, and Sita's request to the Lord removed all hesitation that he may have had.]

तब रघुपति जानत सब कारन । उठे हरषि सुर काजु सँवारन ॥ ६ ॥
 मृग बिलोकि कटि परिकर बाँधा । करतल चाप रुचिर सर साँधा ॥ ७ ॥
 प्रभु लछिमनहि कहा समुझाई । फिरत बिपिन निसिचर बहु भाई ॥ ८ ॥
 सीता केरि करेहु रखवारी । बुधि बिबेक बल समय बिचारी ॥ ९ ॥

taba raghupati jānata saba kārana. uṭhē haraṣi sura kāju saṁvārana. 6.
 mṛga bilōki kaṭi parikara bāṁdhā. karatala cāpa rucira sara sāṁdhā. 7.
 prabhu lachimanahi kahā samujhāī. phirata bipina nisicara bahu bhāī. 8.
 sītā kēri karēhu rakhavārī. budhi bibēka bala samaya bicārī. 9.

Then Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram), who was aware of all the reasons behind this development¹, cheerfully got up to fulfill the objective of the gods that. [And this objective was to eliminate the problem created by the cruel and sinful demon race. The time has come to act upon the word that Lord Vishnu had given to the gods earlier, and so Lord Ram gladly got up to fulfill his mission on earth.] (6)

Looking at the deer, the Lord tied his garments tightly around his hips to prepare for the job at hand, and lifting his beautiful bow in his hands he strung it and mounted the arrow on it². (7)

Then the Lord summoned Laxman and explained to him: 'Oh brother. A lot of demons roam around in the forest unchecked (and so you ought to be careful and on the full alert to avoid any misadventure). (8)

Take care of Sita's safety in accordance with your wisdom and circumstance; employ your strength and discretion while doing so.³ (9)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23 where the same mystical virtue of the Lord has been affirmed.

²Lord Ram could have easily aimed and shot the arrow from where he stood instead of going behind Marich for quite some distance from his hermitage. So why was it done this way? It was necessary to go far away from the hermitage so that ample time and opportunity was given to Ravana to abduct Sita. After all, it was a part of the grand plan of Lord Ram. This is the reason why Lord Ram went on pursuing Marich for a long distance till it was safe for Ravana to take Sita away. And this is also the reason why the Lord maneuvered things in such a way that Laxman, who was deputed to protect Sita, would also be summoned away from the hermitage as we shall read below.

³Lord Ram advised Laxman to use his strength, discretion, wisdom and intelligence to protect Sita according to the circumstance that may arise. Since it was impossible to predict as to what may happen, the Lord left it to Laxman to decide the course of action in accordance to the demands of the situation.

These instructions of the Lord are very important, for it gives Laxman a lot of discretion powers. As the events would unfold and a situation would arise soon when Sita forced him to leave her alone and go to where Lord Ram was near Marich, Laxman's wisdom told him to follow Sita's orders so that no unsavory development can take place that would cast aspersions on his integrity and loyalty to the Lord. Had Lord Ram been specific in his instructions to Laxman—that he must not leave Sita alone under any circumstance whatsoever, Laxman would have had a solid excuse to refuse Sita's orders and continue to remain in the hermitage.

But had this happened, had Laxman not left Sita alone, the long-term planning of the Lord would have gone hay-wire; for then Ravana would not have been able to kidnap her, and so the whole lot of things that followed this singular event that will ultimately result in the elimination of the demons would not have taken place. This would have undermined the Lord's mission. Hence, the wise Lord left a lot of open space to help things fall into their own right position.]

प्रभुहि बिलोकि चला मृग भाजी । धाए रामु सरासन साजी ॥ १० ॥
 निगम नेति सिव ध्यान न पावा । मायामृग पाछें सो धावा ॥ ११ ॥
 कबहुँ निकट पुनि दूरि पराई । कबहुँक प्रगटइ कबहुँ छपाई ॥ १२ ॥
 प्रगटत दुरत करत छल भूरी । एहि बिधि प्रभुहि गयउ लै दूरी ॥ १३ ॥

prabhuhi bilōki calā mṛga bhājī. dhā'ē rāmu sarāsana sājī. 10.
 nigama nēti siva dhyāna na pāvā. māyāmṛga pāchēm sō dhāvā. 11.
 kabahuṁ nikaṭa puni dūri parā'ī. kabahuṁka pragaṭa'i kabahuṁ chapā'ī. 12.
 pragaṭata durata karata chala bhūrī. ēhi bidhi prabhuhi gaya'u lai dūrī. 13.

No sooner did the deer saw Lord Ram than he ran away from the place even as the Lord followed it in hot pursuit with his bow and arrow at the ready. (10)

It is such a wonder that the Lord—who is inaccessible even for the Vedas (i.e. even the scriptures are unable to know him in full) that assert that none of what they know defines the Lord in entirety, and who also remains beyond the reach of Lord Shiva inspite of the latter constantly remaining submerged in meditating upon him¹—would pursue a false deer and run behind it (like an ordinary man). (11)

At one instant the deer appeared to be near, and in the other moment it fled to a distant point; at one moment it was visible and at the next moment it disappeared from sight². (12)

In this way, employing tricks that made it play hide and seek with the Lord, revealing and concealing itself in quick succession, the deer took Lord Ram far away (from the hermitage). (13)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i); Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 341.

The Lord who is all-knowing would run behind a false deer without knowing who it actually was is something that is very astounding and beyond comprehension; but it is the mysterious way of the Lord by which he does many things that no one can understand.

²When we read the story of how king Pratapbhanu was misled by the wild boar during the hunt, a similar situation is seen. It has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 157. So it is easy to conclude that these demons were skilled in employing tricks that made them appear and disappear from sight as they pleased; this was in addition to their ability to change forms quickly. These tricks helped them to trap their victims as well as to avoid being captured.]

तब तकि राम कठिन सर मारा । धरनि परेउ करि घोर पुकारा ॥ १४ ॥
लछिमन कर प्रथमहिं लै नामा । पाछें सुमिरेसि मन महुँ रामा ॥ १५ ॥
प्रान तजत प्रगटेसि निज देहा । सुमिरेसि रामु समेत सनेहा ॥ १६ ॥
अंतर प्रेम तासु पहिचाना । मुनि दुर्लभ गति दीन्हि सुजाना ॥ १७ ॥

taba taki rāma kaṭhina sara mārā. dharani parē'u kari ghōra pukārā. 14.
lachimana kara prathamahim lai nāmā. pāchēm sumirēsi mana mahum rāmā.
15.
prāna tajata pragaṭēsi nija dēhā. sumirēsi rāmu samēta sanēhā. 16.
antara prēma tāsu pahicānā. muni durlabha gati dīnhi sujānā. 17.

Finally, when they had gone far away, Lord Ram aimed an arrow and shot the deer. It fell down on the earth with a thunderous roar and yelling aloud in a terrifying manner. (14)

While falling down on the ground, the deer first called out loudly the name of Laxman, and then silently remembered the name of Lord Ram in his Mana (heart and mind)¹. (15)

At the instant of his death, Marich resumed his original form of a demon, and remembered Lord Ram with a lot of affection and love. (16)

The omniscient Lord, who knows the inner thoughts of all, saw that Marich had immense love for him in his heart, so the good Lord rewarded him in his death by granting him that spiritual stature that is rare even for great sages to attain.

[To wit, Lord Ram granted deliverance to the soul of Marich; he gave Marich emancipation and salvation, and abiding bliss, felicity and beatitude that great sages and hermits long for. The next Doha explicitly tells us what special grace Lord Ram had bestowed upon Marich; it tells us that the Lord granted him a transcendental state that was equivalent to the Lord himself in divinity and holiness.]² (17)

[Note—¹This sound indicated to Laxman the direction where Lord Ram was present. Marich could have died quietly but even during his last moments he wished to be loyal to his master, Ravana. It made it necessary for him to call out for Laxman so that he leaves the hermitage to enable Ravana to take away Sita.

Marich remembered Lord Ram's holy name 'silently' because it is the way the Lord is remembered during meditation; no hue and cry is made. Marich mentally bowed before Lord Ram, invoked his holy name quietly and discretely, and sought the Lord's intervention in order to attain salvation and emancipation of his soul.

²It is a stated position of Lord Ram that no matter how sinful a creature is, if he comes to take shelter with him then the Lord would not only forgive him but even grant his soul liberation and deliverance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 44.]

दो०. बिपुल सुमन सुर बरषहिं गावहिं प्रभु गुन गाथ ।

निज पद दीन्ह असुर कहूँ दीनबंधु रघुनाथ ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

bipula sumana sura baraṣahim gāvahim prabhu guna gātha.
nija pada dīnha asura kahūṁ dīnabandhu raghunātha. 27.

The Gods showered an abundance of flowers upon Lord Ram to celebrate this marvelous occasion; they sang laurels of the Lord and cheered at his wonderful nature of providing a glorious destiny to even a demon that made the latter equivalent in divinity to the Lord himself¹. (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹In Chaupai line no. 17 that immediately precedes this Doha we have read that the Lord “granted to Marich a stature that was even difficult for great sages and seers to attain”. This Doha answers what that stature was. To wit, Marich, who was condemned to become a demon at the time of birth, found an exalted state for his soul at the time of death, a transcendental state that was divine, sublime, holy and pious in nature, a stature quite the opposite of what he was till this point in his life. This was made possible due to the grace of Lord Ram and the chance of having a contact with him, no matter how and for what reason this chance meeting had happened.]

चौ०. खल बधि तुरत फिरे रघुबीरा । सोह चाप कर कटि तूनीरा ॥ १ ॥

आरत गिरा सुनी जब सीता । कह लछिमन सन परम सभीता ॥ २ ॥

जाहु बेगि संकट अति भ्राता । लछिमन बिहसि कहा सुनु माता ॥ ३ ॥

भृकुटि बिलास सृष्टि लय होई । सपनेहुँ संकट परइ कि सोई ॥ ४ ॥

मरम बचन जब सीता बोला । हरि प्रेरित लछिमन मन डोला ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

khala badhi turata phirē raghubīrā. sōha cāpa kara kaṭi tūnīrā. 1.
ārata girā sunī jaba sītā. kaha lachimana sana parama sabhītā. 2.

jāhu bēgi saṅkaṭa ati bhrātā. lachimana bihasi kahā sunu mātā. 3.
 bhr̥kuṭi bilāsa sṛṣṭi laya hōī. sapanēhuṁ saṅkaṭa para'i ki sōī. 4.
 marama bacana jaba sītā bōlā. hari prērita lachimana mana ḍōlā. 5.

No sooner had Lord Ram slayed the wicked fellow (Marich) than he turned back to go to his hermitage. The bow in his hand and the quiver tied to his waist give the Lord a magnificent form (that was captivating for the beholder). (1)

Meanwhile, Sita had heard the loud and distressful cry of Marich calling out the name of Laxman¹. This sound filled her with a lot of apprehension, and she felt sore affright (about the safety of her husband, Lord Ram). (2)

She urgently instructed Laxman, ‘Go immediately, for it looks some danger had befallen upon your brother.’

Laxman laughed at this unfounded fear of Sita, and tried to reassure her by saying, ‘Mother, listen. (3)

He whose turn of an eye and raising of the eyebrow can lead to the destruction of the entire creation—say, can such an almighty Lord ever have the fear of any danger upon him; can such a mighty and all-powerful Lord ever come to any harm under any situation?² (4)

However, Sita began wailing and grieving gravely; her heart-touching words of pity and lamentation moved Laxman as his mind wavered. Though initially he had a lot of self-confidence and would have ordinarily stood firm on his ground, but it was the wish of Lord Hari that it ought to be otherwise (hari prērita); for soon Laxman’s mind became indecisive and he yielded to doubts (lachimana mana ḍōlā), his resolve faltered and he felt inclined to obey Sita’s commands and go out to help Lord Ram³. (5)

[Note—¹When Marich died, he had yelled aloud the name of Laxman before silently invoking the holy name of his beloved Lord Ram. Refer: Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 27 herein above. From a distance, where Sita was, it appeared that Lord Ram is calling out for Laxman to help; it appeared that the Lord was in some sort of danger and needed Laxman’s help.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 66, and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35 where the same fact is stated.

³Sita lost her patience and began lamenting; she forced Laxman to go after the sound, in the direction from where it came and see what the matter was. So though Laxman was unwilling to leave her alone in the dangerous forest as he was expressly commanded by the Lord himself not to do so, yet he had no choice, because Sita threw such a tantrum that he thought it wise and prudent to do as she wished lest she would complain to the Lord, when he comes back, of Laxman’s stubborn and irreverent behaviour, which would, in this unfortunate background of her feeling worried about her husband’s safety and asking his brother to go and help him, would create unnecessary misunderstanding between the two brothers who otherwise had perfect bond of love and loyalty between them.]

बन दिसि देव सौंपि सब काहू । चले जहाँ रावन ससि राहू ॥ ६ ॥
 सून बीच दसकंधर देखा । आवा निकट जती कें बेष्टा ॥ ७ ॥
 जाकें डर सुर असुर डेराहीं । निसि न नीद दिन अन्न न खाहीं ॥ ८ ॥
 सो दससीस स्वान की नाई । इत उत चितइ चला भड़िहाई ॥ ९ ॥
 इमि कुपंथ पग देत खगेसा । रह न तेज तन बुधि बल लेसा ॥ १० ॥

bana disi dēva saumpi saba kāhū. calē jahāṁ rāvana sasi rāhū. 6.
 sūna bīca dasakandhara dēkhā. āvā nikaṭa jatī kēm bēṣā. 7.
 jākēm ḍara sura asura ḍērāhīm. nisi na nīda dina anna na khāhīm. 8.
 sō dasasīsa svāna kī nā'īm. ita uta cita'i calā bhaḍihā'īm. 9.
 imi kupantha paga dēta khagēsā. raha na tēja tana budhi bala lēsā. 10.

Laxman entrusted Sita's safety to all the patron deities of the different directions as well as the presiding deities of the forest, and then he headed towards the direction where Lord Ram, who was like Rahu for the symbolic Moon represented by Ravana, was¹⁺². (6)

When Ravana found that Sita was alone (and the hermitage was left unprotected after Laxman went away), he approached disguised as a mendicant. (7)

It is a wondrous thing that he whose fear caused the gods and the demons alike to be so sore affright and tremble that they weren't able to sleep in the night and eat food during the daytime, --- (8)

---That same ten-headed Ravana should be so scared out of his wits that he would approach the hermitage with unsure steps out of fear, surreptitiously like a terrified dog, glancing to the right and to the left, as he neared the place. (9)

Oh the lord of birds (khagēsā)³! It is like the case of one stepping on a wrong and immoral path, because no sooner one does so when one loses self-confidence, for one's body fails in its natural vigour, one's intellect fails him, and one's inherent strength too leaves him (even as he staggers and struts and stumbles to move forward in an awkward way).

[To wit, as soon as one tries to do anything unrighteous and inauspicious, his inner-self will revolt instantly; his inner-voice of conscience tells him that he is about to do something that is wrong. It is another matter that more often than not a man tends to overlook this natural warning of his inner-consciousness, and goes ahead with his evil designs, only to land himself in a grave peril.] (10)

[Note—¹Rahu was a demon whose head was severed from his trunk by Lord Vishnu during an ancient event that occurred at the time when the celestial ocean was being churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of immortality. Since Rahu was betrayed by the Moon and the Sun Gods, and since he had already drunk some Amrit which prevented his death, he was given a boon by the creator Brahma that he would periodically devour Moon and Sun to satisfy his hunger as well as to take revenge upon these two Gods for betraying him.

So, Rahu devours the disc of the full moon and the sun from time to time, and this, according to mythology, is the cause of the lunar and the solar eclipses respectively. But since his neck was cut off, the moon and the sun gradually emerge from this severed end of the head; this ends the eclipse.

In this metaphor, Ravana is the moon, and Lord Ram is the Rahu who would soon overcome Ravana's might and virtually eclipse him. But even as the glory of the Moon and the Sun are restored soon after the eclipse, Lord Ram would restore the glory of Ravana by granting him an exalted state of bliss and beatitude by liberating his soul from the sinful body of a demon and gracing it with deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

In this story of Rahu and the Moon, it was the Moon who had caused offense to Rahu by betraying him; Rahu was simply squaring up the account. So also in this case, it is Ravana who will cause offense to Lord Ram by stealing his wife Sita, and Lord Ram will simply teach him a lesson.

Another similarity is this: Rahu devours a full Moon; so Lord Ram will now slay Ravana when the vessel of his sins and cruelty has become full to the brim.

²Though it is not mentioned here but at the time of leaving Sita, Laxman had drawn a circle around the hermitage and invoked some powerful Mantras to make the area within this circle absolutely safe. When Ravana, who was disguised as a mendicant, could not enter this firewall of security around the hermitage, he had prevailed upon Sita to step out of it in order to give him alms; since Sita could not break tradition by refusing a mendicant alms, she stepped out of this circle, and scarcely had she done so then Ravana grabbed her.

We learn about Laxman drawing this circle of firewall of security when Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, talks about it when she sternly admonishes her husband for not having the guts to cross even a circle marked on the ground by Laxman while he bragged of bringing Sita and now is daring to take the two brothers head-on in a fight to the finish. Why did he not dare to cross Laxman's circle if he had all the might and powers he boasts of so much? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36; and Geetawali, Lanka Kand, stanza no. 6 of verse no. 1.

³It ought to be noted here that the story of Ram Charit Manas has a number of narrators. One such narrator was the crow-saint Kaagbhusund who was approached by the "lord of the birds", i.e. Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, for he wanted to hear the divine story of Lord Ram.

This narration forms the major part of the second half of the seventh Canto called Uttar Kand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125. This story has been published by this author in English as an independent book titled "Kaagbhusund Ramayan".]

नाना बिधि करि कथा सुहाई । राजनीति भय प्रीति देखाई ॥ ११ ॥

कह सीता सुनु जती गोसाई । बोलेहु बचन दुष्ट की नाई ॥ १२ ॥

तब रावन निज रूप देखावा । भई सभय जब नाम सुनावा ॥ १३ ॥

nānā bidhi kari kathā suhā'ī. rājanīti bhaya prīti dēkhā'ī. 11.

kaha sītā sunu jatī gōsā'īm. bōlēhu bacana duṣṭa kī nā'īm. 12.

taba rāvana nija rūpa dēkhāvā. bha'ī sabhaya jaba nāma sunāvā. 13.

The fake mendicant (i.e. Ravana in disguise) told her (Sita) many fascinating tales which he weaved on the spur of the moment; he tried to influence her by invoking a variety of means using the principles of politics, fear and affection. (11)

Sita became alarmed at the indiscretion of the mendicant¹; she chided him, saying, 'Listen oh mendicant! You talk like a wicked fellow.' (12)

At that instant, Ravana showed his true form. When he told her his real name, she became sore frightened². (13)

[Note—¹Ravana went on talking and talking endlessly without invitation. His behaviour was quite unbecoming of a true mendicant who would talk not more than what is absolutely essential. Besides this, no mendicant would approach a lonely lady and indulge in unwanted story telling; it does not behoove of a mendicant to talk sweetly to a lady while she is alone, showing undue interest in her and trying to arouse her interest in himself. This highly odd behaviour aroused Sita's suspicion. But she should have used more discretion; she should not have rebuked him so openly but should have waited quietly to give time to Lord Ram and Laxman to come back.

But it was not to be so; it was destined that she would be stolen by Ravana as it would become the cause for the elimination of the demons. This was the reason why Sita lost her patience and failed to exercise self-restraint.

²Sita had not seen Ravana earlier, but she had heard of his name. So when Ravana revealed his true form of a demon, Sita had little fear of him as she had seen demons earlier during her journey through the forest and was acquainted with such terrible forms. She had no fear of ordinary demons as she had seen many being killed by Lord Ram single-handedly. But of course the name 'Ravana' was something different, for he was no ordinary demon. She had heard of his immense strength, ferocity and pervert nature; so as soon as he uttered his name it sent a chill down the spine of Sita.]

कह सीता धरि धीरजु गाढ़ा । आइ गयउ प्रभु रहु खल ठाढ़ा ॥ १४ ॥

जिमि हरिबधुहि छुद्र सस चाहा । भएसि कालबस निसिचर नाहा ॥ १५ ॥

सुनत बचन दससीस रिसाना । मन महुँ चरन बंदि सुख माना ॥ १६ ॥

kaha sītā dhari dhīrajū gāṛhā. ā'i gaya'u prabhu rahu khala ṭhāṛhā. 14.

jimi haribadhuhi chudra sasa cāhā. bha'ēsi kālabasa nīsicara nāhā. 15.

sunata bacana dasasīsa risānā. mana mahum carana bandi sukha mānā. 16.

Sita mustered a lot of courage and boldly told Ravana, 'Wait a little you wicked fellow, for the Lord is just about to come back. (14)

Oh the king of demons; just like a vile rabbit covets the lioness which surely invites its death, so are you impaled by your own death. [To wit, by eying me with ill intentions, you are surely inviting your own death just like the wretched rabbit who is

sure to die if it tries dirty tricks with a lioness. Wait till my Lord Ram comes back to teach you a good lesson.]" (15)

Hearing these words of stern rebuke, the ten-headed Ravana became very angry. But internally he bowed at the feet of Sita and felt very glad (that finally the opportunity has arrived for which he had been waiting for so long—which is to get himself killed by Lord Ram and free his soul from the cage of his evil demon body, enabling it to find deliverance, emancipation and salvation)¹. (16)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that Ravana had bowed to Sita mentally, but externally he maintained the show of anger and vengeance. Even Marich had adopted this attitude. And we will read later on that like Marich, Lord Ram had granted the soul of Ravana the ultimate destination by accepting it as a part of his own Self; this happened when the soul of Ravana emerged in the form of a brilliant shaft of light at the time of his death to enter the body of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

Not only Ravana, all the demon warriors who were killed in the war too found salvation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

The question arises: Why did Ravana maintain the external façade of hostility with Lord Ram? Well, he had to pay attention to his domestic constituency consisting of the demon race, which was very irrational and haughty in its behaviour, and had never learnt to have mercy and reasoning in its dealing with other creatures. If he was to remain in charge of the demons and force them to owe their allegiance to him, which he had managed more by fear than having actual loyalty, it was imperative that he himself act fiercely and without compromise.

Say, what huge gossip would do the rounds if he does not take revenge for his sister's deformation; what face would he show the demons if he shies from punishing a human being for the audacity of challenging his might? Any overt sign of surrender or fear of impending death by him will send a wrong signal to the rest of the demons, and as these fellows feared Ravana only because he was merciless and unforgiving and will do them to death if they refuse to toe his line, once they learn that he has been frightened by someone then all the demons warriors will lose the fear of him, and consequently it would be impossible for him to maintain his grip upon the demon race.]

दो०. क्रोधवन्त तब रावन लीन्हिसि रथ बैठाइ ।

चला गगनपथ आतुर भयँ रथ हाँकि न जाइ ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

krōdhavanta taba rāvana līnhisi ratha baiṭhā'i.

calā gaganapatha ātura bhayaṁ ratha hāṁki na jā'i. 28.

Then, seething with anger and profoundly vexed, Ravana hastily seated Sita on his chariot. Then he took to the path of the sky as he scrambled to muster strength to go away from that place as fast as he could because he was so scared stiff with fear that he was scarcely able to control his chariot during its flight¹. (Doha no. 28)

[Note—¹It is not clear here as to how Ravana had Sita board the chariot. It is not mentioned that “he grabbed her by the hand”. So how did he manage to put Sita on the chariot? The answer is found in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas—where it is said that “Ravana used his long nails to scoop up the earth from below Sita’s feet and then placed her on the chariot like one transfers a plant from one place to another”. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 51-52.

And why was he angry? It is because Sita had called him a “wretched rabbit eying a lioness”, and “to wait till Lord Ram comes back to teach him a lesson in propriety”. This was an affront on his ego and self-respect, something that would be too much for any man worth his salt to tolerate.

Why was he so utterly vexed and confounded that he could not even drive his chariot properly? It is because he was unsure of his fate; he did not know if his actions were right or wrong, and what the consequences of his deeds would be. This doubt lingered in his mind and perplexed him from the beginning when Supernakha had asked him to revenge her humiliation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

Ravana was in such a hurry to get out from the place that his chariot swung madly to the right and the left as he kept pressing forward at full tilt. He had come quietly, but now he was roaring and yelling as he fled in terror, as fast as the unhindered path of the sky would allow him to move ahead.]

चौ०. हा जग एक बीर रघुराया । केहिं अपराध बिसारेहु दाया ॥ १ ॥
 आरति हरन सरन सुखदायक । हा रघुकुल सरोज दिननायक ॥ २ ॥
 हा लछिमन तुम्हार नहिं दोसा । सो फलु पायउँ कीन्हेउँ रोसा ॥ ३ ॥
 बिबिध बिलाप करति बैदेही । भूरि कृपा प्रभु दूरि सनेही ॥ ४ ॥
 बिपति मोरि को प्रभुहि सुनावा । पुरोडास चह रासभ खावा ॥ ५ ॥
 सीता कै बिलाप सुनि भारी । भए चराचर जीव दुखारी ॥ ६ ॥

caupāī.

hā jaga ēka bīra raghurāyā. kēhiṁ aparādha bisārēhu dāyā. 1.
 āraṭi harana sarana sukhadāyaka. hā raghukula sarōja dinanāyaka. 2.
 hā lachimana tumhāra nahim dōsā. sō phalu pāya'um kīnhē'um rōsā. 3.
 bibidha bilāpa karati baidēhī. bhūri kṛpā prabhu dūri sanēhī. 4.
 bipati mōri kō prabhuhi sunāvā. purōḍāsa caha rāsabha khāvā. 5.
 sītā kai bilāpa suni bhārī. bha'ē carācara jīva dukhārī. 6.

Sita wailed and grieved woefully as Ravana was taking her away forcibly on his chariot. She lamented thus: ‘Oh the brave Lord of the Raghu family (bīra raghurāyā) who has no match anywhere in this world (jaga ēka). What is my mistake for which you have overlooked your merciful nature by abandoning me? Why have you become so stone-hearted? (1)

You are renowned as the one who eliminates the troubles of those who are tormented; you remove the cause of distress of all who take shelter in your holy feet, making them happy and contented.

Oh Lord who is like the sun for the lotus flower symbolizing the race of king Raghu¹!

[¹To wit, just as the sun makes the lotus open its petals and bloom, Lord Ram lends glory and fame to the entire family descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya. Lord Ram is like the sun with respect to the family of king Raghu as his mere presence makes the whole family happy and proud at having such an excellent Lord as one of its illustrious members.] (2)

Alas Laxman; it is not your fault at all, for I have got the bitter fruit of becoming angry at you for no rhyme or reason².

[²Laxman; please forgive me that I spoke to you in a harsh tone when you were reluctant to leave me alone in the forest, especially when Lord Ram had himself given specific instructions to this effect. Now I am being punished for my indiscretion; why and how could you be blamed for my misfortunes when you had but little choice against my impertinence? So forgive me.] (3)

In this way, Vaidehi* (the daughter of Vaideha, the king of Janakpur; i.e. Sita) lamented and grieved gravely at her misfortunes. She talked to herself, 'The dear Lord (prabhu -- sanēhī), who is full of mercy (bhūri kṛpā), has gone far away (chasing the decoy deer)³.

[³Once again, how can I blame the Lord also, for it was on my insistence that he had gone behind the deer to bring it to me. Alack; Alack! It is me who am to be squarely blamed for whatever ill has befallen me, for it was I who had sent Lord Ram away from the hermitage, and once again it was I who had forced Laxman also to leave me alone at the hermitage.

*It is important to note why the word "Vaidehi" has been used for Sita; its remarkable. This word literally means 'one who has no body; or one who is not aware of the existence of his or her physical body'. So this word implies that Sita was so overcome with grief that she virtually lost consciousness of her own body as well as her surroundings. It also implies that the Sita we are talking about is only a 'shadowy figure', that she does not actually have any physical presence, as the original lady had already been entrusted to the care of the Fire God by Lord Ram earlier. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 24 herein above.] (4)

Will, by any good chance, anyone tell the Lord about my condition; has anyone done so yet⁴?

Look how an ass is trying to surreptitiously eat (caha rāsabha khāvā) the offerings meant for the sacred fire sacrifice (purōḍāsa)⁵.

[⁴Sita was so upset that the little time that elapsed seemed like too long for her, for she wondered if some good soul who had witnessed her being taken away by Ravana would have met Lord Ram and Laxman and told them about the misfortune that had suddenly befallen her. Or that soon someone will do so if yet not done already. This will help the Lord to come to her aid forthwith, and perchance he may reach her in time it is possible that he would kill her tormentor and liberate her from his clutches. But who knows what has happened?

Laxman had entrusted Sita's safety in the hands of the various patron deities of the forest and the directions at the time of leaving her. Refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 28 herein above. So Sita hopes that someone amongst them would tell Lord Ram and Laxman what had happened to her.

She was wailing loudly; so it was her intention that in case no one near the hermitage tells Lord Ram about her abduction perhaps out of their fear of Ravana, then at least some amongst them would now take pity on her when they hear her wailings, and gather enough courage to at least quietly tell the Lord what had happened in his absence.

⁵We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 8 that Sita uses another deprecating metaphor to snub Ravana; it is as follows: “Alas; a barbarian is trying to eat the offerings meant for the sacred fire of the sacrifice, thereby attempting to defile it.”

Here, Ravana is the ‘ass’ or the ‘barbarian’, and Sita is like the ‘offering made for the sacred cause’ of the gods, which was to ensure elimination of the demons and provide security to mother earth and its inhabitants.

A similar idea is also expressed in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 55.] (5)

Hearing the loud wailing and woeful cries of Sita, all the creatures, both animate as well as inanimate (*carācara jīva*)⁶, felt saddened and distressed, for they all empathized with her sorrows.

[⁶‘Animate’ creatures hear and talk, but who were the ‘inanimate’ ones being referred to here? The ‘animate’ beings were the many living beings living in the vicinity of the hermitage, such as forest-dwelling sages and hermits as well as the birds, animals and other creatures. The ‘inanimate’ beings were the invisible deities of the forest and the realm in whose custody Laxman had left Sita, as well as trees and creepers who are all deemed to have life in them. Here, all entities in the Lord’s creation are being addressed. Some were living beings in traditional sense, and others were personified forms of non-living beings such as trees and water bodies, as well as the invisible deities.] (6)

गीधराज सुनि आरत बानी । रघुकुलतिलक नारि पहिचानी ॥ ७ ॥
 अधम निसाचर लीन्हें जाई । जिमि मलेछ बस कपिला गाई ॥ ८ ॥
 सीते पुत्रि करसि जनि त्रासा । करिहउँ जातुधान कर नासा ॥ ९ ॥
 धावा क्रोधवंत खग कैसें । छूटइ पबि परबत कहूँ जैसें ॥ १० ॥
 रे रे दुष्ट ठाढ़ किन होही । निर्भय चलेसि न जानेहि मोही ॥ ११ ॥

gīdharāja suni ārata bānī. raghukulatilaka nāri pahicānī. 7.
 adhama nisācara līnhēm jā’ī. jimi malēcha basa kapilā gā’ī. 8.
 sītē putri karasi jani trāsā. kariha’uṁ jātudhāna kara nāsā. 9.
 dhāvā krōdhavanta khaga kaisēm. chūṭa’i pabi parabata kahūṁ jaisēm. 10.
 rē rē duṣṭa ṭhārha kina hōhī. nirbhaya calēsi na jānēhi mōhī. 11.

[Now it so happened that Ravana went by the path in the sky that crossed a place where lived an old vulture named Jatau. He had been befriended by Lord Ram earlier when the Lord was entering into the deep recesses of the forest of Dandak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.

When Jatau heard and saw Ravana scrambling away fast with a wailing Sita aboard his chariot, the old vulture could immediately understand that there was something seriously amiss. So he decided to intervene and set Sita free.]

The lord of the vultures (gīdharāja; Jatau) heard the wailings of Sita, and as he looked out to investigate he could perceive immediately that she was indeed the honourable wife of the Lord who was the glory of king Raghu's line (raghukulatilaka nāri; "the wife of Lord Ram"). (7)

He realized that the contemptible demon was taking her forcibly away like a cow known as Kapila that has fallen into the hands of a cruel barbarian (malēcha) who is forcibly taking her away (to be sacrificed)¹.

[¹The 'Kapila' cow is regarded as a holy animal; she has dark skin of grayish-brown hue, and is considered as auspicious. The cruel barbarian takes her away to kill her. Here, Sita is like this 'cow', and Ravana is the 'barbarian'.] (8)

Jatau leapt to defend Sita; he called out aloud to her: 'Listen daughter Sita; don't worry and do not be afraid. I shall kill this demon straightaway.' (9)

The mighty bird lunged forward angrily and with the greatest of agility as if the thunderbolt is shot at a huge mountain to break it down. (10)

He yelled and challenged Ravana, 'Oh you rascal; oh you wicked fellow (rē rē duṣṭa). Why don't you stop? You are going away without any fear whatsoever; don't you know me and who I am, and that it is my area of influence that you seem to violate with impunity; how dare you do so?'²

[²Say, how dare you cross my path so boldly without regard to my presence; how dare you take Sita, whom I regard as my deemed daughter, away so fearlessly, with impunity? Hold it; I have decided to teach you a lesson in propriety and good manners!

Don't you know that my name is Jatau, that I am an upholder of Dharma (propriety and probity), that I am very strong and able, and that I am a son of the legendary sage Kashyap? And that in the absence of the two brothers Ram and Laxman, I am the guardian of Sita? Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Aranya Kand, (i) Canto 50, verse nos. 3-4; and (ii) Canto 14, verse no. 34 respectively.

I shall immediately fell you from your chariot and slay you like your brother Khar had been. Though I am old but don't be misled by it—for I am able enough to trounce you in a fraction of a moment in a duel; don't have delusions about it. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse nos. 23 and 28; and Canto 51, verse no. 30.] (11)

आवत देखि कृतांत समाना । फिरि दसकंधर कर अनुमाना ॥ १२ ॥
की मैनाक कि खगपति होई । मम बल जान सहित पति सोई ॥ १३ ॥
जाना जरठ जटायू एहा । मम कर तीरथ छाँड़िहि देहा ॥ १४ ॥

āvata dēkhi kṛtānta samānā. phiri dasakandhara kara anumānā. 12.
kī maināka ki khagapati hō'ī. mama bala jāna sahita pati sō'ī. 13.
jānā jaraṭha jaṭāyū ēhā. mama kara tīratha chāṁḍīhi dēhā. 14.

When the ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) observed the mighty bird dashing towards him like the death-god himself personified, he faltered in his flight,

wondering as to who he might be. He turned back to see who his attacker was, and began to make guesses. (12)

‘Who is this? Is he Mt. Mainak in a personified form¹; or is he the Lord of the Birds (known as ‘Garud’, the mount of Lord Vishnu)? Now, perchance he is the latter, then he must be aware of my stupendous strength as much as his own Lord (Vishnu) knows about it².

[¹Mount Mainak is a huge mountain. When Indra, the king of gods, ran to hide from Ravana, he had taken shelter in this mountain. Besides this, Mainak was once attacked by Indra who shot his Vajra (thunderbolt) at it; at that time Mainak had hidden under the surface of the ocean to escape the strike of the thunderbolt and get reduced to rubble. So by invoking Mainak, Ravana implies that this legendary Mountain is well aware of his might; so there is no chance of Mainak (i.e. personified form of Mt. Mainak or its patron deity) risking his own safety by showing the audacity to confront Ravana of whom even Indra is scared stiff.

²To wit, Ravana thought to himself thus: “If my detractor is Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, then he also surely knows how strong and invincible I am, for his own master, Lord Vishnu, knows everything about me. He is therefore expected to avoid me as he knows that I have subdued all the gods, and none amongst them ever dare to confront me. In this case this fellow is inviting calamity upon himself by confronting me; he and his lord Vishnu would together regret for this misconceived sense of dare-devilry that by some misadventure Garud seems eager to show.”] (13)

When Ravana discovered upon close observation that his attacker was the old vulture Jatāu³, he sneered sarcastically and joked, ‘This poor fellow seems to be in the throes of death for he has decided to die at my hands like a person willingly submits to die in a pilgrim place.’

[³The age of Jatāu was approximately sixty-thousand years at that time. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 20.] (14)

सुनत गीध क्रोधातुर धावा । कह सुनु रावन मोर सिखावा ॥ १५ ॥
तजि जानकिहि कुसल गृह जाहू । नाहिं त अस होइहि बहुबाहू ॥ १६ ॥
राम रोष पावक अति घोरा । होइहि सकल सलभ कुल तोरा ॥ १७ ॥

sunata gīdha krōdhātura dhāvā. kaha sunu rāvana mōra sikhāvā. 15.
taji jānakihi kusala gr̥ha jāhū. nāhiṁ ta asa hō'ihī bahubāhū. 16.
rāma rōṣa pāvaka ati ghōrā. hō'ihī sakala salabha kula tōrā. 17.

When the vulture heard the insinuating words of Ravana (Chaupai line no. 14 herein above) that were insulting to the extreme, his fury knew no bounds; he dashed forward with full ferocity ignited by anger, exclaiming with vehement indignation, ‘Oh Ravana, pay attention to my sane advice. (15)

Leave Janak’s daughter (Sita; “jānaki”) alone and go back home safely. [It is for your own good.] For otherwise, oh the one with multiple arms (“bahubāhū”; so-called as Ravana had twenty arms, ten on each side of the body)¹, it would happen that --- (16)

--- In the fierce fire ignited by Lord Ram's anger symbolized by the powerful arrows shot by him, your entire family and the race over which you rule would burn to ashes like insects that get roasted in the scorching flame of a lighted lamp; so beware!² (17)

[Note—¹Ravana was very proud of his twenty arms, and on different occasions he had boasted of their might and invincibility. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 28; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 25; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41.

So this is why Jatau chose to tease him by citing his multiple arms, in effect telling him that the part of his body of which he has been so proud of would afford him no protection against Lord Ram's wrath.

²Insects get attracted to the flame of a lighted oil lamp or a candle. They dance around the flame only to get burnt to death. Here, Jatau warns Ravana that instead of the him (Jatau) courting death by interfering with Ravana and trying to stop him from whisking Sita away, it is he (Ravana) who willfully lights the flame that would burn not only him alone but his entire clan to death. He would be well advised to pay heed and leave Sita alone here and now; for otherwise he is embracing sure and certain death even as insects that gather around a flame of a lighted lamp soon burn to death. In this metaphor, Lord Ram's anger represented by the arrows shot by him during the war to free Sita would be like the 'flame of the lighted lamp', and Ravana and the rest of the demons would be like the 'horde of insects that get pulled towards this flame only to get scorched to death'.

Similar allusion to the demons dying in hordes like insects burning to death around a flame has been cited elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, in Sundar Kand, Doha no. 15, Hanuman cites the same metaphor to assure Sita that soon the demons would burn to death by the fire symbolized by the arrows shot angrily by Lord Ram like so many insects who jump to their death by dancing near the flame.

In Valmiki's Ramayan, an identical assertion is made by Jatau: refer—Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 16.]

उतरु न देत दसानन जोधा । तबहिं गीध धावा करि क्रोधा ॥ १८ ॥
 धरि कच बिरथ कीन्ह महि गिरा । सीतहि राखि गीध पुनि फिरा ॥ १९ ॥
 चोचन्ह मारि बिदारेसि देही । दंड एक भइ मुरुछा तेही ॥ २० ॥
 तब सक्रोध निसिचर खिसिआना । काढ़ेसि परम कराल कृपाना ॥ २१ ॥
 काटेसि पंख परा खग धरनी । सुमिरि राम करि अदभुत करनी ॥ २२ ॥

utaru na dēta dasānana jōdhā. tabahim gīdha dhāvā kari krōdhā. 18.
 dhari kaca biratha kīnha mahi girā. sītahi rākhi gīdha puni phirā. 19.
 cōcanha māri bidārēsi dēhī. daṇḍa ēka bha'i muruchā tēhī. 20.
 taba sakrōdha nīsacara khisi'ānā. kāṛhēsi parama karāla kṛpānā. 21.
 kāṭēsi paṅkha parā khaga dharanī. sumiri rāma kari adabhuta karanī. 22.

When the ten-headed warrior (Ravana; “dasānana jōdhā”) did not reply or pay any heed to the vulture (“gīdha”; Jatau), the latter angrily rushed towards him. (18)

He (Jatau) caught hold of Ravana by his hair, and pulled him off the chariot; Ravana fell on the ground. Then the vulture Jatau took Sita away to keep her safely (at his own place), and returned swiftly to face Ravana. (19)

He (Jatau) began tearing at Ravana's body fiercely and rapidly with his sharp pointed beaks, resulting in the demon getting so seriously wounded that for about an hour (*daṇḍa ēka*) he lost his consciousness and fainted on the ground¹. (20)

When by-and-by the demon Ravana regained his consciousness, he was seething in anger; he vehemently drew out his terrible sword. (21)

And with that horrifying sword he cut-off the poor vulture's wings so that the latter fell down on the ground. The Bird invoked Lord Ram and his mysterious and strange ways (that had prevented Jatau from saving Sita)². (22)

[Note—¹We note that Jatau had not attacked Ravana directly on the first occasion itself, for first he tried to stop him, then he tried to reason with him, explaining the grave danger Ravana is inviting upon his entire race by kidnapping Sita and attempting to persuade him to leave her alone, and finally Jatau attacked only when Ravana neglected him completely, paying no heed to him, and instead sneered at him saying that the bird wished to die at his hands.

Jatau could have hit Ravana in his eyes to make him blind, but the demon had ten heads and therefore twenty eyes; so it was impossible to blind him completely. The easiest way to make him fall from the chariot was to hover over his head and catch hold of his hairs and pull him off the vehicle like a folk-lift truck picks up a car, and then dash him on the ground.

²Jatau was crest-fallen and dismayed at the turn of events. He wondered at the mysterious ways of the Supreme Lord and marveled at the way Providence determines a creature's destiny; for though he had almost been successful in rescuing Sita yet destiny wanted something different as it prevailed by forcing him to become helpless by cutting his wings so that Ravana would manage to take Sita away. Jatau realized that perhaps, and in all likelihood, this was the wish of the Supreme Lord as it may have something to do with his divine play and the fulfillment of the Lord's divine mission of which he wasn't aware of. Now nothing more could be done; with his wings cut, the poor Jatau was completely helpless to help Sita.

Jatau also marveled at the fact that Ravana had not cut-off his head to kill him on the spot, but only left him immobile by chopping-off his wings. Surely this was also due for some great cause that is yet to be fulfilled. Slowly and steadily Jatau pondered over the whole affair and came to the conclusion that since nothing happens in this world without the Lord's wishes, it surely means that he was left wounded to live till Lord Ram comes his way searching for Sita. At that time it will be his honour and privilege to tell the Lord about Sita's abductor and of the direction she has been taken away. Besides it, Jatau thought that it would grant him a last chance of meeting and paying his respects to the Supreme Lord before his death, and surely this would not have been possible had Ravana killed him by cutting his head. So his wounds were indeed a blessing in disguise; the sufferings he would have to endure till the Lord comes there would be like a Tapa (penance) for him; it would entitle him to

attain final emancipation and salvation that generally Tapa rewards its practitioner with.

When Jatau understood the significance of his not instantly being killed but getting only wounded, he began, without wasting time, meditating upon the holy name of Lord Ram, which he knew was a great spiritual formula that helps the soul of a creature to find deliverance and emancipation. This is clearly hinted in the wording of this stanza as it says: “sumiri rāma”; i.e. ‘remembering Lord Ram’. So in these final moments, Jatau stopped regretting his failure in stopping Ravana from taking Sita away as it was the wish of the Lord himself, but instead he concentrated his mind to remember the divine form and holy name of Lord Ram to ensure for himself spiritual welfare and a glorious destiny.]

सीतहि जान चढ़ाइ बहोरी । चला उताइल त्रास न थोरी ॥ २३ ॥
 करति बिलाप जाति नभ सीता । ब्याध बिबस जनु मृगी सभीता ॥ २४ ॥
 गिरि पर बैठे कपिन्ह निहारी । कहि हरि नाम दीन्ह पट डारी ॥ २५ ॥
 एहि बिधि सीतहि सो लै गयऊ । बन असोक महँ राखत भयऊ ॥ २६ ॥

sītahi jāna caṛhā'i bahōrī. calā utā'ila trāsa na thōrī. 23.
 karati bilāpa jāti nabha sītā. byādha bibasa janu mṛgī sabhītā. 24.
 giri para baiṭhē kapinha nihārī. kahi hari nāma dīnha paṭa ḍārī. 25
 ēhi bidhi sītahi sō lai gaya'ū. bana asōka maham̐ rākhata bhaya'ū. 26.

Ravana lifted Sita once again on the chariot and ran away from there as fast as he could, as he was very agitated and terrified with fear¹.

[¹Ravana feared for the worst; he feared that by some signal Jatau may call his peers and friends to come immediately to his aid and attack the demon; he also feared that if he wasted more time then it may be possible that even Lord Ram and Laxman would come there hurrying after him in hot pursuit as soon as they would discover that Sita has been abducted.] (23)

Sita lamented and grieved very sorely as she was being taken through the path of the sky; her condition was as pitiful and helpless as a terrified deer that is being taken away by a lion. (24)

On the way she saw some monkeys sitting on the top of a mountain, whereupon she uttered loud the name of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram) and dropped some pieces of her garment².

[²These monkeys were Sugriv and his companions such as Hanuman, Jamvant etc. They lived atop a mountain on the outskirts of Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom. Later on, when Lord Ram was wandering in the forest searching for Sita, he would come to this place. Then the Lord would befriend Sugriv and others; at that time these monkey warriors would tell the Lord of what they had seen about Sita being taken away through the sky by a miscreant. The Lord would be shown these pieces of clothes as identification tokens, and he would be convinced of the authenticity of the story narrated by the monkeys and also of Sita's identity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 5.] (25)

In this way, he (Ravana) took Sita away and held her captive in his royal garden called 'Ashok Van' (bana asōka maham rākhata bhaya'ū)³.

[³This garden was so called for two reasons. One is that it was so pleasant that it removed the sorrows of all those who came to visit it. And the second reason is that it had large Ashoka trees that gave ample shade; it was under one such leafy tree where Sita was seated.

Ravana was so much agitated that he did not pay attention to the tell-tale signs that Sita left on the way. He couldn't realize that these tokens that she is felling would lead Lord Ram hot on his trail.] (26)

दो०. हारि परा खल बहु बिधि भय अरु प्रीति देखाइ ।
तब असोक पादप तर राखिसि जतन कराइ ॥ २९ (क) ॥
जेहि बिधि कपट कुरंग सँग धाइ चले श्रीराम ।
सो छबि सीता राखि उर रटति रहति हरिनाम ॥ २९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

hāri parā khala bahu bidhi bhaya aru prīti dēkhā'i.
taba asōka pādapa tara rākhisi jatana karā'i. 29 (a).
jēhi bidhi kapaṭa kuraṅga saṅga dhā'i calē śrīrāma.
sō chabi sītā rākhi ura raṭati rahati harināma. 29 (b).

That wicked fellow (Ravana) tried all his best tricks employing fear and affection in an attempt to make Sita yield to him, but he failed miserably. So ultimately he left her to be seated under the shade of a great Ashoka tree, and made adequate arrangement for her security¹. (Doha no. 29-a)

Meanwhile, Sita remembered the last vision she saw of Lord Ram—the fascinating view of the Lord going behind the decoy deer—and enshrined it inside her heart, meditating on it and repeating the name of Lord Ram (as a means of survival). (Doha no. 29-b)

[Note—¹Ravana made proper arrangement for Sita and her security. He appointed an old demoness named Trijata to look after her. In due course of time, Trijata became Sita's confidante and close companion. When other demoness tried to tease Sita, Trijata would warn them to leave her alone. She was also the medium by which Sita would come to learn of the developments once the war to free her broke out. These facts have been narrated in Lanka Kand.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.]

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Section 5.2.2:

Adhyatma Ramayan

{The Story of Abduction of Sita by Ravana}

Now we shall read this episode from Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas.

In their principle narration, the versions of Ram Charit Manas and Adhyatma Ramayan are almost alike, though they vary in finer details.

In Adhyatma Ramayan the narration of this particular episode, i.e. of Supernakha's misadventure that resulted in her deformation, and the subsequent events that culminated in Ravana abducting Sita, is found in Canto nos. 5-7 of Aranya Kand. This version is quite frank in its presentation as compared to the version in Ram Charit Manas which observes decorum to quite an extent. So now we shall have another flavour of this fascinating story by reading it word-by-word from Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Cantos 5-7 as follows:

(a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5 (Supernakha's misadventure and her punishment; the slaying of the demons Khar and Dushan etc. by Lord Ram; Supernakha approaches Ravana to seek retribution):-

॥ पञ्चमः सर्गः ॥

श्री महादेव उवाच

तस्मिन् काले महारण्ये राक्षसी कामरूपिणी ।
विचचार महासत्त्वा जनस्थाननिवासिनी ॥ १॥
एकदा गौतमीतीरे पञ्चवट्यां समीपतः ।
पद्मवज्राङ्कुशाङ्कानि पदानि जगतीपतेः ॥ २॥
दृष्ट्वा कामपरीतात्मा पादसौन्दर्यमोहिता ।
पश्यन्ती सा शनैरायाद्राघवस्य निवेशनम् ॥ ३॥

॥ pañcamah sargah ॥

śrī mahādeva uvāca

tasmin kāle mahāraṇye rākṣasī kāmārūpiṇī ।
vicāra mahāsattvā janasthānanivāsini ॥ 1॥
ekadā gautamītire pañcavaṭyāṃ samīpataḥ ।
padmavajrāṅkuśāṅkāni padāni jagatīpateḥ ॥ 2॥
drṣṭvā kāmaparītātmā pādasaundaryamohitā ।
paśyantī sā śanairāyādrāghavasya niveśanam ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—‘Oh Parvati! At that time, there used to roam about freely in that dense forest a demoness who was very strong and could assume any form she wished (1).

Once, near the banks of the Gomti river near Panchvati she saw the marks of the feet of Sri Ram on the ground having the signs (linings) of lotus, Bajra and goad on them. She was enchanted by them and overcome by lust and passion; she followed those pug-marks and slowly, surreptitiously reached his hermitage (2-3).

तत् सा तं रमानाथं सीतया सह संस्थितम् ।
कन्दर्पसदृशं रामं दृष्ट्वा कामविमोहिता ॥ ४॥
राक्षसी राघवं प्राह कस्य त्वं कः किमाश्रमे ।
युक्तो जटावल्कलाद्यैः साध्यं किं तेऽतू मे वद ॥ ५॥

tatra sā taṁ ramānāthaṁ sītayā saha saṁsthitam ।
kandarpasadr̥śaṁ rāmaṁ dr̥ṣṭvā kāmavimohitā ॥ 4॥
rākṣasī rāghavaṁ prāha kasya tvam kaḥ kimāśrame ।
yukto jaṭāvalkalādyaiḥ sādhyam kiṁ te'tra me vada ॥ 5॥

4-5. Reaching there, she saw Ramanath (Lord Ram) who looked as beautiful as Kamdeo-cupid as he sat alongside Sita. Being overcome by passion (4), Supernakha said to the Lord: ‘Whose (son or husband) are you? What is your name? Why do you stay in this forest attired in clothes made of birch (bark of tree) and matted hairs etc.? What do you wish to receive, gain or achieve by staying here? Tell me that (5).

अहं शूर्पणखा नाम राक्षसी कामरूपिणी ।
भगिनी राक्षसेन्द्रस्य रावणस्य महात्मनः ॥ ६॥
खरेण सहिता भ्रात्रा वसाम्यत्रैव कानने ।
राज्ञा दत्तं च मे सर्वं मुनिभक्षा वसाम्यहम् ॥ ७॥
त्वां तु वेदितुमिच्छामि वद मे वदतां वर ।
तामाह रामनामाहमयोध्याधिपतेः सुतः ॥ ८॥

ahaṁ śūrpaṇakhā nāma rākṣasī kāmārūpiṇī ।
bhaginī rākṣasendrasya rāvaṇasya mahātmanaḥ ॥ 6॥
khareṇa sahitā bhrātrā vasāmyatraiva kānane ।
rājñā dattaṁ ca me sarvaṁ munibhakṣā vasāmyaham ॥ 7॥
tvāṁ tu veditumicchāmi vada me vadatāṁ vara ।
tāmāha rāmanāmāhamayodhyādhipateḥ sutaḥ ॥ 8॥

6-8. I am Supernakha, the sister of king of demons, Ravana. I can assume any beautiful form (or can become as beautiful as Kamdeo-cupid himself) (6).

I stay with my brother Khar in this forest. The king (Ravana) has granted me the right over this whole forest. (Hence, as is my wont as a demoness) I eat hermits who live here (7).

Oh the one who appears to be an excellent speaker (*vadatām vara*)! I want to know about you, so do tell me about yourself.’

Then the Lord replied to her, ‘I am the son of the king of Ayodhya; his name is Dasrath, and my name is Ram (8).

एषा मे सुन्दरी भार्या सीता जनकनन्दिनी ।
 स तु भ्राता कनीयान् मे लक्ष्मणोऽतीवसुन्दरः ॥ ९॥
 किं कृत्यं ते मया ब्रूहि कार्यं भुवनसुन्दरि ।
 इति रामवचः श्रुत्वा कामार्ता साब्रवीदिदम् ॥ १०॥
 एहि राम मया सार्धं रमस्व गिरिकानने ।
 कामार्ताहं न शक्नोमि त्यक्तुं त्वां कमलेक्षणम् ॥ ११॥

eṣā me sundarī bhāryā sītā janakanandinī ।
 sa tu bhrātā kaṇīyān me lakṣmaṇo'tīvasundaraḥ ॥ 9॥
 kiṃ kṛtyaṃ te mayā brūhi kāryaṃ bhuvanasundari ।
 iti rāma vacaḥ śrutvā kāmārtā sābravīdidam ॥ 10॥
 ehi rāma mayā sārḍhaṃ ramaśva girikānane ।
 kāmārtāhaṃ na śaknōmi tyaktuṃ tvāṃ kamalekṣaṇam ॥ 11॥

9-11. This beautiful lady is my wife, her name is Sita, while that most handsome and charming youth is my younger brother Laxman (9).

Oh Tribhuvan Sundari (i.e. one who is the most beautiful in all the three sections of the world, the heaven, the earth and the nether world). Tell me what I can do for you?’

Hearing these words of Sri Ram, Supernakha who was bitten by the lust-bug, wistfully said (10): ‘Oh Sri Ram! Come to a mountain cave and enjoy yourself with me. At this time I am lustful, passionate and sexually excited, so I cannot leave (spare) you who are lotus-eyed.’ (11).

रामः सीतां कटाक्षेण पश्यन् सस्मितमब्रवीत् ।
 भार्या ममैषा कल्याणी विद्यते ह्यनपायिनी ॥ १२॥
 त्वं तु सापत्न्यदुःखेन कथं स्थास्यसि सुन्दरि ।
 बहिरास्ते मम भ्राता लक्ष्मणोऽतीव सुन्दरः ॥ १३॥
 तवानुरूपो भविता पतिस्तेनैव सञ्चर ।
 इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणं प्रह पतिर्मे भव सुन्दर ॥ १४॥
 भ्रातुराज्ञां पुरस्कृत्य सङ्गच्छावोऽद्य मा चिरम् ।
 इत्याह राक्षसी घोरा लक्ष्मणं काममोहिता ॥ १५॥

rāmaḥ sītāṃ kaṭākṣeṇa paśyan sasmitamabravīt ।
 bhāryā mamaīṣā kalyāṇī vidyate hyanapāyinī ॥ 12॥
 tvaṃ tu sāpatnnyaduḥkhena kathaṃ sthāsyasi sundari ।
 bahirāste mama bhrātā lakṣmaṇo'tīva sundaraḥ ॥ 13॥

tavānurūpo bhavitā patistenaiva sañcara ।
 ityuktā lakṣmaṇaṃ prāha patirme bhava sundara ॥ 14॥
 bhrāturājñāṃ puraskṛtya saṅgacchāvo'dya mā ciram ।
 ityāha rākṣasī ghorā lakṣmaṇaṃ kāmamohitā ॥ 15॥

12-15. Then Sri Ram indicated towards Sita with a sideways glance and said, 'Oh the beautiful one! My wife is present; abandoning her is impossible (12). While she is alive, how can you live your life burning in the jealousy of having a competitor (or a co-wife)? My most handsome younger brother Laxman is present outside the hermitage (13). He can be your worthy husband. You should roam and enjoy yourself with him (in the forests and mountains).'

When Sri Ram had said this, the fierce demoness Supernakha, who was overcome by passion and excited by libido, approached Laxman and tried to cajole him, saying, 'Oh the beautiful one! Obey your brother and become my husband. Let you and me move around together; don't delay in this.' (14-15).

तामाह लक्ष्मणः साध्वि दासोऽहं तस्य धीमतः ।
 दासी भविष्यसि त्वं तु ततो दुःखतरं नु किम् ॥ १६॥
 तमेव गच्छ भद्रं ते स तु राजाखिलेश्वरः ।
 तच्छ्रुत्वा पुनरप्यागाद्राघवं दुष्टमानसा ॥ १७॥
 क्रोधाद्राम किमर्थं मां भ्रामयस्यनवस्थितः ।
 इदानीमेव तां सीतां भक्षयामि तवाग्रतः ॥ १८॥

tāmāha lakṣmaṇaḥ sādhi dāso'haṃ tasya dhīmataḥ ।
 dāsī bhaviṣyasi tvaṃ tu tato duḥkhataraṃ nu kim ॥ 16॥
 tameva gaccha bhadraṃ te sa tu rājākhileśvaraḥ ।
 tacchrutvā punarapyāgādrāghavaṃ duṣṭamānasā ॥ 17॥
 krodhādrāma kimarthaṃ māṃ bhrāmayasyanavasthitaḥ ।
 idānīmeva tāṃ sītāṃ bhakṣayāmi tavāgrataḥ ॥ 18॥

16-18. He (Laxman) replied to her, 'Oh seeker of love! I am but a humble servant of wise Sri Ram. By making me your husband, you too shall have to become his maid servant. What more sorrowful, humiliating and insulting can anything else be for you? (16). You be blessed! You should go to him for he is our Lord.'

Hearing this, that wicked demoness became peeved and came back to Raghav (Sri Ram) (17), and said menacingly, 'Oh Sri Ram! You are fickle minded. Why do you make me run here and there? If Sita is a hurdle (and you are reluctant to accept my proposal because of her, then I shall eat her instantly, right here in front of you (so as to remove her from the path of our matrimony)).' (18).

इत्युक्त्वा विकटाकारा जानकीमनुधावति ।
 ततो यमाज्ञया खड्गमादाय परिगृह्य ताम् ॥ १९॥
 चिच्छेद नासां कर्णौ च लक्ष्मणो लघुविक्रमः ।

ततो घोरध्वनिं कृत्वा रुधिराक्तवपुर्द्रुतम् ॥ २०॥
 कून्दमाना पपाताग्रे खरस्य परुषाक्षरा ।
 किमेतदिति तामाह खरः खरतराक्षरः ॥ २१॥
 केनैवं कारितासि त्वं मृत्योर्वक्त्रानुवर्तिना ।
 वद मे तं वधिष्यामि कालकल्पमपि क्षणात् ॥ २२॥

ityuktvā vikaṭākārā jānakīmanudhāvati ।
 tato rāmājñāyā khaḍgamādāya pariṅhya tām ॥ 19॥
 ciccheda nāsām kaṇau ca lakṣmaṇo laghuvikramaḥ ।
 tato ghoradhvaniṃ kṛtvā rudhirāktavapurdrutam ॥ 20॥
 krandamānā papātāgre kharasya paruṣākṣarā ।
 kimetaditi tāmāha kharah kharatarākṣarah ॥ 21॥
 kenaivaṃ kārītāsi tvam mṛtyorvaktrānuvartinā ।
 vada me taṃ vadhiṣyāmi kālakalpamapi kṣaṇāt ॥ 22॥

19-22. Saying this, Supernakha assumed a ferocious form and lunged towards Sita. Then on the instructions of Sri Ram, Laxman swiftly caught her and using a sword (19), chopped-off her nose and ears. Then, making a terrible noise and drenched in blood (20), she hurriedly went and fell down in front of Khar (her brother), shrieking horribly as she fell. Seeing her distressed condition, Khar was taken aback; he said with an astonished voice that was shrill to reveal his emotions of utter dismay, ‘What is the matter? (21). Oh, which rascal has dared to do this to you and wish to go in the mouth (jaws) of death? Just tell me—even if he is as strong as Kaal (death), I shall kill him in a moment (to avenge for what he has done to you).’ (22).

तमाह राक्षसी रामः सीतालक्ष्मणसंयुतः ।
 दण्डकं निर्भयं कुर्वन्नास्ते गोदावरीतटे ॥ २३॥
 मामेवं कृतवान्स्तस्य भ्राता तेनैव चोदितः ।
 यदि त्वं कुलजातोऽसि वीरोऽसि जहि तौ रिपू ॥ २४॥
 तयोस्तु रुधिरं पास्ये भक्षयैतौ सुदुर्मदौ ।
 नो वेत्प्राणान् परित्यज्य यास्यामि यमसादनम् ॥ २५॥

tamāha rākṣasī rāmaḥ sītālakṣmaṇasaṃyutaḥ ।
 daṇḍakaṃ nirbhayaṃ kurvannāste godāvarītaṭe ॥ 23॥
 māmevaṃ kṛtavānstasya bhrātā tenaiva coditaḥ ।
 yadi tvam kulajāto'si viro'si jahi tau ripū ॥ 24॥
 tayostu rudhiraṃ pāsye bhakṣayaitau sudurmadau ।
 no cetprāṇān parityajya yāsyāmi yamasādanam ॥ 25॥

23-25. Then the demoness Supernakha said to him, ‘Sri Ram along with Sita and Laxman stays on the banks of river Godawari in order to make the Dandak forest fearless (23).

At his instigation (or instance), his brother Laxman has made me in this horrible condition. If you have honour and dignity of your clan and if you are brave, then you should kill those two enemies (24).

You must eat those two who are wild and intoxicated (i.e. are arrogant with their pride, strength and valour) while I shall drink their blood. Otherwise, I shall die (of shame) and go to hell.' (25).

तच्छ्रुत्वा त्वरितं प्रागात्स्वरः क्रोधेन मूर्च्छितः ।
चतुर्दश सहस्राणि रक्षसां भीमकर्मणाम् ॥ २६॥
चोदयामास रामस्य समीपं वधकाङ्क्षया ।
स्वस्त्रं त्रिशिरश्चैव दूषणश्चैव रक्षसः ॥ २७॥
सर्वे रामं ययुः शीघ्रं नानापूहरणोद्यताः ।
श्रुत्वा कोलाहलं तेषां रामः सौमित्रिमब्रवीत् ॥ २८॥

tacchrutvā tvaritaṃ prāgātkharaḥ krodhena mūrcchitaḥ ।
caturdaśa sahasrāṇi rakṣasāṃ bhīmakarmaṇām ॥ 26॥
codayāmāsa rāmasya samīpaṃ vadhakāṅkṣayā ।
kharaśca trīśirāścaiva dūṣaṇaścaiva rākṣasaḥ ॥ 27॥
sarve rāmaṃ yayuḥ śīghraṃ nānāpraharaṇodyatāḥ ।
śrutvā kolāhalaṃ teṣāṃ rāmaḥ saumitrimabravīt ॥ 28॥

26-28. Hearing these words of Supernakha, Khar was furious with anger and proceeded from there in haste. He sent a ferocious, most vicious and terrible army of fourteen thousand demons (26) to kill Sri Ram. Khar, Dushan and Trishira (27) armed themselves with different weapons and reached the spot where Sri Ram was. Hearing the tumult caused by their arrival, Sri Ram said to Laxman (28)—

श्रूयते विपुलः शब्दो नूनमायान्ति रक्षसाः ।
भविष्यति महद्युद्धं नूनमद्य मया सह ॥ २९॥
सीतां नीत्वा गुह्यं गत्वा तत्र तिष्ठ महाबल ।
हन्तुमिच्छाम्यहं सर्वान् रक्षसान् घोररूपिणः ॥ ३०॥
अत्र किञ्चिन्न वक्तव्यं शापितोऽसि ममोपरि ।
तथेति सीतामादाय लक्ष्मणो गह्वरं ययौ ॥ ३१॥

śrūyate vipulaḥ śabda nūnamāyānti rākṣasāḥ ।
bhaviṣyati mahadyuddhaṃ nūnamadya mayā saha ॥ 29॥
sītāṃ nītvā guhāṃ gatvā tatra tiṣṭha mahābala ।
hantumicchāmyahaṃ sarvān rākṣasān ghorarūpiṇaḥ ॥ 30॥
atra kiñcinna vaktavyaṃ śāpito'si mamopari ।
tatheti sītāmādāya lakṣmaṇo gahvaraṃ yayau ॥ 31॥

29-31. 'There is a great noise. It appears that the demons are positively coming. It is certain that there will be a fierce battle between them and me today (29). So, oh the most strong, valorous one, you should take Sita with you and go secure her inside some mountain cave (so that the demons don't see her and she is not terrified at the spectacle which is about to unfold here shortly). I wish to slay all these ferocious and vicious demons today (30). I tell you on oath, don't tell her anything on this subject.'

Laxman obediently replied, 'As you please', and took Sita to a mountain cave (31).

रामः परिकरं बद्ध्वा धनुरादाय निष्ठुरम् ।
 तूणीरावक्षयशरौ बद्ध्वायतोऽभवत्प्रभुः ॥ ३२॥
 तत आगत्य रक्षांसि रामस्योपरि चिक्षिपुः ।
 आयुधानि विचित्राणि पाषाणान् पादपानपि ॥ ३३॥
 तानि चिच्छेद रामोऽपि लीलया तिलशः क्षणात् ।
 ततो बाणसहस्रेण हत्वा तान् सर्वराक्षसान् ॥ ३४॥
 खरं त्रिशिरसं चैव दूषणं चैव राक्षसम् ।
 जघान प्रहयार्धेन सर्वानेव रघूत्तमः ॥ ३५॥

rāmaḥ parikaraṁ baddhvā dhanurādāya niṣṭhuraṁ ।
 tūṇīrāvākṣayaśarau baddhvāyatto'bhavatprabhuḥ ॥ 32॥
 tata āgatya rakṣāṁsi rāmasyopari cikṣipuḥ ।
 āyudhāni vicitrāṇi pāṣāṇān pādapānapi ॥ 33॥
 tāni ciccheda rāmo'pi līlayā tilaśaḥ kṣaṇāt ।
 tato bāṇasahasreṇa hatvā tān sarvarākṣasān ॥ 34॥
 kharaṁ trīśīrasaṁ caiva dūṣaṇaṁ caiva rākṣasaṁ ।
 jaghāna praharārdhena sarvāneva raghūttamaḥ ॥ 35॥

32-35. Then Sri Ram tied his waist-cloth (i.e. readied himself to face his enemies, the attacking demons), took the stern, merciless and formidable hard bow and two quivers full of arrows that never ended in their numbers (because once shot they would come back to the shooter as they were magically charged for such occasions), and became ready for battle. [This bow and quivers were given to him by sage Agastya. Refer: Adhyatma Ramyan, Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 45-46.] (32).

Then the demons came there and began to shower various weapons and armaments, stones, boulders and trees on Sri Ram (33).

Sri Ram sliced and battered those weapons into minute pieces in a moment as if by magic (or by using a mysterious power). After that, having killed those demons by shooting thousands of arrows (34), the Lord also slayed Khar, Dushan and Trishira. In this manner, the most exalted Raghu (Sri Ram) slayed all those demons in 'half a Prahar' (or 1½ hours). [1 Prahar = 3 hours.] (35).

लक्ष्मणोऽपि गुहामध्यात्सीतामादाय राघवे ।
 समर्प्य राक्षसान् दृष्ट्वा हतान् विस्मयमाययौ ॥ ३६॥
 सीता रामं समातिङ्ग्य प्रसन्नमुखपङ्कजा ।

शस्त्रवृणानि चाङ्गेषु ममार्जं जनकात्मजा ॥ ३७॥

lakṣmaṇo'pi guhāmadhyātsītāmādāya rāghave ।
samarpya rākṣasān dr̥ṣṭvā hatān vismayamāyayau ॥ 36॥
sītā rāmaṃ samāliṅgya prasannamukhapaṅkajā ।
śastravraṇāni cāṅgeṣu mamārja janakātmajā ॥ 37॥

36-37. Then Laxman brought Sita out of the cave and handed her over to Sri Ram. At that time, he (Laxman) was very astonished on seeing all the dead demons (36).

Janak's daughter Sita embraced her husband with a most delighted face and moved her hands (affectionately and with divine healing powers) on the wounds inflicted on his body by the arms used by the demons to attack him (37).

सापि दुद्राव दृष्ट्वा तान् हतान् राक्षसपुङ्गवान् ।
लङ्कां गत्वा सभामध्ये क्रोशन्ती पादसन्निधौ ॥ ३८॥
रावणस्य पपातोर्व्या भगिनी तस्य राक्षसः ।
दृष्ट्वा तां रावणः प्रह भगिनीं भयविह्वलाम् ॥ ३९॥

sāpi dudrāva dr̥ṣṭvā tān hatān rākṣasapuṅgavān ।
laṅkāṃ gatvā sabhāmadhye krośantī pādasannidhau ॥ 38॥
rāvaṇasya papātorvyāṃ bhaginī tasya rakṣasaḥ ।
dr̥ṣṭvā tāṃ rāvaṇaḥ prāha bhaginīm bhayavihvalām ॥ 39॥

38-39. Seeing all those demons, who were among the best in their clan, dead, Supernakha, the sister of demon king Ravana, rushed to Lanka and fell on the ground at his feet, weeping and wailing miserably. Seeing his sister so terrified and utterly in a state of extreme distress, Ravana was perplexed; he enquired of her (38-39)—

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ वत्से त्वं विरूपकरणं तव ।
कृतं शक्रेण वा भद्रे यमेन वरुणेन वा ॥ ४०॥
कुबेरेणाथवा ब्रूहि भस्मीकुर्या क्षणेन तम् ।
राक्षसी तमुवाचेदं त्वं प्रमत्तो विमूढधीः ॥ ४१॥

uttiṣṭhottiṣṭha vatse tvam virūpakaraṇam tava ।
kṛtaṃ śakreṇa vā bhadre yamena varuṇena vā ॥ 40॥
kubereṇāthavā brūhi bhaśmīkuryāṃ kṣaṇena tam ।
rākṣasī tamuvācedaṃ tvam pramatto vimūḍhadhīḥ ॥ 41॥

40-41. 'Oh daughter, get up (uttiṣṭhottiṣṭha vatse). Do tell me who has dared to deform you? Oh gentle and honourable lady! Is this the work of Indra (king of Gods), or who among Yam (God of death), Varun (God of water) (40), or Kuber (God's treasurer) has done it? Tell me, I shall reduce him to ashes in a moment.'

Then the demoness replied (strongly admonishing Ravana and rebuking him), ‘You are very indulgent, haughty and a foolish block-head (41).

पानासक्तः स्त्रीविजितः षण्ढः सर्वत्र लक्ष्यसे ।
 चारचक्षुर्विहीनस्त्वं कथं राजा भविष्यसि ॥ ४२॥
 खरश्च निहतः सङ्ख्ये दूषणस्त्रिशिरस्तथा ।
 चतुर्दश सहस्राणि राक्षसानां महात्मनाम् ॥ ४३॥
 निहतानि क्षणेनैव रामेणासुरशत्रुणा ।
 जनस्थानमशेषेण मुनीनां निर्भयं कृतम् ।
 न जानासि विमूढस्त्वमत एव मयोव्यते ॥ ४४॥

pānāsaktaḥ strīvijitaḥ ṣaṇḍhaḥ sarvatra lakṣyase ।
 cāracakṣurvihīnastvaṃ kathaṃ rājā bhaviṣyasi ॥ 42॥
 kharaśca nihataḥ saṅkhye dūṣaṇastriśirāstathā ।
 caturdaśa sahasrāṇi rākṣasānāṃ mahātmanām ॥ 43॥
 nihatāni kṣaṇenaiva rāmeṇāsuraśatruṇā ।
 janasthānamaśeṣeṇa munīnāṃ nirbhayaṃ kṛtam ।
 na jñāsi vimūḍhastvamata eva mayocyate ॥ 44॥

42-44. You are a drunkard; you are infatuated with and dominated by women (you are a womaniser), and you appear impotent in all matters. You do not have the so-called four eyes that a prudent king must possess (in the form of spies and informers, as well as good and fearless advisors, besides having personal sense of wisdom and prudence)—then, how (i.e. for how long) can you remain a king? (42).

Khar has been killed in the battle while Dushan and Trishira along with fourteen thousand of the best of the demon army (43) have been killed by the one who is an enemy of demons, that is Sri Ram, in an instant. The whole inhabited area (of the forest) has been liberated from demons and made freely accessible and habitable for the hermits and sages by him. In spite of such a havoc taking place in your realm, you are still unaware of it. That is why I say you are a total blockhead and a complete idiot.’ (44).

रावण उवाच
 को वा रामः किमर्थं वा कथं तेनासुरा हताः ।
 सम्यक्कथय मे तेषां मूलघातं करोम्यहम् ॥ ४५॥

rāvaṇa uvāca
 ko vā rāmaḥ kimarthaṃ vā kathaṃ tenāsuraḥ hatāḥ ।
 samyakkathaya me teṣāṃ mūlaghātaṃ karomyaham ॥ 45॥

45. Ravana retorted, ‘Oh, tell me who that Ram is? Why and how has he killed those demons? Tell me everything in detail; I will pierce (spike, chop off, eliminate) the root cause of it all.’ (45).

शूर्पणखोवाच

जनस्थानादहं याता कदाचित् गौतमीतटे ।

तत् पञ्चवटी नाम पुरा मुनिजनाश्रया ॥ ४६॥

तत्प्राश्रमे मया दृष्टो रामो राजीवलोचनः ।

धनुर्बाणधरः श्रीमान् जटावल्कलमण्डितः ॥ ४७॥

कनीयाननुजस्तस्य लक्ष्मणोऽपि तथाविधः ।

तस्य भार्या विशालाक्षी रूपिणी श्रीरिवापरा ॥ ४८॥

śūrpaṇakhovāca

janasthānādahaṃ yātā kadācit gautamītaṭe ।

tatra pañcavaṭī nāma purā munijanāśrayā ॥ 46॥

tatrāśrame mayā dr̥ṣṭo rāmo rājīvalocanaḥ ।

dhanurbāṇadharah śrīmān jaṭāvalkalamaṇḍitaḥ ॥ 47॥

kanīyānanujastasya lakṣmaṇo'pi tathāvidhaḥ ।

tasya bhāryā viśālākṣī rūpiṇī śrīrivāparā ॥ 48॥

46-48. Supernakha said indignantly, 'One day I was going from my usual habitat to the banks of river Gomti where there is an ancient hermitage inhabited by hermits, ascetics and sages. The place is called Panchvati (46).

In that hermitage I saw Sri Ram the lotus-eyed one, who was attired in matted hairs and clothes made from bark of trees (birch), holding a bow and arrow, and who is a treasury of beauty (47).

His younger brother is as beautiful, handsome, charming and attractive as Sri Ram, and his broad-eyed wife is also comparable to goddess Laxmi herself in beauty and charm (48).

देवगन्धर्वनागानां मनुष्याणां तथाविधा ।

न दृष्टा न श्रुता राजन् द्योतयन्ती वनं शुभा ॥ ४९॥

आनेतुमहमुद्युक्ता तां भार्यार्थं तवानघ ।

लक्ष्मणो नाम तद्भ्राता चिच्छेद मम नासिकाम् ॥ ५०॥

कर्णो च नोदितस्तेन रामेण स महाबलः ।

ततोऽहमतिदुःखेन रुदती स्वरमन्वगाम् ॥ ५१॥

devagandharvanāgānāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ tathāvidhā ।

na dr̥ṣṭā na śrutā rājan dyotayantī vanaṃ śubhā ॥ 49॥

ānetumahamudyuktā tāṃ bhāryārthaṃ tavānagha ।

lakṣmaṇo nāma tadbhrātā ciccheda mama nāsikām ॥ 50॥

karṇau ca noditastena rāmeṇa sa mahābalaḥ ।

tato'hamatiduhkhena rudatī kharamanvagām ॥ 51॥

49-51. Oh king! Among the Gods, Gandharvas (celestial musicians), Naags (legendary serpents who rule the subterranean world and have near-human forms) and

humans etc.—a woman as beautiful and enchanting as that lady has never been ever heard of or seen anywhere among them. That auspicious and virtuous lady illuminates the whole forest by her beauty, radiance and glow (49).

Oh Anagh (one who is sinless, faultless and immaculate; one who is honourable and respectable)¹! I had tried to bring her here to make her your wife, at which attempt of mine, Sri Ram's brother Laxman had chopped off my nose (50).

And then (not satisfied by that, and to add insult to injury), at the behest of Sri Ram, the most strong Laxman disfigured me by cutting off my ears too. Then I went away, gravely lamenting and weeping distressfully to report the developments to Khar (my brother) (51).²

[Note—¹It is easy to see how cunning and deceitful Supernakha was. Earlier she had heaped all sorts of insults on her brother Ravana (verse 42-44), and now she flatters him by calling him “Anagh”, i.e. one who is excellent and without faults.

²It should be noted how falsehood has been used by Supernakha to instigate and incite Ravana. This, along with Manthar's instigation of Kaikeyi at Ayodhya that resulted in Lord Ram being sent to fourteen years in exile in the forest, are but two outstanding examples of how misinformation or distortion of facts can subvert the mind of even the most wise persons and cause horrible consequences. The moral is to verify the facts first hand before jumping to conclusions, and more dangerously, to act upon these twisted, self-serving, spiced-up bits of information without due application of mind.]

सोऽपि रामं समासाद्य युद्धं राक्षसयूथपैः ।
 अतः क्षणेन रामेण तेनैव बलशालिना ॥ ५२॥
 सर्वे तेन विनष्टा वै राक्षसा भीमविक्रमाः ।
 यदि रामो मनः कुर्यात्त्रैलोक्यं निमिषार्धतः ॥ ५३॥
 भस्मीकुर्यान्न सन्देह इति भाति मम प्रभो ।
 यदि सा तव भार्या स्यात्सफलं तव जीवितम् ॥ ५४॥

so'pi rāmaṃ samāsādyā yuddhaṃ rākṣasayūthapaiḥ ।
 ataḥ kṣaṇena rāmeṇa tenaiva balaśālinā ॥ 52॥
 sarve tena vinaṣṭā vai rākṣasā bhīmavikramāḥ ।
 yadi rāmo manaḥ kuryātrailokyam niṣārdhataḥ ॥ 53॥
 bhasmīkuryānna sandeha iti bhāti mama prabho ।
 yadi sā tava bhāryā syātsaphalaṃ tava jīvitam ॥ 54॥

52-54. He (Khar) immediately went with his demon commanders (Dushan and Trishira) and took up battle with Sri Ram but that valourous one (52) destroyed the huge, invincible and always victorious demons in a flash (i.e. in a short while). It appears to me that if Sri Ram firmly decides, he can turn the Triloki (the three worlds) (53) into ashes in a second. But, by the way, if his woman (Sita) becomes your wife, then your life will be deemed to be rewarded and fortunate (i.e. you will be very lucky to have Sita as your wife) (54).

अतो यतस्व राजेन्द्र यथा ते वल्लभा भवेत् ।
सीता राजीवपत्राक्षी सर्वलोकैकसुन्दरी ॥ ५५॥
साक्षाद्रामस्य पुरतः स्थातुं त्वं न क्षमः प्रभो ।
मायया मोहयित्वा तु प्राप्स्यसे तां सघूतमम् ॥ ५६॥

ato yatasva rājendra yathā te vallabhā bhavet ।
sītā rājīvapatrākṣī sarvalokaikasundarī ॥ 55॥
sākṣādrāmasya purataḥ sthātum tvam na kṣamaḥ prabho ।
māyayā mohayitvā tu prāpsyase tāṃ raghūttamam ॥ 56॥

55-56. Hence, oh King of kings (Rajendra)! Make an effort so that Sita, who is lotus-eyed and the only beauty in the whole world, becomes dearest to your heart (i.e. your dear wife) (55).

Oh Lord! You cannot stand physically in front of him (i.e. you are no match to Sri Ram's strength). So, in order to accomplish this task, you will have to adopt some clever means tactfully to divert his attention in order to get her (Sita).' (56).

श्रुत्वा तत्सूक्तवाक्यैश्च दानमानादिभिस्तथा ।
आश्वस्य भगिनीं राजा प्रविवेश स्वकं गृहम् ।
तत्र चिन्तापरो भूत्वा निद्रां रात्रौ न लब्धवान् ॥ ५७॥

śrutvā tatsūktavākyaīśca dānamānādibhistathā ।
āśvāsyā bhaginīm rājā praviveśa svakaṃ grham ।
tatra cintāparo bhūtvā nidrām rātrau na labdhavān ॥ 57॥

57. Hearing all this, the demon king Ravana honoured his sister (Supernakha) with pleasant and sweet words, and tried to console her by giving gifts. After reassuring her of his full support and sympathy, he went to his royal palace. But he was so confounded and perturbed by the developments that he could not sleep even for a moment that night; the flow of worrying ideas and the spectre of ghosts of ruin and calamity caused immense mental disturbance to him (57).

एकेन रामेण कथं मनुष्यमात्रेण नष्टः सबलः खरो मे ।
भ्राता कथं मे बलवीर्यदर्पयुतो विनष्टो बत राघवेण ॥ ५८॥

ekena rāmeṇa katham manuṣyamātreṇa naṣṭaḥ sabalaḥ kharo me ।
bhrātā katham me balavīryadarpayuto vinaṣṭo bata rāghaveṇa ॥ 58॥

58. During the night he pondered over the matter and debated to himself, 'It is very surprising and strange occurrence that a lonely, ordinary human born in Raghu's clan, Sri Ram, can ever slay my brother Khar, who was endowed with immense strength, valour and bravery, along with his ace army (58).

यद्वा न रामो मनुजः परेशो मां हन्तुकामः सबलं बलौघैः ।
सम्प्रार्थितोऽयं द्रुहिणेन पूर्वं मनुष्यरूपोऽद्य रघोः कुलेऽभूत् ॥ ५९॥

yadvā na rāmo manujaḥ pareśo māṃ hantukāmaḥ sabalaṃ balaughaiḥ ।
samprārthito'yaṃ druhiṇena pūrvaṃ manuṣyarūpo'dya raghoḥ kule'bhūt ॥ 59॥

59. Or else it appears that he is the personification of Parmatma (the Supreme Soul) himself who has, on the prayers of Brahma in some previous time, has incarnated (manifested) himself in a human form in king Raghu's clan of Ayodhya (as Sri Ram) to kill me, along with my army and kinsmen, by employing an army of monkeys for the purpose (59).

वध्यो यदि स्यां परमात्मनाहं वैकुण्ठराज्यं परिपालयेऽहम् ।
नो चेदिदं राक्षसराज्यमेव भोक्ष्ये चिरं राममतो व्रजामि ॥ ६०॥

vadhyo yadi syāṃ paramātmānaḥaṃ vaikunṭharājyaṃ paripālaye'ham ।
no cedidaṃ rākṣasarājyameva bhokṣye ciraṃ rāmamato vrajāmi ॥ 60॥

60. If I am indeed killed by Parmatma (supreme Lord) himself than surely enough I shall enjoy the kingdom of heaven, otherwise I will be enjoying the kingdom (or kingdom) of the demons for a long time to come. I stand to gain both the ways. Therefore, I will certainly go to (i.e. have a face-off with) Sri Ram.' (60).

इत्थं विचिन्त्याखिलराक्षसेन्द्रो रामं विदित्वा परमेश्वरं हरिम् ।
विरोधबुद्ध्यैव हरिं प्रयामि दुतं न भवत्या भगवान् प्रसीदेत् ॥ ६१॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामयणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे
अरण्यकाण्डे पञ्चमः सर्गः ॥ ५॥

itthaṃ vicintyākhilarākṣasendro rāmaṃ viditvā parameśvaraṃ harim ।
virodhabuddhyaiva hariṃ prayāmi drutaṃ na bhaktyā bhagavān prasīdet ॥
61॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmayāṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde
araṇyakāṇḍe pañcamaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 5॥

61. Ravana, who was a king of the whole demon race, contemplated over the matter thus and realising (coming to the conclusion) that Sri Ram was the real, true personification of Parmatma Sri Hari (Vishnu) himself, he decided that he will attain (go near) the Lord even with enmity, ill-will and maliciousness because for him to do it (i.e. approach Sri Ram) with Bhakti and other noble pursuits such as righteousness

and spiritualism, is very difficult and the Lord cannot be easily pleased with him by the latter method of Bhakti (because he is so sinful that he is not fit to do it properly, it is not his cup of tea) (61)¹.

[Note—¹In Canto 7, verse no. 65 herein below we will read that Ravana had showed great respect to Sita in the way he kept her safely in his garden. This proves that though outwardly Ravana had played his role as a ferocious and vicious tyrant, a demon who was ruthless, cruel and belligerent, but internally he was at peace with himself, sure in the conviction that finally, his redemption, emancipation and salvation was at hand, and that too in a manner befitting his mental temperament and tendencies of a demon who loves to fight and show no mercy on anyone, who is overtly sinful and pervert, and who knows not how to worship God in the proper manner in which the Lord ought to be worshipped in accordance with the sanction of the scriptures.

To wit, the deliverance for which mystics, ascetics, sages, hermits, seers, saints had to do so much austerities and penances was available to him virtually on a platter without the incumbent sufferings and hardships. Further, the Lord is attainable by honest and sincere confession, and not by deception, and Ravana wins the game hands down on this count—for he was very sincere in his heart when he decided to take away Sita and directly confront Lord Ram as he was sure that it was the only means left to him by which he can finally attain redemption for his tormented soul which was crying for deliverance from the evil body of a demon in which it was unfortunately trapped due to some misadventure of the past, which was now history and could not be changed, but what could be changed was the future course that the soul was free to decide for itself as its preferred destiny.]

Thus ends Canto 5 of Adhyatma Ramayan narrating the conversation between Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and Uma (his consort Parvati).

(b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 6 (Ravana approaches the demon Marich to ask him to become a decoy deer so that Sita can be abducted):-

॥ षष्ठः सर्गः ॥

विविन्त्यैवं निशायां स प्रभाते रथमास्थितः ।

शवणो मनसा कार्यमेकं निश्चित्य बुद्धिमान् ॥ १॥

ययौ मारीचसदनं परं पारमुदन्वतः ।

मारीचस्तत्र मुनिवज्जटावत्कलधारकः ॥ २॥

ध्यायन् हृदि परात्मानं निर्गुणं गुणभासकम् ।

समाधिविरमेऽपश्यद्रावणं गृहमागतम् ॥ ३॥

॥ ṣaṣṭhaḥ sargaḥ ॥

vicintyaivaṃ niśāyāṃ sa prabhāte rathamāsthitaḥ ।

rāvaṇo manasā kāryamekaṃ niścitya buddhimān ॥ 1॥

yayau māricasadanam param pāramudanvataḥ ।

māricastatra munivajjaṭāvalkaladhārakaḥ ॥ 2॥

dhyāyan hr̥di parātmānaṃ nirguṇaṃ guṇabhāsakam ।

samādhivirame'paśyadrāvaṇaṃ gr̥hamāgatam ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva continued with his narration and said—‘Oh Parvati! Making up his mind during the night, when the day broke, the wise Ravana boarded a chariot and having decided on a course of action (1), he went to the residence of Marich on the other shore of the ocean. There, Marich, attired like a hermit with matted lock of hairs and clothes made of birch (2), was contemplating on the Nirgun God (i.e. the Lord who is without attributes, is formless and all-pervading) who illuminates (i.e. pervades uniformly in the whole of) Nature. When he woke up from his contemplative, meditative posture, he found Ravana standing in front of him in his dwelling (3).

द्रुतमुत्थाय चालिङ्ग्य पूजयित्वा यथाविधि ।
कृतातिथ्यं सुखासीनं मारीचो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ४॥
समागमनमेतत्ते रथेनैकेन रावण ।
चिन्तापर इवाभासि हृदि कार्यं विचिन्तयन् ॥ ५॥
ब्रूहि मे न हि गोप्यं चेत्करवाणि तव प्रियम् ।
न्याय्यं चेद्ब्रूहि राजेन्द्र वृजिनं मां स्पृशेन्न हि ॥ ६॥

drutamutthāya cālīṅgya pūjayitvā yathāvidhi ।
kṛtātithyaṃ sukhāsīnaṃ mārīco vākyaṃ abravīt ॥ 4॥
samāgamanametatte rathenaikena rāvaṇa ।
cintāpara ivābhāsi hṛdi kāryaṃ vicintayan ॥ 5॥
brūhi me na hi gopyaṃ cetkaravāṇi tava priyam ।
nyāyyaṃ cedbrūhi rājendra vṛjinaṃ māṃ spṛṣenna hi ॥ 6॥

4-6. When Marich saw Ravana, he hastily stood up, embraced him, duly welcomed and worshipped him in the traditional way as a honoured guest (by offering oblations, refreshments etc.), and when Ravana was comfortably seated, Marich asked (4), ‘Oh Ravana! You have come with a single chariot (alone) and your mind appears to be deeply disturbed and worried on some subject (5). If it is not a secret (which you do not want to divulge to me, then) do tell me about it. Oh King of kings! If I do not have to commit a sin and if it is righteous, proper and in accordance with the law, then tell me, I shall surely do that work for you which is dear to you (i.e., the work which you want me to do, and for which purpose you have come here).’ (6).

रावण उवाच
अस्ति राजा दशरथः साकेताधिपतिः किल ।
रामनामा सुतस्तस्य ज्येष्ठः सत्यपराक्रमः ॥ ७॥
विवासयामास सुतं वनं वनजनप्रियम् ।
भार्यया सहितं भ्रात्रा लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितम् ॥ ८॥
स आस्ते विपिने घोरे पञ्चवट्याश्रमे शुभे ।
तस्य भार्या विशालाक्षी सीता लोकविमोहिनी ॥ ९॥

rāvaṇa uvāca

asti rājā daśarathaḥ sāketādhipatiḥ kila ।
 rāmanāmā sutastasya jyeṣṭhaḥ satyaparākramaḥ ॥ 7॥
 vivāsayāmāsa sutaṃ vanam vanajanapriyam ।
 bhāryayā sahitaṃ bhrātrā lakṣmaṇena samanvitam ॥ 8॥
 sa āste vipine ghore pañcavaṭyāśrame śubhe ।
 tasya bhāryā viśālākṣī sītā lokavimohinī ॥ 9॥

7-9. Ravana replied, 'It is said that king Dasrath is the ruler of Ayodhya, and his eldest son is the right-earnest and victorious one called Ram (7).

Dasrath has sent that son, who is dear to the hermit and sages, to the forest along with his wife and younger brother Laxman (8).

Presently, he stays in the Panchvati hermitage in the dense, wild forest called Dandkaranya. I've heard that his wife, the broad-eyed Sita, is able to charm and enchant the whole of the three worlds (i.e. the three divisions of the world) by her bewitching beauty (9).

रामो निरपराधान्मे राक्षसान् भीमविक्रमान् ।
 खरं च हत्वा विपिने सुखमास्तेऽतिनिर्भयः ॥ १०॥
 भगिन्याः शूर्पणखाया निर्दोषायाश्च नासिकाम् ।
 कर्णो चिच्छेद दुष्टात्मा वने तिष्ठति निर्भयः ॥ ११॥

rāmo niraparādhānme rākṣasān bhīmavikramān ।
 kharaṃ ca hatvā vipine sukhamāste'tinirbhayaḥ ॥ 10॥
 bhaginyāḥ śūrpaṇakhāyā nirdoṣāyāśca nāsikām ।
 karṇau ciccheda duṣṭātmā vane tiṣṭhati nirbhayaḥ ॥ 11॥

10-11. That Ram has killed my demon warriors who were brave, valiant, mighty and innocent, and unfortunately that includes my brother Khar. He (Sri Ram) stays in that forest happily and fearlessly (as if he has no fear of me and my demon warriors, and this sort of encourages others who live there, such as the sages and hermits whom I have till now managed to subdue, to show their disrespect to me and my forces, something intolerable for me, as this undermines my authority and makes me look ridiculous) (10).

My sister Supernakha had also not committed any misconduct and was innocent. She had not done any harm or caused any offence to him, but that rascal cut-off her nose and ears, and now fearlessly lives in that forest unchallenged (11)¹.

[Note—¹The reader must note how facts have been distorted. Ravana claims that Supernakha was not guilty of any misconduct—which is contrary to facts.]

अतस्त्वया सहायेन गत्वा तत्प्राणवत्लभाम् ।
 आनयिष्यामि विपिने रहिते राघवेण ताम् ॥ १२॥
 त्वं तु मायामृगो भूत्वा ह्याशूमादपनेष्यसि ।
 रामं च लक्ष्मणं चैव तदा सीतां हराम्यहम् ॥ १३॥

atastvayā sahāyena gatvā tatprāṇavallabhām ।
 ānayaṣyāmi vipine rahite rāghaveṇa tām ॥ 12॥
 tvaṃ tu māyāmr̥go bhūtvā hyāśramādapaneṣyasi ।
 rāmaṃ ca lakṣmaṇaṃ caiva tadā sītāṃ harāmyaham ॥ 13॥

12-13. Hence, by your help, I intend to bring his dearest wife Sita when Sri Ram is not in that forest (12).

You should become a decoy deer and take Sri Ram and Laxman far away from the hermitage on some pretext. Just at that opportune time, I shall steal (kidnap) Sita (sītāṃ harāmyaham) (13).

त्वं तु तावत्सहायं मे कृत्वा स्थास्यसि पूर्ववत् ।
 इत्येवं भाषमाणं तं रावणं वीक्ष्य विस्मितः ॥ १४॥
 केनेदमुपदिष्टं ते मूलघातकरं वचः ।
 स एव शत्रुर्वध्यश्च यस्त्वन्नाशं प्रतीक्षते ॥ १५॥

tvaṃ tu tāvatsahāyaṃ me kṛtvā sthāsyasi pūrvavat ।
 ityevaṃ bhāṣamāṇaṃ taṃ rāvaṇaṃ vīkṣya vismitaḥ ॥ 14॥
 kenedamupadiṣṭaṃ te mūlaghātakaraṃ vacaḥ ।
 sa eva śatrurvadhyāśca yastvannāśaṃ pratīkṣate ॥ 15॥

14-15. In this manner, after helping me in my job, you can come back to your residence here as before.'

Hearing Ravana make this preposterous proposal, Marich was stunned with astonishment. He said (14), 'Oh Ravana! Who has told (advised) you this thing which is completely devastating and ruinous for you? Anyone who wants to destroy you in this manner (using this plan as a bait to lure you in the trap of self destruction), surely he is your enemy and worthy of being killed (i.e. punished by you). [To wit, anyone, whosoever he or she may be, who has given you this mad idea is without doubt your greatest enemy; beware. You are inviting your own ruin by lending your mind to such mischievous and ridiculous thoughts that pretend nothing but destruction.] (15).

रामस्य पौरुषं स्मृत्वा चित्तमद्यापि रावण ।
 बालोऽपि मां कौशिकस्य यज्ञसंरक्षणाय सः ॥ १६॥
 आगतस्त्विषुणैकेन पातयामास सागरे ।
 योजनानां शतं रामस्तदादि भयविह्वलः ॥ १७॥
 स्मृत्वा स्मृत्वा तदेवाहं रामं पश्यामि सर्वतः ॥ १८॥

rāmasya pauruṣaṃ smṛtvā cittamadyāpi rāvaṇa ।
 bālo'pi māṃ kauśikasya yajñasaṃrakṣaṇāya saḥ ॥ 16॥
 āgatastviṣuṇaikenā pātayāmāsa sāgare ।
 yojanānāṃ śataṃ rāmastadādi bhayavihvalaḥ ॥ 17॥

smṛtvā smṛtvā tadevāhaṃ rāmaṃ paśyāmi sarvataḥ ॥ 18॥

16-18. Oh Ravana when I remember the valour of Sri Ram's adolescent days—when he had come to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra (16), and (when I had tried to interfere) he had thrown me (i.e. flung me) by a single arrow to a distance of 100 Yojans (appx. 800 miles) on the shore of an ocean—ever since that time, I remain terrified (17).

That incident keeps on recurring in my memory, and I imagine (visualise) Sri Ram everywhere¹.

[¹It appears to be a case of traumatic hallucination from which Marich suffered. He was so traumatized by the shock of the arrow striking him so hard that it flung him for 800 miles that ever since that moment he lived in constant fear of those horrifying moments. Whenever he recalled those turbulent moments, he had goosebumps and shivered as if a fever was coming up. His psyche was so much affected by this singular event that he found it hard to forget Lord Ram; but at the same time he thanked the Lord also for sparing his life by shooting him with a harmless arrow that instead of snuffing life out of him merely flung him away from the battle-field.] (18)

दण्डकेऽपि पुनरप्यहं वने पूर्ववैरमनुचिन्तयन् हृदि ।
तीक्ष्णशृङ्गमृगरूपमेकदा मादृशैर्बहुभिरावृतोऽभययाम् ॥ १९॥
राघवं जनकजासमन्वितं लक्ष्मणेन सहितं त्वरान्वितः ।
आगतोऽहमथ हन्तुमुद्यतो मां विलोक्य शरमेकमक्षिपत् ॥ २०॥

daṇḍake'pi punarapyahaṃ vane pūrvavairamanucintayan hṛdi ।
tikṣṇaśṛṅgamṛgarūpamekadā mādr̥śairbahubhirāvṛto'bhyayām ॥ 19॥
rāghavaṃ janakajāśamanvitaṃ lakṣmaṇena sahitaṃ tvarānvitaḥ ।
āgato'hamatha hantumudyato māṃ vilokya śaramekamakṣipat ॥ 20॥

19-20. One day, remembering my old enmity with him, I went to the Dandkaranya forest disguised as a deer with sharp horns and mixed myself with other such deer (to conceal my true identity) (19).

When I hastily moved forward with the intention to kill Raghav (Sri Ram), along with the daughter of Janak (Sita) and Laxman, he had shot a single arrow at me when he saw me (20).

तेन विद्धहृदयोऽहमुद्भ्रमन् राक्षसेन्द्र पतितोऽस्मि सागरे ।
तत्प्रभृत्यहमिदं समाश्रितः स्थानमूर्जितमिदं भयार्दितः ॥ २१॥

tena viddhahṛdayo'hamudbhraman rākṣasendra patito'smi sāgare ।
tatprabhṛtyahamidaṃ samāśritaḥ sthānamūrjitamidaṃ bhayārditaḥ ॥ 21॥

21. Oh king of demons! I was pierced by it and I spun in the sky before falling in the ocean. I am so scared and terrified since then that I live in this place which makes me feel fearless and comfortable (because it is secluded and far away from Sri Ram) (21).

राममेव सततं विभावये भीतभीत इव भोगराशितः ।
राजरत्नरमणीरथादिकं श्रोत्रयोर्यदि गतं भयं भवेत् ॥ २२॥

rāmameva satataṁ vibhāvaye bhītabhīta iva bhogarāśitaḥ ।
rājaratnaramaṇīrathādikaṁ śrotrayoryadi gataṁ bhayaṁ bhavet ॥ 22॥

22. When any word starting with the letter ‘Ra’, such as Raj—kingdom, Ratna—gems and jewels, Ramani—a lustful woman, and Rath—a chariot, fall in my ears, I get terribly scared (remembering ‘Ram’ whose name also starts with this letter “Ra”) so much so that I remain sore terrified of even thinking of anything of comfort and pleasure (represented by the above four entities). The effect on my psyche is so profound that I always keep on remembering ‘Ram’, though it is out of fear more than out of any endearment for the Lord (22).

राम आगत इहेतिशङ्कया बाह्यकार्यमपि सर्वमत्यजम् ।
निद्रया परिवृतो यदा स्वप्ने राममेव मनसानुचिन्तयन् ॥ २३॥

rāma āgata ihetiśaṅkayā bāhyakāryamapi sarvamatyajam ।
nidrayā parivṛto yadā svape rāmameva manasānucintayan ॥ 23॥

23. Scared stiff by the apprehension that Sri Ram might come here also, I have forsaken all outside work (and remain holed up inside my safe haven). When I sleep during the night, I keep on remembering Sri Ram (even in my dreams) (23).

स्वप्नदृष्टिगतराघवं तदा बोधितो विगतनिद्र आस्थितः ।
तद्भवानपि विमुच्य चाग्रहं राघवं प्रति गृहं प्रयाहि भोः ॥ २४॥

svapnadṛṣṭigatarāghavaṁ tadā bodhito vigatanidra āsthitaḥ ।
tadbhavānapi vimucya cāgrahaṁ rāghavaṁ prati grhaṁ prayāhi bhoḥ ॥ 24॥

24. In this manner while seeing Raghav (Sri Ram) in my dreams, when I wake up from my sleep, I am unable to forget him. Hence, oh Ravana, you too should abandon your stubbornness with respect to Sri Ram, and dropping the matter here you would do good to go back home (24).

रक्ष राक्षसकुलं चिरागतं तत्स्मृतौ सकलमेव नश्यति ।
तव हितं वदतो मम भाषितं परिगृहाण परात्मनि राघवे ।
त्यज विरोधमतिं भज भक्तिः परमकारुणिको रघुनन्दनः ॥ २५॥

अहमशेषमिदं मुनिवाक्यतः अशृण्वमादियुगे परमेश्वरः ।
 ब्रह्मणार्थित उवाच तं हरिः किं तवेप्सितमहं करवाणि तत् ॥ २६॥
 ब्रह्मणोक्तमरविन्दलोचन त्वं प्रयाहि भुवि मानुषं वपुः ।
 दशरथात्मजभावमञ्जसा जहि रिपुं दशकन्धरं हरे ॥ २७॥

rakṣa rākṣasakulaṃ cirāgataṃ tatsmṛtau sakalameva naśyati ।
 tava hitaṃ vadato mama bhāṣitaṃ parigrhāṇa parātmani rāghave ।
 tyaja virodhamatiṃ bhaja bhaktitaḥ paramakāruṇiko raghunandanaḥ ॥ 25॥
 ahamaśeṣamidaṃ munivākyataḥ aśṛṇavamādiyuge parameśvaraḥ ।
 brahmaṇārthita uvāca taṃ hariḥ kiṃ tavepsitamahaṃ karavāṇi tat ॥ 26॥
 brahmaṇoktamaravindalocana tvam prayāhi bhuvi mānuṣaṃ vapuḥ ।
 daśarathātmajabhāvamamñjasā jahi ripuṃ daśakandharaṃ hare ॥ 27॥

25-27. In this way you will be able to protect your ancient demon race from total destruction. Everything is ruined if one remembers him (Lord Ram) with enmity and malice. Pay heed to what I say, for it is for your own welfare's sake and meant for your well-being. You must abandon your animosity (inimical and confrontational predisposition) with Raghav (Sri Ram) (25), and worship and adore him with devotion and dedication because Raghunandan (Sri Ram) is very merciful and compassionate. I have heard all these things from the mouth of sages and hermits that during the Satyug (the 1st of the four era celestial cycle) the Parmeshwar (the supreme Lord) (26) Sri Hari (Vishnu) had asked Brahma, when the latter had prayed to the former, to tell him what his desire was and it shall be fulfilled. Then Brahma had replied, 'Oh the lotus-eyed one! Manifest yourself soon on the earth as a human being in the form of Dasrath's son Ram and slay Ravana who has become inimical to the Gods.' (27).

अतो न मानुषो रामः साक्षान्नारायणोऽव्ययः ।
 मायामानुषवेषेण वनं यातोऽतिनिर्भयः ॥ २८॥
 भूभारहरणार्थाय गच्छ तात गृहं सुखम् ।
 श्रुत्वा मारीचवचनं रावणः प्रत्यभाषत ॥ २९॥

ato na mānuṣo rāmaḥ sāksānnārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ ।
 māyāmānuṣaveṣeṇa vanaṃ yāto'tinirbhayaḥ ॥ 28॥
 bhūbhāraharaṇārthāya gaccha tāta grhaṃ sukham ।
 śrutvā māricavacanaṃ rāvaṇaḥ pratyabhāṣata ॥ 29॥

28-29. Hence, you must believe me, Sri Ram is not an ordinary human. He is the truthful personification of the indefinable, attributeless, limitless, imperishable entity Sri Narayan himself. He has assumed a human form to remove the burden of the earth and has, therefore, come to the forest fearlessly (with this purpose in mind). Hence, oh dear, you should stop procrastinating any further and remove all doubts from your mind; and you should return home cheerfully.'

Hearing these words of sane advice given by Marich, Ravana however became extremely peeved and exasperated (because he regarded this as a lecture given by an old man who is terrified of death and whose capricious mind does not allow him to think coherently). So Ravana answered Marich (and gave his reasons as to why he is so determined to confront Sri Ram) as follows – (28-29)

परमात्मा यदा रामः प्रार्थितो ब्रह्मणा किल ।
मां हन्तुं मानुषो भूत्वा यत्नादिह समागतः ॥ ३०॥
करिष्यत्यचिरादेव सत्यसङ्कल्प ईश्वरः ।
अतोऽहं यत्नतः सीतामानेप्याम्येव राघवात् ॥ ३१॥

paramātmā yadā rāmaḥ prārthito brahmaṇā kila ।
māṃ hantum mānuṣo bhūtvā yatnādiha samāgataḥ ॥ 30॥
kariṣyatyacirādeva satyasaṅkalpa īśvaraḥ ।
ato'haṃ yatnataḥ sītāmāneṣyāmyeva rāghavāt ॥ 31॥

30-31. 'If Parmatma (the Supreme Soul or the Supreme Lord of the world) has indeed come himself in the form of Sri Ram by assuming a human body on the express prayers of Brahma to kill me, then he is sure to do it soon, because the Lord God is true to his words (and if this is the case then there is no escaping it for me). Therefore, I will definitely make efforts to bring Sita away from Raghav (Sri Ram), as soon as I can (30-31).

वधे प्राप्ते रणे वीर प्राप्स्यामि परमं पदम् ।
यद्वा रामं रणे हत्वा सीतां प्राप्स्यामि निर्भयः ॥ ३२॥
तदुत्तिष्ठ महाभाग विवित्मृगरूपधृक् ।
रामं सलक्ष्मणं शीघ्रमाश्रमादतिदूरतः ॥ ३३॥
आक्रम्य गच्छ त्वं शीघ्रं सुखं तिष्ठ यथा पुरा ।
अतः परं चेद्यत्किञ्चिद्भाषसे मद्विभीषणम् ॥ ३४॥
हनिष्याम्यसिनानेन त्वामत्रैव न संशयः ।
मारीचस्तद्वचः श्रुत्वा स्वात्मन्येवान्वचिन्तयत् ॥ ३५॥

vadhe prāpte raṇe vīra prāpsyāmi paramaṃ padam ।
yadvā rāmaṃ raṇe hatvā sītāṃ prāpsyāmi nirbhayaḥ ॥ 32॥
taduttiṣṭha mahābhāga vicitramṛgarūpadhṛk ।
rāmaṃ salakṣmaṇaṃ śīghramāśramādatidūrataḥ ॥ 33॥
ākramya gaccha tvaṃ śīghraṃ sukhaṃ tiṣṭha yathā purā ।
ataḥ paraṃ cedyatkiñcidbhāṣase madvibhīṣaṇam ॥ 34॥
haniṣyāmyasinānena tvāmatraiva na saṃśayaḥ ।
māricastadvacaḥ śrutvā svātmanyevānvacintayat ॥ 35॥

32-35. Oh the brave one (Marich)! If I am killed at his (Ram's) hands in battle, I shall attain the highest stature that a creature can expect to attain for himself, and on the contrary if I am able to kill (subdue) Sri Ram in the battle-field, then I shall get Sita (as a trophy) without any fear or chances of mischief later (for the simple reason that I would have vanquished her husband and claim my right over her as a trophy of battle won) (32).

Hence, oh the most lucky and fortunate one (mahābhāga)¹, get up immediately, assume the form of a strange deer, and take Sri Ram and Laxman far away from the hermitage very soon (33), and then (when my mission has been accomplished) you can return back to your hermitage and live happily as you have been doing now. If, however, you try to scare me off by saying anything more (34) then be certain that I shall kill you here instantly with this sword.'

Hearing his threatening words, Marich thought to himself that he has very little choice left for himself (35)—

[Note—¹Why has Ravana called Marich “mahābhāga”? Well, Marich had escaped death in the first instance, then he had been meditating on Lord Ram for a long time by constantly remembering the Lord's holy name, and now he is getting another chance to meet the Lord and get killed so that his soul finds freedom from his demonic body and attains final deliverance and emancipation. Say, what more would a living being wish for if salvation is finally at hand? Ravana himself wished for such an auspicious end for his own self, so he was surely honest and right in calling Marich very fortunate and lucky one.]

यदि मां राघवो हन्यात्तदा मुक्तो भवार्णवात् ।
मां हन्याद्यदि चेदुष्टस्तदा मे निरयो ध्रुवम् ॥ ३६॥
इति निश्चित्य मरणं रामादुत्थाय वेगतः ।
अब्रवीद्रावणं राजन् करोम्याज्ञां तव प्रभो ॥ ३७॥

yadi māṃ rāghavo hanyāttadā mukto bhavārṇavāt ।
māṃ hanyādyadi cedduṣṭastadā me nirayo dhruvam ॥ 36॥
iti niścitya maraṇaṃ rāmādutthāya vegataḥ ।
abraviḍrāvaṇaṃ rājan karomyājñāṃ tava prabho ॥ 37॥

36-37. [Marich thought to himself—] ‘If I am killed at that hands of Raghav (Sri Ram), then I shall be able to cross this ocean representing the gross, deluding mundane world of transmigration. But if this wicked rascal (Ravana) kills me, then I shall have to fall in hell.’ (36).

In this situation, Marich decided, as a matter of choice, that it would be wiser for him to get killed at the hands of Sri Ram; so he got up hastily and said to Ravana, ‘Oh king! Oh Lord! I shall obey your orders.’ (37).

इत्युक्त्वा स्थमास्थाय गतो रामाश्रमं प्रीति ।
शुद्धजाम्बूनदप्रख्यो मृगोऽभूद्रौप्यबिन्दुकः ॥ ३८॥
रत्नशृङ्गो मणिस्तुरो नीलरत्नविलोचनः ।

विद्युत्प्रभो विमुग्धास्यो विचचार वनान्तरे ॥ ३९॥
रमाश्रमपदस्यान्ते सीतादृष्टिपथे चरन् ॥ ४०॥

ityuktvā rathamāsthāya gato rāmāśramam prati ।
śuddhajāmbūnadaprakhyo mrgo'bhūdraupyabindukah ॥ 38॥
ratnaśṛṅgo maṇikhuro nīlaratnavilocanaḥ ।
vidyutprabho vimugdhāsyō vicacāra vanāntare ॥ 39॥
rāmāśramapadasyānte sītadr̥ṣṭipathe caran ॥ 40॥

38-40. Saying this, Marich boarded the chariot (with Ravana), and came to Sri Ram's hermitage (at Panchvati). There, he assumed the form of a strange and beautiful deer with silvery spots on a pure golden skin (38).

Its horns were gem-studded, the hooves were embedded with jewels, and its eyes were like a blue sapphire. In this way, that strange and majestic deer with an electric-like dazzle and fascinating countenance began roaming (39) near the hermitage of Sri Ram, within the sight of Sita (to ensure that she sees the deer) (40).

क्षणं च धावत्यवतिष्ठते क्षणं समीपमागत्य पुनर्भयावृतः ।
एवं स मायामृगवेषरूपधृक् चचार सीतां परिमोहयन् खलः ॥ ४१॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामयणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे
अरण्यकाण्डे षष्ठः सर्गः ॥ ६॥

kṣaṇam ca dhāvatyavatiṣṭhate kṣaṇam samīpamāgatya punarbhayāvṛtaḥ ।
evam sa māyāmṛgaveṣarūpadhr̥k cacāra sītām parimohayan khalaḥ ॥ 41॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmaramayaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde
araṇyakāṇḍe ṣaṣṭhaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 6॥

41. In one moment he pranced and bounced playfully and in another he came and stood motionless, and again he ran away as if out of fear. In this manner, that imposter (Marich) assumed a deceitful form of a decoy deer and roamed about playfully trying to attract Sita's attention (41).

[Note—Both Ravana and Marich knew very well that Sri Ram was not an ordinary prince as is very evident by verse nos. 30-36. So, it was a conscious decision on their part to create wilful enmity with the Lord as a means of their liberation from the body of a demon, and attain emancipation and salvation for their respective souls.]

Thus ends Canto 6 narrating the conversation between Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and Uma (his divine consort Parvati).

(c) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7 (Slaying of Marich, who was disguised as a deer, by Lord Ram, and abduction of Sita by Ravana):-

॥ सप्तमः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच
अथ रामोऽपि तत्सर्वं ज्ञात्वा रावणचेष्टितम् ।
उवाच सीतामेकान्ते शृणु जानकि मे वचः ॥ १॥
रावणो भिक्षुरूपेण आगमिष्यति तेऽन्तिकम् ।
त्वं तु छायां त्वदाकारां स्थापयित्वोदजे विश ॥ २॥
अग्नावदृश्यरूपेण वर्षं तिष्ठ ममाज्ञया ।
रावणस्य वधान्ते मां पूर्ववत्प्राप्स्यसे शुभे ॥ ३॥

॥ saptamaḥ sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca
atha rāmo'pi tatsarvaṃ jñātvā rāvaṇaceṣṭitam ।
uvāca sītāmekānte śṛṇu jānaki me vacaḥ ॥ 1॥
rāvaṇo bhikṣurūpeṇa āgamiṣyati te'ntikam ।
tvaṃ tu chāyāṃ tvadākārāṃ sthāpayitvoṭaje viśa ॥ 2॥
agnāvadṛśyarūpeṇa varṣaṃ tiṣṭha mamājñayā ।
rāvaṇasya vadhānte mām pūrvavatprāpsyase śubhe ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva continued with his narrative—‘Oh Parvati! Here, becoming aware of all the conspiracies of Ravana, Sri Ram advised Sita when they were alone, ‘Oh Sita! Listen to what I have to tell you (1).

Oh the auspicious one! Ravana will come to you disguised as a mendicant. Hence, by my orders, you must enter the holy fire leaving behind your look-alike shadow in this hut, and stay there in the fire in an invisible form for one year. After that, after the killing of Ravana, you shall get back to me once again.¹ (2-3).

[Note—¹This establishes that the period of Sita's separation from Sri Ram was for one year. Further, it was she, in an invisible, intangible form, in her capacity as the all-powerful, dynamic, all-engulfing infinite energy residing in the fire that, when ignited by Hanuman at Lanka, was responsible for the devastation of the city.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.]

श्रुत्वा रामोदितं वाक्यं सापि तत्र तथाकरोत् ।
मायासीतां बहिः स्थाप्य स्वयमन्तर्दधेऽनले ॥ ४॥
मायासीता तदाऽपश्यन्मृगं मायाविनिर्मितम् ।
हसन्ती राममभ्येत्य प्रोवाच विनयान्विता ॥ ५॥
पश्य राम मृगं चित्रं कानकं रत्नभूषितम् ।
विविधं बिन्दुभिर्युक्तं चरन्तमकुतोभयम् ।
बद्ध्वा देहि मम क्रीडामृगो भवतु सुन्दरः ॥ ६॥

śrutvā rāmoditaṃ vākyaṃ sāpi tatra tathākarot ।
 māyāsītāṃ bahiḥ sthāpya svayamantardadhe'nale ॥ 4॥
 māyāsītā tadā'paśyanmṛgaṃ māyāvinirmītam ।
 hasantī rāmamabhyetya provāca vinayānvitā ॥ 5॥
 paśya rāma mṛgaṃ citraṃ kānakaṃ ratnabhūṣitam ।
 vicitrabindubhīryuktaṃ carantamakutobhayam ।
 baddhvā dehi mama krīḍāmṛgo bhavatu sundaraḥ ॥ 6॥

4-6. Hearing these words of Sri Ram, Sita did as she was told. She became invisible in fire, leaving behind a shadowy Sita (4). Then that Maya-Sita (illusionary Sita) saw (i.e. was attracted to) that Maya-deer (i.e. an illusionary deer), came to Sri Ram and smilingly, politely said to him (5), ---

‘Oh Sri Ram! Look at this golden deer which is adorned by gems and jewels. Ah! What marvelous spots are there on his body and how fearlessly it is wandering and frolicking here! Oh Lord! Tie it and bring it to me; let it be my playmate.’ (6).

[Note—(i) Not until the time Maya-Sita had made her appearance, the deer could not succeed in its attempts to attract the ‘original Sita’. The lesson drawn is that ‘Maya attracts Maya’. If we are free from Maya, this delusionary, imaginary and artificial world will automatically lose its charm and sheen for us.

(ii) Sita had not asked Sri Ram to kill the deer as is widely believed, but only asked him to bring it alive.]

तथेति धनुरादाय गच्छन् लक्ष्मणमब्रवीत् ।
 रक्ष त्वमतियत्नेन सीतां मत्प्राणवल्लभाम् ॥ ७॥
 मायिनः सन्ति विपिने रक्षसा घोरदर्शनाः ।
 अतोऽतूवहितः साध्वीं रक्ष सीतामनिन्दिताम् ॥ ८॥
 लक्ष्मणो राममाहेदं देवाय मृगरूपधृक् ।
 मारीचोऽत्र न सन्देह एवम्भूतो मृगः कुतः ॥ ९॥

tatheti dhanurādāya gacchan lakṣmaṇamabravīt ।
 rakṣa tvamatiyatnena sītāṃ matprāṇavallabhām ॥ 7॥
 māyīnaḥ santi vipine rākṣasā ghoradarśanāḥ ।
 ato'trāvahitaḥ sādhvīm rakṣa sītāmaninditām ॥ 8॥
 lakṣmaṇo rāmamāhedam devāyaṃ mṛgarūpadhṛk ।
 mārīco'tra na sandeha evambhūto mṛgaḥ kutaḥ ॥ 9॥

7-9. Then he (Sri Ram) said ‘alright’, picked up his bow, and said to Laxman while departing, ‘Oh Laxman! You must make all efforts to protect my dearest Sita (7).

Most ferocious, vicious, illusive and deceptive demons are roaming in the forest. Hence, you should be very alert and careful in protecting the faultless and holy Sita.’ (8).

Then Laxman replied to Sri Ram, ‘Oh Lord! This is Marich who is disguised as a deer, there is no doubt about it, because such a strange deer in the entire existence is non-existent?’ (9).

[Note—Laxman was aware that this is ploy by Marich because he had had the experience of him trying to kill them previously in the form of a deer—see Canto 6, verse nos. 19-21.]

श्रीराम उवाच

यदि मारीच एवायं तदा हन्मि न संशयः ।

मृगश्चेदानयिष्यामि सीताविश्रमहेतवे ॥ १०॥

गमिष्यामि मृगं बद्ध्वा ह्यानयिष्यामि सत्वरः ।

त्वं प्रयत्नेन सन्तिष्ठ सीतासंरक्षणोद्यतः ॥ ११॥

śrīrāma uvāca

yadi mārīca evāyaṃ tadā hanmi na saṃśayaḥ ।

mṛgaścedānayiṣyāmi sītāviśramahetave ॥ 10॥

gamiṣyāmi mṛgaṃ baddhvā hyānayiṣyāmi satvaraḥ ।

tvaṃ prayatnena santiṣṭha sītāsaṃrakṣaṇodyataḥ ॥ 11॥

10-11. Sri Ram replied, ‘If he is indeed Marich then there is no doubt that I shall kill him. And if he is an ordinary deer, I shall bring him to please Sita (10).

I shall swiftly go and soon tie this deer and bring it here. Meanwhile, you should be alert, keep a vigilant eye and protect Sita.’ (11).

इत्युक्त्वा प्रययौ रामो मायामृगमनुद्रुतः ।

माया यदाश्रया लोकमोहिनी जगदाकृतिः ॥ १२॥

निर्विकारश्चिदात्मापि पूर्णोऽपि मृगमन्वगात् ।

भक्तानुकम्पी भगवानिति सत्यं वचो हरिः ॥ १३॥

ityuktvā prayayau rāmo māyāmṛgamanudrutah ।

māyā yadāśrayā lokamohinī jagadākṛtiḥ ॥ 12॥

nirvikāraścidātmāpi pūrṇo'pi mṛgamanvagāt ।

bhaktānukampī bhagavāniti satyaṃ vaco hariḥ ॥ 13॥

12-13. [What a wonder that—] The Maya which embodies (or symbolises) the universal delusion-creating power of the Lord that enchants and captivates the whole world and even the great gods by its fascinating, maverick and powerful spell, which is itself dependent on and obedient to Sri Ram, the Supreme Being—that same person (Sri Ram) ran behind pursuing a ‘Maya-deer’ (i.e. a deer which was as deceptive and illusionary as the Maya which has created it) (12).

In spite of being faultless, eternal, measureless, pure consciousness and blissful supreme Soul as well as all-pervading, omnipresent, self sufficient and complete Lord—he rushed behind that deer. This goes to prove the truth of the statement that

‘Lord Hari is very dear, merciful, compassionate, munificent and benevolent to his devotees’ (13).

[Note—How? Because it was the desire of Marich to get killed at the hands of Sri Ram and it was the wish of Ravana that Marich should take Sri Ram far away from the dwelling so that he can abduct Sita. Despite the fact that Sri Ram knew that he will have to suffer a lot of hardship due to this single incident, he had allowed it to happen. That is why he is called a ‘Bhakta Vatsala’ as above. See Canto 6, verse nos. 36-37 also.]

कर्तुं सीताप्रियार्थाय जानन्नपि मृगं ययौ ।
अन्यथा पूर्णकामस्य रामस्य विदितात्मनः ॥ १४॥
मृगेण वा स्त्रिया वापि किं कार्यं परमात्मनः ॥ १५॥

kartuṃ sītāpriyārthāya jānannapi mṛgaṃ yayau ।
anyathā pūrṇakāmasya rāmasya viditātmanah ॥ 14॥
mṛgeṇa vā striyā vāpi kiṃ kāryaṃ paramātmanah ॥ 15॥

14-15. The omniscient Lord knew everything; inspite of that he went behind the deer pursuing it just in order to please Sita (refer verse 6 above). Otherwise, what had Sri Ram—who is fully contented, is without any wants or desires of any kind, is enlightened, self-realised and most wise (14)—had to do with a deer or a woman.

That deceptive deer appeared near the Lord for one moment and went far away from him and disappeared from sight in another moment (15).

कदाचिद् दृश्यतेऽभ्याशे क्षणं धावति लीयते ।
दृश्यते च ततो दूरदेवं राममपाहरत् ।
ततो रामोऽपि विज्ञाय राक्षसोऽयमिति स्फुटम् ॥ १६॥
विव्याध शरमादाय राक्षसं मृगरूपिणम् ।
पपात रुधिराक्तस्यो मारीचः पूर्वरूपधृक् ॥ १७॥
हा हतोऽस्मि महाबाहो त्राहि लक्ष्मण मां द्रुतम् ।
इत्युक्त्वा रामवद्वाचा पपात रुधिराशनः ॥ १८॥

kadācid dr̥śyate'bhyāśe kṣaṇaṃ dhāvati liyate ।
dr̥śyate ca tato dūrādevaṃ rāmamapāharat ।
tato rāmo'pi vijñāya rākṣaso'yamiti sphuṭam ॥ 16॥
vivādha śaramādāya rākṣasaṃ mṛgarūpiṇam ।
papāta rudhirāktāsyo mārīcaḥ pūrvarūpadhr̥k ॥ 17॥
hā hato'smi mahābāho trāhi lakṣmaṇa māṃ drutam ।
ityuktvā rāmavadvācā papāta rudhirāśanaḥ ॥ 18॥

16-18. It reappeared again at a great distance. In this manner, appearing and disappearing repeatedly, he took Sri Ram very far away. Then being certain that this

is a demon, and not an ordinary deer (16), Sri Ram pierced (shot) him with a single arrow. Immediately on being shot, Marich fell on the ground, assumed his original form of a demon, with blood spilling out from his mouth (17).

That blood-drinking demon (a virtual vampire) fell to the ground, crying aloud in the voice mimicking that of Sri Ram—‘Oh brave Laxman! I am in mortal danger. Come to my aid immediately.’ (18).

यन्नामाज्ञोऽपि मरणे स्मृत्वा तत्साम्यमाप्नुयात् ।
किमुताग्रे हरि पश्यन्स्तेनैव निहतोऽसुरः ॥ १९॥
तद्देहादुत्थितं तेजः सर्वलोकस्य पश्यतः ।
राममेवाविशदेवा विस्मयं परमं ययुः ॥ २०॥

yannāmājño'pi maraṇe smṛtvā tatsāmyamāpnuyāt ।
kimutāgre hariṁ paśyanstenaiva nihato'suraḥ ॥ 19॥
taddehādutthitaṁ tejaḥ sarvalokasya paśyataḥ ।
rāmamevāviśaddevā vismayam paramaṁ yayuḥ ॥ 20॥

19-20. Even the ignorant ones who remember him (the Lord, Sri Ram) at the time of death become one with him (i.e. they merge their soul with the supreme Soul of the Lord which is called attainment of emancipation and salvation), to die at the hands of ‘that’ Hari while looking at him (i.e., having him within sight before closing the eyes for good)—what to say of the good luck and fortunes of such a demon! [How fortunate and privileged he was, how redeemed his soul was!] (19).

The effulgence of light that represented his soul (because the ‘soul’ is self-illuminated pure Consciousness that is present in the body of all living beings, and which is also called the ‘Atma’ of the creature) emerged from his body and instantly entered Sri Ram. The Gods were very astonished and bewildered at this marvelous spectacle¹ (20).

[Note—¹Indeed they were! It's such an irony that demons such as Marich, Ravana and Kumbhakarna had their souls merging into Sri Ram at the end of their lives while the great sages, seers, hermits and mystics on this earth who claimed to be spiritually enlightened and attained ones, and their exalted counterparts the Gods in heaven who pride themselves of their elevated stature, never had this privilege. Mere boast of spirituality will not please the Lord.

Even lowly low-caste Sabari and the vulture Jatayu had their share of salvation, but exalted sages and seers who had met Lord Ram, except a few such as sage Sutikshan, remained what they were—sages and seers; none had the privilege of attaining eternal peace and beatitude for their soul, none got the reward of emancipation and salvation, none found liberation and deliverance from this gross body as none died while the Lord was in their front to ensure their final liberation from the cycle of transmigration as was the honoured case of Sabari and Jatayu as well as of the demons Marich, Ravana and Kumbhakarna.

Why were the gods astonished? They hadn't ever imagined that someone whom they had always thought was a nasty and sinful demon would have this rarest of rare privilege that his soul would be so holy and purified that it would be accepted by the Supreme Being by allowing it to merge with his own Supreme Self. The gods'

astonishment itself reflects negatively on their claim of wisdom and spiritual superiority, for they had failed to remember that the soul is inherently perfect and holy, and that the Supreme Lord believes in a creature's internal feelings and thoughts rather than how he acts and behaves externally, because the Lord understands that the creature is bound by certain orders of destiny and providence that arise due to the cumulative effects of his past deeds over which the creature has no control in his present life. But if the creature is wise and prudent he would love and worship the Lord internally, at his mental and sub-conscious level, inspite of the physical compulsions of his existential circumstances in his present life, because the creature knows that the Lord has this penetrating insight to know what goes on inside someone's heart and mind, and if the Lord finds that the creature is holy from within inspite of having an evil external frame due to existential compulsions then redemption for such fortunate creature is sure to be had.]

किं कर्म कृत्वा किं प्राप्तः पातकी मुनिर्हिंसकः ।
अथवा राघवस्यायं महिमा नात्र संशयः ॥ २१॥
रामबाणेन संविद्धः पूर्वं राममनुस्मरन् ।
भयात्सर्वं परित्यज्य गृहवितादिकं च यत् ॥ २२॥

kiṃ karma kṛtvā kiṃ prāptaḥ pātakī munihimsakaḥ ।
athavā rāghavasyāyaṃ mahimā nātra saṃśayaḥ ॥ 21॥
rāmabāṇena saṃviddhaḥ pūrvam rāmamanusmaran ।
bhayātsarvaṃ parityajya gṛhavittādikam ca yat ॥ 22॥

21-22. They (the Gods) said, 'This cruel demon who was a killer of hermits, had done so many sinful, unrighteous deeds and then attained such an auspicious end! Without doubt it is due to the benevolence, benediction and munificence as well as profound and majestic glory of Raghav (Sri Ram). Having been shot (pierced) by Sri Ram's arrows on two previous occasions, he had already forsaken his household and wealth out of fear, and was always engrossed (constantly involved) in remembering Sri Ram (21-22).

हृदि रामं सदा ध्यात्वा निर्धूताशेषकल्मषः ।
अन्ते रामेण निहतः पश्यन् राममवाप सः ॥ २३॥
द्विजो वा राक्षसो वापि पापी वा धार्मिकोऽपि वा ।
त्यजन् कलेवरं रामं स्मृत्वा याति परं पदम् ॥ २४॥

hr̥di rāmaṃ sadā dhyātvā nirdhūtāśeṣakalmaṣaḥ ।
ante rāmeṇa nihataḥ paśyan rāmamavāpa saḥ ॥ 23॥
dvijo vā rākṣaso vāpi pāpī vā dhārmiko'pi vā ।
tyajan kalevaram rāmaṃ smṛtvā yāti param padam ॥ 24॥

23-24. By constantly remembering Sri Ram in his heart (albeit out of fear and animosity), all his sins, misdemeanours and unrighteousness were destroyed while at

the end (i.e., at the time of his death) he died looking at the Lord and was killed by his hands. This is why he has attained Sri Ram (i.e. the supreme Lord) himself (23).

Those who leave their bodies (die) remembering Sri Ram—whether they are Brahmins or demons, whether they are sinful or righteous—they are sure to attain the supreme stature of being one with the Lord.’ (24).

[Note—Verse nos. 21-24 mark the praise of Gods for Marich. To their credit, they acknowledged that Marich had indeed become sinless by remembering Sri Ram. No wonder in that—all those who come in contact with the Lord do become sinless. But how many of them ‘merged’ in him? Even sage Sarbhang died looking at Sri Ram, but he went to heaven and did not merge his soul in the Lord, although he was standing in front of the former. Refer also Adhyatma Ramayan’s Aranya Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 11-12.]

इति तेऽन्योन्यमाभाष्य ततो देवा दिवं ययुः ॥ २५॥
 रामस्तत्त्वित्तयामास म्रियमाणोऽसुराधमः ।
 हा लक्ष्मणेति मद्राक्यमनुकुर्वन्ममार किम् ।
 श्रुत्वा मद्राक्यसदृशं वाक्यं सीतापि किं भवेत् ॥ २६॥

iti te'nyonyamābhāṣya tato devā divaṃ yayuḥ ॥ 25॥
 rāmastaccintayāmāsa mriyamāṇo'surādhamah ।
 hā lakṣmaṇeti madvākyamanukurvanmamāra kim ।
 śrutvā madvākyasadṛśaṃ vākyaṃ sītāpi kiṃ bhavet ॥ 26॥

25-26. Saying this to each other, the Gods went to the heaven. Then Sri Ram began to ponder—why has this lowly demon died calling out ‘Oh Laxman’ in my voice? What will happen to Sita when she hears a voice like that of mine (i.e. a voice mimicking me, implying that I am in danger and need Laxman’s help) (25-26).

इति चिन्तापरीतात्मा रामो दूरान्न्यवर्तत ॥ २७॥
 सीता तद्भाषितं श्रुत्वा मारीचस्य दुरात्मनः ।
 भीतातिदुःखसंविग्ना लक्ष्मणं त्विदमब्रवीत् ।
 गच्छ लक्ष्मण वेगेन भ्राता तेऽसुरपीडितः ॥ २८॥

iti cintāparitātmā rāmo dūrānnyavartata ॥ 27॥
 sītā tadbhāṣitaṃ śrutvā mārīcasya durātmanah ।
 bhītātiduḥkhasaṃvignā lakṣmaṇaṃ tvidamabravīt ।
 gaccha lakṣmaṇa vegena bhrātā te'surapīḍitaḥ ॥ 28॥

27-28. Worrying in this way, Sri Ram started on his way back to his hermitage from a great distance. Here, Sita heard the voice of evil Marich mimicking Sri Ram (27), and becoming greatly afraid about Sri Ram's welfare and overcome by mental agitations and worries, she said to Laxman, ‘Oh Laxman! You must go immediately; your brother is in danger and is being tormented by demons (28).

हा लक्ष्मणेति वचनं भ्रातुस्ते न शृणोषि किम् ।
 तामाह लक्ष्मणो देवि रामवाक्यं न तद्भवेत् ॥ २९॥
 यः कश्चिद्राक्षसो देवि म्रियमाणोऽब्रवीद्वचः ।
 रामस्तैलोक्यमपि यः क्रुद्धो नाशयति क्षणात् ॥ ३०॥
 स कथं दीनवचनं भाषतेऽमरपूजितः ।
 क्रुद्धा लक्ष्मणमालोक्य सीता बाष्पविलोचना ॥ ३१॥
 प्राह लक्ष्मण दुर्बुद्धे भ्रातुर्व्यसनमिच्छसि ।
 प्रेषितो भरतेनैव रामनाशाभिकाङ्क्षिणा ॥ ३२॥

hā lakṣmaṇeti vacanaṃ bhrātuste na śṛṇoṣi kim ।
 tāmāha lakṣmaṇo devi rā mavākyaṃ na tadbhavet ॥ 29॥
 yaḥ kaścidrākṣaso devi mriyamāṇo'bravīdvacaḥ ।
 rāmastrailokyamapi yaḥ kruddho nāśayati kṣaṇāt ॥ 30॥
 sa kathaṃ dīnavacanam bhāṣate'marapūjitaḥ ।
 kruddhā lakṣmaṇamālokya sītā bāṣpavilocanā ॥ 31॥
 prāha lakṣmaṇa durbuddhe bhrāturvyasanamicchasi ।
 preṣito bharatenaiva rāmanāśābhikāṅkṣiṇā ॥ 32॥

29-32. Don't you hear your brother's voice calling out 'Oh Laxman'?

Laxman replied, 'Oh goddess (devi)! These words are not of Sri Ram (29). Some demon has said them while dying. Sri Ram—who can destroy the Triloki (the whole of the three worlds—subterranean, terrestrial, celestial) in an instant if he gets angry (30)—how can that (supreme, all powerful) Lord speak in such miserable, pitiful and distressed words?'

Then Sita became angry and admonished Laxman, saying with tearful eyes (31), 'Oh Laxman! Do you want to see your brother in trouble? Oh you evil minded one! It looks like Bharat—who wants the destruction of Sri Ram—has sent you (privately, surreptitiously, with some malefic intentions) (32).

मां नेतुमागतोऽसि त्वं रामनाश उपस्थिते ।
 न प्राप्स्यसे त्वं मामद्य पश्य प्राणान्स्त्यजाम्यहम् ॥ ३३॥
 न जानातीदृशं रामस्त्वां भार्याहरणोद्यतम् ।
 रामादन्यं न स्पृशामि त्वां वा भरतमेव वा ॥ ३४॥

māṃ netumāgato'si tvaṃ rāmanāśa upasthite ।
 na prāpsyase tvaṃ māmadya paśya prāṇānstyajāmyaham ॥ 33॥
 na jānātīdṛśaṃ rāmastvāṃ bhāryāharaṇodyatam ।
 rāmādanyaṃ na sprśāmi tvāṃ vā bharatameva vā ॥ 34॥

33-34. Have you come to take me away after Sri Ram is somehow eliminated (killed)? But you shall not get hold of me. Look, I shall die now (33).

Sri Ram does not know that you are eager to usurp his loyal wife. I cannot touch either you or Bharat or anyone else in this world, for I know no one except Sri Ram. [To wit, I am a chaste and loyal wife of Sri Ram. So do not ever dare to cast an evil eye upon me, not you nor anyone else. Beware?]' (34).

इत्युक्त्वा वध्यमाना सा स्वबाहुभ्यां रुरोद ह ।
 तच्छ्रुत्वा लक्ष्मणः कर्णौ पिधायातीव दुःखितः ॥ ३५॥
 मामेवं भाषसे चण्डि धिक् त्वां नाशमुपैष्यसि ।
 इत्युक्त्वा वनदेवीभ्यः समर्प्य जनकात्मजाम् ॥ ३६॥
 ययौ दुःखातिसंविग्नो राममेव शनैः शनैः ।
 ततोऽन्तरं समालोक्य रावणो भिक्षुवेषधृक् ॥ ३७॥
 सीतासमीपमगमत् स्फुरदण्डकमण्डलुः ।
 सीता तमवलोक्याशु नत्वा सम्पूज्य भक्तिः ॥ ३८॥
 कन्दमूलफलादीनि दत्वा स्वागतमब्रवीत् ।
 मुने भुङ्क्व फलादीनि विश्रमस्व यथासुखम् ॥ ३९॥
 इदानीमेव भर्ता मे ह्यागमिष्यति ते प्रियम् ।
 करिष्यति विशेषेण तिष्ठ त्वं यदि रोचते ॥ ४०॥

ityuktvā vadhyamānā sā svabāhubhyāṃ ruroda ha ।
 tacchrutvā lakṣmaṇaḥ karṇau pidhāyātīva duḥkhitaḥ ॥ 35॥
 māmevaṃ bhāṣase caṇḍi dhik tvāṃ nāśamupaiṣyasi ।
 ityuktvā vanadevībhyaḥ samarpya janakātmajām ॥ 36॥
 yayau duḥkhātisaṃvigno rāmameva śanaiḥ śanaiḥ ।
 tato'ntaraṃ samālokyā rāvaṇo bhikṣuveṣadhṛk ॥ 37॥
 sītāsamīpamagamāt sphuraddaṇḍakamaṇḍaluḥ ।
 sītā tamavalokyāśu natvā sampūjya bhaktiḥ ॥ 38॥
 kandaṃulaphalādīni dattvā svāgatamabravīt ।
 mune bhuṅkṣva phalādīni viśramasva yathāsukham ॥ 39॥
 idānīmeva bhartā me hyāgamiṣyati te priyam ।
 kariṣyati viśeṣeṇa tiṣṭha tvāṃ yadi rocate ॥ 40॥

35-40. Saying this, she starting beating her chest with her hands, and wept bitterly. Hearing such reprehensive, stern, scornful and accusing words from her, Laxman was aghast and overwhelmed with anguish and anger. He closed both his ears in disgust with his hands (35).

He said disdainfully, 'Oh Chandi! ['Chandi' is an epithet for a woman in anger; it is used to show disgust at a woman who has lost all sense of prudence in her fit of anger; Chandi is a goddess of war and an embodiment of ferocity and vehemence.]

Shame to you that you say such (abhorable, reprehensible, despicable and hateful) words to me. This will cause your own destruction (ruin).'

Saying this, Laxman put her in the care of the patron deities of the forest (36), and being immensely anguished, perturbed, peeved and remorseful, he proceeded reluctantly and slowly to where Sri Ram was.

Just at that time and as was the want of destiny, seeing an opportune moment, Ravana assumed the form of a mendicant (37), complete with his staff and Kamandal (a water pot), and came to Sita. She bowed to him as soon as she saw a mendicant, worshipped him with due devotion (i.e. sincerely) (38), welcomed him by offering refreshment of edible roots, stems and fruits, and said, ‘Oh hermit! Eat these fruits etc. and make yourself comfortable (39). My husband will be coming back in a short while. If you wish, wait for some more time. He can show some greater respect to you (i.e. you will be properly worshipped and honoured by my husband; I am unable to do so properly as I have my limitations for being a woman who is expected to maintain certain decorum and civil politeness when dealing with strangers).’ (40).

[Note—Verse nos. 31-36 show the effects of anger and false accusations. But we must remember that this is not the ‘original’ Sita speaking—she has concealed herself in the fire; it is her deceptive, shadowy Maya who speaks to Laxman. The lesson to draw is that Maya forcefully leads us astray from our chosen path and duty, and it fills us with agitations and anguish, anger and frustration leading to reckless behaviour and our ruin.]

भिक्षुरुवाच

का त्वं कमलपत्राक्षि को वा भर्ता तवानग्रे ।
किमर्थमतु ते वासो वने राक्षससेविते ।
ब्रूहि भद्रे ततः सर्वं स्ववृत्तान्तं निवेदये ॥ ४१॥

bhikṣuruvāca

kā tvaṃ kamalapatrākṣi ko vā bhartā tavānaghe ।
kimarthamatra te vāso vane rākṣasasevite ।
brūhi bhadre tataḥ sarvaṃ svavṛttāntaṃ nivedaye ॥ 41॥

41. Ravana, who was in the disguise of a mendicant, said, ‘Oh the lotus-eyed one (kamalapatrākṣi)! Who are you? Who is your husband? Oh the faultless and immaculate lady (tavānaghe)! Why do you live in this forest inhabited by demons? Oh honourable lady (bhadre)! Tell me all this, then I shall also tell you about myself.’ (41).

सीतोवाच

अयोध्याधिपतिः श्रीमान् राजा दशरथो महान् ।
तस्य ज्येष्ठः सुतो रामः सर्वलक्षणलक्षितः ॥ ४२॥
तस्याहं धर्मतः पत्नी सीता जनकनन्दिनी ।
तस्य भ्राता कनीयान्श्च लक्ष्मणो भ्रातृवत्सलः ॥ ४३॥
पितुराज्ञां पुरस्कृत्य दण्डके वस्तुमानतः ।
चतुर्दश समास्तां तु ज्ञातुमिच्छामि मे वद ॥ ४४॥

sītovāca

ayodhyādhipatiḥ śrīmān rājā daśaratho mahān ।
 tasya jyeṣṭhaḥ suto rāmaḥ sarvalakṣaṇalakṣitaḥ ॥ 42॥
 tasyāhaṁ dharmataḥ patnī sītā janakanandinī ।
 tasya bhrātā kaṇīyānsca lakṣmaṇo bhrātrvatsalaḥ ॥ 43॥
 piturājñāṁ puraskṛty daṇḍake vastumāgataḥ ।
 caturdaśa samāstvāṁ tu jñātumicchāmi me vada ॥ 44॥

42-44. Sita said—‘Oh mendicant! Sri Dasrath, the great king, was the ruler of Ayodhya. His eldest son is Sri Ram who possesses all good characters and virtues (42).

I, Sita, the daughter of Janak, am his wife. His younger brother is Laxman. He (Laxman) is very fond of his brother (Sri Ram) (43).

Sri Ram, along with us two, have come to live in the Dandkaranya forest for fourteen years on the orders of his father. Now I want to know about you. You should also tell me about yourself.’ (44).

भिक्षुरुवाच

पौलस्त्यतनयोऽहं तु यवणो रक्षसाधिपः ।
 त्वत्कामपरितप्तोऽहं त्वां नेतुं पुरमागतः ॥ ४५॥
 मुनिवेषेण रामेण किं करिष्यसि मां भज ।
 भुङ्क्ष्व भोगान् मया सार्धं त्यज दुःखं वनोद्भवम् ॥ ४६॥

bhikṣuruvāca

paulastyatanayo'haṁ tu rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
 tvatkāmaparitampto'haṁ tvāṁ netuṁ puramāgataḥ ॥ 45॥
 muniveṣeṇa rāmeṇa kiṁ kariṣyasi māṁ bhaja ।
 bhuṅkṣva bhogān mayā sārddhaṁ tyaja duḥkhaṁ vanodbhavam ॥ 46॥

45-46. The mendicant replied—‘I am Ravana, the king of demons and the son of Vishrava of the Pulastya clan (or a grand son of Pulastya). I yearn to possess you; hence, I have come here to take you with me to my capital (at Lanka) (45).

What will you get (benefit) from that Ram who is attired as a hermit. Have affection and love for me, and avoid all the hardships (and sorrows, troubles and miseries) associated with the forest. Instead, enjoy various types of comforts and pleasures with me.’ (46).

श्रुत्वा तद्वचनं सीता भीता किञ्चिदुवाच तम् ।
 यद्येवं भाषसे मां त्वं नाशमेष्यसि राघवात् ॥ ४७॥
 आगमिष्यति रामोऽपि क्षणं तिष्ठ सहानुजः ।
 मां को धर्षयितुं शक्तो हरेर्भार्या शशो यथा ॥ ४८॥

śrutvā tadvacanaṁ sītā bhītā kiñciduvāca tam ।
 yadyevaṁ bhāṣase māṁ tvāṁ nāśameṣyasi rāghavāt ॥ 47॥

āgamiṣyati rāmo'pi kṣaṇaṃ tiṣṭha sahānujaḥ ।
māṃ ko dharṣayituṃ śakto harerbhāryāṃ śaśo yathā ॥ 48॥

47-48. Hearing these words of Ravana, Sita became a little scared, and said to him, 'If you say such things to me, Raghav (Sri Ram) will destroy (punish) you (47).

Just wait a little while, Sri Ram shall be coming soon with his younger brother. Who can use force with me? Is it possible that a rabbit uses force against a lioness? (48).

रामबाणैर्विभिन्नस्त्वं पतिष्यसि महीतले ॥ ४९॥
इति सीतावचः श्रुत्वा रावणः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः ।
स्वरूपं दर्शयामास महापर्वतसन्निभम् ।
दशास्यं विंशतिभुजं कालमेघसमद्युतिम् ॥ ५०॥

rāmabāṇairvibhinnastvaṃ patiṣyasi mahītale ॥ 49॥
iti sītāvacah śrutvā rāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrcchitaḥ ।
svarūpaṃ darśayāmāsa mahāparvatasannibham ।
daśāsyam viṃśatibhujaṃ kālameghasamadyutim ॥ 50॥

49-50. Being pierced (shot) and torn (cut) to pieces, you'll soon sleep (lie dead) on the surface of the earth (i.e. you will die at the hands of Sri Ram).'

Hearing such (scornful, sarcastic, bold and reproachful) words of Sita, Ravana became extremely agitated with anger (49) and showed her his colossus, mountainous form which had ten heads and twenty arms, and who had the fearful visage and an awe-inspiring terrifying form resembling that of a black cloud (of dooms day) (50).

तदृष्ट्वा वनदेव्यश्च भूतानि च विततसुः ।
ततो विदर्य धरणीं नखैरुद्धृत्य बाहुभिः ॥ ५१॥
तोलयित्वा रथे क्षिप्त्वा ययौ क्षिप्रं विहायसा ।
हा राम हा लक्ष्मणेति रुदती जनकात्मजा ॥ ५२॥
भयोद्विग्नमना दीना पश्यन्ती भुवमेव सा ।
श्रुत्वा तत्क्रुन्दितं दीनं सीतायाः पक्षिसत्तमः ॥ ५३॥
जटायुरुत्थितः शीघ्रं नगाग्रातीक्ष्णतुण्डकः ।
तिष्ठ तिष्ठेति तं प्रह को गच्छति ममाग्रतः ॥ ५४॥
मुषित्वा लोकनाथस्य भार्या शून्यादनालयात् ।
शुनको मन्तूपूतं त्वं पुरोडाशमिवाध्वरे ॥ ५५॥

taddr̥ṣṭvā vanadevyaśca bhūtāni ca vitatrasuḥ ।
tato vidārya dharanīm nakhairuddhṛtya bāhubhiḥ ॥ 51॥
tolayitvā rathe kṣiptvā yayau kṣipram vihāyasā ।
hā rāma hā lakṣmaṇeti rudatī janakātmajā ॥ 52॥
bhayodvignamanā dīnā paśyantī bhuvameva sā ।

śrutvā tatkranditaṃ dīnaṃ sītāyāḥ pakṣisattamaḥ ॥ 53॥
 jaṭāyurutthitaḥ śighraṃ nagāgrāttikṣṇatuṇḍakaḥ ।
 tiṣṭha tiṣṭheti taṃ prāha ko gacchati mamāgrataḥ ॥ 54॥
 muṣitvā lokanāthasya bhāryāṃ śūnyādvānālayāt ।
 śunako mantrapūtaṃ tvam puroḍāśamivādhvare ॥ 55॥

51-55. Seeing that fearful, terrible form, the patron goddesses and gods of the forest became immensely scared. [Perhaps this is the reason why the forest goddesses whom Laxman had entrusted the security of Sita did not react and tried to protect her. Refer verse no. 36.]

Then Ravana used his nails to dig and scoop-up the earth from beneath Sita, and lifted it in his hands along with her (51), put it on his chariot, and then sped away hastily through the path of the sky¹. At that time, Sita became extremely horrified and wept bitterly, wailing aloud woefully in utter distress, ‘Oh Ram, Oh Laxman!’ (52).

Sita became terribly frightened and looked pitifully and haplessly at the ground below. Hearing these loud wailings of Sita crying for help, Jatayu, the best among vultures (53), who had a sharp beak, got up from the summit of the mountain, and challenged Ravana, saying: ‘Oh you rascal, stop! Like the dog which surreptitiously takes away (steals) ‘Purodaash²’ material of the fire sacrifice, who are you who is taking away the wife of the Lord of the Lokas (i.e. Sri Ram) from this lonely, dense forest right in front of me? [To wit, how dare you trespass my area of authority with such impunity; who the hell are you to kidnap someone’s wife while I am here to guard the realm? Stop instantly and answer me before you proceed.]’ (54-55).

[Note—¹Ravana had tried to rape two Apsaras or celestial damsels called Punjiksthala and Rambha, and was cursed by Brahma and Nal Kuber, son of Kuber, respectively that if he tried to force himself upon any woman against her wishes in future, his head will split in 100 pieces. This is the reason why Ravana did not touch Sita, and in order to abduct her he had scooped up the earth from underneath her feet, and planted it on his chariot just like a gardener transplants his plants from one spot in the garden to another.

²Purodash is the offering made to a sacred fire during a sacrifice. It consists of a mixture of wheat flour, rice, sugar and milk cooked together.]

इत्युक्त्वा तीक्ष्णतुण्डेन चूर्णयामास तद्रथम् ।
 वाहान् बिभेद पादाभ्यां चूर्णयामास तद्धनुः ॥ ५६॥
 ततः सीतां परित्यज्य रावणः खड्गमाददे ।
 चिच्छेद पक्षौ सामर्षः पक्षिराजस्य धीमतः ॥ ५७॥
 पपात किञ्चिच्छेषेण पूरणेन भुवि पक्षिराट् ।
 पुनरन्यस्थेनाशु सीतामादाय रावणः ॥ ५८॥

ityuktvā tīkṣṇatuṇḍena cūrṇayāmāsa tadratham ।
 vāhān bibheda pādābhyāṃ cūrṇayāmāsa taddhanuḥ ॥ 56॥
 tataḥ sītāṃ parityajya rāvaṇaḥ khaḍgamādade ।

ciccheda pakṣau sāmārṣaḥ pakṣirājasya dhīmataḥ ॥ 57॥

papāta kiñciccheṣeṇa prāṇena bhuvi pakṣirāt ।

punaranyarathenāśu sītāmādāya rāvaṇaḥ ॥ 58॥

56-58. Saying this, Jatau used his sharp beaks to break his chariot to smithereens, used his claws to kill the horses and cut Ravana's bow to pieces (56).

Then Ravana left Sita aside and took out his sword, and out of frustration, cut-off the wings of Jatau (57).

With the wings chopped-off, the poor Jatau became helpless and fell to the ground almost half dead. Then Ravana put Sita in a second (reserve; back-up) chariot and sped off (58).

[Note—This verse shows that he had another standby chariot ready for contingencies. How come he had two chariots? When he has visited Marich, he had brought along two chariots—one for himself and the other for Marich. But since Marich boarded the chariot along with him—see Canto 6, verse no. 38—the other chariot was towed along for emergencies.]

क्रोशन्ती रामरामेति त्रातारं नाधिगच्छति ।

हा राम हा जगन्नाथ मां न पश्यसि दुःखिताम् ॥ ५९॥

रक्षसा नीयमानां स्वां भार्या मोचय राघव ।

हा लक्ष्मण महाभाग त्राहि मामपराधिनीम् ॥ ६०॥

krośanti rāmarāmeti trātāraṃ nādhigacchati ।

hā rāma hā jagannātha māṃ na paśyasi duḥkhitām ॥ 59॥

rakṣasā nīyamānāṃ svām bhāryām mocaya rāghava ।

hā lakṣmaṇa mahābhāga trāhi māmaparādhinīm ॥ 60॥

59-60. At that time, finding no one to save her, Sita repeatedly called out to Sri Ram, weeping and wailing woefully—‘Oh Sri Ram! Oh the Lord of the world! Don't you (or can't you) see this distressed and tormented me? (59).

Oh Raghav! You wife is being taken away (forcefully) by a demon, you must liberate her. Oh the great Laxman! Protect me, who am the culprit (i.e. I am guilty of casting aspersions on you and on your character, ridiculing you and forcing you to abandon me alone in the forest. It is my fault that I am being kidnapped. That is why I call myself a culprit) (60).

वाक्शरेण हतस्त्वं मे क्षन्तुमर्हसि देवर ।

इत्येवं क्रोशमानां तां रामागमनशङ्कया ॥ ६१॥

जगाम वायुवेगेन सीतामादाय सत्वरः ॥ ६२॥

विहायसा नीयमाना सीतापश्यदधोमुखी ।

पर्वताग्रे स्थितान् पञ्च वानरान् वारिजानना ।

उत्तरीयार्धखण्डेन विमुक्त्याभरणादिकम् ॥ ६३॥

बद्ध्वा चिक्षेप रामाय कथयन्त्विति पर्वते ॥ ६४॥

ततः समुद्रमुल्लङ्घ्य लङ्कां गत्वा स रावणः ।
 स्वान्तःपुरे रहस्ये तामशोकविपिनेऽक्षिपत् ।
 राक्षसीभिः परिवृतां मातृबुद्ध्यान्वपालयत् ॥ ६१॥

vāksareṇa hatastvaṃ me kṣantumarhasi devara ।
 ityevaṃ krośamānām tām rāmāgamanaśaṅkayā ॥ 61॥
 jagāma vāyuvegena sītāmādāya satvaraḥ ॥ 62॥
 viḥāyasā nīyamānā sītāpaśyadadhomukhī ।
 parvatāgre sthitān pañca vānarān vārijānanā ।
 uttarīyārdhakhaṇḍena vimucyābharaṇādikam ॥ 63॥
 baddhvā cikṣepa rāmāya kathayantviti parvate ॥ 64॥
 tataḥ samudramullaṅghya laṅkāṃ gatvā sa rāvaṇaḥ ।
 svāntaḥpure rahasye tāmaśokavipine'kṣipat ।
 rākṣasibhiḥ parivṛtām mātṛbuddhyānvapālayat ॥ 65॥

61-65. 'Oh brother in law! I had accused you of having ill-intentions against me and Sri Ram (literally, shot scathing verbal acrimonious arrows at you accusing you of many things which I regret now. Refer verse nos. 31-36). So forgive me!'

Seeing Sita wailing and lamenting like this, and fearing that Sri Ram would hear her and arrive soon (61), Ravana moved speedily with great haste, as fast as the wind. In this manner, while going through the sky and looking downwards (62), the lotus-eyed Sita saw five monkeys sitting on the top of a mountain (of Rishyamuk). Seeing them, she tore off her scarf into pieces, tied her ornaments in them with knots, and threw them down one by one on the mountain with the idea that these will tell Sri Ram about her (i.e., the direction by which she was going).

Eventually, Ravana crossed the ocean and reached Lanka (63-64).

There in his palace, he placed her (Sita) in a secluded place called 'Ashok Van' (which was an enchanting garden inside Ravana's royal palace). Keeping her surrounded (i.e. guarded) by demonesses, he protected her (and kept a strict vigil on her) as if she was his mother. [To wit, Ravana ensured that no one amongst the demons would unnecessarily trouble Sita. So he appointed certain female demons to guard Sita round the clock. One such demoness was Tadka, an old lady who was wise and god-fearing. By-and-by she became a close companion of Sita and used to keep her spirits high and hopes for freedom alive all through her ordeal.] (65).

[Note—(1) Sita must have thrown at least 2-3 packets down, if not more. This was to help Sri Ram identify or chart the direction in which she was flying because by drawing a straight line between any 2-3 points, it would be easy for Sri Ram to extend it to Lanka—or the general direction in which Ravana took her. It is based on simple geometry.

(2) Mentally, Ravana revered Sita as his mother, but outwardly he had to play his role in the drama of which he was a villain as much as Sri Ram played his role as a hero in spite of him knowing everything beforehand. Ravana had taken proper care of Sita with the same reverential feeling as one would have for his own mother.]

कृशाऽतिदीना परिकर्मवर्जिता दुःखेन शुष्यदृढनाऽतिविह्वला ।

हा राम रामेति विलप्यमाना सीता स्थिता राक्षसवृन्दमध्ये ॥ ६६॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामयणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे
अरण्यकाण्डे सप्तमः सर्गः ॥ ७॥

krśā'tidīnā parikarmavarjitā duḥkhena śuśyadvadanā'tivihvalā ।
hā rāma rāmeti vilapyamānā sītā sthitā rākṣasavṛndamadhye ॥ 66॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmayāṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde
araṇyakāṇḍe sapṭamaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 7॥

66. At that place, Sita, who had become very weak, emaciated, forlorn and miserably wretched, abandoned all ornamentations. She was withered in body and was tormented (mentally). She spent her days remorsefully lamenting, saying 'Oh Ram, Oh Ram' continuously (66).

[Note—Sita was undergoing immense mental distress and abject sense hopelessness which was more devastating for her health than any physical torture. Since Ravana had revered her as his mother, the chances of any physical torture were remote. She became emaciated and weak due to mental agonies and worries. She had become a mental and physical wreck.]

Thus ends Canto 7 of Aranya Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan narrating what Lord Shiva told Parvati with respect to Sita's abduction by Ravana.

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Section 5.2.3:

Geetawali Ramayan

{The Story of Abduction of Sita by Ravana}

'Geetawali Ramayan' is another version of the epic story of the Ramayan that was written by Goswami Tulsidas. This fascinating book is so called because its composition pattern makes it suitable as a "Book of Songs", because the word 'Geeta' means a 'song'. Its verses have been set to different Ragas of classical Indian music, and are so wonderfully penned and planned that single events of the story of the Ramayan are composed in different styles of poetic composition that conform to different Ragas so that the same episode can be sung melodiously in varying styles of classical songs.

Another salient feature of Geetawali Ramayan is that the pace of narration is slow and easy-going as they are meant to be sung in melodious tunes, and a song needs ample time and space that is unique to the individual requirements of the style

in which it is composed. A song is not a narrative like that of a dry prose; it focuses on one aspect of a particular event and delves on it sufficiently long enough to make it touch the finer cords of heart and stir up relevant emotions.

Verses of Geetawali Ramayan, and even Kavitawali Ramayan that also falls in the genre of songs and poetry and forms a part of our narrative as we shall see in due course of our reading, have been used in our narration to add a new flavour and taste to the Story of Ravana; it adds to the narrative an emotional and sentimental quotient that are natural and inherent to songs and poetry, something usually lacking in prose to a great extent. It also makes the rendering of the story diverse and multifaceted as the reader can read it from different angles and different perspectives.

Another thing: the style of composition of both Geetawali and Kavitawali is such that they have a slow-motion narrative, as their verses focus on a particular event more closely, describing a single event in a number of verses composed in different poetic styles and set to different musical tunes known as 'Ragas' of classical Indian music. So when the reader reads the verses of Geetawali or Kavitawali, which have been included in the general flow of our text at intervals, it is like a rewinding of the story and re-visiting its selected episodes to read them once again in slow-motion, at an easy pace; this gives a chance to see that particular event from up close as if having a ring-side viewing of it. It adds further charm to the general reading of the story.

This said, we shall now read Geetawali Ramayan, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3-8 that describe the slaying of Marich (verse nos. 3-6), Sita's abduction by Ravana (verse no. 7), and the killing of Jatau by Ravana (verse no. 8). Now therefore we shall start reading the verses in right earnest as follows:-

मारीच-वध
राग सोरठ
(3/3)

बैठे हैं राम-लषन अरु सीता ।
पंचबटी बर परनकुटी तर, कहैं कछु कथा पुनीता ॥ 1 ॥
कपट-कुरंग कनकमनिमय लखि प्रियसों कहति हँसि बाला ।
पाए पालिबे जोग मंजु मृग, मारेहु मंजुल छाला ॥ 2 ॥
प्रिया-बचन सुनि बिहँसि प्रेमबस गवहिं चाप-सर लीन्हें ।
चल्यो भाजि, फिरि फिरि चितवत मुनिमख-रखवारे चीन्हें ॥ 3 ॥
सोहति मधुर मनोहर मूरति हेम-हरिनके पाछे ।
धावनि, नवनि, बिलोकनि, बिथकनि बसै तुलसी उर आछे ॥ 4 ॥

mārīca-vadha
rāga sōraṭha
(3/3)

baiṭhē haiṁ rāma-laṣana aru sītā.
pañcabaṭī bara paranakuṭī tara, kahaiṁ kachu kathā punītā.. 1..
kapaṭa-kuraṅga kanakamanimaya lakhi priyasōm kahati haṁsi bālā.

pā'ē pālibē jōga mañju mṛga, mārēhu mañjula chālā.. 2..
 priyā-bacana suni bihaṁsi prēmabasa gavahim cāpa-sara līnhēm.
 calyō bhāji, phiri phiri citavata munimakha-rakhavārē cīnhēm.. 3..
 sōhati madhura manōhara mūrati hēma-harinakē pāchē.
 dhāvani, navani, bilōkani, bithakani basai tulasī ura āchē.. 4..

The slaying of the Demon Marich-I

Verse no. 3/3—[Marich was one of the demons who had gone to disturb the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra which Lord Ram and Laxman had stood to guard. He was accompanied by another demon named Subahu, and they led a huge army of demons to attack the fire sacrifice. In the battle that ensued, Subahu was burnt to death while Marich was hit by the head-less shaft of Lord Ram's arrow which spared his life but flung him 700 Yojans (1 Yojan = appx. 8 or 16 miles depending upon different measuring scales) away to an island in the middle of the ocean where he lived hidden in utter affright of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

Now it so happened that when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman entered the deep realms of the wild forest, beyond the mountains of Vindhyaachal, they decided to tarry a while and take shelter in Panch-vati, a pleasant place surrounded by five huge banyan trees on the banks of river Godavari, to abide there for some time ere moving ahead on their wanderings in the forest. This place was the play-ground of demons and demonesses. One such female demon was Supernakha, a sister of Ravana, the king of the demon race. She was extremely lascivious and pervert as was the wont of her ilk. When she descried the handsome and well-built beauteous and charming form of Lord Ram, she was overcome with passion and wished to marry the Lord. She disguised herself as a beautiful maiden and approached Lord Ram with this absurd proposal. Obviously the Lord rejected her overtures. She became furious and lunged at Sita to kill her. Then Lord Ram signalled Laxman to snip-off her nose and ears as punishment. Bleeding and aghast, she rushed to her cousin brothers named Khar, Dushan and Tisira, asking them to take revenge. Peeved beyond measure and felt challenged, they attacked Lord Ram with a fierce army. Howbeit, they were all decimated in the battle that ensued. Stunned and flabbergasted, Supernakha rushed to Ravana to inform him of all the developments. She made a strong case for Ravana to intervene and take up arms for her, as the person who could do this to her and kill her invincible cousins surely posed a grave danger to Ravana himself. So, after due thought and council, Ravana devised a device to settle scores with Lord Ram, and to implement his plans he went to Marich and forced him, under the threat of death should he refuse to do as was told, because Marich was very reluctant to confront Lord Ram, to disguise himself as a deer with a golden hide and play around the hermitage of Lord Ram.

By and by, as was decreed by Destiny and was the fiat of Fate which only helped Lord Ram to carry out his pre-planned strategy, Sita asked the Lord to fetch the deer as she wanted to keep it as a pet to play with in the hermitage. Hereat, Lord Ram went behind Marich who was now disguised as a golden deer. Marich ran far away from the hermitage when the Lord finally shot him as he refused to be trapped. While dying, Marich lent out a shrill cry, shouting the name of Laxman at the top of

his voice. When Sita heard it she felt Lord Ram was in danger and needed Laxman's help. So she forced Laxman to go to the aid of his brother, and was thus left alone in the hermitage.

Meanwhile, Ravana lay in wait for this precise moment. He came to Sita disguised as a mendicant, begging for alms. When she came out to offer something to him, he caught hold of her, and forcing her on his chariot, he took her to his capital city of Lanka and held her captive.

This entire episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 29 ka.

However, Marich-specific narration appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 27.

In Geetawali however, we come straight to the narration of the incident of the slaying of Marich, in verse nos. 3/3—3/6 herein below.]

Lord Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman are sitting inside the beautiful thatched hut in the Panchvati forest (1).

At the moment when Sita saw the deceitful deer with a golden hide that was studded with priceless gems, its skin glistening with the hue of gold, she said to her husband (Lord Ram), 'If you can trap and bring this deer alive, it is worth keeping; and even if it is killed, its hide is very beautiful (and we can use it as a seating mat).'¹ (2)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 27.]

Hearing the words of his beloved, Lord Ram lifted the bow and arrow. Seeing Lord Ram pursuing it, the deer ran away, but constantly kept glancing back (because) he could recognise Lord Ram who had protected sage Vishwamitra's sacrifice (and had thrown Marich far onto the island in the middle of the ocean with one shot of his headless arrow) (3).

The image of Lord Ram running behind a golden deer is very attractive and indescribably beautiful. The Lord's running, bending, taking aim, getting tired and resting a while, and then resuming his run to pursue the golden deer—Tulsidas says that he has permanently etched this enchanting scene in his heart² (4).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-13 that precede Doha no. 27.]

राग कल्याण
(3/4)

कर सर-धनु, कटि रुचिर निषंग ।

प्रिया-प्रीति-प्रेरित बन-बीथिन्ह बिचरत कपट-कनक-मृग संग ॥ 1 ॥

भुज बिसाल, कमनीय कंध-उर, स्रम-सीकर सोहैं साँवरे अंग ।

मनु मुकुता मनि मरकत गिरिपर लसत ललित रबि-किरनि प्रसंग ॥ 2 ॥

नलिन नयन, सिर जटा-मुकुट, बिच सुमन-माल मनु सिव-सिर गंग ।

तुलसिदास ऐसी मूरति की बलि, छबि बिलोकि लाजैं अमित अनंग ।।३।।

rāga kalyāṇa
(3/4)

kara sara-dhanu, kaṭi rucira niṣaṅga.
priyā-prīti-prērita bana-bīthinha bicarata kapaṭa-kanaka-mṛga saṅga.. 1..
bhuja bisāla, kamañiya kandha-ura, srama-sīkara sōhairṁ sām̐varē aṅga.
manu mukutā mani marakata giripara lasata lalita rabi-kirani prasaṅga..2..
nalina nayana, sira jaṭā-mukuta, bica sumana-māla manu siva-sira gaṅga.
tulasidāsa aisī mūrati kī bali, chabi bilōki lājaiṁ amita anaṅga..3..

The slaying of Demon Marich-II

Verse no. 3/4—Lord Ram has a bow and arrow in his hands, and an attractive quiver tied to his waist.

Inspired by his beloved's love (or, being unable to deny her, his beloved wife Sita, what she so longingly desired), he is moving around the forest paths behind the decoy, evasive golden deer (1).

His arms are long and muscular; his shoulders and chest are pretty to behold. The sweat drops that adorn his dark complexioned body look as magnificent as pearls that embellish a mountain of Markat-mani (i.e. a mountain of emerald) when the sunlight falls upon them¹ (2).

[¹Here, the dark-complexioned body of Lord Ram is like the mountain of emerald, and the sweat drops are like the pearls that decorate its sides. Both the sweat drops as well as the pearls dazzle and shine with a twinkle when the sunlight falls upon them, while the body of the Lord glistens in the sunlight even as the smooth sides of the mountain of emerald does when the sunlight is reflected from its surface.]

The Lord's eyes are like lotuses; the head has a crown of matted hairs with a garland of flowers tucked in its folds resembling the holy river Ganges on the head of Lord Shiva. [The garland is made of white flowers, resembling the frothy and milky waters of the river.]

Tulsidas says that he has sacrificed himself on this majestic and extremely enchanting sight of the Lord (i.e. he is in thrall and totally spellbound by this astounding vision of Lord Ram) which puts to shame the image of even countless Kamdeo-cupids taken together. [To wit, a thousand Kamdeos, who is the patron god of beauty and charm, would be no match for this wonderful image of Lord Ram.] (3).

राग केदारा
(3/5)

राघव, भावति मोहि बिपिनकी बीथिन्ह धावनि ।
अरुन—कंज—बरन—चरन सोकहरन, अंकुस—कुलिस—

केतु—अंकित अवनि ॥ 1 ॥
 सुंदर स्यामल अंग, बसन पीत सुरंग, कटि निषंग
 परिकर मेरवनि ।
 कनक—कुरंग संग, साजे कर सर—चाप, राजिवनयन
 इत उत चितवनि ॥ 2 ॥
 सोहत सिर कुमुट जटा—पटल—निकर, सुमन लता
 सहित रची बनवनि ।
 तैसेई स्रम—सीकर रुचिर राजत मुख, तैसिए ललित
 भ्रकुटिन्हकी नवनि ॥ 3 ॥
 देखत खग—निकर, मृग रवनिन्हजुत थकित बिसारि
 जहाँ—तहाँकी भँवनि ।
 हरि—दरसन—फल पयो है ग्यान बिमल, जाँचत भगति
 मुनि चाहत जवनि ॥ 4 ॥
 जिन्हके मन मगन भए हैं रस सगुन, तिन्हके लेखे
 अगुन—मुकुति कवनि ।
 श्रवन—सुख करनि, भवसरिता—तरनि, गावत तुलसिदास
 कीरति पवनि ॥ 5 ॥

rāga kēdārā
 (3/5)

rāghava, bhāvati mōhi bipinakī bīthinha dhāvani.
 aruna-kañja-barana-carana sōkaharana, aṅkusa-kulisa-kētu-aṅkita avani.. 1..
 sundara syāmala aṅga, basana pīta suraṅga, kaṭi niṣaṅgaparikara mēravani.
 kanaka-kuraṅga saṅga, sājē kara sara-cāpa, rājivanayana ita uta citavani.. 2..
 sōhata sira kumuṭa jaṭā-paṭala-nikara, sumana latā sahita racī banavani.
 taisē'ī srama-sīkara rucira rājata mukha, taisi'e lalita bhrakuṭinhakī navani.. 3..
 dēkhata khaga-nikara, mṛga ravaninhajuta thakita bisāri jahāṁ-tahāṁkī
 bhaṁvani.
 hari-darasana-phala payō hai gyāna bimala, jāṁcata bhagati muni cāhata
 javani.. 4..
 jinhakē mana magana bha'e haiṁ rasa saguna, tinhakē lēkhē aguna-mukuti
 kavani.
 śravana-sukha karani, bhavasaritā-tarani, gāvata tulasidāsa kīrati pavani.. 5..

The slaying of Demon Marich-III

Verse no. 3/5—[Tulsidas addresses Sri Ram and says—] ‘Oh Raghav (Sri Ram)! Forsooth I very much like (or am enchanted by the vision of) your running on the unpaved, rough ground of the forest (bipinakī bīthinha dhāvani), as a result of which the earth of that place is getting marked by the footprints of your holy feet which have the colour of red lotus, are the eliminator of sorrows, tribulations and agonies, and have the three auspicious sign of the Ankush (the goad), the Vajra (thunderbolt) and the Dwhaja (divine standard or flag of Vishnu) etc. marked on their soles¹ (1).

[¹Lord Vishnu has these three signs on the sole of his feet. The ‘standard’ or the flag of Vishnu symbolizes his determination to uphold the law of Dharma, i.e. the

principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility in thought and conduct.

Tulsidas hereby stresses that he is taking so much interest in the narration of the story of Lord Ram not because the Lord was some great prince and Tulsidas is some bard trying to please his followers and gain acclaim as a great narrator of history, but because the Lord was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and Tulsidas has used this means of narration to remember the Lord, focus his mind on the Lord, and thereby purify himself and his inner-being, fill his heart with devotion and love for the Lord, whereat his entire being feels ecstatic and his life fulfilled, and that he has found it the best way to attain bliss and beatitude that suits him because he is unable to follow the rigours of meditation and other means of spiritual peace.]

I (Tulsidas) am enchanted by the most charming image of the Lord wearing a yellow silk cloth called the 'Pitambar' around his most beautiful dark complexioned body, the quiver and waist-cloth that are tied around the Lord's waist, his pursuing (running behind) the golden deer with a bow and arrow in hand, and his glancing quickly here and there with alert eyes (2).

Besides this, the crown of matted hairs on the Lord's head, with flowers and creepers tucked here and there in it, look extremely magnificent. Similarly, sweat drops adorn and look magnificent on the Lord's beauteous face, while the curvature of his two eyebrows are no less marvelous to behold (3).

At that time, the flock of birds and animals, both male and female, who come out to watch the Lord, become benumbed and stunned into immobility due to the awe they find themselves in when they observe the extremely enchanting, the spellbinding, the stunning and captivating beauty of Lord Ram's sight as he runs behind the golden deer.

By their good fortune they have already got (even without asking) the fruit of pure, pristine Gyan (realization of the Truth) that comes naturally as a result of having Darshan (divine, holy viewing) of the Lord². Now, as they stand still gazing at Lord Ram they appear to beg and plead with the Lord for blessing them with having selfless devotion and affection for him which is much sought after by even the sages and hermits³ (4).

[²This refers to the ultimate bliss that an aspirant achieves when he realizes the Truth of the Self. These poor creatures didn't have the benefit of doing great religious practices to achieve it. But when they saw Lord Ram, the intensity of blessedness they experienced was the same that is attained by becoming self-realised. Since Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Self, the 'Parmatma', his sight was equivalent to viewing the true Self in a visible form.

³Albeit that was alright, but it was a temporary period of feeling blessed, for soon the Lord would go far away and these animals and birds would lose sight of the Lord. Likewise, it is a very difficult to retain the spiritual gains made by realization of the Self, called the path of 'Gyan', so much so even great sages and hermits come to the conclusion that it is far easier and better to follow the path of Bhakti for the Lord, i.e. the path of devotion and love. This latter path is smooth, without any cumbersome procedures, and easy to follow, and more importantly, its gains can be maintained easily for long durations. It gives eternal blessedness more easily and sustainably as compared to the path of Gyan.

So, in this imagery, Tulsidas envisages that the way these birds and animals stand transfixed gazing at Lord Ram, it appears to him that they are pleading with the Lord to bless them with Bhakti so that even after the few moments when the Lord would have gone beyond their field of vision they could still remember the Lord for all times in their lives and derive the same sense of bliss that they are getting in the present moment.]

[Lauding the glorious virtues of Bhakti as opposed to dry and abstract philosophy of obtaining Mukti, or blessedness, by pursuing the path of Gyan, Tulsidas makes the following observation—] Those whose mind and intellect are submerged in the succulent juice-like vision of the image of the manifest form of the Lord (which in this case is the form of Lord Ram), what values (or importance, significance) do the virtues of an abstract form of salvation and emancipation have for them?

That is why, to wit, Tulsidas sings the glories and fame of Lord Ram (as a means for attaining his own blessedness, bliss and beatitude) that are holy and divine, are pleasant to the ears, and can help one cross the river symbolized by this deluding and mundane world (5).

[Note—Stanza nos. 4 and 5 lay emphasis on ‘Saguna’ form of devotion for the Lord as opposed to the ‘Nirguna’ form. The former represents the formed, physically verifiable, visible and known form of the Lord God that has attributes. The latter would be the opposite of it: i.e. it would be to worship the Lord in his macrocosmic form, a form that is invisible, attributeless, all-pervading, omnipresent.

Even as the presence of the lamp will automatically eliminate darkness, so does the presence of the Lord remove the darkness of ignorance, and in the absence of ignorance, wisdom shines through. It is like removing the dark soot or rust from the surface of a vessel to bring out the shine of brass from underneath it.

It is far more practical and better to have the lamp burning right in front and get illumination from it (Saguna) than to use a mirror to reflect the sun that is far away to get its light for the purpose of getting the same illumination (Nirguna)!

This is what Tulsidas alludes to in stanza no. 4. He has used the metaphor of birds and animals to highlight his philosophy of Bhakti vis-à-vis Gyan.]

राग सोरठ
(3/6)

रघुबर दूरि जाइ मृग मार्यो ।
लषन पुकारि, राम हरुए कहि, मरतहु बैर सँभार्यो ॥ 1 ॥
सुनहु तात ! कोउ तुम्हहि पुकारत प्राननाथकी नाई ।
कह्यो लषन, हत्या हरिन, कोपि सिय हठि पठयो बरिआई ॥ 2 ॥
बंधु बिलोकि कहत तुलसी प्रभु 'भाई ! भली न कीन्हीं ।
मेरे जान जानकी काहू खल छल करि हरि लीन्हीं ॥ 3 ॥

rāga sōraṭha
(3/6)

raghubara dūri jā'i mṛga māryō.
laṣana pukāri, rāma haru'ē kahi, maratahu baira saṁbhāryō.. 1..

sunahu tāta! kō'u tumhahi pukārata prānanāthakī nā'īm.
 kahyō laṣana, hatyā harina, kōpi siya haṭhi paṭhayō bari'ā'ī.. 2..
 bandhu bilōki kahata tulasī prabhu 'bhā'ī! bhalī na kīnhīm.
 mērē jāna jānakī kāhū khala chala kari hari līnhīm.. 3..

The slaying of Demon Marich-IV

Verse no. 3/6—[Lord Ram went far away pursuing the golden deer, far enough to give Ravana the chance and the freedom to abduct Sita comfortably. As has been noted above, it was a part of the greater scheme of the Lord, and he wished to make sure that this opportunity was not lost. He did not wish to make Ravana doubt whether he would be able to abduct Sita successfully or not. So he went as far away as was reasonable. Then he shot the deer, who was actually the demon Marich in disguise. The demon cried out aloud the name of Laxman and then the holy name of the Lord softly before he died. His utterance of Lord Ram's name at the final moment of his life ensured his emancipation and deliverance.

Meanwhile, when Sita heard Laxman's name being called out, she thought that the Lord was in trouble. So she persuaded Laxman to go forthwith to the aid of the Lord. This was the opportunity the wicked Ravana was waiting for. He disguised himself as a hermit and came to the hermitage from his hiding place to ask Sita for food. As soon as she came close, he caught hold of her and fled.

The Lord was on his way back after killing the deer, and so when he saw Laxman coming towards him, he knew at once that things have gone wrong, that Sita is not safe.

See introductory note to Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 3/3 herein above. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 27 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede it.]

Lord Ram went very far away before killing the deer. The deer cried aloud 'Oh Laxman', and then softly uttered 'Oh Ram' before dying.

In this way, even while dying, he remembered his old enmity, and at the same time he ensured his salvation¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-17 that precede Doha no. 27.

By calling out for Laxman, Marich made it appear that Lord Ram was in danger so that Laxman leaves Sita alone and rushes to help Lord Ram. This will give Ravana an opportunity to kidnap her. This will also help Marich settle squares with Ram who had shot and flung him earlier when Marich had gone to defile sage Vishwamitra fire sacrifice. By saying 'Ram' as he collapsed dying, Marich had also pronounced the Lord's holy name which is at once a provider of emancipation and salvation. The Lord's holy name liberates and delivers the soul from the cycle of transmigration and gives it permanent rest. So we see how clever Marich was—he has kept his word to Ravana that he would help him to steal Sita, he has settled his old enmity with Ram, and to cap it all he had even ensured his own Mukti, i.e. his own emancipation and deliverance simultaneously by uttering the Lord's divine name 'Ram' while dying. Definitely it is very clever of him!]

On hearing someone call out Laxman's name, Sita said to him, 'Laxman, someone is calling you in the same manner as Lord Ram would. [So, it appears that the Lord needs you. Hence, you must go immediately.]'

Laxman attempted to assure her that there is nothing to worry about, for it is the deer that has been certainly killed.

At this, Sita became angry and forcefully sent Laxman away (2).²

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28.]

Seeing Laxman coming towards him, Tulsidas' Lord Sri Ram said, 'Brother, you have not done good. In my view (i.e. I have an intuitive feeling that) some scoundrel has used deceit to abduct Sita.'³ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 30.]

सीता-हरण (3/7)

आरत बचन कहति बैदेही।
बिलपति भूरि बिसूरि 'दूरि गए मृग सँग परम सनेही'॥ 1॥
कहे कटु बचन, रेख नाँघी मैं, तात छमा सो कीजै।
देखि बधिक-बस राजमरालिनि, लषन लाल ! छिनि लीजै॥ 2॥
बनदेवनि सिय कहन कहति यों, छल करि नीच हरी हौं।
गोमर-कर सुरधेनु, नाथ ! ज्यों त्यों परहाथ परी हौं॥ 3॥
तुलसिदास रघुनाथ-नाम-धुनि अकनि गीध धुकि धायो।
'पुत्रि पुत्रि! जनि डरहि, न जैहै नीचु, मीचु हौं आयो'॥ 4॥

sītā-haraṇa (3/7)

ārata bacana kahati baidēhī.
bilapati bhūri bisūri 'dūri ga'e mṛga saṁga parama sanēhī'.. 1..
kahē kaṭu bacana, rēkha nāṁghī mair̥ṁ, tāta chamā sō kijai.
dēkhi badhika-basa rājamarālini, laṣana lāla! chini lījai.. 2..
banadēvani siya kahana kahati yōṁ, chala kari nīca harī hauṁ.
gōmara-kara suradhēnu, nātha! jyaum̐ tyaum̐ parahātha parī hauṁ.. 3..
tulasidāsa raghunātha-nāma-dhuni akani gīdha dhuki dhāyō.
'putri putri! jani ḍarahi, na jaihai nīcu, mīcu hauṁ āyō'.. 4..

Abduction of Sita

Verse no. 3/7— [Now it so happened that when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman entered the deeper parts of the wild forest, beyond the mountains of Vindhyaachal, they decided to tarry a while and take shelter in Panch-vati, a pleasant place surrounded by

five huge banyan trees on the banks of river Godavari, to abide there for some time ere moving ahead on their wanderings in the forest. This place was the play-ground of demons and demonesses. One such female demon was Supernakha, a sister of Ravana, the king of the demon race. She was extremely lascivious and pervert as was the wont of her ilk. When she descried the handsome and well-built beauteous and charming form of Lord Ram, she was overcome with passion and wished to marry the Lord. She disguised herself as a beautiful maiden and approached Lord Ram with this absurd proposal. Obviously the Lord rejected her overtures. She became furious and lunged at Sita to kill her. Then Lord Ram signalled Laxman to snip-off her nose and ears as punishment. Bleeding and aghast, she rushed to her cousin brothers named Khar, Dushan and Tisira, asking them to take revenge. Peeved beyond measure and felt challenged, they attacked Lord Ram with a fierce army. Howbeit, they were all decimated in the battle that ensued. Stunned and flabbergasted, Supernakha rushed to Ravana to inform him of all the developments. She made a strong case for Ravana to intervene and take up arms for her, as the person who could do this to her and kill her invincible cousins surely posed a grave danger to Ravana himself. So, after due thought and council, Ravana devised a device to settle scores with Lord Ram, and to implement his plans he went to Marich and forced him, under the threat of death should he refuse to do as was told, because Marich was very reluctant to confront Lord Ram, to disguise himself as a deer with a golden hide and play around the hermitage of Lord Ram.

By and by, as was the fiat of Fate and the decree of Destiny which only helped Lord Ram to carry out his pre-planned strategy, Sita asked the Lord to fetch the deer as she wanted to keep it as a pet to play with in the hermitage. Hereat, Lord Ram went behind Marich who was now disguised as a golden deer. Marich ran far away from the hermitage when the Lord finally shot him as he refused to be trapped. While dying, Marich lent out a shrill cry, shouting the name of Laxman at the top of his voice. When Sita heard it she felt Lord Ram was in danger and needed Laxman's help. So she forced Laxman to go to the aid of his brother, and was thus left alone in the hermitage.

Meanwhile, Ravana lay in wait for this precise moment. He came to Sita disguised as a mendicant, begging for alms. When she came out to offer something to him, he caught hold of her, and forcing her on his chariot, he took her to his capital city of Lanka and held her captive.

As Ravana was taking her away, Jatau, the old vulture whom Lord Ram had befriended on his way, heard her wailings and lamentations, and discovering that she was Lord Ram's wife, he intervened and chased the chariot. However hard he tried to rescue Sita from the clutches of Ravana, he was no match for the ferocious and well-armed demon, who seeing no other way finally drew his sword and cut the bird's wings, at which the poor Jatau fell on the ground mortally wounded.

This entire episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 29 ka.

However, the narration that specifically describes the abduction of Sita and the way she squealed pitifully like a frightened fowl sore affright when it is caught in the talons of a cruel hawk, wailing and lamenting as she was being taken by Ravana aboard his chariot, and Jatau's intervention which is the subject matter of the present verse of Geetawali, appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 28—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Albeit, when Ravana fled with Sita, she wailed and lamented woefully. She was filled with contrition and regretted what she did—first telling Lord Ram to go and bring the golden deer for her, and then asking Laxman to go away from the hermitage. Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3/3 and 3/6 herein above.]

Sita wailed and lamented most woefully—‘Alas! Alack! Oh my beloved Lord Ram; who knows how far has he gone pursuing the deer! [To wit, an he haply be somewhere near by, he would definitely hear my wailings, and would immediately rush to help me.] (1).

Oh dear Laxman, I said harsh words to you and crossed the line marked by you. So oh son, excuse me. And save me from this hunter (Ravana)¹ (2).’

[¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28; and (b) Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 3/6.

At the time of dying, Marich had let out a shrill cry, calling out the name of Laxman. When Sita heard it she thought that Lord Ram was calling, and forced Laxman to go to his brother’s aid. Laxman knew that it was not Lord Ram but Marich calling, but Sita got so angry at his reluctance to go that he decided that it was wiser for him to leave. But before going away, he had marked a circle on the ground around the boundary of the hut, activating it as a sort of shield with some mystical Mantras to protect the area of the hermitage from any danger, asking Sita not to step out of it.

But the ways of destiny and the doing of fate are so mysterious that when an accident is to occur, all wit, wisdom and precautions fail. So, when Ravana approached Sita disguised as a mendicant seeking alms, he stood at a distance from the circumference of this circle, and in order to reach him to put the alms in his begging bowl, Sita inadvertently and errantly stepped out of this protected circle. Seizing the moment, Ravana grabbed her and pulled her onto his waiting chariot as he quickly fled the sight.]

Then she said to the forest deities, ‘Please tell Lord Ram that I have been kidnapped by the vile Ravana. Oh Lord (Ram)! I am in the clutches of this rascal like a cow called ‘Surdhenu’ (or Kaam-dhenu)² is in the hands of a butcher (3).’

[²This is the cow of the gods.]

Tulsidas says that hearing Sita's pitiful cry and hearing Lord Ram's name being said by her in utter distress, the vulture king Jatau rushed forward angrily to help her rescue from the clutches of the demon.

He said, ‘Daughter! Don't be afraid! This scoundrel (Ravana) can't escape from me now; I've come disguised as his own death!’³ (4).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-11 that precede Doha no. 29.]

जटायु-वध
(3/8)

फिरत न बारहि बार प्रचार्यो ।

चपरि चोंच-चंगुल हय हति, रथ खंड खंड करि डार्यो ॥ १ ॥

बिरथ-बिकल कियो, छीन लीन्हि सिय, घन घायनि अकुलान्यो ।

तब असि काढ़ि, काटि पर, पाँवर लै प्रभु—प्रिया परान्यो॥ 2॥
 रामकाज खगराज आजु लर्यो, जियत न जानकि त्यागी।
 तुलसिदास सुर—सिद्ध सराहत, धन्य बिहँग बड़भागी॥ 3॥

jaṭāyu-vadha
 (3/8)

phirata na bārahi bāra pracāryō.
 capari cōṇca-caṅgula haya hati, ratha khaṇḍa khaṇḍa kari ḍāryō.. 1..
 biratha-bikala kiyō, chīna līnhi siya, ghana ghāyani akulān'yō.
 taba asi kāḍhi, kāṭi para, pāmvara lai prabhu-priyā parān'yō.. 2..
 rāmakāja khagarāja āju laryō, jiyata na jānaki tyāgī.
 tulasidāsa sura-sid'dha sarāhata, dhan'ya bihaṁga barabhāgī.. 3..

Death of Jatau

Verse no. 3/8—[The valiant and brave Jatau attacked Ravana with all the ferocity and strength he could muster, though old age acted a severe drag on his agility and powers. A fierce fight ensued wherein Jatau managed to inflict severe deep wounds on Ravana, and at one point of time even managed to take Sita out of the chariot and keep her safe somewhere. But the poor bird was obviously no match for the muscular, powerfully built and angry Ravana who was not only stoked by vengeance which made him mad and reckless to the extreme, but was also armed to the teeth. He drew his sword and snipped off Jatau's wings. Thus incapacitated and mortally wounded, the poor Jatau fell to the ground, wailing and marveling at the way Fate and Destiny finally have their say. He groaned and continued to repeat the holy name of Lord Ram, and somehow managed to hold on to his breath, which albeit was very shallow, till the time Lord Ram and Laxman came that way in search of Sita so that he (Jatau) could convey the news to the Lord, and then make peace with his soul.

The fight between Jatau and Ravana has been described vividly in Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-22 that precede Doha no. 29.]

Jatau scolded and reproached Ravana severely, most sternly, and repeatedly, but the latter did not relent. Then Jatau swiftly attacked the horses with his beaks and claws and killed them, and broke the chariot into splinters (1).

Then he snatched Sita from Ravana's clutches, who being severely wounded and seething with anger, drew his sword and cut off the wings of the vulture, recovered Sita (from the safe hideout where Jatau had hidden her temporary), and escaped (2).

Tulsidas says that at that moment, the gods and enlightened ones praised Jatau that as long as he lived, he fought the demon valiantly and did not let him proceed with Sita. Jatau is forsooth and without gainsay extremely lucky; we hail him; glory to him! (3).

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Part 2

Chapter 6: The Search for Sita, And her Discovery as a Captive in Lanka

Section 6.1:

Ram Charit Manas

Till this point we have read why and how Ravana abducted Sita. Now we move on to the next phase of the narrative. In this Chapter no. 6 we read that when Lord Ram returned to his hermitage and found it empty, he was sorely sad and grieved for Sita. But soon the Lord gathered his courage and resilience for which he was famous, and getting his acts together he decided resolutely to find her abductor and punish him. So the Lord set out in search of Sita. On the way he meets Jatayu who dies before the Lord, and the Lord performs his last rites. Moving ahead, the Lord meets Sabari, the old tribal woman, who directs him towards Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom, with an advice that there he would meet Sugriva and other monkey warriors who will help him in his search.

By and by, Lord Ram reached the Rishyamook Mountain atop whose summit lived Sugriva lived in exile with his monkey and bear companions such as Hanuman, Jambavan etc. Here Lord Ram befriends Sugriva and restores his right over the kingdom of Kishkindha from which he was unceremoniously ousted by his elder brother Vali due to some misunderstanding between the two brothers.

In due course, a huge effort was launched to trace Sita, and hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears were sent as messengers in all the directions. One such group consisted of Hanuman, Angad, Nal, Neel, Jambavan etc. who were chiefs of their various groups. This particular group was fortunate as it became the privileged one to ultimately trace Sita. When this group reached the shore of the mighty ocean across which was situated Lanka where Sita was held in captivity by Ravana, it met Sampati, the elder brother of Jatayu, who, being a vulture, had a long sight and could see Sita seated in a garden in Lanka. He advised the group to send someone there and accomplish their mission successfully.

Hanuman was selected for this great and historical endeavour: he virtually jumped across the ocean to land at Lanka, and there he met Sita.

This part of the Story straddles three Chapters or Kandas or Cantos of Ram Charit Manas, viz. the second half of Aranya Kand, the whole of Kishkindha Kand, and the beginning of Sundar Kand.

Since our focus is on telling of the Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka, and also since we draw from multiple sources (such as Adhyatma Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan and Kavitaawali Ramayan besides Anand Ramayan) to tell this fascinating story, we would be constrained, from a practical point, to restrict our narrative to only those parts or sections of Ram Charit Manas (and for that matter, of the other books which we quote) that have a direct bearing on the general theme of this Story.

So therefore, in order to remain focused and avoid unnecessary distraction, we will quote only that part of the Text that is relevant for our purpose, skipping the rest, as our objective here is not to present a full and comprehensive rendering of Ram Charit Manas verse-by-verse per-se, but to cite its verses selectively and skillfully so as to construct the Story of Ravana around them just like an artisan selects a variety of mosaic pieces to create a ‘big picture’ that he wants to make.

Verily, our Book is a sort of ‘bouquet of flowers’ as it draws from more than one source to tell the Story of Ravana, and it is obvious that all the flowers in the garden cannot be accommodated in the limited space of a single bouquet. This practical constraint compels us to be selective, for it is essential and crucial for the successful completion of the project of writing this Book. However, all necessary verses will be included.

Section 6.1.1: Lord Ram begins his search for Sita:

After slaying Marich, Lord Ram was on his way back to his hermitage when he met Laxman on the way. The Lord immediately perceived that there was something gravely wrong, and he was proved right because he found the hermitage empty upon his return; Sita was not there.

Initially he was extremely shocked and felt forlorn and hopeless, but soon he gathered courage and regained his quintessential power of resilience and being steadfast in the face of the gravest of adversities; so overcoming initial distress and dismay at the sudden misfortune that had come to haunt him, the Lord launched his search for Sita with a firm determination.

This part of the story appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 30.

चौ०. रघुपति अनुजहि आवत देखी । बाहिज चिंता कीन्हि बिसेषी ॥ १ ॥
जनकसुता परिहरिहु अकेली । आयहु तात बचन मम पेली ॥ २ ॥
निसिचर निकर फिरहिं बन माहीं । मम मन सीता आश्रम नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

raghupati anujahi āvata dēkhī. bāhija cintā kīnhi bisēṣī. 1.
janakasutā pariharihu akēlī. āyahu tāta bacana mama pēlī. 2.
niscara nikara phirahim bana māhīm. mama mana sitā āśrama nāhīm. 3.

When Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) saw his younger brother Laxman coming to him (inspite of his instructions not to leave Sita alone in the wild forest infested with demons), he appeared to be flabbergasted and very worried, but this was only an external show of consternation and annoyance (bāhija cintā kīnhi bisēṣī). (1)

Expressing his concern to Laxman, Lord Ram said to him, ‘My dear; you left Sita alone. You had disobeyed my orders and come here. (2)

Hordes of demons roam around freely in the wild forest¹; I have an intuitive feeling that Sita is not in the hermitage. (3)

[Note—¹Externally Lord Ram appeared to be annoyed that Laxman had disobeyed him by leaving Sita alone, and this may be dangerous for her as the forest was full of evil creatures who would be lurking in the dark and waiting for the first chance to cause harm. The Lord however was well aware of what must have happened as all the developments were pre-planned by him in advance, and though he pretended to be annoyed that Laxman left Sita alone but actually he felt happy that things were going according to the master plan, for otherwise it would have been quite difficult for him to find an excuse to get rid of the cruel and sinful demons.

In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6, 8-9 that precedes Doha no. 27 which expressly endorse these observations.]

गहि पद कमल अनुज कर जोरी । कहेउ नाथ कछु मोहि न खोरी ॥ ४ ॥
 अनुज समेत गए प्रभु तहवाँ । गोदावरि तट आश्रम जहवाँ ॥ ५ ॥
 आश्रम देखि जानकी हीना । भए बिकल जस प्राकृत दीना ॥ ६ ॥

gahi pada kamala anuja kara jōrī. kahē'u nātha kachu mōhi na khōrī. 4.
 anuja samēta ga'e prabhu tahavāṁ. gōdāvari taṭa āśrama jahavāṁ. 5.
 āśrama dēkhi jānakī hīnā. bha'e bikala jasa prākṛta dīnā. 6.

The Lord's younger brother (Laxman) fell at the feet of the Lord and pleaded that there was no fault on his part (as he was compelled by Sita to leave her and come to where Lord Ram was). Laxman said, 'Oh Lord, I have not erred willingly at all (for I was compelled to come here by Sita herself who raised a tantrum to force me to leave her against my wishes)¹.' (4)

Lord Ram went with his brother to the banks of river Godavari where he had his hermitage. (5)

Finding the hermitage empty and Sita missing from there, the Lord felt extremely distressed and dismayed like an ordinary man would be in this situation. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28.]

हा गुन खानि जानकी सीता । रूप सील ब्रत नेम पुनीता ॥ ७ ॥
 लछिमन समुझाए बहु भाँती । पूछत चले लता तरु पाँती ॥ ८ ॥

hā guna khāni jānakī sītā. rūpa sīla brata nēma punītā. 7.
 lachimana samujhā'e bahu bhāṁtī. pūchata calē latā taru pāṁtī. 8.

Lord Ram wailed and lamented like an ordinary man who is extremely perturbed and afflicted; he grieved thus: 'Oh Janki (Sita; the daughter of king Janak) who is an abode of all good virtues. Oh Sita who is perfect and excellent in beauty and manners, is steady in upholding the vows of righteousness and probity, and steadfast in

observing all the rules of good conduct and goodness in general. [“What has happened to you; where have you gone; why did you leave me?”] (7)

Laxman consoled the Lord in various ways and did his best to uplift his sagging spirits and repair the Lord’s broken heart in the best way possible in the prevailing situation (like a faithful and true friend and companion should in times of distress and misfortune that befalls a person).

The Lord recovered himself soon, and began his search for Sita. He moved along the forest path, asking creepers, trees and leaves about the whereabouts of Sita¹. (8)

[Note—Lord Ram was so sad, so distressed and so overwhelmed by grief that he asked anything that came his way about Sita. At that time it appeared that he has lost all common sense and mental bearing in his desperation to find where Sita had gone by asking even inanimate trees, creepers and leaves about her though it is obvious that these things can’t hear or speak.

Why did the Lord do it? It is because he had to play to perfection his role of a person whose dear wife has been lost. Further, Laxman was kept in the dark about the Lord’s plan to get Sita abducted by Ravana as a prelude to eliminating the demons. So he did not wish to let anyone doubt that Sita’s abduction was known to him, and he was unaffected by it. That would not fit into his role of a human being; and since the Lord is perfect in whatever he chooses to do, he must act perfectly in his role of a human being too.

Besides this, any dispassionate behaviour on his part which would indicate that losing Sita has had no great impact on him, would have sent a wrong signal to his adversaries: for then tongues would start wagging that Sri Ram was not too pleased with Sita and so her loss did not affect him as it should have. This was not acceptable at all.

Refer also to: Chaupai line nos. 16-17 herein below that endorse these view points.]

हे खग मृग हे मधुकर श्रेणी । तुम्ह देखी सीता मृगनैनी ॥ ९ ॥
 खंजन सुक कपोत मृग मीना । मधुप निकर कोकिला प्रबीना ॥ १० ॥
 कुंद कली दाड़िम दामिनी । कमल सरद ससि अहिभामिनी ॥ ११ ॥
 बरुन पास मनोज धनु हंसा । गज केहरि निज सुनत प्रसंसा ॥ १२ ॥
 श्रीफल कनक कदलि हरषाहीं । नेकु न संक सकुच मन माहीं ॥ १३ ॥

hē khaga mṛga hē madhukara śrēnī. tumha dēkhī sītā mṛganainī. 9.
 khañjana suka kapōta mṛga mīnā. madhupa nikara kōkilā prabīnā. 10.
 kunda kalī dāḍima dāminī. kamala sarada sasi ahibhāminī. 11.
 baruna pāsa manōja dhanu hansā. gaja kēhari nija sunata prasansā. 12.
 śrīphala kanaka kadali haraṣāhīm. nēku na sañka sakuca mana māhīm. 13.

‘Oh birds; oh animals; oh swarm of bees! Have any one of you seen the doe-eyed Sita? (9)

Alas! The wagtail, the parrot, the pigeon, the deer, the fish, the swarm of bees, the expert cuckoo [10], the buds of jasmine flower, the pomegranate, the streak of lightening, the lotus flower, the moon of the autumn night, the she-serpent who moves smoothly as she slides on a surface [11], the noose of Varun (the Water God), the bow of Kaamdeo (cupid), the majestic swan, the mighty elephant and the grand lion—all of them now hear themselves being praised and honoured (by poets for their respective qualities, virtues and characters that are unique to them, who earlier were shunned by the same poets who desisted from praising them and comparing them to Sita as they were no match for her singular beauty and virtues represented by each of these entities) [12]¹. (10-12)

Similarly, the fruits of the wood-apple tree and the golden coloured banana tree also feel happy; they do not at all feel bashful and have no misgivings about anything. [With Sita gone, these entities too are happy that poets would now use them as metaphors when they wish to compare other things with the unique qualities that these entities have. Earlier the poets shunned them as Sita was much superior in all respects as far as the virtues represented by the wood-apple and banana trees was concerned. But now that she has gone, the poets have no choice but to cite these two entities for comparison purposes.] (13)

[Note—¹Indian poets and bards usually use these entities when they need examples of certain unique and excellent qualities that they stand for. But all these qualities faded in excellence when compared with similar qualities of Sita; so the poets refrained from citing them as metaphors as that would undermine their reputation as skillful and knowledgeable poets and bards. Now that Sita is no more, these entities feel happy that once again they will have the honour being cited as examples of certain stellar virtues or qualities by poets and bards.

That said, now let us what special features these entities possess that make them so favourite of poets and bards when they use them as standards to describe the beauty of a lady in her prime.

The eyes of a bewitching beauty are compared to the eyes of a fish, the wagtail and the fawn; the nose to the parrot's beak; the neck to that of a pigeon; the curl of hairs to a swarm of black-bees; the voice to the singing of the cuckoo; the teeth to the buds of the jasmine flower and the seeds of the pomegranate; the brilliance and glisten of complexion to the radiance and splendour of lightening; the limbs, i.e. the hand and the leg, as well as the face and the eyes to the lotus flower; the face to the full moon of autumn; the long braid of hair hanging and swaying at the back or front of the lady to the smooth sliding motion of a serpent; the enticing smile that captivates all beholders to the snare of Varun; the curve of the eyebrow to the bow of Kaamdeo (cupid); the swagger in the gait and its swaying movement to the majestic way a swan swims or an elephant walks; the waist to that of an adult lion; the breasts to the fruits of the wood-apple tree; and the thighs to the smooth skin of the banana tree.

The subtle idea here is that though these selected entities are models of beauty themselves in their respective fields, yet they were no comparisons to Sita; and hence poets and bards shied away from citing any of them. But now that Sita is gone, and if the poets and bards need a metaphor in her absence, they have no other options but to cite one of these entities to suit their purpose. This makes these entities happy that at last they are once again in demand and sought after.]

सुनु जानकी तोहि बिनु आजू । हरषे सकल पाइ जनु राजू ॥ १४ ॥
 किमि सहि जात अनख तोहि पाहीं । प्रिया बेगि प्रगटसि कस नाहीं ॥ १५ ॥
 एहि बिधि खोजत बिलपत स्वामी । मनहुँ महा बिरही अति कामी ॥ १६ ॥
 पूरनकाम राम सुख रासी । मनुज चरित कर अज अबिनासी ॥ १७ ॥

sunu jānakī tōhi binu ājū. haraṣē sakala pā'i janu rājū. 14.
 kimi sahi jāta anakha tōhi pāhīm. priyā bēgi pragaṭasi kasa nāhīm. 15.
 ēhi bidhi khōjata bilapata svāmī. manahum mahā birahī ati kāmī. 16.
 pūranakāma rāma sukha rāsī. manuja carita kara aja abināsī. 17.

Oh Janki (Sita), listen. All these entities are so happy at your absence as if they have acquired the kingdom of some place. [To wit, all of a sudden they feel very fortunate that once again they are sought after by poets for citing them as metaphors of beauty.] (14)

Say, how can you bear such rivalry? [These entities are rejoicing at your misfortune; they are least concerned that your absence has caused so much misery to me.

My dear, tell me is it ever possible that you would tolerate their impertinence and ill-manners? If not, then why are you hiding? If you come out and reveal yourself, they would be put to ignominious shame and would go to hide themselves.]' (15)

In this way, overcome with grief and distress, the Lord moved around in a miserable condition, lamenting and wailing for Sita woefully like a very passionate man who has been smitten by deathly pangs of separation from his beloved, leaving him utterly inconsolable. (16)

Lord Ram is eternally contented and fulfilled; he is an eternal abode of bliss, happiness and beatitude. But now he is acting like a mortal man even though he is immortal and one who neither dies nor takes a birth. [This is because he is the Supreme Being. And this being the case, it also means that he is perfect in whatever he does, even playing his role as a human being to perfection. He shows here how a husband whose dear wife has been lost feels and behaves.] (17)

Section 6.1.2: Lord Ram meets Jatau and performs his last rites:

Wandering in the forest looking for Sita as described herein above, Lord Ram came to the place where Jatau, the vulture, lay wounded on the ground after his wings were cut by Ravana as the latter fled with Sita towards Lanka.

The Lord met Jatau most affectionately, caressed him and cleaned his wounds personally, feeling very sorry for him as he tried to sooth the bird and give peace to him as best as he could. Jatau told the Lord about Ravana and the general direction in which he had gone on the chariot with a wailing Sita in his captivity. Then Jatau prayed to Lord Ram and died. The Lord performed his last rites as he would have done for his own father. Jatau found deliverance, and went to the abode of the Lord in heaven.

This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 33.

Now, let us read what happened:

आगें परा गीधपति देखा । सुमिरत राम चरन जिन्ह रेखा ॥ १८ ॥

āgēm parā gīdhapati dēkhā. sumirata rāma carana jinha rēkhā. 18.

When Lord Ram moved ahead he came to the place where he saw the king of vultures, Jatayu, lying on the ground (because his wings had been cut-off by Ravana). Jatayu was remembering Lord Ram and his mind was concentrated on the holy feet of the Lord with their auspicious marks¹. (18)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world. According to scriptures, the sole of Lord Vishnu's feet have 48 marks which are considered unique to him and very auspicious. They are the following:

(a) Marks or holy signs under the sole of the left foot—(i) a vertical line (Urdhva-rekha), (ii) a swastika, (iii) an octagon made by a pair of squares intersecting each other to form eight-cornered star (Ashtakona), (iv) a golden coloured coil consisting of two-and-a-half concentric circles (symbolizing goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity), (v) a plough (Hal), (vi) a pestle (Moosal), (vii) a figure of the serpent (the celestial serpent known as Sesh-nath), (viii) an arrow, (ix) a zero (symbolising the sky element that is infinite and nothingness; Shunya), (x) a lotus flower (Kamal), (xi) a chariot, (xii) a thunderbolt (Vajra), (xiii) a grain of barley (symbolising crop and cereals that give nourishment), (xiv) the tree (Kalpa-taru; the all wish fulfilling tree found in heaven), (xv) a goad (Ankush; symbolising control of the world and subduing sinful creatures), (xvi) a flag (Pataka or Dhvaj; insignia of supreme and universal authority), (xvii) a crown (Mukut; the lordship of this creation), (xviii) a discus (serrated circular weapon; the Sudarshan Chakra), (xix) a throne (standing for supremacy authority and emperorship of this creation), (xx) the danda (staff of Yama, the god of death; symbolising the Lord's power over death), (xxi) a flapper or whisker (used to whisk away flies; swayed before kings and emperors; it is known as Chamar); (xxii) a parasol or umbrella (put on the head of a sovereign; symbol of universal power and authority over this creation), (xxiii) a male human figure (of Viraat Purush; the cosmic form of the Supreme Being; the supreme Father), and (xxiiii) a garland (of victory). Total = 24 signs.

(b) Marks or holy signs under the sole of the right foot—(i) flowing water (symbolising the holy river Saryu), (ii) a cow's hoof, (iii) the earth, (iv) a pitcher, (v) a flag (Pataka), (vi) a black plum (Jambu Phal), (vii) a crescent moon (Chandra), (viii) a conch shell (Shankha) (ix) a hexagon (a figure made by intersecting of two equilateral triangles), (x) a triangle (Trikona), (xi) a mace (Gada), (xii) a living being (symbolized by a point standing for the soul which is atomic in size), (xiii) a Vindu (the decimal; a dot; symbolising the source of cosmic energy), (xiv) the Shakti (cosmic dynamic powers and energy represented by a semi-circle at the lower end or the base of the dot, the Vindu), (xv) a lake or reservoir of nectar (Sudha-kunda), (xvi) three horizontal lines (symbolising the three phases of creation, time and space; or the three segments of the world: the heaven, the earth and the nether world), (xvii) a fish,

(xviii) a full moon (Chandrama), (xix) an Indian lute (Vina), (xx) a flute, (xxi) a bow; (xxii) a quiver, (xxiii) a swan (Hansa), and (xxiii) a tiara (known as Chandrika; a crescent-shaped ornament worn on the top of a turban or crown of kings; an ornament of a lady's head). Total = 24 signs.

Grand total = 24 on left foot + 24 of right foot = 48.]

दो०. कर सरोज सिर परसेउ कृपासिंधु रघुबीर ।

निरखि राम छबि धाम मुख बिगत भई सब पीर ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

kara sarōja sira parasē'u kṛpāsindhu raghubīra.

nirakhi rāma chabi dhāma mukha bigata bhaī saba pīra. 30.

Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram), who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, felt very sorry and sad for Jatau; the Lord caressed him very affectionately by moving his loving hands over the wounded bird's head.

When Jatau observed the charming face of Lord Ram up close, all his agonies and grief disappeared (for he felt extremely comforted, happy and fulfilled notwithstanding his sufferings and pain caused by the mortal wound that bled severely, inflicted on his body by Ravana). (Doha no. 30)

[Note—Lord Ram was well acquainted with Jatau; they had met earlier when the Lord had entered the Dandakaranya forest, and an affectionate bond of friendship was established between the two. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.

It was this friendship that led to Jatau intervening on the Lord's behalf when he saw Ravana taking away Sita.

Jatau was a friend of king Dasrath, Lord Ram's father and king of Ayodhya. So when Lord Ram and Jatau met, the latter assured him that while the Lord, Sita and Laxman live in Panchavati, from where Sita was later on abducted by Ravana, he would keep a watch over them, and protect them like a father would as he was a friend of Lord Ram's father. In case both the brothers go out in the forest on some errand, such as to hunt or collect firewood or eatables, then he would guard Sita. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-7. So Jatau kept his promise very well, even sacrificing his life for keeping his word.

And Lord Ram too lived up to the affectionate relationship that Jatau had established with him, a relationship that was no less than that which exists between a son and a father—for the Lord showed him the same respect he would have shown to his own father by performing the last rites of Jatau with his own hands at the time of his death as a son would have done for his father. Glory to Jatau for he had this rare privilege that no one else except Sabari, of whom we will soon read, had.

The emotion of love and affection exhibited by Lord Ram and Jatau was mutual, natural and spontaneous. Lord Ram was greatly moved by Jatau's miserable, pitiable condition; the Lord took the wounded bird in his arms lovingly, he caressed him affectionately, he unfolded his long lock of hairs and cleaned Jatau's wounds with them, he grieved and lamented at Jatau's ill fortune as if he was directly affected by it, he spoke sweet words of reassurance and encouragement to shore up Jatau's sagging and dejected spirits even as he held the bird close to his bosom to comfort him.

Jatau, meanwhile, knew that he won't live, for his wounds were grave and fatal. He was anxiously waiting to see Lord Ram for one final moment of his life like a father in the throes of death awaits his only son so that he can see him for the last time and die in his presence. Jatau wasn't sure, but he hoped. He clung to life for another reason also: his sacrifice would be meaningful if he could tell the Lord about Sita being abducted by Ravana; it will also make the Lord aware that Jatau has lived up to his promise that he would take care of them as best as he could while they lived in the area of the forest where Jatau lived. Death would have come one day or the other, for Jatau was old and nearing the end of his life. But how nice would it be if there was someone to perform his last rites, and his body does not decay and rot to emit a foul smell, or fall prey to wild carnivorous animals who might tear him apart and feast on his carcass, he gloomily thought with a sad and mournful mind. So now since he has lived up to his own part of the bargain, he wondered if Lord Ram would live up to his own part by performing his last rites as he knows that Jatau was his father's friend, and when a father's friend dies in an alien land where there is no one to take care of him, it becomes obligatory for a person to step in to fill the gap and assume the role of next-of-kin, as now the situation was between Jatau and Lord Ram. Jatau wished to have a dignified death; he had sacrificed his life for a noble cause and so hoped that the Supreme Lord who rewards a creature in accordance with his deeds would now apply the same principles to him as well during his last moments. So when Jatau saw Lord Ram caressing him with love and empathy he felt completely contented; he felt that his life had certainly been fruitful in spite of his being born a flesh-eating vulture, a birth not worthy of any praise, for even in his death he had been able to serve the Lord in the best way he could.

And truly indeed, the all-knowing Lord Ram read the inner thoughts of Jatau, that he treated the Lord as his son. So it was a natural emotion of grief and sadness and empathy when the Lord saw Jatau lying wailing and mortally wounded on the ground; and similarly when Jatau realized that his 'son' has finally arrived, he felt very happy and contented in his last moments.]

चौ०. तब कह गीध बचन धरि धीरा । सुनहु राम भंजन भव भीरा ॥ १ ॥
 नाथ दसानन यह गति कीन्ही । तेहिं खल जनकसुता हरि लीन्ही ॥ २ ॥
 लै दच्छिन दिसि गयउ गोसाईं । बिलपति अति कुररी की नाई ॥ ३ ॥
 दरस लागि प्रभु राखेउँ प्राना । चलन चाहत अब कृपानिधाना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

taba kaha gīdha bacana dhari dhīrā. sunahu rāma bhañjana bhava bhīrā. 1.
 nātha dasānana yaha gati kīnhī. tēhīm khala janakasutā hari līnhī. 2.
 lai dacchina disi gaya'u gōsā'īm. bilapati ati kurarī kī nā'īm. 3.
 darasa lāgi prabhu rākhē'uṁ prānā. calana cahata aba kṛpānidhānā. 4.

Then the vulture (Jatau) recovered himself and patiently said to Lord Ram, 'Listen Ram who destroys (eliminates; removes; helps the creature to get rid of) the terrible fear of birth and death and their associated miseries and pains in this mortal world of transmigration (bhañjana bhava bhīrā)¹.

[¹Jatau was seriously injured; he was barely able to breathe. So when he felt Lord Ram's caressing hands on his body and opened his eyes to see the Lord, he gave

a sigh of contentment and joy. His wishes were honoured by the Lord; now he would not only die in peace but would have also the opportunity to find final deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. That is why he recalls this special virtue of the Lord that he grants freedom from the fear of birth and death. There was nothing more to worry and be fearful of now. So Jatau was very patient; he slowly opened his tired eyes that were already half closed as he was on the verge of death, and calmly conversed with Lord Ram. His calm demeanours and contented look showed he had no regrets for what he had done or what fate he is destined to have, for he was absolutely certain that things were indeed done rightly, and there was nothing better that he could have done. As for his fate he was assured of a fine one: with Lord Ram holding him in an affectionate embrace, clasping him to his bosom and cleaning his wounds himself, was there any trace of doubt left about it by any stretch of imagination? (1)

Oh Lord, this wretched condition of mine has been caused by the ten-headed Ravana; it is he who has stolen Sita. (2)

He has taken her in the southern direction even as she kept wailing and screaming loudly like a caged and frightened osprey (*bilapati ati kuraṛī kī nā'īm*). (3)

I have somehow managed to keep myself alive so that I can see your holy self, oh my Lord. Now my 'Pran' (my vital life forces) want to leave this gross body and exit from it².

[²I wish to die now; the wounds are hurting me sorely; I somehow managed to cling to life just to see you and convey my blessing as well as the information about Sita being taken away by the rascal Ravana. But now that purpose has been served; so I wish to die peacefully.] (4)

राम कहा तनु राखहु ताता । मुख मुसुकाइ कही तेहिं बाता ॥ ५ ॥
जा कर नाम मरत मुख आवा । अधमउ मुकुत होइ श्रुति गावा ॥ ६ ॥
सो मम लोचन गोचर आगें । राखौं देह नाथ केहि खाँगें ॥ ७ ॥

rāma kahā tanu rākhahu tātā. mukha musukā'i kahī tēhīm bātā. 5.
jā kara nāma marata mukha āvā. adhama'u mukuta hō'i śruti gāvā. 6.
sō mama lōcana gōcara āgēm. rākhaurṁ dēha nātha kēhi khāṁgēm. 7.

[Lord Ram was immensely moved and emotionally overwhelmed by the pitiful condition of Jatau. He thought 'Jatau is my father's friend; he has valiantly fought Sita's abductor on my behalf inspite of being unarmed and his old age; he has suffered so gravely for me, yet he is so contented and peaceful. How great and holy is his soul; how grand is his mind and heart inspite of his body of a vulture. Surely I must honour his wishes; it is my honourable duty and moral obligation. Since I have the power over death and life of creatures in this creation, as it is my prerogative as the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world, I must now do for this noble bird what he wants me to do for him, even if it goes beyond the Laws of Nature. So the Lord thought that since Jatau has suffered and is about to die for his cause, he must now grant him life to the bird if he so wishes.]

Lord Ram told Jatau with a smile on his face, ‘My dear, keep your body (if you so wish).¹’ (5)

Jatau replied, ‘The Lord whose name is so holy, divine and spiritually purifying that if it comes to the mouth of a dying creature, if the dying creature utters the Lord’s name even once at the time of his death, then no matter how lowly and fallen he might be he is sure to find Mukti for himself (i.e. such a creature finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death with its accompanying horrors; his soul gets eternal peace, bliss and beatitude; the creature is blessed with emancipation and salvation at that instant itself). This is what the scriptures say and affirm about the glory and spiritual powers of the Lord’s divine, holy name (and hence it is the Truth). (6)

That same Lord is standing right in my front, and is being watched affectionately by my eager eyes. Say oh Lord, why then, for what reason, should I wish to keep this mortal body?²’ (7)

[Note—¹To wit, you need not die; if you wish to live I will ensure that your wounds are quickly healed magically, and you be restored to the condition in which you were prior to this misadventure.

Why did Lord Ram smile when he spoke to Jatau? Well, Lord Ram indicated to Jatau that it is no problem for him to restore the latter’s healthy body if he so wished. But, at the same time, the Lord also wished to test how truly Jatau was holy and wise internally, for now Jatau had two options before him: either to live in this mortal world for some more days and die like an ordinary vulture, or to get the rarest of rare destiny that eludes even the greatest of sages, seers, hermits and ascetics, the destiny that grants eternal peace, bliss and beatitude to the creature, and emancipation and salvation to his soul, by dying now even as the Supreme Being is there to take care of him and his soul?

So the Lord smiled to see what Jatau’s response was: whether he is an ordinary creature who loves his gross body that every living being is aware is perishable yet wishes to cling to it, or he is an enlightened soul who grabs the first opportunity to discard this mortal body and seek eternity, who yearns for deliverance for his soul, who strives for attainment of emancipation and salvation.

²It is not always that such an opportunity presents itself to a dying creature that the Supreme Being himself stands before him to grant his wishes. What good fortune befalls me today that the Lord stands right before me, and I see him up so close, soothing my wounds and comforting me so lovingly. Am I not going to die one day; has anyone who is born remains forever in this world that is characterized by mortality and transmigration? If it is the case that all those who have taken a birth must die, then where would I get this rarest of rare chance that I have at this instant? Where again will I have the Lord standing before my eyes at the time of my death? Where again will I be assured of the best destiny that the soul can ever expect to have as I have today, as the Supreme Lord is himself present to take care of my soul?

No, no, dear Ram; I am not so stupid to let go of this golden chance. I don’t want to keep this mortal and gross body of a vulture; I wish to discard it and find eternal deliverance while you are here before me. Nothing doing; this is my wish, if you ask me!]

जल भरि नयन कहहिं रघुराई । तात कर्म निज तें गति पाई ॥ ८ ॥
 परहित बस जिन्ह के मन माहीं । तिन्ह कहूँ जग दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं ॥ ९ ॥
 तनु तजि तात जाहु मम धामा । देउँ काह तुम्ह पूरनकामा ॥ १० ॥

jala bhari nayana kahahim raghurā'ī. tāta karma nija tēm gati pā'ī. 8.
 parahita basa jinha kē mana māhīm. tinha kahum̐ jaga durlabha kachu nāhīm.
 9.
 tanu taji tāta jāhu mama dhāmā. dē'um̐ kāha tumha pūranakāmā. 10.

Tears welled-up in the eyes of Lord of the Raghus ("raghurā'ī"; Lord Ram) as he said to Jatau, 'My dear. You shall get the destiny that you deserve in accordance to the deeds you have done; your fate is decided by your own actions and deeds. [And what is it? The Lord explains below.] (8)

He who is selfless in his actions and keeps the good and welfare of others in his heart, for such a person there is nothing inaccessible or impossible to attain in this world. (9)

My dear (tāta)! You discard this gross mortal body of yours and go to my own abode in the heaven¹. What more can I grant you; you are fulfilled and contented in every respect. (10)

[Note—¹Jatau had selflessly served Lord Ram by sacrificing his own body in order to protect Sita. For such a noble deed there is only one destiny—it is an abode in heaven. This certainty of destiny obtained by serving others selflessly and dying for the cause of their good oversteps other considerations of life such as the nature of one's birth, one's stature in life, whether or not he has done any other religious deeds during his lifetime, or has worshipped the Lord God, or has adopted a mean for his livelihood that may or may not be regarded as being totally noble and righteous, and so on.

This singular act of selflessness and having the thought of good of others in one's heart determines one's auspicious fate at the time of death.

So since Jatau had died while trying to protect Sita from the clutches of Ravana, his auspicious destiny in heaven is secured for him. Hence Lord Ram says that he is not doing anything special for Jatau by granting him an abode in the heaven as this was his rightful claim.]

दो०. सीता हरन तात जनि कहहु पिता सन जाइ ।
 जौं मैं राम त कुल सहित कहिहि दसानन आइ ॥ ३१ ॥

dōhā.

sītā harana tāta jani kahahu pitā sana jā'i.
 jaum̐ maim̐ rāma ta kula sahita kahihi dasānana ā'i. 31.

My dear; when you go to heaven please don't tell my father (Dasrath) about Sita's abduction. [Because this will cause intense pain in his heart, for it was he who had

sent us to forest exile. He will be overcome with remorse, and I would not like to cause distress to him in heaven where he rests in peace.]

If I am truly worthy of my name ‘Ram’¹ then one day soon Ravana will come there with his kin and companions and his entire family to tell this story himself to my father². (Doha no. 31)

[Note—¹What does the Lord mean by saying “if I am truly worthy of my name Ram”? Earlier we have read that Jatau made two significant observations concerning Lord Ram—viz. (i) The Lord was one who destroys or eliminates the fear of transmigration and its associated miseries in this mortal world, and (ii) The Lord is one whose name is so holy, divine and spiritually purifying that it provides deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature if it is said even once at the time of death, and the Srutis or the Vedas affirm it—refer to Chaupai line nos. 1 and 6 that precede Doha no. 31 respectively herein above.

Lord Ram’s name, pronounced as “RAAM”, is called a ‘Tarak Mantra’, i.e. it is a spiritual formula that blesses the one who says it with the reward of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. This spiritual fact is specifically declared in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1 belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition. In general, the great spiritual importance and the supreme value of Lord Ram’s Name as being the holiest of Mantras has been elaborately dealt with in Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Cantos 1-4, and Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad; these two Upanishads pertain to the Atharva Veda and are exclusively dedicated to expounding upon the divinity of Lord Ram and his Holy Name.

Lord Shiva is a great exponent of this spiritual philosophy for he uses this method to grant instant deliverance to the dying creature on the banks of the holy river Ganges in the pilgrim city of Kashi by uttering the holy name of Lord Ram into his ears—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19.

The greatness and glory of Lord Ram’s holy name has been elaborately enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.

This said, suppose Lord Ram were to be a little more elaborate in his declaration, then what would he have told Jatau? He would have said something to the effect as follows—

“Listen dear Jatau. You have yourself acknowledged that I am the one who grants Mukti, or liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature. And you have also accepted that my name is so holy, divine, purifying and mystical that even a fallen and sinful and lowly creature is blessed with Mukti and finds eternal peace and bliss if he utters my name. So therefore, now I am obliged to live up to this reputation; it has become sacrosanct for me especially because you have cited the Vedas to make this declaration. This being the case, I have to make sure that Ravana too gets Mukti, for I would be right in front when he dies. Since it has been my hoary reputation that I am forgiving, merciful, compassionate, gracious, magnanimous, beneficent and kind to one and all, that I, being the Supreme Being and the Lord of this creation, treat all creatures alike, and even in my punishment is hidden my grace and compassion for the creature for I don’t want any soul to perish and suffer in hell, so I declare to you that when I slay Ravana I will also make sure that he finds the same destiny that you have now been fortunate to attain. Although Ravana is sinful and evil, yet his soul yearns for deliverance, and he constantly remembers me even if it out of animosity or fear, so it is obligatory for me to send

him to heaven. I don't distinguish between two creatures as I know that there souls are one and the same, and this soul is eternally and inherently pure and holy; it is the gross physical body that is sinful and evil, and not the soul of the creature. So look here my dear—Ravana cannot go to hell any longer, and I declare now that I will send him to heaven where you are going, and where Dasrath too dwells.

I don't see Dasrath as my father, nor Jatau as a vulture, or Ravana as a demon who has taken away my wife; I see their Atma which is holy and pure consciousness that is my own reflection, and it is one uniform entity.

To wit, for me all creatures are equally dear; I don't pay attention to their physical bodies as this is acquired by the individual based on what he had done in his previous life. As far as I am concerned, being the Supreme Lord of this creation, I go deeper and examine what lies behind the curtain of delusions and the shell known as the creature's body which hides his 'true self', which all self-realised and enlightened persons know is the nothing but 'pure consciousness' known as the individual's Atma or the soul. Now this Atma, which is the creature's 'true self', is as pure, divine and holy as my own cosmic Self, the Supreme Atma that is known as 'Parmatma'. It's just like the case of sky or space present inside a small box that would represent the individual's Atma, and the endless space that extends to infinity which you see all around you and which stands for the Parmatma. Say, is there any fundamental difference between the two types of space? So likewise, there is no fundamental difference between the individual creature known as the Jiva and me who is known as the Supreme Being.

This being the irrefutable fact, say how can I not see my 'true image' in the creature? And since I am eternal, never-changing and constant, why will I not see the same consistency in all the individual creatures? That is why I say that Dasrath, Jatau and Ravana are equal for me. I practice equanimity and universality in my outlook, and I don't have a narrow selfish mind to view this creation in a fractured way because it is but my own image, and I am uniform and one in all respects.

Well, let me add something more: If I, Ram, promise that notwithstanding how sinful and evil Ravana is he will go to heaven, for he remembers me and utters my holy name, the spiritual rewards of which surely accrues to him as they can't go in vain, making it my moral duty to redeem his soul, then remember also all those who care to pay attention—that if I can promise spiritual peace and eternal freedom from the cycle of transmigration (Mukti) to Ravana whom the whole world despises as being singularly sinful and evil, then all the creatures should rejoice that their destiny is also insured by me, that all can find Mukti, but the only condition is that they should remember me, they should remember my holy name, have faith in me, and be devoted to me so much so that when they breathe their last they die remembering me and my holy name instead of anything else, especially anything related to this gross world and its material things.”

²A very remarkable phrase is used here—it is “*kahihi dasānana ā'i*”, i.e. Ravana will come 'here' to tell this story to Dasrath. Ordinarily the term 'there' should have been used; Lord Ram should have said that “Ravana would go 'there', to heaven, to tell the story of Sita's abduction to Dasrath and other residents of heaven when they ask him to acquaint them with the story of his life”.

This implies two things very clearly and obviously: one is that Lord Ram predicts that Ravana would also go to heaven at the time of his death inspite of his being a cruel demon who has not done any good deed in his life; and second, that he would go to that part of heaven which is the abode of the Lord himself and where the

Lord himself would go after his mission is complete—this is why he says “he will come ‘here’ ”, instead of saying “he will go ‘there’ ”.

At the time of death, Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, had gone to heaven because he had died remembering the Lord and muttering his holy name till his last breath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 155—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156. Dasrath’s last moments were like those of Jatau.

A very interesting observation is to be made here. All hatred, animosity, ill-will, jealousy and malice, all factors that distinguish two creatures as being ‘me and you’, ‘my friend and my enemy’, are limited to the gross mortal body of a creature and the equally gross mortal world where he lives. Rising from this limited gross view of existence and attaining a higher and sublime level enlightens the creature of the futility of such lowly and selfish thoughts, as the true identity of all living beings is their soul, and this soul is a universally pure entity known as Consciousness that is holy and divine.

When a creature dies he discards his gross physical body, and assumes a subtle form that is ethereal in nature. It is in this form that he goes to heaven or hell as he is judged in accordance to the law of deeds done in life and their results that accumulate over time. Those who live in heaven have an ethereal form, and not a gross form like the creatures of this world. The glory of Lord Ram’s holy name is that it provides the creature a chance to get an exalted destiny for himself in case his deeds alone don’t ensure it for him.

In the present case, Dasrath, Jatau and Ravana attained heaven precisely for this reason—for all of them had been constantly remembering Lord Ram as long as they lived, and at the time of death too their minds were concentrated on the Lord and his holy name. Refer to Ram Charit Manas: (a) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it with respect to king Dasrath; (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30 with respect to Jatau; and (c) in Lanka Kand we read that Ravana’s mind was constantly occupied by the thoughts of Lord Ram, albeit it was due to animosity and fear combined, but nonetheless he remembered the Lord at all the moments of his existence which unwittingly became a sort of meditation for him, and even while dying he not only was fortunate to see the Lord standing in front but his last words had the name of Lord Ram—for he cried “where is Ram whom I want to defeat in the battle-field” (Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103). This means that even while dying Ravana had a last divine glimpse of the holy form of Lord Ram and uttered his holy name. These factors played a crucial role to determine his destiny—for it was now sure he would not go to hell.]

चौ०. गीध देह तजि धरि हरि रूपा । भूषन बहु पट पीत अनूपा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

gīdha dēha taji dhari hari rūpā. bhūṣana bahu paṭa pīta anūpā. 1.

The vulture left his mortal coil (his gross body) and assumed a holy form that was in likeness of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu). He was attired in magnificent clothes of different kinds, and adorned in ornaments of equal magnificence that covered his body.

[To wit, after discarding his physical body of a vulture, Jatau's soul regained its original form as the Holy One; it was a sublime form of ethereal nature. This verse means that a creature's soul is eternally holy and his true self is an image of the Supreme Being; it is the creature's gross physical body that is so ugly and has so many varied forms which are totally different from his true identity which is one and the same—that of an image of the Supreme Being. What a wonder of this creation and the magic delusion plays that rarely does one understand this universal truth.]

दो०. अबिरल भगति मागि बर गीध गयउ हरिधाम ।
तेहि की क्रिया जथोचित निज कर कीन्ही राम ॥ ३२ ॥

dōhā.

abirala bhagati māgi bara gīdha gaya'u haridhāma.
tēhi kī kriyā jathōcita nija kara kīnhī rāma. 32.

Asking Lord Ram to grant him eternal and uninterrupted devotion for the Lord, the vulture (Jatau) went to the heavenly abode of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu; the Supreme Being).

After that, Lord Ram performed his last rites in the proper way with his own hands¹. (Doha no. 32)

[Note—¹This rare honour was granted to Jatau alone by Lord Ram; for not even Dasrath, the worldly father of the Lord, had had the privilege that his last rites would be performed by his son, Lord Ram. So Jatau is deemed to be the most fortunate one in the whole story of the Ramayan.

It is to be noted however that there was one more person whose last rite was done by the Lord—and it was Sabari, the aged tribal woman whom the Lord would meet soon after moving ahead after cremating Jatau. But Sabari was a 'woman', while Jatau was a 'male'.

The result is that Jatau was elevated to the grand stature of being Lord Ram's father, and Sabari to being his mother!

It is such a remarkable thing and a wonderful one also that Lord Ram would elevate a lowly flesh-eating vulture and a lowly tribal woman who had been shunned by the rest of the society to the grand pedestal of being the Lord's "father and mother" respectively.

This is why it is said that there is no Lord or God like Lord Ram in this world; for Lord Ram accepts devotion and love and faith for him as the only criterion for accepting the creature; he overlooks all the faults and shortcomings of a creature and readily grants him liberation and deliverance if the creature surrenders before the Lord and had deep reverence for him. See verses below.]

चौ०. कोमल चित अति दीनदयाला । कारन बिनु रघुनाथ कृपाला ॥ १ ॥
गीध अधम खग आमिष भोगी । गति दीन्ही जो जाचत जोगी ॥ २ ॥
सुनहु उमा ते लोग अभागी । हरि तजि होहिं बिषय अनुरागी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kōmala cita ati dīnadayālā. kārana binu raghunātha kṛpālā. 1.
gīdha adhama khaga āmiṣa bhōgī. gati dīnhī jō jācata jōgī. 2.
sunahu umā tē lōga abhāgī. hari taji hōhim biṣaya anurāgī. 3.

Lord Ram has a very soft heart and mind; he is of a very affable nature, most merciful, very compassionate, and full of grace. He readily shows his kindness in a selfless manner to even the most humble of creatures. (1)

A vulture is a most hateful and lowly carnivorous bird who eats flesh of dead creatures; yet the Lord granted him a destiny that is suitable for a great ascetic (because the Lord sent him to heaven where great and holy ones can only go). (2)

Lord Shiva (the primary narrator of the story of Ram Charit Manas) told his consort, ‘Listen Uma! Those persons who abandon such a magnanimous and merciful Lord Hari and instead indulge in self and worldly gratification, and are attracted towards the sense objects of this material, mortal world—verily indeed, to say the truth, such persons are very stupid and most unfortunate.’ (3)

पुनि सीतहि खोजत द्वौ भाई । चले बिलोकत बन बहुताई ॥ ४ ॥
संकुल लता बिटप घन कानन । बहु खग मृग तहँ गज पंचानन ॥ ५ ॥

puni sītahi khōjata dvau bhāī. calē bilōkata bana bahutāī. 4.
saṅkula latā biṭapa ghana kānana. bahu khaga mṛga tahaṁ gaja pañcānana. 5.

Once again, the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) resumed their search for Sita. They moved ahead in the forest observing it closely. (4)

The forest was dense with creepers and trees; it was inhabited by many varieties of birds and deer, and there dwelt in it many elephants and lions. (5)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman moved slowly and steadily thorough the thick forest, looking minutely at every nook and corner of it, at every shade and glade, behind every thicket and under each canopy formed by closely interlocked creepers and dense foliage of trees, in every direction, sideways to the left and to the right—not leaving any place unexamined or unexplored along the forest path.]

Section 6.1.3: Lord Ram meets Sabari who advises him to go to Lake Pampa where he would meet Sugriv who will give him more information about Sita:

After performing the last rites of Jatau, Lord Ram and his younger brother resumed their search for Sita. They meandered through the forest and on the way provided deliverance to a demon named Kabandha. By-and-by they reached the hermitage of

Sabari, an old woman who was cast out by the society and lived in the abandoned hermitage of sage Matang*. She however was a great devotee of Lord Ram; she waited patiently for the moment when Lord Ram would pass that way, as this was what the sage had advised her before going away. She eagerly kept a vigil on the forest path leading up to and going beyond her hermitage—waiting for the Lord's arrival. Finally her long wait ended and the Lord arrived. She worshipped and prayed to him, offered the two brothers plums which she had been plucking and collecting especially for this occasion, and then when Lord Ram asked her if she can tell him anything about Sita, she advised him to go Lake Pampa where he would meet Sugriv, the prince of the monkeys, who will help him not only in finding Sita but also in the endeavour to secure her freedom.

This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33, Chaupai line nos. 3, 5-10 that precede Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37. Out of these verses we shall select only those that directly relate to this part of the story, and skip those that are not pertinent to our narrative.

*Now, a brief word about Sage Matang: He is considered as being a 'Brahm-rishi', i.e. a great and exalted sage who was self-realised, exceptionally enlightened and well versed in true knowledge of Brahm, the Supreme Being and an embodiment of the cosmic form of pure Consciousness, that granted the sage a stature that was equivalent to Brahm.

He had his hermitage at a place near Lake Pampa, on a hill known as Rishyamook. This place is situated now in Hampi in the state of Karnataka in South India.

One of his most famous disciples was Sabari, the lowly woman whom Lord Ram met. The Lord preached her the nine-fold path of Bhakti (devotion), and then honoured her by not only granting deliverance from this world of transmigration but even performing her last rites like a son does for his mother.

When the king of the monkey race, Vaali, killed the demon Dundhubhi and flung his severed head, it fell near the hermitage of sage Matang, and as a result blood was sprinkled all over the place, defiling the sage's hermitage. The infuriated sage cursed Vaali that if he ever came that way his own head would be blown to pieces.

According to a legend, sage Matang's daughter was named Maatangi; she was an attendant of goddess Lalita, one of the many forms of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva.

आवत पंथ कबंध निपाता । तेहिं सब कही साप कै बाता ॥ ६ ॥

दुरबासा मोहि दीन्ही सापा । प्रभु पद पेखि मिटा सो पापा ॥ ७ ॥

āvata pantha kabandha nipātā. tēhiṁ saba kahī sāpa kai bātā. 6.

durabāsā mōhi dīnhī sāpā. prabhu pada pēkhi miṭā sō pāpā. 7.

[Chaupai nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 33.]

On the way, Lord Ram faced a demon called 'Kabandha'¹ whom the Lord slayed. The demon, after leaving his mortal body, told Lord Ram about sage Durvasa's curse that had made him a demon. (6)

He said to Lord Ram, ‘Sage Durvasa had cursed me². But now after having seen the holy feet of the Lord my sins have been washed off. (7)

[Note—¹Kabandha was like a gigantic octopus or a giant spider or a huge tarantula; he had a blue coloured body that had no abdomen, neck or head. On his chest he had a large grotesque eye, and his limbs extended for four Kosas (roughly 4 x 2 = 8 miles) from the side of his colossus body that was like a rough, irregularly-shaped ball. There were sharp thorny hairs growing wildly all over it. This gave Kabandha a most terrifying appearance.

When he saw Lord Ram and Laxman he lunged towards them to gobble them up. Then the Lord cut-off his long creeper-like arms, as a result of which he fell down on the ground with a huge thud. He asked the Lord who the two brothers were, and when he learnt about the true identity of the Lord he felt very happy that at last he will be redeemed. And redeemed he was for he regained his original form of a Gandharva and went to heaven once again as we shall read below.

²Kabandha was a Gandharva, a celestial musician and singer, in his previous life. Due to sage Durvasa’s curse he had become a demon. He was so proud of his handsome body of a Gandharva that one day he laughed at sage Durvasa because the sage was looking ugly. This infuriated the sage who cursed him to have a body that would be most horrible to look at.

Another story says that once he was singing and dancing in the court of Indra, the king of gods, when sage Durvasa visited. Seeing the sage’s body he laughed, and the sage cursed him. Another variant of this story says that the sage remained aloof and disinterested in his singing and dancing, so the Gandharva laughed as he thought the sage could not appreciate fine music; then the sage got angry and cursed him.]

कहि निज धर्म ताहि समुझावा । निज पद प्रीति देखि मन भावा ॥ ३ ॥

रघुपति चरन कमल सिरु नाई । गयउ गगन आपनि गति पाई ॥ ४ ॥

kahi nija dharma tāhi samujhāvā. nija pada prīti dēkhi mana bhāvā. 3
raghupati carana kamala siru nā’i. gaya’u gagana āpani gati pā’i. 4.

Lord Ram explained to him his laws of Dharma (laws which govern righteousness, auspiciousness, propriety, probity, decency and good conduct)¹. Then the Lord observed that Kabandha had affection for his holy feet, which pleased him. (3)

Bowing his head reverentially before the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram (Raghupati), he (Kabandha) went back to the heaven and attained a destiny that he deserved². (4)

[Note—¹Kabandha had caused offense to sage Durvasa as he was very proud of his skill as a musician as well as his body that was very handsome. So Lord Ram told him that pride is not a good thing, and so is showing disrespect to saints and sages.

²After offering his obeisance at the holy feet of Lord Ram, Kabandha regained his stature of an exalted soul and went back to heaven. It ought to be noted here that it is

not said that he “became a Gandharva once again”; it is merely said that he “attained a destiny that he deserved”.

To wit, he attained emancipation and salvation for his soul. He no longer was an entertainer like Gandharvas who dance and sing and play music for the gods are; he was now a liberated soul which had found eternal freedom from the cycle of birth and death; his soul had found eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity. After all, no lesser reward could be had when a creature is delivered by Lord Ram himself. Becoming a Gandharva is not something highly praised just as court musicians and singers were not too highly looked upon as being in a noble profession by society even though they had access to a king and his courtiers.]

After providing liberation to Kabandha from his demon body, Lord Ram and Laxman moved ahead. We shall now read what happened next from Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34 onwards as follows:-

ताहि देइ गति राम उदारा । सबरी कें आश्रम पगु धारा ॥ ५ ॥
 सबरी देखि राम गृहँ आए । मुनि के बचन समुझि जियँ भाए ॥ ६ ॥
 सरसिज लोचन बाहु बिसाला । जटा मुकुट सिर उर बनमाला ॥ ७ ॥
 स्याम गौर सुंदर दोउ भाई । सबरी परी चरन लपटाई ॥ ८ ॥

tāhi dē'i gati rāma udārā. sabarī kēm āśrama pagu dhārā. 5.
 sabarī dēkhi rāma gr̥haṁ ā'ē. muni kē bacana samujhi jiyāṁ bhā'ē. 6.
 sarasija lōcana bāhu bisālā. jaṭā mukuṭa sira ura banamālā. 7.
 syāma gaura sundara dō'u bhā'ī. sabarī parī carana lapaṭā'ī. 8.

After providing him (Kabandha) the destiny that he deserved, the magnanimous, benevolent and beneficent Lord Ram (rāma udārā) stepped into the hermitage of Sabari¹. (5)

When Sabari saw that Lord Ram has come home to her in her hermitage, she recalled the words of the sage (Matang) and felt exceedingly fortunate, glad and happy in her heart. [To wit, Sabari remembered what sage Matang had told her earlier, and when the sage's words bore fruit and Lord Ram came to her hermitage, her joy and happiness knew no bounds.] (6)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) had lotus-like eyes, long muscular arms, wore a crown of matted hairs on their heads and a garland of flowers that bloom in the forest on their chests [7], and their complexions were dark and fair respectively (i.e. Lord Ram had a dark complexion, while Laxman was fair). When Sabari saw them, she fell on the ground and clasped their holy feet [8]. (7-8)

[Note—¹Sabari (also pronounced as 'Shabari') was a woman belonging to a forest tribe called 'Sabari'. This tribe was classified as Shudras or lower caste, and sustained themselves by collecting and selling honey and fruits from the forest trees. Being of a low caste, she is said have been ostracized by others. She served a sage named Matanga very devotedly. The sage was a realised soul, and so pleased was he with her

devotion and service that he blessed her at the time of leaving his body that she would find her emancipation and salvation when Lord Ram visits her while searching for Sita. Like her Guru, Sabari too left her mortal body after having the privilege of meeting and worshipping the Lord in person by lighting the pyre herself with her mystical powers. According to Adhyatma Ramayana of sage Veda Vyas, it was Lord Ram who had performed her last rites himself, a rare privilege that was even denied to his own worldly father Dasrath.

Sabari used to live in the hermitage where earlier sage Matanga lived. This hermitage was near Mount Rishyamook where Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of the king of monkeys Vali, lived with his close confidantes Hanuman, Jamvant, Naal and Neel etc. This place was about ten Yojans or eighty miles from Kishkindha, the capital of the forest kingdom of which Vali was the king.

There is a story about Lake Pampa on the banks of which she lived. The great sage Matang had his hermitage here. To be precise it was on Rishyamook mountain on the other end of Lake Pampa, but perhaps he maintained a small hermitage on the plains where Sabari lived to serve him.

Sabari used to get up very early and clean the path around this lake before her Guru went there for his daily bath and other chores. It so happened that one day, the sages and seers who lived in that area saw her cleaning the path leading to the lake very early in the morning. Since she was of a low caste, they cursed and scolded her because they regarded her appearance as defiling the place. This misplaced notion of superiority and high stature immensely displeased the Lord. So as soon as those haughty and proud sages went and took a dip in that lake, its water turned turbid, polluted and infested by warms and filth. When Sri Ram had gone there during his forest exile, the sages and seers requested him to purify that lake. Sri Ram, being all-knowing, knew the secret behind that pollution, and in order to teach those sages a lesson of their lives, he asked them to request Sabari to take a dip in it. As soon as she did it, the water regained its former pristine purity, and the lake its former exceptional scenic beauty. This made the haughty sages and seers feel ashamed at their ignorance and behaviour.

Lord Sri Ram had visited her hermitage and enjoyed the fruits offered by her just like he would have enjoyed them if they were given to him by his mother. In the 'Ram-Sarawali of Surdas', verse no. 11, it is said that 'Sabari was a long time ardent devotee and a humble follower of Raghupati (Sri Ram). He accepted and ate fruits offered by her, preached her on the concept of complete devotion, and then liberated her by giving her residence in his own abode.'

It was Shabari who had advised Sri Ram to go towards the Rishyamook mountain and make friends with Sugriv, the monkey king, who in turn would help the Lord in finding out Sita and freeing her from the clutches of her captors.]

प्रेम मगन मुख बचन न आवा । पुनि पुनि पद सरोज सिर नावा ॥ ९ ॥

सादर जल लै चरन पखारे । पुनि सुंदर आसन बैठारे ॥ १० ॥

prēma magana mukha bacana na āvā. puni puni pada sarōja sira nāvā. 9.
sādara jala lai carana pakhārē. puni sundara āsana baiṭhārē. 10.

She was so overwhelmed by surging emotions of affection and love for the Lord and his brother that she became dumb with joy so much so that she could not find words

to speak. She repeatedly fell down and bowed her head before the lotus-like feet of the two brothers. [To wit, Sabari was so moved and emotionally stunned that she could not even say a word of welcome for Lord Ram and Laxman. She simply fell down before the two brothers and clasped their feet with both hands.] (9)

She then washed their feet reverentially with water, and then offered them excellent seats of honour to sit down upon. (10)

दो०. कंद मूल फल सुरस अति दिए राम कहूँ आनि ।

प्रेम सहित प्रभु खाए बारंबार बखानि ॥ ३४ ॥

dōhā.

kanda mūla phala surasa ati di'ē rāma kahuṁ āni.
prēma sahita prabhu khā'ē bārambāra bakhāni. 34.

Then she brought tasty edible roots, tubers, bulbs as well as succulent fruits and offered them to Lord Ram¹.

The Lord ate them with relish, praising them much repeatedly. (Doha no. 34)

[Note—¹Sabari brought refreshments that were available in the forest; she had been collecting them and storing them for a long time in the hope that one day Lord Ram would visit her. She knew that sage Matang's words can't be wrong, so she waited patiently. As we have seen, she did not speak a word, but simply brought these delicious offerings and gave them to Lord Ram (di'ē rāma kahuṁ āni).

Does this mean that she neglected Laxman or did not offer refreshment to him? Not at all; Lord Ram was the elder brother and so he only is mentioned here. The fact is that the two brothers sat side-by-side, and they used to share their meals together ever since they started on their journey into the forest; they shared their joys and sorrows together as if they were one soul with two bodies. Hence, Sabari brought in the fruits etc. and placed them before the two brothers who sat close to each other, and who would partake of these refreshments together too.

We have read in the previous verse that Sabari caught hold of the feet of both the brothers simultaneously (Chaupai line no. 8 herein above). Obviously she could do this if they were standing very close to each other, so that Sabari could encircle and clasp their feet at the same time with her outstretched arms.]

[After these warm and affectionate gestures of welcome and Sabari's worship of the Lord, when he was refreshed and rested, he enquired from her if she could tell him anything about Sita. We shall now read onwards from Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 36 about this conversation. When the time came for Lord Ram to move ahead, Sabari left her mortal coil by offering her gross body in the self-ignited sacred fire of Yoga. Then Lord Ram performed her last rites like he had done for Jatau earlier. This way, the Lord provided deliverance to Sabari too.]

जनकसुता कइ सुधि भामिनी । जानहि कहु करिबरगामिनी ॥ १० ॥

पंपा सरहि जाहु रघुराई । तहँ होइहि सुग्रीव मिताई ॥ ११ ॥

सो सब कहिहि देव रघुबीरा । जानतहूँ पूछहु मतिधीरा ॥ १२ ॥
बार बार प्रभु पद सिरु नाई । प्रेम सहित सब कथा सुनाई ॥ १३ ॥

janakasutā ka'i sudhi bhāminī. jānahi kahu karibaragāminī. 10.
pampā sarahi jāhu raghurā'i. tahaṁ hō'ihi sugrīva mitā'i. 11.
sō saba kahihi dēva raghubīrā. jānatahūṁ pūchahu matidhīrā. 12.
bāra bāra prabhu pada siru nā'i. prēma sahita saba kathā sunā'i. 13.

Lord Ram asked Sabari about the whereabouts of Sita. The Lord said, 'Oh good and noble lady (bhāminī)? Please tell me about the whereabouts of the daughter of Janak ("janakasutā"; Sita) who walks with an elegant and dignified style that resembles the way a majestic she-elephant walks (karibaragāminī). Pray, please tell me if you know anything about her.'¹

[¹This verse can be interpreted and read in another way also as follows: "Oh good and noble lady (bhāminī)? Please tell me about the whereabouts of the daughter of Janak ("janakasutā"; Sita) if you know anything about her. You live in the forest and have seen many a majestic she-elephants moving about (karibaragāminī). Well, Sita too walks in this style, and so can you recollect any lady going this way with a gait similar to the way an elephant walks? Pray, tell me please."] (10)

Sabari replied, 'Oh Lord Raghurai (Lord Ram who is the Lord of the line of kings descending from the great King Raghu)! Go to Lake Pampa where you will be befriended by Sugriv (the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha). (11)

He shall tell you everything about her (Sita). Oh Lord with a steady and calm mind (matidhīrā)²! You know everything³, but you still ask me as if you are ignorant of developments. (12)

[²Sabari observed that Lord Ram was calm and composed during his stay at her hermitage inspite of the fact that his wife Sita was stolen by some fiend; the Lord was not agitated and looked distressed and sad like a man whose wife has been kidnapped by a fiend is expected to be. So she makes this comment.

³Of course Lord Ram knew everything—this is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

Then Sabari bowed her head at the holy feet of Lord Ram repeatedly and affectionately narrated the whole story to him⁴. (13)

[⁴What story did Sabari tell Lord Ram? It is not mentioned here which story it was. But surely it was the story about her own past and what sage Matang had told her as it would be clear in the following verses where she lit a fire and discarded her gross body by burning it in this fire, after which Lord Ram performed her last rites in accordance to her wishes. This story has been briefly narrated as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34 herein above in this section.]

छं०. कहि कथा सकल बिलोकि हरि मुख हृदयँ पद पंकज धरे । १ ।
तजि जोग पावक देह हरि पद लीन भइ जहँ नहिं फिरे ॥ २ ॥
नर बिबिध कर्म अधर्म बहु मत सोकप्रद सब त्यागहू । ३ ।

बिस्वास करि कह दास तुलसी राम पद अनुरागहू ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kahi kathā sakala bilōki hari mukha hṛdayaṁ pada pañkaja dharē. 1.
taji jōga pāvaka dēha hari pada līna bha'i jahaṁ nahim phirē. 2.
nara bibidha karma adharmā bahu mata sōkaprada saba tyāgahū. 3.
bisvāsa kari kaha dāsa tulasī rāma pada anurāgahū. 4.

Having narrated to Lord Ram the whole story, she (Sabari) fixed her eyes (affectionately) on the charming face of Lord Hari (Sri Ram) and enshrined his lotus-like holy feet in her heart. (Chanda line no. 1)

Then she discarded (burnt) her gross body in the self-ignited fire of Yoga (deep meditation)¹, and attained an exalted, sublime state from where there is no return to the gross mortal world and its cycle of transmigration². (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas, the saint-poet, observes—“Oh Men! All the different kinds of deeds and improper activities, as well as the many sectarian beliefs and narrow-minded self-centered schools of thought—all of them give nothing but sorrows and grief to the creature. So you will be well advised to abandon all such distractions and misleading thoughts and precepts [3], and instead, focus your attention in developing affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram (as one single window and a sure-shot formula to attain complete fulfillment and peace for your soul) [4].” (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹Yoga generates heat and energy inside the body as the flow of breath is restricted, inhalation and exhalation stops, the vital winds present in the body get heated as they circulate within it, and all vital forces of life are harnessed and concentrated at focal points, called Chakras, present at different locations inside the body. The body gets naturally heated, and if breathing is not resumed within a specified period the heat builds up to such an extent that the gross body starts smouldering till a stage is reached when it dries up completely from within and ultimately crumbles into a heap of ash like burnt-out firewood.

It's surely not an easy process; and since this kind of Yoga leads to death, only those who are determined to leave this body would ever put it into practice. But a death obtained by this method is deemed to be the best way for a soul to leave the gross body of a creature. The fire ignited by Yoga is as sacred and holy as the fire of a religious sacrifice.

²When a Jiva, the living being, leaves his gross body by this method, his soul finds eternal liberation and deliverance because the body has been voluntarily abandoned and offered as a sacrifice to the holy fire. Hence, the creature gets final emancipation and salvation; his soul will no longer remain entangled in the cycle of birth and death.

To wit, Sabari attained 'Mukti'—i.e. liberation from the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death in which the creature's soul is usually trapped.]

दो०. जाति हीन अघ जन्म महि मुक्त कीन्हि असि नारि ।
महामंद मन सुख चहसि ऐसे प्रभुहि बिसारि ॥ ३६ ॥

dōhā.

jāti hīna agha janma mahi mukta kīnhi asi nāri.
mahāmanda mana sukha cahasi aisē prabhuhi bisāri. 36.

[Tulsidas observes—] That lady (Sabari) was out-caste, shunned by the society and had a lowly birth, yet she was granted Mukti (liberation and deliverance) by the Lord.

Oh Mana (mind and heart)! Say how supremely foolish and dumb-witted you would be if you forget or neglect such a (magnanimous, benevolent, beneficent, kind, obliging, merciful and gracious) Lord, and try to seek happiness and peace elsewhere. (Doha no. 36)

[Note—The spiritual philosophy outlined in this Doha is more elaborately explained in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-19 that precede it. These verses are part of my Book titled “Kaagbhusund Ramayan” which has been published separately and is available for the interested reader for download or purchase via the internet.]

चौ०. चले राम त्यागा बन सोऊ । अतुलित बल नर केहरि दोऊ ॥ १ ॥
बिरही इव प्रभु करत बिषादा । कहत कथा अनेक संबादा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calē rāma tyāgā bana sō'ū. atulita bala nara kēhari dō'ū. 1.
birahī iva prabhu karata biṣādā. kahata kathā anēka sambādā. 2.

Lord Ram then left that forest (i.e. the Dandak forest) and moved ahead (in the direction of the Pampa Lake as advised by Sabari).

Verily, the two brothers were unparalleled in their strength and valour; there were like lions in the human race. (1)

(For the purpose of external show—) The Lord behaved and lamented woefully like a passionate man suffering from excessive grief and overcome with sorrow at being separated from his beloved wife. As he moved along, he spoke of many tales and said many things that indicated this state of his (external) being¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-17 that precede Doha no. 30 where Lord Ram's external behaviour is the same as referred to here. It is observed in Chaupai line nos. 6 and 17 of these verses that it is a great wonder that the Lord, who is omnipotent, omniscient, dispassionate and steady would act in this way like an ordinary human being lamenting for his lost wife.

But why was it; why did Lord Ram behave like an ordinary man lamenting for his wife? The Lord wanted to maintain this delusion and surround himself with a smoke-screen of doubt about his true identity of the Supreme Being as it was an expedient necessary for eliminating the demons headed by Ravana; for if Ravana got a hint that Lord Ram was not a human being but the Supreme Being himself, then he would soon surrender himself before the Lord and return Sita instead of confronting the Lord and fighting him tooth-and-nail. If he surrendered and asked for forgiveness, the Lord would be morally bound to forgive him, and should this happen the scourge

of the demons would remain intact, and the whole exercise of coming down to earth would go down in vain. Ravana was very clever; so in this eventuality, he would keep low for some time and let things cool off before reverting to his old evil ways. What would then happen?

All the sufferings and horrors of mother earth and the gods that Ravana and his ilk had caused, the scourge which Lord Vishnu had promised to eradicate, would be back again with a vengeance. The resurgent Ravana, whose anger and wrath were suppressed due to unfavourable conditions for him, would become more forcefully vindictive and ferociously vicious in wreaking vengeance on those who dared to complain against him to Lord Vishnu. It is a well-established doctrine of political philosophy that once an enemy is identified, he should be completely done away with; any remnant of a thorny plant or a poison, no matter how inconsequential and miniscule and seemingly harmless it seems to be, can grow back into a thorn that would prick to kill, or a potion of poison that is fermented over time would acquire scalding acid-like properties that would burn through!

The world had had enough of Ravana's cruelty and savagery; there was no scope and sense in giving him a second chance, for he was so evil and pervert that instead of actually mending his way by the opportunity given to him by way of goodwill will be employed by him only to recover himself till Lord Ram was somewhere around, and then he would pounce upon his prey, the creatures of the world and the gods of heaven, with full force like a huge meteorite striking the earth with a blast violent enough to reduce everything to rubble.

Consequentially it was necessary to keep the doubts about the Lord's true identity alive; it was vital to let Ravana remain confused about who Lord Ram was, as the former already was totally confounded on this matter—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

So therefore, had the Lord remained calm and poised and emotionally unmoved when he moved in the open on the path in the forest—as he was when he met Jatau and Sabari and even Kabandha—then Ravana's spies would have immediately got the wind of it and inform Ravana. That would have spoilt the whole master-plan of the Supreme Being who had to take the trouble of becoming a human being precisely for eliminating the scourge known as 'Demonic Ravana'.]

Section 6.1.4—6.1.6: (Lord Ram arrives at Mt. Rishyamook on the banks of Lake Pampa where he meets and befriends Sugriv, the monkey prince; reconnoitring teams of spies and scouts are sent in all directions to find the whereabouts of Sita; one group reaches the shore of the southern ocean from where Hanuman is sent to Lanka to meet Sita and bring back her news:

After providing Mukti to Sabari, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, moved in the direction of Lake Pampa as advised by her. At the lake they took some time to rest and refresh themselves. Here the celestial sage Narad met Lord Ram, and the brief conversation between them revolved around spiritual matters and why the Lord had prevented Narad from marrying and getting entangled in routine family matters. The Lord in essence told Narad that for a saint and a sage of his exalted nature, one who has already renounced the world with its material charms and sensual pleasures, it is inappropriate to get involved in it once again, and it is for this basic reason why the

Lord prevented him from marrying because the Lord always ensures that the good and well-being of his devotee is taken care of; if by some odd chance the devotee is about to commit some error of judgement which will land him or her in trouble, the Lord steps in to sort out the matter in favour of the devotee.

From there Lord Ram and Laxman moved ahead towards the other end of the lake where a chain of mountains bordering the kingdom of Kishkindha was situated.

The next phase of this marvelous story of ours takes us to the foothills of this chain of mountains, the highest peak of which was called 'Rishyamook', and then to 'Kishkindha', the kingdom of the monkey race. At Rishyamook Lord Ram met and befriended Sugriv, the prince of this kingdom, who promised to the Lord that he would spare no effort to find where Sita was, as well as to help him to retrieve her. It was here that Lord Ram also met Hanuman, one of the chief companions of Sugriv, and hereafter one of the Lord's main devotees and an obedient follower, for whom the word of the Lord was sacrosanct. The Lord spent the rainy season on Mt. Parvarsan, and as autumn arrived and winter was fast approaching, he asked Sugriv to keep his promise—i.e. to make efforts to search Sita.

One very important point is to be noted here. The inhabitants of Kishkindha were probably called 'monkeys and bears' because their lifestyle and habits, their external appearances and characteristic features, their special qualities and abilities were more like those of monkeys and bears than ordinary human beings. For instance, they grew large body hair and nails; they could easily climb trees and leap across branches; they could climb mountains which were difficult for humans to access; they ate forest fruits and lived atop trees in tree-houses; they inhabited thick forested areas away from human population. This was all made necessary as expedencies of life and survival in the hills and forests where they lived. So in effect these inhabitants of Kishkindha were forest and hill dwelling tribes of ancient India.

But they surely weren't animals called "monkeys and bears" in the way we understand these words to mean today; they weren't "animals" like today's monkeys and bears. Come to think of it: even we humans, who pride ourselves as highly civilised and evolved in this creation, actually belong to the "animal kingdom" which science likes to call "zoology"; humans are not studied under the head 'botany' which deals with the members of the plant kingdom, but under the classification of 'zoology'.

For one, these monkeys and bears could walk erect and speak the human tongue in an intelligible way; they were surely bilingual and may be even knew more than one languages like we do today. When they conversed within their own community they used their own lingua franca, and when they interacted with other tribes or foreigners they used a universal language in vogue at the time; and this language was Sanskrit. This is evident from the fact that Lord Ram could talk freely with them in a human tongue, and then we will read later on in the story that Hanuman and Angad would converse with Ravana and Vibhishan etc. who were demons from a different culture. Their interaction was only possible if they could speak a common international language like we use standard English today.

It is said in Adhyatma Ramayan that Hanuman spoke to Lord Ram in perfect Sanskrit language when he met the Lord at the base of Mt. Rishyamook. This was the language of the educated class in those days, and no one can expect a 'monkey', the 'animal', to speak classical language as Hanuman did so much so that even Lord Ram was highly impressed with Hanuman's expertise with the Sanskrit language and its grammar, and the Lord expressed his astonishment on this count to Laxman. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 12-18.

The second important reason is that these monkeys and bears were actually gods who had come down to earth in these forms to help Lord Ram eliminate the scourge of the demons headed by Ravana. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188 as well as in Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-30.

Coming back to our narrative, a huge reconnoitring team of countless monkey and bear warriors was assembled; it was divided into many groups, and all the groups were dispatched in different directions to search Sita. One such group consisted of some of the most faithful and able chiefs of the community, such as Hanuman, Angad, Nal, Neel and Jamvant etc., was dispatched in the south direction by the Lord and his friend Sugriv as they already knew that Ravana had fled in that direction. This group reached the shores of the southern ocean where they met Sampati, the elder brother of Jatau. Sampati, being a vulture who inherently have the ability to see long distances, told them that Sita was seated under a tree in a garden at Lanka.

It was then decided that Hanuman would go across and meet her personally, and come back with a first-hand report.

These events have been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5; (ii) Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Doha no. 30.

For the purpose of convenience of reading, these episodes have been grouped under three sub-sections as follows:

6.1.4—Here we read about Lord Ram's arrival at Mt. Rishyamook where he meets Hanuman and befriends Sugriv, the monkey prince. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5.

6.1.5—Lord Ram spends the rainy season on Mt. Pravarsan, and at the end of this season reconnoitring teams of spies and scouts are sent in all directions to find the whereabouts of Sita. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it; (ii) from Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 18; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Doha no. 23.

6.1.6—One such group heads towards the southern ocean, and on the way enters a cave where it meets a hermitress named Swayamprabha. She employs her mystical powers to transfer the messengers of Lord Ram directly to the shore of the ocean across which was situated Lanka where Sita was held captive. At the shore they meet Sampati, the old vulture, who tells them about Sita being actually held captive in Lanka as he could see her sitting there under a tree inside a garden. It is decided then to send Hanuman across the ocean to the island of Lanka to ascertain facts, and come back with a first-hand report of Sita. These developments are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 30.

Now let us begin our narration by citing these verses directly from the holy book Ram Charit Manas:-

Section 6.1.4: Lord Ram arrives at Mt. Rishyamook that was situated beyond Lake Pampa; here he meets Hanuman and befriends Sugriv, the monkey prince:

This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5 as follows:-

चौ०. आगेँ चले बहुरि रघुराया । रिष्यमूक पर्वत निअराया ॥ १ ॥
 तहँ रह सचिव सहित सुग्रीवा । आवत देखि अतुल बल सींवा ॥ २ ॥
 अति सभित कह सुनु हनुमाना । पुरुष जुगल बल रूप निधाना ॥ ३ ॥
 धरि बटु रूप देखु तैं जाई । कहेसु जानि जियँ सयन बुझाई ॥ ४ ॥
 पठए बालि होहिं मन मैला । भागौं तुरत तजौं यह सैला ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

āgēm calē bahuri raghurāyā. riṣyamūka parbata ni'arāyā. 1.
 tahaṁ raha saciva sahita sugrīvā. āvata dēkhi atula bala sīnvā. 2.
 ati sabhita kaha sunu hanumānā. puruṣa jugala bala rūpa nidhānā. 3.
 dhari baṭu rūpa dēkhu taim jāī. kahēsu jāni jiyam sayana bujhāī. 4.
 paṭha'e bāli hōhim mana mailā. bhāgaum turata tajaum yaha sailā. 5.

The Lord of the Raghu's line of kings ("raghurāyā"; Lord Ram) then moved ahead and neared Mt. Rishyamook¹. (1)

On the summit of this mountain lived Sugriv (the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha²) with his ministers and courtiers. He saw the two brothers, who from their very appearance seemed to possess immeasurable strength and looked most valiant, approaching the place. (2)

This sight made him sore affright³; so he said to Hanuman (who was his close confidante and companion), 'Listen Hanuman⁴! These two gentlemen look as if they are repositories of immense strength and unparalleled valour. (3)

You go to them disguised as a young Brahmin student (dhari baṭu rūpa)⁵ and look into the matter; find out their intention, why have they come here in this direction, and then signal to me by a gesture of your eyes (to tell me if they are friendly or not). (4)

In case you discover that they have been sent by Baali and have some sort of ill-intentions that would create some danger for me, then indicate to me by your gesture so that I will make good my escape and run away from here immediately, abandoning this mountain forthwith.' (5)

[Note—¹Mt. Rishyamook was on the far end of Lake Pampa; it was a part of a chain of hills that lay on the outer fringes of the kingdom of Kishkindha. It is so called because sage Matang used to do Tapa (penances; austerity; stern religious practices) silently here. "Rishya = Rishi = a sage"; "Mook = silent".

Another interpretation is that a special class of deer called Rishya used to live in and around this mountain; these animals moved around silently like sages. The mountain got its name from them.

According to Valmiki's Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 73, verse nos. 32-34, it was first created by Brahma, the creator of this world. It had a thick cover of evergreen trees, and was steep and so thickly covered by creepers and undergrowth that it was difficult to climb it easily. It was further made inaccessible by abundance of snakes that were found everywhere on it.

This mountain was uninhabited and so inhospitable that no one would even think of coming here to hide. Besides its general foreboding atmosphere, it also bore sage Matang's curse which said that if Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv who turned to become his arch enemy, ever came there, his head would break to many pieces, i.e. he would die.

The reason for the sage cursing Baali is that the latter used to be very restless; he would come to that forest to eat fruits, shake trees violently and break their branches and leaves, littering the whole place near sage Matang's hermitage, make a lot of noise and create general nuisance. The sage got infuriated and cursed him that if he ever dared to come near that place then his head would break up into many pieces.

Another reason says that when Baali killed the demon Dundubhi, he flung his body for a distance of 1 Yojan (roughly 8 miles); this carcass fell near the sage's hermitage, and blood and flesh littered the place. So the angry sage cursed Baali that anyone who would one day reduce the heap of bones that formed a mountain at the spot where the dead body fell into rubble, and cut the seven tall trees that grew on this mountain, would kill Baali. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 7; and Valmiki Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 11, verse no. 47 etc.

So Sugriv and his companions found Mt. Rishyamook a perfect place to live without fear of Baali.

²As we have read in the introduction of this sub-section, the inhabitants of Kishkindha were not actual 'monkeys and bears' as we may think, but they were so-called because of their lifestyle and habits, their external appearances and characteristic features, their special qualities and abilities which were more like those of monkeys and bears than ordinary human beings. For instance, they grew large body hair and nails; they could easily climb trees and leap across branches; they could climb mountains which were difficult for humans to access; they ate forest fruits and lived atop trees in tree-houses; they inhabited thick forested areas away from human population. This was all made necessary as expediencies of life and survival in the hills and forests where they lived. So in effect these inhabitants of Kishkindha were forest and hill dwelling tribes of ancient India.

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community they used their own lingua franca, and when they interacted with other tribes or foreigners they used a universal language in vogue at the time; and this language was Sanskrit. This is evident from the fact that Lord Ram could talk freely with them in a human tongue, and then we will read later on in the story that Hanuman and Angad would converse with Ravana and Vibhishan etc. who were demons from a different culture. Their interaction was only possible if they could speak a common international language like we use standard English today.

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The second important reason is that these monkeys and bears were actually gods who had come down to earth in these forms to help Lord Ram eliminate the scourge of the demons headed by Ravana. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188 as well as in Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-30.

³What made Sugriv so terrified of strangers? The reason has been described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-13 that precede Doha no. 6.

In brief however, this story is this: Sugriv had developed some misunderstanding with his elder brother Baali (also pronounced as Vaali) who first thrashed him severely and then ousted him from the capital of Kishkindha. Sugriv was pursued by Baali relentlessly; eventually he came to live on Mt. Rishyamook on the advice of Hanuman and others as it was safe from any attack from Baali because he would dare not come here.

But though Baali would not come personally, he still could send some powerful warrior in disguise to square up with his brother-turned-enemy Sugriv and kill him. This probability made Sugriv afraid of any stranger coming that way, more so because that area was almost barren of life and far away from any other inhabited area or civilisation; no one ventured that way and it was almost out of bounds for travellers.

⁴Another interesting question that arises here is this: Of all his companions, why did Sugriv select Hanuman for this mission? It was because by experience Sugriv knew very well that Hanuman was exceptionally intelligent, wise and practical; he could tackle matters himself and solve the issue on the spot without further instructions or consultations; he was trust-worthy, faithful and honest; and he was fearless, prudent, brave, courageous, strong and powerful to face any adverse situation should it arise unexpectedly; Sugriv knew that no one could compare with Hanuman in these qualities. This fact is reiterated in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Canto 2, verse nos. 13-19; (ii) Canto 44, verse nos. 1, 6-8.

Meanwhile, one would like to read a little more about Hanuman: who he was? A brief life-sketch of Hanuman is added at the end of the notes to these verses; it is marked by * sign.

⁵Why did Sugriv advise Hanuman to go as a ‘Brahmin student’ (a “*baṭu rūpa*”) to meet Lord Ram? Well, the two brothers were armed with bows and arrows, had quivers tied to their waists, the way they walked with dignified steps fearlessly and with confidence, their general manners and bearing—all gave an impression that they were some noble men and great warriors. Sugriv, who was already apprehensive about them and their objective of coming that way, did not wish to take risk. He knew that everyone respects a Brahmin and trusts him; so if Hanuman goes there attired as a Brahmin, especially as a student, then the chances of these two strangers harming him or deceiving him as to their purpose of coming here were minimal.

Why as Hanuman advised to go as a ‘student’ instead of as an adult Brahmin? The reason is this: Had Hanuman gone to meet the Lord as an ‘adult Brahmin’, there were chances that the Lord would immediately become suspicious about him because the area of the forest where this interaction took place was deep in the forest, a remote area that was far from civilisation and virtually uninhabited as it lay beyond the famous Dandkak forest which was itself literally intractable. Adult Brahmins lived in populated areas such as villages, towns and cities, but not in the far depth of a forest. A young Brahmin-student, however, would go to distant places to study under renowned sages and seers who usually had their hermitages in forests as they needed quietude for their spiritual pursuits; some senior ones even lived on mountains and hill tops, and though they did not maintain hermitages per se, yet they would occasionally accept isolated students who they thought were eager for knowledge and worthy to be imparted the knowledge that only these sages possessed.

To wit, the chances of meeting an adult Brahmin in this part of the land were very remote; but in case of a ‘student’ it was quite possible that he was on the way to his Guru’s (teacher’s) hermitage to study, and he met the two brothers on the path by pure good chance. His Guru could well be an aged sage or seer living on one of the mountains or hills in that area. So this form of Hanuman as a ‘student’ would not arouse any suspicion in the mind of the two brothers as an adult Brahmin would surely do—so reasoned Sugriv.

There were some other reasons that too weighed in favour of sending Hanuman disguised as a ‘student Brahmin’. If a young boy makes some mistake he is usually overlooked by an adult; so if by some misadventure Hanuman said something or any of his gestures or actions were such as to cause a bit of annoyance to the two strangers, there were fair chances that they would overlook it as a youngster’s error committed in folly, and forgive him.

Further, this form of a ‘student’ would enable Hanuman to bow and pay his respects to the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, is expected to show respect to elders even if he is Brahmin, otherwise it would be bad manners for the boy. When the strangers see that the student who is interacting with them is good mannered, polite and cultured they would be willing to reciprocate and engage with him; this was vital to extract the information needed by Sugriv.

On the other hand, if Hanuman appeared as an adult Brahmin, there were chances that the two brothers would just pay their homage to him and move on. An adult Brahmin would have to maintain his dignity and decorum; he would not be expected to bow and show other forms of respect to the visitors with the same ease with which a young boy could do.

So now, since these so-called monkeys were virtually like humans as we have noted herein above, it wasn’t difficult for Hanuman to disguise himself as a Brahmin student when he came down the summit of the mountain to meet Lord Ram. He had only to wear appropriate clothes and apply some holy marks on his forehead and

body, such as make a Tilak mark on his forehead, sling a sacred thread across his shoulders, and tie his hairs in a tuft at the back of his head, to indicate that he was a Brahmin student.

And then he spoke with Lord Ram in the human tongue during the interview; in fact, to be precise, it was in perfect Sanskrit that Hanuman interacted with Lord Ram as noted in note no. 2 herein above. Hence, the Lord felt he was in the company of educated natives who could talk in the Lord's language, and it would be practical and prudent to become friendly with them, if no other reason than at least because he has to cross this country to reach the place where Sita was held captive by Ravana. If these natives could speak Sanskrit then, the Lord thought, communication would not be a barrier any more.

Lord Ram was in an alien country; it was wise to be friendly with the natives of the place. The Lord needed help to find Sita, and he reasoned that if he was good and friendly towards these natives then they would be cooperative and helpful; they will extend logistical help, and manpower too could be easily arranged.

*⁴A life sketch of Hanuman is narrated in the following scriptures—(i) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 155-190; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Sarga (Canto) 66, verse nos. 1-17 (as narrated by Jamvant, the Bear king); Uttar Kand, Sarga 35-36 (as described to Sri Ram by sage Agastya).

Wonderful hymns dedicated to Lord Hanuman are found in Tulsidas' "Vinai Patrika", verse nos. 25-36.

These describe Hanuman as the Son of the Wind God. The story of Hanuman being the son of the Wind God is briefly this: An Apsara (a heavenly damsel of great beauty) named Punjiksthal became the daughter of a monkey named Kunjar. Her name was Anjana, and she was married to Kesari. One day Anjana assumed a form of a human female, adorned her self with ornaments and garlands of choicest flowers, and went to the top of a mountain to enjoy the beauty of Nature that spread all around her. Her bewitching beauty attracted the attention of the Wind God who embraced her (in the form of a soft, pleasant and fragrant gust of wind that swirled all around her, enveloping her from all sides). As a result of this embrace, Anjana gave birth to a son who had all the excellent virtues of the Wind God: he possessed stupendous powers, had astounding strength, was matchless in valiance and courage, his intelligence and wisdom had no parallel, radiance effused from him like a divine glow, and he was a personified form of glory and excellence. That is why Hanuman is usually called the 'son of the Wind God'.

But it is also universally believed that Hanuman is a manifestation of Lord Shiva, and represents the 'Tej' (glory and dynamism) of Lord Ram. This is clearly mentioned in Brihad Brahm Sanhita, Chapter (Pratham) 3, Canto (Adhyaya) 1, verse (Shloka) no. 102. This verse also says that it is Lord Shiva who manifested also as Sankarshan, one of the forms of Lord Vishnu. In the case of Hanuman, it is said here that "Hanuman is a manifestation of Lord Maha Shiva, and represents the Tej (glory and dynamic aspect) of Lord Ram".

There are three Gods in the Trinity—viz. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the sustainer and protector of creation, and Shiva is the concluder who brings about the end of creation when the time comes. In the story of the Ramayan, Lord Vishnu manifested himself as Lord Ram, the prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya, Brahma became the Jamvant who was an old and wise chief of the bear community who lived in the kingdom of Kishkindha, and Shiva took the form of Hanuman who was an

ardent and faithful devotee of Lord Ram as well as one of the chief advisors of Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey race.

Lord Shiva reveres Lord Ram, constantly chants his holy name “Ram”, and worships the Lord as his chosen deity. So when the time came to serve Lord Ram during his manifestation on earth, Shiva did not wish to lose this opportunity; he therefore chose to become a monkey known as Hanuman so that he will not only have a chance to be helpful to his beloved Lord but also be able to serve him diligently, and in the case need arose, to extend full protection to Lord Ram. In fact it was Hanuman who had actually found Sita, Lord Ram’s wife who was abducted by the demon king Ravana, imprisoned in Lanka. Further we read that in the epic war of Lanka, when the forces of Lord Ram consisting of the monkeys and the bears of Kishkindha had fought a no-holds barred bloody battle with the demon forces of Ravana, it was Hanuman who had played a pivotal role of singular importance; he was crucial to the winning of the war in general. Even Lord Ram had acknowledged Hanuman’s valour and praised him lavishly during the heat of battle once when he told Laxman, his younger brother, that there was only one warrior he sees in the whole battle field of Lanka who has taken the demon-bull by its horns, and this warrior was none other than Hanuman. This is clearly stated in Kavitawali Ramayan of Goswami Tulsidas, Lanka Kand, verse no. 40.

Not only this, Lord Ram had publicly shown his affection for Hanuman when he lovingly embraced him and declared that he would forever remain indebted to Hanuman: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32. The occasion was Hanuman bringing the news of Sita and conveying it to Lord Ram.

The especial bond that existed between Lord Ram and Hanuman was unique, and it is no where more evident than the time when they first met at the base of Mt. Rishyamook. Lord Ram and Hanuman had both become overwhelmed with tidal waves of affectionate emotions so much that while Hanuman’s voice trembled, his body was thrilled and he could barely stifle his sobs, Lord Ram wept and tears flowed down his eyes even as he clasped Hanuman to his bosom. There seemed no formality or artificiality in this spontaneous burst of loving emotions; Hanuman had become so joyous that he lost control over his senses so much that instead of showing respect to his Lord he went on to reprimand Lord Ram for forgetting him for so long. It was like a scene of two fast friends who had been separated long back due to misfortunes inflicted upon them by providence had one day met each other most unexpectedly at a place and time that they weren’t aware of a minute ago. This episode is fully narrated in vivid details in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2—Doha no. 3.

And as if to add a tiara to the crown, or a diamond that is placed centrally on the helm of this crown, it was only Hanuman who was allowed by Lord Ram to stay with him after he returned home to Ayodhya at the end of his 14-year forest sojourn; and Hanuman stayed with the Lord for the rest of his time on earth.

To wit, Lord Hanuman was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Ram. His devotion for Lord Ram had no match. He is regarded as the wisest, the most enlightened and a highly self-realised soul. He is an incarnation of the eleventh form of Lord Shiva that is known as Rudra. When Lord Vishnu decided to manifest himself as Lord Ram in this world, all the different Gods has assumed various forms to serve the Lord. Shiva had taken the form of Hanuman to serve Lord Ram.

According to the Purans (mythological histories), the name of his mother was Anjana. She was the wife of the monkey king Kesari. He was born as a grace of the

Wind God, also known as Marut. Hence, Hanuman was also known as ‘Anjaneya’ or ‘Maruti’. However, his most common name ‘Hanuman’ is derived from the fact that once he had been hit by the ‘Vajra’, the hard weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. The story goes that once, a little time after his birth, the infant Hanuman had felt extremely hungry, and seeing the rising sun he thought it to be some ripe red fruit dangling from the sky. So he leapt to the sky to eat the rising sun. Incidentally, it was the time of the solar eclipse, when, according to mythology, the head of the demon known as Rahu was proceeding to devour the sun. When he saw Hanuman rushing towards the sun, Rahu ran away scared, thinking that Hanuman was some competitor who was out there to grab his food. Rahu complained to Indra, the king of Gods, that he is being denied his regular meal. At this, Indra intervened. When Hanuman saw Indra approaching astride his white majestic elephant known as Eraavat, he thought that it was some other white fruit. So he left sun alone and instead leapt at Eraavat. Indra was shocked, confounded and perplexed, and in order to stop Hanuman he threw his formidable weapon known as Vajra. The Vajra hit him on the chin, thereby causing a dent. The jaw swelled as result. This incident gave ‘Hanuman’ his famous name.

The word ‘Hanu’ means the lower jaw, the chin, while ‘Maan’ means to hit to subdue or defeat. Another interpretation is that ‘Hanu’ means to crush, to trounce, to take away, or to eliminate, and ‘Maan’ means one’s pride, arrogance, haughtiness and ego. So the composite word ‘Hanuman’ refers to this incident when Indra had subdued the son of the Wind God by breaking his chin-bone as a token punishment for him being extremely arrogant and unnecessarily mischievous.

But when the Wind God saw that Hanuman was hurt, he became extremely angry as Hanuman was born as his grace, so he stopped the movement of air. This caused suffocation in this creation and all the Gods were on the verge of asphyxiation. So they appeased the Wind God by blessing Hanuman with invincibility and formidable powers. This made Hanuman immortal and immune to the dangers of fire, water and wind.

As for the colour of Hanuman’s face being ‘of a red tinge’, there are two tales in this regard. One says that his fair skin was tanned red due to the intense heat of the sun as once he had leapt into the sky to eat the sun, thinking it to be some big red fruit dangling from the sky. Another legend says that when he saw Sita applying the red vermilion powder on her head and when asked about it was told that it was a mark that showed that Sita was eternally a wife of Lord Ram, or was inseparable from the Lord, Hanuman applied this powder on his whole face to please the Lord and signal to him that if a single dot or a line of red on Sita’s head could endear her to Lord Ram so much, how much more the Lord will love to see Hanuman with his whole countenance coloured in red of the vermilion.

Once as a child he was even cursed by sages because of his mischievous nature as he used to play havoc with the trees and plants around the hermitages and forests where they lived, uprooting them, breaking their branches, eating their fruits and littering the place all around. So they cursed him that he would forget his powers till the time someone reminded him about them. As it happened, when the monkeys and bears set out in search of Sita, who had been abducted by the demon king of Lanka known as Ravana, and had reached the shores of the vast ocean, they faced the formidable challenge of having to cross it, face this formidable enemy, and come back alive. It was then that Jamvant, the old patriarch of the bears, had reminded Hanuman about his lost strength. Hanuman regained his old stupendous powers and abilities, and he was the one who not only crossed the ocean but also burnt Lanka before

coming back with the news of Sita. These events are narrated in the epic Ramayana in great detail.

Hanuman can be likened to a diamond amongst all the characters in the epic story of Ramayan which deals with Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Lord Ram. In fact, the story of Lord Ram and his conquest of Lanka would not have been what it was without Hanuman. Even Lord Ram had openly accepted his indebtedness to Hanuman.

Hanuman was very dear to Lord Ram. The Lord was exceptionally obliged to him, and on several occasions he had expressed this too. Hanuman was more close to Lord Ram than any other single character in the Ramayana. Whenever the Lord needed help, he looked at Hanuman. Hanuman had always repeated the holy Name of Lord Ram silently, and this gave him immense strength and peace. By the way of the Name, Hanuman was able to have the Lord stay with him always. The best proof of the Lord recognizing this divine quality and spiritual nature of Hanuman was when the Lord directed him to stay in this world at the time of the Lord's own departure for his heavenly abode at the end of his tenure on this earth, and keep the light of the Lord's glory alight by way of repeating his divine Name and ensuring protection for those who said the Lord's Name. In other words, the Lord had appointed Hanuman as the heir to his legacy, and passed on the baton of Dharma (virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and auspiciousness) and Satya (truth) to him to act as their custodian on the strength of Lord's holy Name.

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 26 that Hanuman was able to keep Lord Ram under his loving sway by the virtue of repeating the Lord's holy Name constantly.

So therefore, when Lord Ram left this world for his heavenly abode during the final episodes of Ramayana, all those who were close to him as well as the rest of his subjects had also left this world with the Lord. But Hanuman remained behind with the express mandate from the Lord to ensure that the Lord's glory as well as the glory of his divine name can be perpetuated, and to ensure that the devotees of the Lord can be afforded protection. This has been narrated in (i) Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 9, verse nos. 34-36; (ii) Anand Ramayan, Purva Kand, Sarga (Canto) 5, verse nos. 9-13; (iii) Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 108, verse nos. 32-35.

Hanuman had immense mental and physical agility, strength, power and prowess. His character was immaculate and his intellect was of high refinement. He had complete, unchallenged and unparalleled knowledge of the scriptures. One of the reasons is that his teacher was the Sun God himself who had taught him all the Vedas and other scriptures. His speech was elegant and scholarly. He is regarded as a treasury of the eight Siddhis (mystical powers) and the nine Nidhis (spiritual assets). He was a renunciate and a celibate since birth.

The eight Siddhis which Hanuman possessed were the following—(i) 'Anima'—means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; to become small like an atom; (ii) 'Mahima'—is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and skills; to become huge like a mountain, thereby standing out and being unique or special in a crowd; (iii) 'Garima'—is to be heavy-weight in any field, to have special qualities that give one's ideas and words a great amount of importance and weight; to have stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance; (iv) 'Laghima'—is the grand virtue of being simple and humble inspite of being great, powerful and authoritative; it is to have simplicity and humility despite

possessing grandeur, majesty, power, authority and magnificence; (v) 'Praapti'—is to be able to attain, gain or obtain anything wished or desired for; (vi) 'Praakramya'—is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa'—is to be able to have lordship or sway over everything else; to be able to rule over others; (viii) 'Vashitwa'—is to be able to control and subdue others, and exert influence on them so much so that they become obedient and subservient.

The nine Nidhis that Hanuman possessed were the following— Spiritual assets—according to saint Tulsidas' epic *Ram Charit Manas*, Aranya Kand, Doha 35-36, they are—(i) communion with saints and pious people where the Lord's glories are being sung, (ii) serving one's teacher and elders, (ii) praising the Lord's glories and doing Kirtan and Bhajan which are community singing of the Lord's glories, (iv) repeating the divine Mantras or holy words of the Lord, i.e. doing Japa, (v) having such virtues as 'Dam' or tolerance, patience, fortitude and resilience, 'Sheel' or good and righteous demeanours, 'Virati' or being renunciate and detached from deeds and to be dispassionate towards the world, 'Sam' or equanimity, looking everything as Brahm, having a non-dual approach of or view of the world, 'Santosh' or contentedness, and 'Sara' or simplicity and humility, (vi) having no deceit, conceit and falsehoods, (vii) not finding faults with others and criticising them unnecessarily, (viii) to have firm reliance and faith in the Lord, and (ix) not to feel dejected, depressed, despaired, inferior, lowly and condemned under any adverse circumstances, because the great and merciful Lord is always with them.

According to another version, the nine Nidhis are the various special virtues or qualities or attributes that one possesses, and which make him special amongst others. They are the following—(i) Buddhi—intelligence and the power to discriminate, to think sharply, quickly, logically, rationally, deeply and analytically. (ii) Bal—strength, vigour and power of the body and of the mind as well as of the spirit. (iii) Yasha—fame, good reputation and name; majesty and renown. (iv) Dhairya—to have courage, fortitude, resilience, ability to hold on in the face of greatest adversity, misfortune and opposition. (v) Nirbhayataa—fearlessness, courage, bravery and an indomitable spirit. (vi) Aarogyataa—to be freed from diseases and illnesses, both mental as well as bodily. (vii) Ajaadyataa—the opposite of Jadataa; to be free from the negative trait of inertia, lethargy, depression, stagnation, lack of drive, initiative and will power. (viii) Vaakya-patutaa—to be an expert orator; speaking skills, eloquence, diplomacy, and wise and intelligent choice of the spoken word. (ix) Bhakti—to have steady and robust devotion, loyalty, dedication and conviction for one's chosen deity and faith. This quality, of course, comes under the category of spiritual assets also.

Other variations include the following qualities in this list of Nidhis because they are like an asset for a man which stand him in good stead in his life— (i) Sham—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses. (ii) Dam—tolerance, forbearance, fortitude. (iii) Upriti—renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement. (iv) Titksha—endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity. (v) Samadhan—the ability to find a solution, an answer to even the most vexing problem; lack of confusion or doubts; clarity of thoughts and conception. (vi) Shraddha—having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion. (vii) Sakhya—friendship and the ability to co-exist with even one's adversary. (viii) Daya—kindness, compassion, graciousness. (ix) Atma Bodh—self-realisation and awareness about the true nature of one's conscious 'self', to be

enlightened about the Atma, the pure consciousness, that resides inside one's inner self as his soul, as his Spirit.

Sometimes, the last Nidhi of 'Atma Bodh' is replaced with 'Seva' or the natural habit of serving others selflessly.

Faces of Hanuman—In iconography, Hanuman is depicted as having five, ten or eleven faces.

(a) The *five faces of Hanuman* are as follows—(i) in the eastern direction it is that of a monkey; (ii) in the southern direction it is that of Lord Nrisingh; (iii) in the western direction it is that of Lord Garud; (iv) in the northern direction it is that of Lord Varaaha; and (v) in the zenith it is that of Lord Hayagriva.

The genesis of the story is linked with the battle of Lanka when the son of the ten-headed Ravana, known as Mahi-Ravan, had kidnapped Ram and Laxman and hid them underground in the nether world. He prepared them to sacrifice to the goddess whom he worshipped in order to please the goddess so that his father Ravana could win the war. When Hanuman got the wind of it, he went to the nether world and hid behind the idol of the goddess. The demon Mahi-Ravana offered all sorts of inedible things to the goddess—such as wine, excreta, meat, urine etc. He had his eyes closed in meditation. So Hanuman assumed this heads and ate up all the offerings. Finally, when the wicked demon thought that the sacrifice is finished and the goddess is happy with him, he was about to chop off the heads of the two brothers at the altar, Hanuman emerged from hiding in this ferocious form with five heads (or according to the previous narration with eleven unconventional heads) to kill the demon. It is believed that even Ram and Laxman could not recognize Hanuman in that form till the time they saw his monkey head with which he bowed before the Lord.

In essence we can say that Hanuman epitomised the glory of knowledge and the Shakti of the Supreme Brahm rolled into one. When he appeared to save Ram and Laxman from the clutches of Mahi-Ravana, he represented the supreme power of creation. This form of Hanuman—whether it is of five heads or nine heads or eleven heads—implies that all the fundamental forces of Nature had joined hands to get rid of or negate the negative forces that had become ascendant, and to restore the balance in favour of the positive forces and principles of creation.

The five faces of Hanuman stand for the following—(i) the five elements of creation, viz. sky, air, fire, water and earth. (ii) the five chief vital winds called Prans—viz. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana and Udaana. This fits in perfectly with the fact that Hanuman is regarded as the son of the Wind God.

(b) The *ten or eleven faces of Hanuman*—According to another version, Hanuman is shown as having eleven or ten faces as follows—(i) in the eastern direction it is that of a monkey (Hanuman in his original form); (ii) in the south-east corner (called 'Agneya Kona') it is that of a Kshatriya (warrior class); (iii) in the southern direction it is that of Lord Nrisingh (half man and half lion incarnation of Vishnu); (iv) in the south-west corner (called 'Nairitya Kona') it is that of Lord Ganesh; (v) in the western direction it is that of Harishwar (Hari or Vishnu; or it can be interpreted as Hari's Lord or Shiva in line with the term Rameshwar which is one of the forms of Shiva); (vi) in the north-west corner (called 'Vaayavya Kona') it is that of Lord Bhairav (one of the forms of Shiva); (vii) in the northern direction it is that of Varaaha; (viii) in the north-east corner (called 'Ishan Kona') it is that of Lord Rudra (one of the forms of Shiva); and (ix) in the zenith corner (above; towards the sky) it is that of Lord Hayagriva (Lord Sun; Vishnu with a horse's head; one of the many incarnations of Vishnu).

In this above description only nine faces are given; two are missing. The other two faces are that of Lord Garud (mount of Vishnu) and Lord Shiva. In this version, the face on the west side is that of Garud (instead of Harishwar), and Lord Varaaha faces in the lower direction called nadir. The eleventh face is a combination of all the faces—i.e. it is the face of all-encompassing and all-incorporating Lord Isha.

The point to note here are that all these forms are manifestations or representations of the five or the eleven principal 'Tattwas' or the fundamental elements of creation. The eleven heads are symbols of the following Tattwas—the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) + five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana and Udaana) + Chitta (mind and its sub-conscious). These eleven Tattwas form the basic units which combine together to form the physical body of any living being. It will be noted that only nine specific heads are mentioned though the total number of heads are eleven. Well, the significance of the number 'nine' vis-à-vis the nine Tattwas is as follows—

'The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 14 says that there are nine Tattvas which are actually subtle revelations of the supreme Brahm. They are the following—The three fundamental Gunas, i.e. the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, the three basic characters of the Atma known as Sat-Chit-Anand, i.e. Sat (truth), Chitta (consciousness) and Anand (bliss), and the three forms of divinity represented by the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder of creation, represent the nine Tattvas of creation.'

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 says that the sacred thread that is worn by Brahmins has three main strands, and each strand consists of three sub-strands. The total number of strands thus becomes nine ($3 \times 3 = 9$). These nine strands symbolically represent the nine Tattvas of creation which actually stand for the nine revelations of the same Brahm. The fact that the sacred thread has nine finer strands is endorsed in the *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 27.'

It must be remembered that Hanuman is not an ordinary soul, but he is the most enlightened One to have come on this earth. He is regarded as the leader in the community of the wise and enlightened ones. There is no wonder in it because of two reasons—one, he is Shiva personified, and Shiva is the most enlightened amongst the Trinity Gods, and second, his teacher was the Sun God who is personification of the Supreme Brahm, and his brilliant light is a metaphor of the immensity of knowledge and enlightenment he has as well as the light this knowledge provides to the world. Without knowledge this world would be engulfed in a thick shroud of darkness of ignorance symbolized by the night.

The importance of the figure five is of great metaphysical importance. It represents the Pancha Mahaabh. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety. They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of *Shaarirako-panishad*. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the subtle space between various organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it is called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.]

बिप्र रूप धरि कपि तहँ गयऊ । माथ नाइ पूछत अस भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥
 को तुम्ह स्यामल गौर सरीरा । छत्री रूप फिरहु बन बीरा ॥ ७ ॥
 कठिन भूमि कोमल पद गामी । कवन हेतु बिचरहु बन स्वामी ॥ ८ ॥
 मृदुल मनोहर सुंदर गाता । सहत दुसह बन आतप बाता ॥ ९ ॥
 की तुम्ह तीनि देव महँ कोऊ । नर नारायन की तुम्ह दोऊ ॥ १० ॥

bipra rūpa dhari kapi tahaṁ gaya'ū. mātha nā'i pūchata asa bhaya'ū. 6.
 kō tumha syāmala gaura sarīrā. chatrī rūpa phirahu bana bīrā. 7.
 kaṭhina bhūmi kōmala pada gāmī. kavana hētu bicarahu bana svāmī. 8.
 mṛdula manōhara sundara gātā. sahata dusaha bana ātapa bātā. 9.

kī tumha tīni dēva maham̐ kō'ū. nara nārāyana kī tumha dō'ū. 10.

Hanuman (“Kapi”; literally the monkey) assumed the form of a Brahmin and went there (down the mountain, to meet the two travellers, Lord Ram and Laxman). He bowed his head reverentially before the Lord¹ and enquired as follows—(6)

‘Who are you two, one with a dark and the other with a fair complexion? You look like Kshatriyas (the warrior class; a valiant, brave and courageous race) who are roaming in the forest; prithee, please say what is the reason for your wandering here in the wilds? (7)

The ground is hard and very harsh to walk on barefoot, while your feet are very soft and tender. Oh Lord (svāmī)! This being the case, what is the reason for you roaming around (barefoot) in this wilderness that the forest is²? (8)

Your bodies are tender, charming and handsome (like that of great princes), and here you are enduring such extreme hardships in the forest, facing adversities such as the heat of the sun and the blow of the wind! Say, what is the reason for this misfortune (that seems to have befallen you)? (9)

Or else, are you a manifestation of one of the Gods of the Trinity (i.e. are you either of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva); or is that you two are Nara (the Jiva; the living being) and Narayan (the Supreme Being; the cosmic Male) themselves who have assumed your forms³? Please be kind to tell me, which of these are you two. (10)

[Note—¹Hanuman was in the form of a Brahmin before whom others bow their heads, and it is not the other way round. So it seems out of place that Hanuman, who was in the attire of a Brahmin, should bow to a stranger. But in this case he was in the disguise of a young student, and not an adult Brahmin. Being a student and much younger in age to the visitors, it was his duty to show respect to the guests by bowing to them.

Further, Lord Ram and Laxman were attired as hermits and were senior in age, while Hanuman was in the guise of a young Brahmin student. Hence, Lord Ram and Laxman deserved respect from the young student.

Another reason is that as soon as Hanuman came near Lord Ram, his sixth sense, his intuitive feeling told him that this gentleman was no ordinary man as the Lord had some exceptional aura of divinity and holiness around him that deserved special attention and aroused spontaneous respect. This doubt in Hanuman’s mind—whether Lord Ram was not actually the Supreme Being who had promised to come down one day, and for helping whom the Creator Brahma had advised the gods to assume the form of monkeys and bears and wait for the Lord’s arrival—will soon be clear when he asks the Lord expressly if he was not one of the Trinity Gods; whether he was Nara (a human male) or Narayan (the cosmic Male; Lord Vishnu). {See Chaupai line no. 8 herein below.}

In addition to the above reasons, there are two more. One is this: Hanuman had come to enquire about these two strangers; it was he who needed the opportunity to talk. So he wished to give a first good impression upon the visitors by being polite, and bowing before one’s guest is a welcoming gesture that immediately softens him up quite a bit. So the chances of a friendly conversation were brightened when Hanuman bowed before the travellers to show that he is a polite person, and a

conversation with him will not be unpleasant for the two brothers. Rather, the two brothers would like to engage with their interlocutor more for some time, giving Hanuman the time and space to find more about them and their intention.

Otherwise there were chances that the two brothers would quietly walk on and neglect Hanuman; or would be very brief and circumvent in their reply which would not serve Hanuman's purpose.

The other is this: Hanuman was a monkey by his body, but had hidden it in over garments to disguise himself as a Brahmin student. It was done so quickly that he was very conscious of himself; he feared that these two intelligent gentlemen would immediately know that he was an impostor if he faced them directly and looked at them straight in their eyes. So he kept his head low and sight fixed on the ground before him out of shyness and the usual guilt that accompanies deception. He wondered: "what would happen if these strangers found out who I actually am?" So he avoided a direct and straightforward interaction with Lord Ram; and instead kept his head bowed and eyes low.

²We read elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas that a similar observation was made by the awe-struck villagers and travellers whom Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had met on the path earlier when they had left Ayodhya and were on their way to the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2 and 4 that precede Doha no. 121; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119.

³In this analogy, since Lord Ram is dark complexioned he resembles Lord Vishnu very closely. Laxman, being of a fair complexion, resembles more closely either Brahma whose visage is yellowish as his other name is Hiranayagarbha, the 'cosmic egg', because he is the 'creator' of this world, or Shiva who has a ash-coloured complexion because he keep his body smeared with the ash of the fire sacrifice.

As for 'Nara and Narayan', they represent the male aspect of creation; they stand for the 'Father'. At the macrocosmic level he is the universal Father known as Parmatma, and at the microcosmic level he is the creature's father known as the Jiva. Here, Lord Ram stands for the Parmatma, and his shadow-like dear brother Laxman is like the Jiva.]

दो०. जग कारन तारन भव भंजन धरनी भार ।

की तुम्ह अखिल भुवन पति लीन्ह मनुज अवतार ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

jaga kārana tārana bhava bhañjana dharanī bhāra.

kī tumha akhila bhuvana pati līnha manuḥja avatāra. 1.

Or is that for the express welfare of the world and liberate its creatures from the horrors of transmigration, and in the process eliminate the burden of the earth (created on it by those who are wicked, sinful and evil)—the Supreme Lord of the whole world, the Lord of the entire creation, has indeed manifested himself in the form of a human being?

[Prithvi my Lord; I beseech thee to be kind enough to enlighten me on this matter of singular importance. Is it true that the Supreme Being has decided to come down personally to eliminate evil and negative forces from this world, to restore the

balance in favour of the good, the noble and the righteous by eliminating those that are bad, evil and unrighteous, and to extend protection to his devotees and show them the right path to liberation and deliverance? Oh Lord, am I correct? I shall be highly grateful if you should be graceful enough to tell me something on this matter.]’ (Doha no. 1)

चौ०. कोसलेस दसरथ के जाए । हम पितु बचन मानि बन आए ॥ १ ॥
 नाम राम लछिमन दोउ भाई । संग नारि सुकुमारि सुहाई ॥ २ ॥
 इहाँ हरी निसिचर बैदेही । बिप्र फिरहिं हम खोजत तेही ॥ ३ ॥
 आपन चरित कहा हम गाई । कहहु बिप्र निज कथा बुझाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kōsalēsa dasaratha kē jā'ē. hama pitu bacana māni bana ā'ē. 1.
 nāma rāma lachimana dō'u bhā'ī. saṅga nāri sukumāri suhā'ī. 2.
 ihāṁ harī nisicara baidēhī. bipra phirahiṁ hama khōjata tēhī. 3.
 āpana carita kahā hama gā'ī. kahahu bipra nija kathā bujhā'ī. 4.

Lord Ram answered Hanuman, ‘We (i.e. myself and my brother Laxman) are sons of king Dasrath of the kingdom of Kaushal (which is another name for the realm of Ayodhya). We have come to the forest to keep our father’s words¹. (1)

Our names are Ram and Laxman respectively; and we two are brothers. We had a charming and pretty young lady with us; she was tender and delicate (nāri sukumāri suhā'ī). (2)

Here in the forest some demon has stolen Vaidehi² (Sita, my wife). Oh Brahmin (bipra)! We are wondering in search of her. (3)

We have narrated to you about our story; prithee Brahmin, now please tell us about yourself.’ (4)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in detail in the first half of the second Canto of Ram Charit Manas that is known as Ayodhya Kand; refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.

Briefly it is this: King Dasrath, who had become old, had decided to anoint his eldest son, prince Ram, as the Regent of Ayodhya. The gods were alarmed as this would make it difficult for the Lord to carry out the main objective for which he had come down from heaven to earth, viz. to eliminate Ravana and his clan of cruel and sinful demons. Why so? Because to fulfil this mission certain conditions had to be complied with, and once Lord Ram ascended the throne of the great kingdom of Ayodhya it would be well-nigh impossible to do so.

Hence, it was necessary to prevent his anointment and manoeuvre things in such a way that the Lord goes to the forest, crosses the country and reach Ravana’s citadel at Lanka. So the gods devised a device by which Kaikeyi, the Lord’s step-mother, became suddenly overcome with delusions that created jealousy, selfishness and greed for power in her mind. She had a favourite maid called Manthra with whom

she always shared her thoughts. The gods used her as a medium to implement their master-plan; this old maid prevailed upon her mistress Kaikeyi that she must get her own son Bharat appointed to the throne somehow. Since Kaikeyi's wisdom and sense of propriety had already been clouded by delusions, she could not see the propriety or otherwise of this evil advice, and readily agreed.

By-and-by, Kaikeyi forced her husband king Dasrath to send Lord Ram to fourteen years of exile in the forest and put her own son Bharat on the throne. The Lord was very happy as this is what he exactly wished to happen. Laxman and Sita decided to accompany the Lord for they declared that they can't live without him.

This is how the three—i.e. Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and his younger brother Laxman had come to the forest.

²Lord Ram has significantly used the word “Vaidehi” for Sita; it is a remarkable that he chose to employ this epithet for Sita. On the face of it the word means ‘the daughter of Videha, the king of Janakpur’, which Sita indeed was.

But there is a subtle hint in what the Lord wished to mean: he indicated that the lady who has been stolen by the demon ‘has no physical body’, i.e. it is merely a shadow or an image of the real Sita, for the word ‘Vaidehi’ literally means ‘one without a body’. To wit, Sita who has been kidnapped is not the real Sita who is Lord Ram's wife, for the Lord had cast some magical spell by which a huge smokescreen of delusions has been created as is usually done in theatrical performances where a director arranges scenes of storms and rain and lightening, or of murder and bloodshed on the stage which are so life-like and surreal that the audience thinks that the scenes which it sees unfolding before its eyes are actual events; all those who watch the play flow with the narrative enacted by actors on stage and become emotionally involved in it as if they are participating in real events.

So was exactly the case here: no one could guess that the Sita whom Ravana had abducted was only a mirage, only an image, only a shadow or a ghost, and not the real lady known by this name.

As we have already read earlier, Sita had been made to take shelter with the sacred fire by Lord Ram who entrusted her in the safe custody of the Fire God, and she had also been taken into confidence by the Lord who had told her all that he planned and the reason why he wanted to hide her. But this was a closely guarded secret that not even Laxman was privy to. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.]

प्रभु पहिचानि परेउ गहि चरना । सो सुख उमा जाइ नहिं बरना ॥ ५ ॥

पुलकित तन मुख आव न बचना । देखत रुचिर बेष कै रचना ॥ ६ ॥

पुनि धीरजु धरि अस्तुति कीन्ही । हरष हृदयँ निज नाथहि चीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥

prabhu pahicāni parē'u gahi caranā. sō sukha umā jā'i nahim baranā. 5.
pulakita tana mukha āva na bacanā. dēkhata rucira bēṣa kai racanā. 6.
puni dhīrajū dhari astuti kīnhī. haraṣa hṛdayaṁ nija nāthahi cīnhī. 7.

Hanuman recognised his dear Lord¹, and consequentially he fell down at the Lord's feet.

[Lord Shiva, who has been narrating this story of Ram Charit Manas to his consort Parvati, said to her—] “Oh Uma! It is not possible to describe how joyous and exhilarated he (Hanuman) felt at that moment.” (5)

He (Hanuman) was exceedingly thrilled in his body so much that no words came to his mouth as he was emotionally overwhelmed. He kept his eyes fixed on the magnificent sight that Lord Ram (and Laxman) presented to him. [To wit, Hanuman was so transfixed with joy and emotion that neither could he speak nor could he move his eyes away from the Lord.] (6)

After some time, however, he recovered himself; then he patiently offered his obeisance to the Lord by praising him and offering prayers. He was overjoyed in his heart as he had recognised his dear Lord. (7)

[Note—¹How did Hanuman know that Lord Ram was the Lord for whom he had been waiting for so long to come? Hanuman had remembered the earlier events which had compelled the gods and mother earth to approach Lord Vishnu and pray to him to come down to save them by eliminating the scourge of the demons led by Ravana, as which the Lord had promised them that he will indeed come in the form of Ram and take a human birth in the household of king Dasrath of Ayodhya. And at that time, the grandfather of this creation, Brahma, had advised the gods to take the form of monkeys and bears and descend to earth, and wait for the arrival of the Lord; then they must help the Lord to successfully accomplish an enterprise that actually was their own demand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

Now finally, that great moment has arrived. This realisation made Hanuman literally jump with joy and excitement.

Another reason is this: from the very first moment Hanuman came close to Lord Ram, he could feel that the visitor is no ordinary man, as extraordinary spiritual energy and a halo of divinity radiated from the Lord and spread in all the directions like the brilliant rays of the splendorous sun to embrace everyone who came in contact with him. It was an un-forgetful, hitherto an unknown emotional reaction, and an extremely sublime experience that had mesmerised and captivated the mind and the heart of Hanuman from the very first moment of his interaction with Lord Ram.

Some sixth sense within him, his instinct, his intuition, his sub-conscious, and what we may call his gut-feeling, told him that he has at last met the one for whom he had been waiting eagerly and emotionally for so long, the Lord who was very dear to him.]

मोर न्याउ मैं पूछा साईं । तुम्ह पूछहु कस नर की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

तब माया बस फिरउँ भुलाना । ता ते मैं नहिं प्रभु पहिचाना ॥ ९ ॥

mōra n'yā'u mair̥m pūchā sā'ir̥m. tumha pūchahu kasa nara kī nā'ir̥m. 8.
taba māyā basa phira'uṁ bhulānā. tā tē mair̥m nahir̥m prabhu pahicānā. 9.

Having recovered his emotional bearing and mental composure, Hanuman politely and affectionately reproached Lord Ram in a plaintive accent, ‘Oh Lord! It is okay that I, being a humble creature, ask who you are, but how come even you (who are the

all-knowing Supreme Being) are feigning ignorance and pretending that you do not know me as if you were an ordinary human being. (8)

I was under the influence of your Maya (powers to create delusions and ignorance) due to which I had become forgetful and ignorant, and it is for this reason I could not recognise you immediately, and had erred to ask you who you were¹. (9)

[Note—¹Had Hanuman been free from the Lord's overpowering Maya that leaves no one un-influenced by it, he would have instantly known who the Lord actually was, instead of asking him about it as done in Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 1 herein above.

But by the grace of the Lord, this Maya soon withdrew and Hanuman's natural sense of wisdom and intelligence could see the truth; it just like the case of the moon and the sun during eclipse, for soon they emerge from the shadow of the eclipse that hides their shine for some time, and regain their original brilliance.]

दो०. एकु मै मंद मोहबस कुटिल हृदय अग्यान ।

पुनि प्रभु मोहि बिसारेउ दीनबंधु भगवान ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

ēku maiṁ manda mōhabasa kuṭila hṛdaya agyāna.
puni prabhu mōhi bisārē'u dīnabandhu bhagavāna. 2.

In the first place I am of a low intellect, am overcome with delusions, have a wicked heart, and am ignorant (as a Jiva usually is).

And oh Lord, you are a friend of those who are humble, lowly and fallen; you are their benefactor, and so I am astonished that even you had forgotten me. Why so my Lord; how come you could not recognise (me who is) your eternal servant and devotee?¹ (Doha no. 2)

[Note—¹This is a conversation between a devotee of the Lord and the dearest object of his devotion and worship—in this case Hanuman and Lord Ram respectively.

Let us take an example to understand this scene better. It is like a conversation between two fast friends who had separated a long time ago, only to meet once again almost unexpectedly some time later on in life. A lot of change had happened to both of them—they grew older, their physical appearances changed over time, and the rough and tumble of life had made them so different now from the time when they first separated that neither of them could recognise the other though they had played, eaten and lived together for countless years long ago. But some intuitive feeling, some inner-voice tells them that there exists some secret bond between them which has been so much covered with the dust of time that it needs a bit of dusting and cleaning to see the reality behind the external crust. So when they meet after a long passage of time, they would exchange pleasantries and wish to learn about each other. Some undercurrent of emotion, some tone of the voice and style of speaking and idioms, some well-known gestures and bodily movements with which they were so familiar with since their youth, suddenly come to their memories. They suddenly recognise each other—and what follows is a natural guess for everyone: They would clasp each other in a tight embrace, weep and shake each other in sheer joy of excitement. Nay,

not only this, they would accuse each other affectionately and lovingly why the one had forgotten and neglected the other for so many years. Then they would sit down to reminisce about their past and revel in it for a long time, laughing and joking and patting each other, using choicest epithets and nicknames they used for each other long ago, before coming back to the harsh realities of the present and sobering up.

Something of this sort played out between Hanuman and Lord Ram! It took some time for Hanuman to recognise Lord Ram, and once he came to know who the Lord was, he spoke to him affectionately and lovingly like a devotee would speak to his Lord. There was no element of formality or fear; Hanuman politely and affectionately admonished or chided his beloved Lord Ram as to why he took so long to reveal his true identity before Hanuman; why did he try to play hide-and-seek with him.

Remember: this conversation is drenched in the emotion of affection and love that a devotee has for his beloved Lord, and this bond is so strong and informal that playful chiding and affectionate teasing of each other is not out of the normal.

Hanuman loved Lord Ram so much that he did not hesitate in the expression of his emotional outburst when he told the Lord that the fault of not recognising each other was of the Lord's as he is all-knowing, while Hanuman was simply a creature who is bound by Maya, and therefore it is okay if he could not know the truth about the Lord initially.

In the next set of verses Hanuman clarifies his position.]

चौ०. जदपि नाथ बहु अवगुन मोरें । सेवक प्रभुहि परै जनि भोरें ॥ १ ॥
 नाथ जीव तव मायाँ मोहा । सो निस्तरइ तुम्हारेहिं छोहा ॥ २ ॥
 ता पर मैं रघुबीर दोहाई । जानउँ नहिं कछु भजन उपाई ॥ ३ ॥
 सेवक सुत पति मातु भरोसें । रहइ असोच बनइ प्रभु पोसें ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jadapi nātha bahu avaguna mōrēm. sēvaka prabhuhi parai jani bhōrēm. 1.
 nātha jīva tava māyāṁ mōhā. sō nistarā'i tumhārēhim chōhā. 2.
 tā para mairṁ raghubīra dōhā'ī. jāna'uṁ nahim kachu bhajana upā'ī. 3.
 sēvaka suta pati mātu bharōsēm. raha'i asōca bana'i prabhu pōsēm. 4.

[Hanuman continued—] 'Oh Lord, though it may be true that I have many faults and shortcomings, may be my mind is fickle and my memory weak, but let the Lord not cast me into neglect and forget about me due to my limitations (as a Jiva, a living being)¹.

[¹To wit, it may be that I am not sufficiently competent to be called your servant or devotee for so many faults of mine, but you are renowned for your mercy, compassion and grace, you are very benevolent, magnanimous and beneficent, and you are a benefactor of those who are lowly and unfortunate. So therefore it is expected of you that you do not turn your back to me, and accept me as I am. I am sure you have not forgotten me inspite of my stupidity that I could not recognise you instantly, as soon as I saw you; but that is acceptable because I am an ordinary creature with so many limitations and shortcomings, but oh Lord I am surprised that even you could not recognise me; or was it that you were playing some sort of friendly trick with me and trying to tease me so that I would cry out and jump with

joy as soon as I discovered who you actually are, and the stunned expression of extreme happiness and exhilaration that would overcome my whole being on this discovery would give you intense pleasure. Come, come my dear Lord; you see—you couldn't trick me, could you?] (1)

Oh Lord! The Jiva (a living being) is invariably under the influence of your Maya (delusions that overcome all mortal creatures which make them forget their true identity, i.e. their 'self' which is pure consciousness). This Maya can only be got rid of by your grace and kindness upon that Jiva².

[²I am a Jiva, so it is natural that I was deluded and could not recognise you immediately. But you are not a Jiva; you are the Supreme Being who is free from Maya. So why did you not recognise me immediately; why did you ask me who I was? It would have been proper if you had smile at me and teased me by saying, "Hello Hanuman; why are disguising yourself as a Brahmin student; do you think I have not recognised you? You look funny in this attire; shed it aside and resume your original form." Oh Lord, how happy and joyous would I have felt if you had said something to this effect, instead of asking me who I am.] (2)

Oh Lord Raghubir, I say truly on oath that I do not know how to either worship you or have devotion for you, and neither do I know of any means to achieve success in this direction. Yet I am certain that the Lord would take care of me and hence I am free from worries and fear, because I am aware of the universal principle that a servant rests easy and is in peace by relying on the strength of his master, and so does a son who relies on his mother³.

[³A master is responsible for the welfare, happiness, safety and security of his servant who is totally dependent upon him, and so is a mother in respect to an infant son. The servant and the son both sleep in peace as they know that their master and mother respectively would take care of them in every way. So likewise Hanuman says that he is free from all worries and fears as he knows, and is certain too, that his Lord Ram is alert about his responsibilities towards him, and would care for the well-being and welfare of Hanuman who is totally dependent upon the Lord no matter what happens.] (3-4)

अस कहि परेउ चरन अकुलाई । निज तनु प्रगटि प्रीति उर छाई ॥ ५ ॥
तब रघुपति उठाइ उर लावा । निज लोचन जल सींचि जुड़ावा ॥ ६ ॥
सुनु कपि जियँ मानसि जनि ऊना । तैं मम प्रिय लछिमन ते दूना ॥ ७ ॥
समदरसी मोहि कह सब कोऊ । सेवक प्रिय अनन्यगति सोऊ ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi parē'u carana akulā'ī. nija tanu pragaṭi prīti ura chā'ī. 5.
taba raghupati uṭhā'i ura lāvā. nija lōcana jala sīnci jurāvā. 6.
sunu kapi jiyam mānasi jani ūnā. tairam mama priya lachimana tē dūnā. 7.
samadarasī mōhi kaha saba kō'ū. sēvaka priya anan'yagati sō'ū. 8.

Saying so (as in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 herein above), he (i.e. Hanuman) was so stirred up with overwhelming emotions and so intensely overcome with affection for Lord Ram

surging in his heart like a tidal wave that he fell down at the Lord's feet immediately, and then revealed his true form (as now there was no reason to hide his identity)¹. (5)

Then Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) lifted Hanuman and clasped the latter to his bosom; the Lord shed tears (of affection and joy at having found his dearest devotee and companion) so as to drench Hanuman with them and sooth his emotional agitation². (6)

Lord Ram told Hanuman, 'Listen Kapi (literally meaning a monkey; it was the original form of Hanuman)! Don't feel so lowly and distressed; don't feel depressed in your heart³. Verily indeed I tell you that you are twice as dear to me as is Laxman. (7)

Although everyone says that I treat all alike and with equanimity, for I don't distinguish between individuals, yet it is also universally true that I love my devotees dearly, such devotees who are eternally devoted to me and have unflinching faith and affection for me. This principle of equanimity and non-distinction applies to all others⁴. (8)

[Note—¹As soon as Hanuman realised that the two visiting travellers were no strangers to him, but were the ones for whom he had been waiting all these years, he was excessively overjoyed. First he politely and lovingly admonished his dear and beloved Lord for playing hide-and-seek with him by pretending as if he did not know him or recognise who he was, and then when the truth dawned upon him then he was overwhelmed with surging emotions of affection and endearment like when it happens if two old friends who were close to each other since their childhood, and who had been out of touch for a long time due to circumstances but nevertheless longed that one day they will meet again and embrace each other, actually realise their dream all of a sudden when they stand face-to-face with each other.

One can well imagine how they will feel and react. The two would clasp each other affectionately, shed tears of joy, ask why one forgot the other, strike an instant bond, and make a promise never to separate again. This in essence is what transpired when Hanuman met Lord Ram. And surely enough, the two never ever separated from each other as long as Lord Ram lived in this world; out of all his companions and acquaintances and friends, no one was dearer to the Lord than Hanuman, and Hanuman served Lord Ram with unwavering devotion, faith and affection that had no parallel.

²When Lord Ram perceived that Hanuman's words and actions showed how much the latter loved his Lord and was moved by meeting him—the way Hanuman had fell at the Lord's feet in supplication, the way he had tried to stifle his sobs, the trembling of his voice as he spoke, the thrill that had spread over his body, and the apparent words of reproof which he had used for the Lord were actually a veiled attempt on his part to hide his affectionate emotions that had overwhelmed him—Lord Ram was intensely touched; he bent down to lift Hanuman and clasp the latter to his bosom. Tears of reciprocal joy filled Lord Ram's eyes and ran down his cheeks to flow over Hanuman, and the Lord was as overcome with emotions as Hanuman had been. It appeared that two long-lost fast friends have at last found each other by a stroke of good fortune. The Lord could not control his emotions as he lifted Hanuman, embraced him affectionately, and then wept with joy.

We see here that both Hanuman and Lord Ram have become emotional when they meet each other. So when Hanuman observed that Lord Ram was weeping so much that tears rolled down his eyes and over Hanuman's body, he was thrilled with joy because he understood that the Lord whom he loves so much has reciprocated his feelings in full measure. Spontaneous tears don't come easily; these tears of overwhelming happiness weren't artificial. So Hanuman calmed down and soon regained his composure.

A similar scene is witnessed later on when Hanuman brings the good news that Sita has been found. At that time also he falls at the feet of Lord Ram who lovingly embraces him, and even goes to the extent of saying that he would ever remain indebted to Hanuman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 32—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

³Lord Ram alludes to Hanuman's statements earlier that showed he was very depressed and felt lowly about himself so much so that he had supposed that because of his shortcomings the Lord may not have recognised him, and may not pay much attention to him even after knowing who Hanuman was. Refer: Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 herein above.

So here Lord Ram clarifies that this is not the case at all, for he loves Hanuman more than he loves his own brother Laxman.

Remember: Laxman was standing by Lord Ram's side, and was it possible that this affirmation by the Lord that he loves someone else, in this case Hanuman who, by the way, was met for the first time in life and was virtually a stranger for the two brothers a few moments ago, more than Laxman would in any way offend the latter or make him sad? No; not at all. The brotherly relationship of love and affection between Laxman and Lord Ram was deep and unshakable, not so shallow and weak that such statements, which may have been made by the Lord because he thought it exigent due to circumstantial expediency, would in the slightest manner affect it.

Lord Ram had to show Hanuman that the latter was very dear to him and he should not feel depressed that the Lord had forgotten or neglected him. It was necessary for Lord Ram to do this even if it was merely from a political angle and a strategy that was needed by him to achieve success in his mission to retrieve Sita and eliminate Ravana and his cruel demons, for Hanuman's assistance and cooperation was very crucial for this objective.

Hanuman was the first acquaintance of Lord Ram in an alien land, and if he could be taken into confidence then other things would become easier. So the Lord did not wish to lose this golden opportunity, and hence he went out of his way to show Hanuman how dear was he to the Lord so as to strike an immediate rapport with him. And this strategy stood in good stead of the Lord, for now we shall read how Hanuman became instrumental in making Sugriv a friend of the Lord, a very important development as this would pave the way for the Lord in being able to trace Sita, and then get the help of an immense army of monkey and bear warriors to successfully complete his mission of not only retrieving her but also of eliminating the scourge of the demons. It is obvious that this monumental task would not have been possible without help.

⁴Lord Ram says that since he is the Supreme Lord of this world, he treats all individuals alike. To wit, the Lord says that he is an impartial and a neutral judge; he extends his mercy and grace equally upon all like the sun that gives its sunlight to all the creatures evenly. But there is an exception to this general rule—and it is that the

Lord has a soft corner in his heart for his devotees for whom there is no one in this world except the Lord, who are totally and eternally dependent upon the Lord, and who love the Lord exclusively. The Lord says that he is duty bound to extend a special consideration for such individuals.]

दो०. सो अनन्य जाकेँ असि मति न टरइ हनुमंत ।
मैं सेवक सचराचर रूप स्वामि भगवंत ॥ ३ ॥

dōhā.

sō anan'ya jākēm asi mati na ṭara'i hanumanta.
maim sēvaka sacarācara rūpa svāmi bhagavanta. 3.

Oh Hanuman! An individual is deemed to be my eternal devotee and loved by me if his mind is firm and steady in its conviction that he is an eternal servant and devotee of the Lord of the whole world, and this whole creation consisting of animate and inanimate things is nothing but the Lord's own image.¹ (Doha no. 3)

[Note—¹If the individual is enlightened enough to understand the grand philosophy enshrined in this Doha, that this entire creation is an image of his beloved Lord, then he would serve and love all other creatures equally and with great sincerity, as love and service done to them would be loving and serving his own dear Lord.

This is the universal message of love and service to one and all that Lord Ram advises here.]

चौ०. देखि पवनसुत पति अनुकूला । हृदयँ हरष बीती सब सूला ॥ १ ॥
नाथ सैल पर कपिपति रहई । सो सुग्रीव दास तव अहई ॥ २ ॥
तेहि सन नाथ मयत्री कीजे । दीन जानि तेहि अभय करीजे ॥ ३ ॥
सो सीता कर खोज कराइहि । जहँ तहँ मरकट कोटि पठाइहि ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi pavanasuta pati anukūlā. hṛdayaṁ haraṣa bīti saba sūlā. 1.
nātha saila para kapipati raha'ī. sō sugrīva dāsa tava aha'ī. 2.
tēhi sana nātha mayatrī kijē. dīna jāni tēhi abhaya karījē. 3.
sō sītā kara khōja karā'īhi. jahaṁ tahaṁ marakaṭa kōṭi paṭhā'īhi. 4.

When the Son of the Wind-God (i.e. Hanuman; “pavanasuta”) observed that the Lord was favourable to him and understood him without reservations, he felt overjoyed in his heart; all the agonies and misgivings of his heart disappeared. (1)

He told Lord Ram, ‘Oh Lord; the lord of the monkeys (kapipati) lives on the summit of this mountain (Rishyamook). His name is Sugriv, and he is your servant (i.e. he will obey you and do as you wish)¹. (2)

Oh Lord! Make a friendship with him (Sugriv), and considering him to be humble, afflicted and disenfranchised please be gracious to grant him freedom from fear. [To

wit, show your grace upon him by making him fearless from the things that are worrying him.]² (3)

He (Sugriv) will help you in the search for Sita by sending hundreds and thousands of monkeys (and bears) in all the directions for this purpose.³ (4)

[Note—¹Sugriv had been ousted from the kingdom by his elder brother Baali (also pronounced as Vaali). Presently Baali was the ‘king of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha’. So why did Hanuman address Sugriv as ‘the lord of the monkeys’?

The answer is this: For those who were loyal to Sugriv and had decided to accompany him to exile on Mt. Rishyamook, he was their de-facto king and lord. Among this small group of faithful companions of Sugriv was Hanuman; others included Nal, Neel etc., as well as Jamvant, the lord of the bear community. For them Sugriv was the true King of Kishindha, or at least the next in line to the throne after Baali, his elder brother, and that he had been unjustly deprived of his rights and exiled by his elder brother. This unfair treatment meted out to Sugriv pained all the righteous ministers, some of whom decided to leave with him.

Besides this, Sugriv had already been appointed to the throne by all the ministers and courtiers of the kingdom before Baali threw him out. Sugriv however was not willing to accept the crown in the absence of his elder brother, but the ministers thought that it would not be right and wise to keep the throne vacant for any length of time; so they appointed Sugriv as the regent against his will. When Baali returned home after slaying the demon Mayavi, the son of the demon Maya, and found Sugriv on the throne, he thought that his younger brother has usurped his crown, though this was not the case. This infuriated Baali, and he beat Sugriv severely and threw him out. This story is narrated by Sugriv himself to Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-13 that precede Doha no. 6.

Another question arises: Lord Ram has yet not met Sugriv, so how come Hanuman say that ‘Sugriv is your servant and will follow your instructions’? The answer to this is: These monkeys and bears were actually different gods in their forms waiting for Lord Ram’s arrival as prophesised by Brahma, the creator, earlier. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

So as soon as Hanuman recognised that Lord Ram was indeed the Lord for whom they had been waiting for so long, there was no question that others would also surrender themselves before the Lord like he had done.

The full story of Baali and Sugriv is narrated in detail in (i) sage Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttarkand, Canto 3; (ii) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand (Chapter), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse no. 140-152; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 11.

It ought to be noted here that Sugriv was the son of the Sun-God like Hanuman who was the son of the Wind-God.

²First, Hanuman calls Sugriv ‘the lord of the monkeys’, and so it is proper to say now that Lord Ram make friends with him—because two great kings should strike a friendly note when they meet each other for the first time.

Then Hanuman says ‘show your grace upon him by making him fearless from the things that are worrying him’. Hanuman guessed that Lord Ram would wonder why a king of the monkey race would live in seclusion on a remote mountain instead of in the capital; so surely there must be something amiss, for this situation would

make it obvious to the Lord that Sugriv must be suffering from some misfortune. Hence, Hanuman pleads with the Lord to help Sugriv overcome his predicaments.

³There is another reason for Hanuman going outright to ask Lord Ram to help remove the fears of Sugriv. He wished to serve the Lord's case—i.e. searching Sita and freeing her from her captives—in the best possible way he could, but to make this happen it was important to take the support of his own king, Sugriv. So if Lord Ram helps Sugriv regain his honour and get rid of his fear first then it would be easy for Hanuman to prevail upon Sugriv to do the Lord's work as his own work has been done, and then Sugriv would never be in a position to refuse.

So in order to ensure that the Lord did not hesitate in coming with him to the summit of the mountain to befriend Sugriv and help him overcome the grave fear that has been dogging him for long, Hanuman played his wise card by saying that if the Lord agrees to his proposal then he would see to it that Sugriv helps in the search for Sita.

Come to think of it: Lord Ram was in great need of an ally in an alien land, so when this suggestion came from Hanuman the Lord saw a golden opportunity, and was therefore very willing to cooperate.

In this intelligent way Hanuman served both Sugriv and Lord Ram in equal measure, and as a result of his wise mediation of his he became a favourite with both of them for eternity. This is also a primary reason why Lord Ram chose to give his signet ring for the purpose of identification to Hanuman when the group to which he belonged was about to go in the search for Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precedes Doha no. 23.]

एहि बिधि सकल कथा समुझाई । लिए दुऔ जन पीठि चढ़ाई ॥ ५ ॥
जब सुग्रीवँ राम कहूँ देखा । अतिसय जन्म धन्य करि लेखा ॥ ६ ॥
सादर मिलेउ नाइ पद माथा । भेंटैउ अनुज सहित रघुनाथा ॥ ७ ॥
कपि कर मन बिचार एहि रीती । करिहहिं बिधि मो सन ए प्रीती ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi sakala kathā samujhā'ī. li'ē du'au jana pīṭhi caṛhā'ī. 5.
jaba sugrīvaṁ rāma kahuṁ dēkhā. atisaya janma dhan'ya kari lēkhā. 6.
sādara milē'u nā'i pada māthā. bhēṇṭē'u anuja sahita raghunāthā. 7.
kapi kara mana bicāra ēhi rīṭi. karihahim bidhi mō sana ē prīṭi. 8.

In this way, after explaining all the aspects of the story¹ to the Lord, he (Hanuman) lifted the two of them (Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) on his back (i.e. on his shoulders, one brother on the left and the other on the right, to take them over the steep mountain to the summit where Sugriv was waiting). (5)

When Sugriv saw Lord Ram he considered that his life was very fortunate. (6)

He met and welcomed the two brothers by bowing his head respectfully at the feet of Lord Raghunath and his younger brother (Laxman)². (7)

He wondered in his mind, 'Oh Creator (bidhi)! Will they be my friends; it is possible that we can become friends'?*

[*This verse can also be read as follows: “He wondered by which means it may become possible to be friends with these two gentlemen”.]³ (8)

[Note—¹What story was explained by Hanuman to Lord Ram? It was the story of why and how Sugriv fell into the present miserable state, how he can be of help to the Lord, how the exiled monkeys had seen Sita crying loudly as she was being taken away by her abductor, and so on and so forth. This was done to remove any misgivings that the Lord may have had initially about his new acquaintances, and doubts that he might have had to agree to accompany Hanuman to the top of a steep mountain.

²Sugriv had immense faith in Hanuman, and trusted his wisdom and intelligence. That is why he had sent Hanuman to find out about the strangers in the first place. So when he observed from the summit that Hanuman had fallen at the feet of Lord Ram, the two embraced each other and had a cordial conversation for some time, and now Hanuman was bringing them to his hideout on the summit of the mountain, Sugriv was very sure that certainly it was for his good that Hanuman is doing it. He was sure that these two gentlemen who not only looked glorious, noble and royal but also had a divine halo and an unmistakable aura of charm about them, Sugriv concluded that these two guests were no ordinary men but some specially empowered honourable persons who deserve respect and welcome.

He had nothing to fear from them as was clear from the friendly expression on the faces of both Lord Ram and Laxman. Besides this, Hanuman had signalled to Sugriv in the manner decided between them before-hand (refer: Chauapi line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 1) that these two gentlemen would be of great help to the him (Sugriv), and there is nothing to fear from them at all.

Sugriv trusted Hanuman so much that when the latter told him that he has brought the two brothers up the mountain with a promise that Sugriv would welcome them as a friend, and that Sugriv must not hesitate to meet the two guests immediately and make friends with them, Sugriv did not think twice or in any way doubt the correctness of Hanuman’s decision, because he knew that Hanuman was not only exceptionally wise and intelligent but also very faithful and loyal to him. Sugriv was confident that the Creator may turn against him, but Hanuman would never betray him ever, no matter what happens.

Hanuman explained to Sugriv the strategic importance to have the two warrior brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, as his allies as their friendship would deter his arch enemy, Baali, from tormenting him further. The race to which the two brothers belonged was far superior in intelligence, strength and abilities compared to the race to which Sugriv and his brother Baali belonged. Hence, as soon as Baali discovers that Sugriv has forged an alliance with superior warriors he would stop bothering him any further, and so the constant fear of attack and harm by Baali in which Sugriv passes his days would be a thing of the past.

This logic of Hanuman was sound enough to convince Sugriv who saw merit in it. So he readily agreed to make friendship with Lord Ram.

³The word “*bidhi*” has two meanings: viz. ‘the Creator’, and ‘a mean to achieve success in anything undertake’. So both these interpretations could apply to this verse.]

दो०. तब हनुमंत उभय दिसि की सब कथा सुनाइ ।
पावक साखी देइ करि जोरी प्रीति दृढ़ाइ ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

taba hanumanta ubhaya disi kī saba kathā sunā'i.
pāvaka sākhī dē'i kari jōrī prīti dṛṛhā'i. 4.

Then Hanuman narrated the whole story of the two sides to each other¹. [To wit, Hanuman told Sugriv why Lord Ram was wondering in the forest, and then he told Lord Ram, or rather repeated what he had already told the Lord at the foot of the mountain, about Sugriv and the reason of his living on that mountain.]

After that, he lit a fire and made it a witness of the bond of friendship between the two of them—i.e. between Lord Ram and Sugriv². (Doha no. 4)

[Note—¹Both Sugriv and Lord Ram were suffering in one way or the other. Sugriv's right to the throne had been snatched by his elder brother Baali who threw him into exile and also kept his wife; Lord Ram had been exiled and his wife had been stolen by some rascal. They were literally on the same boat, on the same page. So they could easily empathise with and understand the agony of each other. Hanuman was so wise that he played the soft corner eruditely so as to ensure that both would cooperate with each other as both would be the gainer.

²The 'fire' is the most sacred and an inviolable witness; other witnesses could betray but the fire would never. And besides this, there were no chances of any of the sides rescinding on his promise made to the other with the fire god as a witness for the fear of inviting this god's wrath, and 'fire' is not something to fool around with.

So when a treaty is made with the 'fire' as a witness then it becomes inviolable and sacrosanct.

Hanuman wished to play it safe; it may be that sometime in the unknown future there can be situations when either of the two signatories of the treaty would try to force him to become biased against the other, and there may be existential expediencies when he too might become doubtful as to what is the correct thing to do. But with the 'fire' as the witness there was no scope of going back; the bond was sealed and delivered in a final manner.

And remember: Hanuman was also a witness by default, for he had too witnessed the declaration of this friendship between Lord Ram and Sugriv just like the sacred fire. So in case Sugriv, being a Jiva, a living being, an ordinary creature, who often times forgets his side of the bargain once his selfish needs are met, tries to play truant and shows lack of interest in serving Lord Ram, Hanuman would immediately intervene and remind Sugriv of the oath taken by the side of the sacred fire. And this did happen later on—when, after regaining his honour and throne by the intervention of Lord Ram on his behalf, Sugriv became indulgent in the pleasures that come with kingship, and all but forgot about his promise to Lord Ram to send teams all around to find Sita. At that time it was Hanuman who reminded him of his vows, and persuaded him to do what is needed without delay. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 19.]

चौ०. कीन्हि प्रीति कछु बीच न राखा । लछिमन राम चरित सब भाषा ॥ १ ॥
 कह सुग्रीव नयन भरि बारी । मिलिहि नाथ मिथिलेसकुमारी ॥ २ ॥
 मंत्रिन्ह सहित इहाँ एक बारा । बैठ रहेउँ मैं करत बिचारा ॥ ३ ॥
 गगन पंथ देखी मैं जाता । परबस परी बहुत बिलपाता ॥ ४ ॥
 राम राम हा राम पुकारी । हमहि देखि दीन्हैउ पट डारी ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

kīnhi prīti kachu bīca na rākhā. lachimana rāma carita saba bhāṣā. 1.
 kaha sugrīva nayana bhari bārī. milihi nātha mithilēsakumārī. 2.
 mantrinḥa sahita ihāṁ ēka bārā. baiṭha rahē'uṁ mairṁ karata bicārā. 3.
 gagana pantha dēkhī mairṁ jātā. parabasa parī bahuta bilapātā. 4.
 rāma rāma hā rāma pukārī. hamahi dēkhi dīnhē'u paṭa ḍārī. 5.

An unconditional bond of friendship was made between Lord Ram and Sugriv; both were treated as equal in this understanding¹.

Meanwhile, Laxman narrated the whole story of Lord Ram to all those present². (1)

When Sugriv heard the story (and the misery that the Lord was subjected to due to his wife Sita's abduction), he felt very sorry. With tears filling his eyes³ he said, 'Oh Lord (don't worry); the daughter of king of Mithila ("mithilēsakumārī"; i.e. Sita) would indeed be found. (2)

I was sitting here once with my ministers, discussing some matter. (3)

At that time I saw her being taken by the path of the sky; she was under the captivity of a kidnapper, and she was crying, lamenting and wailing very sorely. (4)

When she saw us, she cried aloud "Ram, Ram, Ram" in a very pitiful and distressed manner; then she dropped some pieces of her garments down from the sky⁴. [We have carefully preserved them as we realised that some lady was being abducted by a rascal, and may be her husband would come this way looking for her some day. Then we would give these pieces to him to convince him that we had indeed seen his wife being taken away by force. And if the need arises and it is within our abilities and the gentleman asks for our help, we would do our best.] (5)

[Note—¹The lesson which we learn here is that when a friendship is made there should be no strings attached to it, and all the friends should be treated equally; this makes the friendship last. Otherwise it would fall apart sooner or later.

²What was the need for Laxman to narrate the story of Lord Ram when Hanuman had already done so in Doha no. 4 herein above? Well, it is sure that Hanuman had limited his version to what Lord Ram had told him earlier when they met for the first time (Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 2 herein above); for Hanuman could not have known more than that from the mortal and worldly point of view though he had recognised the Lord at the subtler level of the Holy Spirit.

So Laxman deemed it necessary to add some more details besides the episode of Sita's abduction by some fiend. During this narration he must have told Sugriv how

Lord Ram had slayed the different demons before coming here. It was to impress upon Sugriv and the rest of his companions that Lord Ram was not an ordinary person whose wife has been stolen and who helplessly wanders here and there searching for her; so they ought to beware, show due respect to the Lord, and not take the Lord lightly in spite of the bond of friendship that makes Lord Ram equal to Sugriv, and the Lord's nature of being obliging and polite, for god forbid that someone offends the Lord for then there would be no one to protect the offender.

³Tears welled up in Sugriv's eyes; this indicates that he was very moved by the sorrowful condition of Lord Ram. This is how a good friend should be—he treats his friend's sorrows and misfortunes as his own, and does whatever he can to help his friend even if it could mean harm to his own personal interests. This fact would be reiterated later on by Lord Ram when Sugriv narrates his own tale of woes concerning how his elder brother Baali had thrown him out of the kingdom and taken his wife. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 7.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 25 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Sita called out Lord Ram's name so that the monkeys, who were sitting on the summit of the mountain, would know whose wife she was, so that when the Lord arrives and discloses his name they would immediately know that he is the husband of the lady who was forcibly taken away.]

मागा राम तुरत तेहिं दीन्हा । पट उर लाइ सोच अति कीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥
 कह सुग्रीव सुनहु रघुबीरा । तजहु सोच मन आनहु धीरा ॥ ७ ॥
 सब प्रकार करिहउँ सेवकाई । जेहि बिधि मिलिहि जानकी आई ॥ ८ ॥

māgā rāma turata tēhiṁ dīnhā. paṭa ura lā'i sōca ati kīnhā. 6.
 kaha sugrīva sunahu raghubīrā. tajahu sōca mana ānahu dhīrā. 7.
 saba prakāra kariha'um̐ sēvakā'ī. jēhi bidhi milihi jānakī ā'ī. 8.

Lord Ram asked for that piece of cloth, and Sugriv gave it to him immediately. The Lord held the cloth close to his heart even as he felt very sorrowful and sad. (6)

Observing the Lord's sadness and a sense of depression, Sugriv reassured him, saying, 'Listen oh Lord Raghubir. Set aside your worries, and have courage and fortitude. (7)

I will serve you in all possible ways and employ all the means at my disposal¹ so that Janki ("jānakī"; the daughter of king Janak; Sita) can come and meet you². (8)

[Note—¹A true friend is one who would employ all his resources and go out of his way to help his friend in times of need. Lord Ram has too affirmed this noble quality of a friend in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 7 as we have already noted.

²Sugriv told Lord Ram that he need not worry on any count; he would not need to go anywhere or wander in the forest searching for Sita. The Lord can sit comfortably right here in Kishkindha, and Sugriv will do the rest for him—he would send messengers in all the directions to find out where Sita was. That is what he means by saying that he would do everything possible by which Sita would come here.

Section 6.1.5 Lord Ram spends the rainy season on Mt. Pravarsan, and at the end of this season reconnoitring teams of spies and scouts are sent in all directions to find the whereabouts of Sita:

Lord Ram restored the honour of Sugriv by being instrumental in the latter regaining his right to the throne of Kishkindha. After making Sugriv the king, Lord Ram decided to spend some time on a nearby mountain called Prabarshan. It was because the summer season had ended and the rains had arrived, and during the rainy season it was not advisable to start the search for Sita in the wilds.

When the four months of the rainy season ended and autumn approached and winter was not far off, Lord Ram summoned Sugriv and asked him to keep his promise by launching a search for Sita. Monkeys and bears from everywhere in the kingdom were called to the capital on the orders of their king Sugriv; groups were formed and ordered to go in all the directions and look for Sita.

One such group consisted of chiefs of the monkeys and bears, viz. Hanuman himself, Angad who was the prince of the kingdom and a nephew of Sugriv, Jamvant who was the chief of the bears, Nal and Neel who were the architects of the kingdom, and others. They headed to the south on the advice of Sugriv as this group had watched the chariot taking away Sita through the path of the sky in that direction.

This group reached the shore of the southern ocean, and then the roaring and heaving ocean stopped their progress like an insurmountable and formidable barrier. Here they met Sampati, a brother of Jatayu, the vulture whom Lord Ram had met earlier, and he advised this group that Sita was held captive in Lanka as he could soar high in the sky and see her sitting remorsefully under a tree in the garden of the demon king Ravana. So therefore anyone who could surmount the mighty barrier of the ocean, and was strong enough to take on the demons of Lanka head on right inside their impregnable fort, would be able to meet Sita.

At this point it was decided that Hanuman would fit the bill perfectly as he had the qualities needed to successfully accomplish this formidable task. And so he got the privilege of being the one who would cross the ocean and go to meet Sita. Once there, Hanuman would reassure her that redemption was soon to come if she displayed a little more of patience, courage and resilience.

These episodes are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it; (ii) from Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 18; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Doha no. 23 as follows:-

कह प्रभु सुनु सुग्रीव हरीसा । पुर न जाउँ दस चारि बरीसा ॥ ७ ॥

गत ग्रीष्म बरषा रितु आई । रहिहउँ निकट सैल पर छाई ॥ ८ ॥
 अंगद सहित करहु तुम्ह राजू । संतत हृदयँ धरेहु मम काजू ॥ ९ ॥
 जब सुग्रीव भवन फिरि आए । रामु प्रबरषन गिरि पर छाए ॥ १० ॥

kaha prabhu sunu sugrīva harīsā. pura na jā'uṁ dasa cāri barīsā. 7.
 gata grīṣama baraṣā ritu ā'ī. rahiha'uṁ nikaṭa saila para chā'ī. 8.
 aṅgada sahita karahu tumha rājū. santata hrdayaṁ dharēhu mama kājū. 9.
 jaba sugrīva bhavana phiri ā'ē. rāmu prabaraṣana giri para chā'ē. 10.

The Lord (Sri Ram) said, 'Listen Sugriv, the lord of the monkeys (sugrīva harīsā). I will not enter a city (or town) for ten and four years (dasa cāri barīsā)¹. (7)

The summer months had passed, and the rainy season has arrived. So for the time being, I will stay on the nearby hill (named Pravarshan)². (8)

You and Angad (Sugriv's nephew and son of his elder brother Baali) jointly rule over the kingdom³, but during the period you must always remember my work (of searching Sita). (9)

When Sugriv returned home, Lord Ram took his abode on Mt. Pravarshan⁴ nearby. (10)

[Note—¹This is because Lord Ram was exceptionally diligent in keeping his words. He was sent to the forest by his step-mother Kaikeyi who had prevailed upon the Lord's father king Dasrath to send the Lord for fourteen years in the forest attired as a hermit, and live there a secluded life of renunciation that is suitable for a hermit. As such it would not be proper for the Lord to enter a city or a town. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.

It is to be noted that Lord Ram addresses Sugriv with the words "lord of monkeys", which means a king of monkeys. It was to show him due honour like one great king would show another. Lord Ram was attired as a hermit and not as a king, and so it would not seem good and proper to address Sugriv as a 'friend' when all his ministers and chiefs were in attendance; it would undermine his royal position and dignity in the eyes of his subjects.

Besides this political prudence there was another subtle reason of Lord Ram calling Sugriv 'a lord or king of the monkeys'. He wanted to tell Sugriv to remember the promise he had made to the Lord that he would go all out to search for Sita—because a right honourable king is known by his words, for a king's word is his honour. He is a 'lord' of the monkeys, so if he gives orders no one would refuse. Then again, Sugriv can't take the excuse that he has no manpower—for he had the resources of the monkey kingdom at his command. Refer verse no. 9 herein below.

The Lord's apprehension that Sugriv would forget his work once he gets the throne and his wife back is clearly articulated by him in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 18 which we shall read shortly below.

²It would be very difficult to launch a search for Sita during the rainy season; so the Lord decided to give a break. It was also intended to help Sugriv get some time to get

his bearings in order and to consolidate his position in the kingdom in the aftermath of the duel in which his elder brother Baali was killed. Some period of time was needed to stabilise things and restore order; since the rainy season lasts for roughly three to four months there was ample time for Sugriv.

³Lord Ram had virtually limited Sugriv's powers by telling him to rule the kingdom alongside his nephew Angad. The Lord had feared that there were high chances that Sugriv would get rid of Angad as he would think the latter posed a danger to him because he was the son of his arch-enemy Baali who had been killed so that Sugriv could ascend the throne. The Lord did not want this to happen; Angad was a boy, and he can never be held responsible for the ill deeds of his father Baali.

The Lord wished to ensure that Angad got his due respect in the kingdom, and is not barred from his rights and privileges. Sugriv had no choice but to obey the Lord's orders to rule the kingdom jointly with Angad, because it was the Lord who had been instrumental in Sugriv getting the crown, and Sugriv had already tested the powers and strengths of Lord Ram prior to challenging Baali so he dared not oppose him or disobey him. This is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 7.

By this singular advice the Lord also made Angad highly favourable towards himself, as now Angad would also feel obliged to the Lord for ensuring that his uncle Sugriv did not torment him or quietly usurp all powers and disenfranchise him as he was the son of his arch-enemy Baali. Any feeling of injustice or bias that Angad may have harboured inside his heart was immediately done away with. In due course of time Angad became an ardent follower and devotee of Lord Ram no less than was Hanuman, and the Lord too showed Angad the respect and confidence he deserved.

Lord Ram had judged by this time that he could not rely too much on Sugriv; he appeared to be a selfish creature. There were ample hints for this—(a) Sugriv had not hesitated in getting his brother Baali killed just to get the crown of the kingdom; he could also have proposed a power-sharing mechanism instead of outright killing his brother; (b) Sugriv did not propose to Lord Ram that if the Lord did not wish to enter the capital of the kingdom then he could stay in a cottage or hut that Sugriv would get constructed on the outskirts, instead of living on a hill during the rainy season as it would be very uncomfortable; he did not think of it once his desire to get the throne was fulfilled!

This is why the Lord reminded Sugriv to remember the promise he had made to him with respect to searching for Sita.

⁴The words “prabaraṣana giri” mean a hill where there is an abundance of rain. This hill was part of the mountain range known as Malyawan.]

दो०. प्रथमहिं देवन्ह गिरि गुहा राखेउ रुचिर बनाइ ।

राम कृपानिधि कछु दिन बास करहिंगे आइ ॥ १२ ॥

dōhā.

prathamahim dēvanha giri guhā rākhē'u rucira banā'i.
rāma kṛpānidhi kachu dina bāsa karahiṅgē ā'i. 12.

In the meantime, the gods had prepared a nice cave on this hill, making it as comfortable and pleasant as possible, in anticipation that Lord Ram, who is an abode of grace, mercy and kindness, would come here and stay for a while. (Doha no. 12)

चौ०. बरषा गत निर्मल रितु आई । सुधि न तात सीता कै पाई ॥ १ ॥
 एक बार कैसेहुँ सुधि जानौं । कालहु जीति निमिष महुँ आनौं ॥ २ ॥
 कतहुँ रहउ जाँ जीवति होई । तात जतन करि आनउँ सोई ॥ ३ ॥
 सुग्रीवहुँ सुधि मोरि बिसारी । पावा राज कोस पुर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

baraṣā gata nirmala ritu āī. sudhi na tāta sītā kai pāī. 1.
 ēka bāra kaisēhuṁ sudhi jānaum. kālahu jīti nimiṣa mahuṁ ānaum. 2.
 katahuṁ raha'u jaum jīvati hōī. tāta jatana kari āna'um sōī. 3.
 sugrīvahuṁ sudhi mōri bisārī. pāvā rāja kōsa pura nārī. 4.

[Four months of the rainy season passed and it appeared that Sugriv had forgotten about his promise to Lord Ram regarding the search for Sita as he had done nothing in this direction. This enraged the Lord, and he told Laxman to go and bring Sugriv to him by a ‘show’ of fear and anger—i.e. by pretending to be angry, and casting fear in his mind.]

Lord Ram confided to Laxman (his constant companion and younger brother), ‘My dear; the rainy season has ended and the clear weather of autumn has arrived, but yet we have not got any hints about the whereabouts of Sita. (1)

If I get any bit of information, whether good or not so good, about her, by any means whatsoever and from any quarter, I will vanquish even the god of death and recover her literally in a flash of a moment (i.e. very soon). (2)

Wherever she may be, if she is alive, then oh my dear, I will bring her by deploying whatever means are needed for the purpose. (3)

Unfortunately, even Sugriv has all but forgotten about me and my work once he has got his kingdom and wife back. (4)

[Note—These verses show Lord Ram’s anguish and dismay at Sugriv’s attitude. Sugriv became indulgent in his affairs of the kingdom, all but forgetting the word he had given to the Lord about sending messengers in all directions to search for Sita.

The forest-dwelling tribes are accustomed to inclement and harsh weather such as rainy season or the summer months unlike humans living in towns and cities. So had Sugriv been diligent and conscientious he would have sent messengers to find out Sita, and by the end of three of four months the required information should have been got. But nothing was done.

The Lord had given him a long time of four or so months to find the whereabouts of Sita, but there was no news; Sugriv had not even bothered to pay a courtesy call on the two brothers since they came to live on Mt. Pravarshan. This attitude of negligence was annoying, and it irritated Lord Ram.]

दो०. तब अनुजहि समुझावा रघुपति करुना सींव ।
भय देखाइ लै आवहु तात सखा सुग्रीव ॥ १८ ॥

dōhā.

taba anujahi samujhāvā raghupati karunā sīnva.
bhaya dēkhā'i lai āvahu tāta sakhā sugrīva. 18.

Then Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram), who was an embodiment of limitless compassion and grace (karunā sīnva)¹, advised Laxman, ‘My dear (tāta); go to my friend Sugriv (sakhā sugrīva) and pretend to be angry at him, just to instil fear in him, and then bring him here to me.’ (Doha no. 18)

[Note—¹The epithet “karunā sīnva” has been added for Lord Ram here to clarify that when the Lord instructed Laxman to show anger and make Sugriv fearful, it was just for show and not actually intended to harm him, for the Lord immediately calls Sugriv his “friend”; it would be highly wrong to harm one’s friend.

But Sugriv had become indulgent and neglected even his benefactor Lord Ram, so he deserved some scolding. Even a father scolds his son over wrongdoing; a good friend too would admonish his buddy if he thinks the latter is erring or failing to do what is rightly expected of him.

To wit, this anger and threatening were merely to bring Sugriv to his senses—for Lord Ram is so merciful and compassionate that he can never ever think of harming anyone, least of all his friend whom he himself had put on the throne.]

चौ०. इहाँ पवनसुत हृदयँ बिचारा । राम काजु सुग्रीवँ बिसारा ॥ १ ॥
निकट जाइ चरनन्हि सिरु नावा । चारिहु बिधि तेहि कहि समुझावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ihāṁ pavanasuta hr̥dayaṁ bicārā. rāma kāju sugrīvaṁ bisārā. 1.
nikaṭa jā'i carananhi siru nāvā. cārihu bidhi tēhi kahi samujhāvā. 2.

Here in the capital, meanwhile, Hanuman too was restless and became alarmed because a long time had passed and Sugriv did not seem inclined to pursue Lord Ram’s work; it looked as he (Sugriv) had all but forgotten about it. (1)

So Hanuman went near him and bowed at his feet. Then he explained the situation squarely to Sugriv from all its four angles. [To wit, Hanuman warned Sugriv of the dire consequences of his negligent attitude.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹The phrase used in the text is “cārihu bidhi” to indicate the way Hanuman explained the gravity of the situation to Sugriv. The word “cārihu” means ‘all the four’, and “bidhi” means ways or means. To wit, Hanuman told Sugriv the pros and cons of neglecting Lord Ram’s work and going back on his own words of helping the Lord find Sita by sending messengers in all the directions to search for her. {Refer:

Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 5.}

He warned Sugriv that if the Lord becomes angry and decides to dethrone him, then god forbid, there would be no succour for Sugriv. Sugriv had ascended the throne only by taking the help of the Lord, for he alone was unable to overcome his arch enemy Baali in order to claim the crown, and he was well aware of the Lord's strength as he had himself tested it when he made Lord Ram fling the huge bones of the demon Dundhuvi as well as fell the seven tall trees that grew on them by a single arrow. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 7.}

Besides this, Angad, the son of Baali, would be too willing to settle scores with his uncle Sugriv who had killed his father; the danger loomed from within his own palace as Angad would revolt if he sees that Lord Ram too is angry with Sugriv, and surely there were many ways open to Angad to take revenge, for obviously there would be a number of courtiers who would like to see Angad on the throne and take sides with him. Sugriv faced the prospects of mutiny, poisoning, civil war, assassination and blood shed etc.

Then there was the burden of shame and ignominy of a king rescinding on his words of honour, of being ungrateful to his friend Lord Ram who had risked his reputation for the sake of putting Sugriv on the throne. What face would he have to show to his countrymen; he would be ridiculed, censored, looked down upon and be a butt of joke. No one in the future would rely on him or his words; it will create anarchy and spark disobedience in his subjects. No one would fear or respect him, as all will know that Sugriv was a selfish creature who has no scruples.

Hanuman also reminded Sugriv of how Lord Ram had displayed his strength by slaying formidable demons, episodes that were briefly outlined by Laxman. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5.}

So Hanuman advised Sugriv that he would be wise to become alert and immediately take remedial steps—which were first to start the search for Sita without delay, and then meet Lord Ram and apologise to him. Should the Lord enquire what he was doing all this time, Sugriv would have a ready excuse that a large number of messengers have already been dispatched for the purpose; otherwise he would have no answer in his defense.]

सुनि सुग्रीवँ परम भय माना । बिषयँ मोर हरि लीन्हैउ ग्याना ॥ ३ ॥
अब मारुतसुत दूत समूहा । पठवहु जहँ तहँ बानर जूहा ॥ ४ ॥
कहहु पाख महुँ आव न जोई । मोरें कर ता कर बध होई ॥ ५ ॥

sunī sugrīvam̐ parama bhaya mānā. biṣayaṁ mōra hari līnhē'u gyānā. 3.
aba mārutasuta dūta samūhā. paṭhavahu jaham̐ taham̐ bānara jūhā. 4.
kahahu pākha mahum̐ āva na jō'ī. mōrēm̐ kara tā kara badha hō'ī. 5.

When Sugriv heard of the gravity of the possibilities that he faced, he was sore alarmed and affright. He regretted and said, 'Indulgences in material world had eclipsed my wisdom and sense of propriety. (3)

Now oh the Son of the Wind God (Hanuman)¹, send heralds on errands in all the directions where great communities of monkeys and bears live. (4)

Tell them to convey to all the communities an urgent message from me, that if any of them do not come here within a time frame of ‘half a month’ (“pākha mahum̐”; fifteen days) then he would be killed by my hands.² (5)

[Note—¹The use of the phrase ‘son of the wind god’ for Hanuman is significant. Speed and agility was needed at this time; natural barriers such as hills, mountains, rivers and forests had also to be confronted. The ‘wind’ has the ability to go anywhere it likes, and there is no barrier that can hinder its passage. That is why Sugriv invokes this uniqueness in Hanuman to remind him of his abilities and motivate him to act fast like his father the Wind God.

²Some sort of threatening and coercive methods were usually employed by kings and emperors to make those reluctant to follow their commands fall in line. Otherwise, half of those who were summoned would cook up some excuse for not coming.

Once Sugriv realised the seriousness of the situation, he lost no time to act; the ‘fifteen day’ time proves his sense of urgency. Why was it not said: ‘tell them to come here “immediately” ’? Well, the kingdom of Kishkindha was a wild territory consisting of forests, mountains, hills, valleys, rivers and the un-chartered wilderness in general. It will take time for the messengers to reach each corner of this unmapped but extensive territory; then some time must be given to the summoned monkeys and bears to prepare and make arrangements at home for their personal affairs before departure, and then some time would be taken cover the distance from their homes to reach the capitol.]

तब हनुमंत बोलाए दूता । सब कर करि सनमान बहूता ॥ ६ ॥
भय अरु प्रीति नीति देखराई । चले सकल चरनन्हि सिर नाई ॥ ७ ॥
एहि अवसर लछिमन पुर आए । क्रोध देखि जहँ तहँ कपि धाए ॥ ८ ॥

taba hanumanta bōlā'ē dūtā. saba kara kari sanamāna bahūtā. 6.
bhaya aru prīti nīti dēkharā'ī. calē sakala carananhi sira nā'ī. 7.
ēhi avasara lachimana pura ā'ē. krōdha dēkhi jahaṁ tahaṁ kapi dhā'ē. 8.

Then Hanuman called the messengers; he extended great cordiality towards them, praising them and their qualities, and in general showing them a special treatment by way of honouring them and giving them due respect¹. (6)

After this initial gestures of cordiality, Hanuman became solemn as he calmly explained the gravity of the situation and the seriousness of the issue for which these heralds were summoned. He used the usual tricks of politics and statecraft to drive the point home by using a mixture of fear, threat, affection and rewards, as well as the propriety and probity of the work they were expected to do. [To wit, it was a ‘carrot and stick’ approach.]

After this briefing, all of the heralds bowed before him (Hanuman) and set off on their mission². (7)

Just at that time, Laxman entered the city angrily (as advised by Lord Ram). All the monkeys ran hither and thither seeing him angry. (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman was very wise, erudite and clever. He wished to ensure loyalty and total commitment of the heralds for the project in hand, so he played on their sense of self-respect, ego and emotions by showing special treatment to them; this ensured that they would be enthusiastic towards doing the task which was to be assigned to them. His cordial welcome to the messengers immediately struck an emotional cord of friendship and loyalty with them, and created a spontaneous bond that endeared him to all of them as they felt very privileged and honoured to have been chosen for this grand assignment.

²We have read earlier that Lord Ram too had adopted this tact to make Sugriv relent and make arrangements for sending troops of messengers in search of Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 18.

It was indeed a ‘carrot and stick’ approach: Hanuman told those who were assembled that if they did not obey then it would be tantamount to disobedience and disloyalty towards their king, in case of which they would be severely punished; if on the other hand they did their duty diligently then the king would reward them in material terms, give them titles of honour, and grant them largesse.

As regards the propriety of them being sent to search for Sita, it was in perfect order as a rascal had kidnapped the lawful wife of a gentleman, and it is an honourable duty of all, and a noble deed indeed, to help such a person in distress; its reward would be immense in both material terms, in addition to having good fame and emotional contentment of a task well done for a good cause.

All the messengers were convinced, and they cheerfully volunteered to do their best.]

दो०. धनुष चढ़ाइ कहा तब जारि करउँ पुर छार ।

ब्याकुल नगर देखि तब आयउ बालिकुमार ॥ १९ ॥

dōhā.

dhanuṣa caṛhā'i kahā taba jāri kara'uṁ pura chāra.

byākula nagara dēkhi taba āya'u bālikumāra. 19.

He (Laxman) raised his stringed bow and mounted an arrow on it. Then he said angrily, ‘I will burn the city to ashes.’

When the son of Baali (“bālikumāra”; Angad) observed that the whole city was terrified and in turmoil, he came to meet Laxman (to calm him down)¹. (Doha no. 19)

[Note—¹It is very significant that Angad decided voluntarily, or he was asked by Sugriv or Hanuman, to go and meet Laxman. Angad was very certain that Laxman would not harm him. Why was it so? It was because his father Baali had held his hand and gave it to Lord Ram just at the time when he was dying, with a prayerful request that the Lord must take care of his son Angad and forever treat him as his servant, or

as his follower and dependant. This is expressly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Lord Ram and Laxman were morally bound by this last wish of Baali made just before he died; it was sacrosanct and could not be bargained or set aside in any condition. So after this moment Lord Ram took great care to ensure Angad was given due respect and honour; that he was shown given full dignity as a prince of the kingdom, and the Lord treated Angad with a kind heart for all times to come. This is the reason why Angad was sure that no harm would come to him from Laxman.

Earlier Lord Ram had made Angad the crown prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha while anointing Sugriv as its king; then the Lord had ordered Sugriv to share the responsibility of ruling the kingdom equally with Angad. By these two gestures the Lord ensured that Angad is not treated unfairly and like a second class citizen; and that after the death of Sugriv the throne would pass on to Angad. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 11; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12.}

Another important reason for selecting Angad to go out and meet Laxman is this: Sugriv was the king, and Angad was the crown prince. When a guest arrives in the kingdom it is usual practice that the prince is sent out to welcome him near the gates of the city, and the king receives the guest in the palace. So this custom was followed here, and since this was in order, therefore Laxman did not mind it.]

चौ०. चरन नाइ सिरु बिनती कीन्ही । लछिमन अभय बाँह तेहि दीन्ही ॥ १ ॥

क्रोधवंत लछिमन सुनि काना । कह कपीस अति भयँ अकुलाना ॥ २ ॥

सुनु हनुमंत संग लै तारा । करि बिनती समुझाउ कुमारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

carana nā'i siru binatī kīnhī. lachimana abhaya bāṁha tēhi dīnhī. 1.
krōdhavanta lachimana suni kānā. kaha kapīsa ati bhayaṁ akulānā. 2.
sunu hanumanta saṅga lai tārā. kari binatī samujhā'u kumārā. 3.

Angad came to Laxman, bowed his head at the latter's feet, and offered his prayers. At this humble and polite approach of Angad, Laxman was pleased; he extended his hands to hold of Angad's arms affectionately, and told Angad that he has nothing to fear from him. (1)

Meanwhile, inside the palace when the king of the monkeys (i.e. Sugriv) heard that Laxman is vehemently angry, he was terrified to his wits end.

He called Hanuman and instructed him urgently, 'Listen Hanumam; take Tara (the widow of Baali and the mother of Angad) with you, and go out to pray politely to the prince ("kumārā"; Laxman) and explain to him the situation¹. (2-3)

[Note—¹Sugriv decided to send Tara and Hanuman as he was sure that they, along with Angad who was already out to meet Laxman and given assurance of no harm from the latter, would be able to persuade Laxman to calm down and excuse the family for any misconduct done or error committed by them. The three—Angad, his mother Tara, and Hanuman—would together apologise on behalf of their king Sugriv.

One more reason was there for sending Tara. A noble man would never insult or harm a woman, especially when she was not at fault at all, nor would he use any

abusive or uncouth language in her presence. So this was a sure-shot method to rein-
in Laxman's anger.]

तारा सहित जाइ हनुमाना । चरन बंदि प्रभु सुजस बखाना ॥ ४ ॥
करि बिनती मंदिर लै आए । चरन पखारि पलंग बैठाए ॥ ५ ॥
तब कपीस चरनन्हि सिरु नावा । गहि भुज लछिमन कंठ लगावा ॥ ६ ॥

tārā sahita jā'i hanumānā. carana bandi prabhu sujasa bakhānā. 4.
kari binatī mandira lai ā'ē. carana pakhāri palam̐ga baiṭhā'ē. 5.
taba kapīsa carananhi siru nāvā. gahi bhuja lachimana kaṇṭha lagāvā. 6.

Hanuman went along with Tara to pay their obeisance at the feet of Laxman; then they praised the glories of the Lord (i.e. of Lord Ram)¹. (4)

Then they prayed to him (Laxman) and requested him to come to the palace. Once there, they washed his feet reverentially and offered a cot as a seat for him sit down upon². (5)

At that moment Sugriv came and bowed his head at Laxman's feet. Laxman immediately took him by his arms and affectionately hugged him³. (6)

[Note—¹It was a clever strategy devised by Hanuman: Laxman cannot harm a person who has politely submitted himself before him, as well as praises Lord Ram at the same time.

²In a king's palace the guest of honour is given a high seat, whereas in an ordinary home he is seated on a sitting mat spread on the ground. So that's why a 'cot' was offered to Laxman.

³Sugriv was watching the proceedings from a hiding place; so when he observed that Laxman has calmed down and was in a friendly mood, he ventured out and came to meet him.

Laxman was instructed by Lord Ram to make a 'show' of anger and create fear as clearly stated in Doha no. 18 herein above; Laxman did not intend actual harm to anyone. So as soon as he saw Sugriv bow his head before him as a token of submission, Laxman grabbed this opportunity without a second thought, and reciprocated warmly by embracing Sugriv so as to put to rest any trace of apprehension that the latter might have had.

All bitterness was forgotten and forgiven; it was bonhomie and goodwill once again. This sudden change was crucial and essential—for, after all, the two brothers knew that they would need the full support of the monkeys and bears to successfully recover Sita. Hence there was no point to unnecessarily prolong the stand-off.]

नाथ बिषय सम मद कछु नाहीं । मुनि मन मोह करइ छन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
सुनत बिनीत बचन सुख पावा । लछिमन तेहि बहु बिधि समुझावा ॥ ८ ॥

पवन तनय सब कथा सुनाई । जेहि बिधि गए दूत समुदाई ॥ ९ ॥

nātha biṣaya sama mada kachu nāhīm. muni mana mōha kara'i chana māhīm.
7.

sunata binīta bacana sukha pāvā. lachimana tēhi bahu bidhi samujhāvā. 8.
pavana tanaya saba kathā sunāī. jēhi bidhi ga'ē dūta samudāī. 9.

Sugriv said (by way of an apology and defence of his position), 'Oh Lord. There is no stronger intoxicating force that deludes a living being than the attractions of the sense objects of the material world which create delusions and attachments in the Mana (heart and mind) of even great sages.

[So, I request you to please excuse for my error and forgive me for the negligence caused due to this natural shortcoming of all living beings. Yes indeed it is true that I had become indulgent in the affairs of the world and had all but forgotten the promise I had made to Lord Ram. But I prithe to be kind on me, and forgive me for my irresponsible behaviour. I am at your service now.]' (7)

Hearing these polite words of humility, Laxman felt very pleased. Then he reassured Sugriv in many ways and explained the different aspects of the situation to him¹. (8)

At this juncture, Hanuman told Laxman everything about the large numbers of messengers being already dispatched in all the four direction with instructions to search for Sita and bring the news as quick as possible within a fixed time frame. (9)

[Note—¹To wit, Laxman assured Sugriv that neither he nor Lord Ram have any ill-will against him in the least; they had utmost trust and faith in him. The reason given by Sugriv was understandable; and he need not worry any longer.

Laxman may have also impressed upon him the urgency of the matter, for the longer it takes to locate Sita and recover her, the lesser would be the chance to find her in sustainable health, or even alive—because Sita may die due to grief and hopelessness if not found in time.

Besides this, the Lord had to return to Ayodhya as soon as the fourteen year period of forest exile ended, because if he did not return in the stipulated time his dear brother Bharat had vowed to end his life after that period. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 116 where Lord Ram himself makes this declaration.}

Hence, no more time is to be spent in searching for and recovering Sita.]

दो०. हरषि चले सुग्रीव तब अंगदादि कपि साथ ।

रामानुज आगें करि आए जहँ रघुनाथ ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

haraṣi calē sugrīva taba aṅgadādi kapi sātha.
rāmānuja āgēm kari ā'ē jaham raghunātha. 20.

Then Sugriv, Angad and the Kapi (i.e. Hanuman) together set off cheerfully to meet Lord Ram. Keeping Laxman in front to lead them¹, they arrived at the dwelling of Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram) (on Mt. Pravarshan)². (Doha no. 20)

[Note—¹Why was Laxman made to lead the group? There are two obvious reasons:

(a) None of them knew the exact place where Lord Ram lived on Mt. Pravarshan, because when Lord Ram took his leave of Sugriv after anointing him as the king of Kishkindha, it was Laxman alone who accompanied the Lord to the cave where they took up dwelling during the rainy season. No one amongst the monkeys knew this location. So it was necessary to have Laxman lead them to the correct cave.

(b) The group consisting of Sugriv, Angad and Hanuman were afraid because Lord Ram was angry with them. So if they kept Laxman in the front when they came face-to-face with Lord Ram, he would signal to the Lord that all was peaceful and in line with his wishes; so the chances of the Lord bursting out in anger as soon as he saw these ungrateful monkeys would be taken care of.

²In Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-3 we read about the time when Sugriv comes to meet Lord Ram on Mt. Pravarshan; the moment has been beautifully described as follows:- “They (i.e. Sugriv, Hanuman, and Laxman who was sent by Lord Ram to bring Sugriv to him) saw Lord Ram sitting on a stone slab on the mouth of the cave. He was attired in a deer skin, was dark complexioned, had a crown of matted hairs on his head (1), had large eyes, was calm, tranquil and serene, and his charming face had a smile of a man lost in some pleasant thoughts so much so that he is unaware of his surroundings. The Lord was so overwhelmed by the emotional torment created due to the agony of separation from his beloved wife Sita that he appeared to be weary and haggard even as he gazed absent-mindedly at the deer and birds that moved around him* (2).

Sugriv and Laxman got down from the chariot a little away, and came and fell down at his feet with devotion and reverence (3).

{*When Sugriv arrived at the cave where Lord Ram dwelt on Mt. Pravarshan, he found him sitting motionless, lost in deep thoughts. The Lord had a melancholic expression spread over his countenance that betrayed his emotional state of extreme sadness and profound gloom which was made all the more striking by the presence of a frozen smile on his dark-complexioned face and lotus-like eyes that were transfixed at a distant point where some deer and birds were moving around carelessly, for the smile and the gaze indicated that a huge emotional storm was blowing inside him as he was deeply lost in reminiscences and thoughts of Sita.}]

चौ०. नाइ चरन सिरु कह कर जोरी । नाथ मोहि कछु नाहिन खोरी ॥ १ ॥

अतिसय प्रबल देव तव माया । छूटइ राम करहु जौं दाया ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nā'i carana siru kaha kara jōrī. nātha mōhi kachu nāhina khōrī. 1.

atisaya prabala dēva tava māyā. chūṭa'i rāma karahu jaurm dāyā. 2.

[When Sugriv met Lord Ram he apologised for the delay in carrying out the Lord's wish, which was to send messengers in all the directions to search for Sita. In the very beginning itself he defended himself by saying that it was not his mistake that he had

forgotten the Lord's work and got involved in worldly affairs as it was due to the overpowering influence of the Lord's delusion-creating powers called 'Maya' that he got distracted from his path.]

Sugriv bowed his head reverentially at the feet of Lord Ram and politely made his submission, 'Oh Lord! I am not at fault (that I had become indulgent and all but forgot to carry out your orders). (1)

Oh Lord; your delusion-creating powers called Maya are extremely formidable and insurmountable; they are difficult to cope with. Oh Lord Ram! The firm grip of Maya can be broken or overcome only if you show mercy, grace and benevolence (upon the creature who has come under its influence). (2)

बिषय बस्य सुर नर मुनि स्वामी । मैं पावँर पसु कपि अति कामी ॥ ३ ॥
 नारि नयन सर जाहि न लागा । घोर क्रोध तम निसि जो जागा ॥ ४ ॥
 लोभ पाँस जेहिं गर न बाँधाया । सो नर तुम्ह समान रघुराया ॥ ५ ॥
 यह गुन साधन ते नहिं होई । तुम्हरी कृपाँ पाव कोइ कोइ ॥ ६ ॥

biṣaya basya sura nara muni svāmī. mair̥m pāvaṁra pasu kapi ati kāmī. 3.
 nāri nayana sara jāhi na lāgā. ghōra krōdha tama nisi jō jāgā. 4.
 lōbha pāṁsa jēhiṁ gara na baṁdhāyā. sō nara tumha samāna raghurāyā. 5.
 yaha guna sādhanā tēm nahim hōī. tumharī kṛpāṁ pāva kō'i kōī. 6.

Even the gods, the humans and the sages, who are higher up in the hierarchy of creation, are not free from the tentacles of attachment to, and attraction for, the comforts and pleasures originating from the sense objects of this material world that Maya creates, so where do I, a lowly and humble creature of limited intellect whose form is like that of a monkey, stand against the formidable force of Maya?¹ (3)

He who has not been pierced by the symbolic arrow shot at him in the form of passionate, longing glances of a woman (i.e. he who succeeds in controlling himself and is not moved by gestures of lust and passion shown by a lovelorn lady), he who manages to remain awake in the horribly dark night symbolised by anger (i.e. he who is not provoked but remains calm and exercises self-control over his emotions when faced with an angry tirade, insinuations or ridicule by his adversaries) [4], ---

--- he who is not tied by the snare of greed and rapacity (i.e. he who overcomes all tendencies of greed and yearning, and practices exemplary renunciation and dispassion)—well, oh Lord, such a man as he is regarded as being similar to you (i.e. he is worthy of honour, respect, adoration, admiration, praise and glories that are similar to yours) [5] (4-5)

These qualities or virtues are not attainable by effort and by employing any other means, but it is only by your grace and mercy that some rare individuals are able to acquire them.² (6)

[Note—¹“To wit, when such exalted beings as gods and sages, as well as humans who are considered as being the first amongst all the members of the animal kingdom, are

not spared from the influence of delusions that bind them to this artificial world of sensual charms, then say who am I in their comparison, for I am a lowly monkey (literally a “lowly animal; *pāvaṁra pasu*”) by birth, and as such I have a fickle mind that is inherently attracted to sensual pleasures and is naturally inclined to be indulgent in the affairs of the world. So I may be forgiven and excused for my errors and negligence.”

Sugriv had made the same excuse before Laxman in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20 herein above.

²To wit, the excellent characters noted above are rare in a living being. The few who are privileged to have them are those who are blessed by Lord Ram, for it is only by his grace and benevolence that one can have them.

Sugriv means that it is actually the fault of the Lord’s Maya that he had become so deluded as to forget about the urgency of the Lord’s work. But when the Lord decided to clear the influence of Maya, Sugriv was alerted about his mistake and made aware of his duties and responsibilities.

We will read in the next verse no. 7 that Lord Ram ‘smiled’, of course in amusement, at this logic of Sugriv and the excuse made by him!]

तब रघुपति बोले मुसुकाई । तुम्ह प्रिय मोहि भरत जिमि भाई ॥ ७ ॥

अब सोइ जतनु करहु मन लाई । जेहि बिधि सीता कै सुधि पाई ॥ ८ ॥

taba raghupati bōlē musukāī. tumha priya mōhi bharata jimi bhāī. 7.
aba sō'i jatanu karahu mana lāī. jēhi bidhi sītā kai sudhi pāī. 8.

Then Lord of the Raghus (“raghupati”; Lord Ram) smiled¹ and said, ‘You are dear to me like my brother Bharat is. (7)

However, please now make necessary arrangements, with all diligence and sincerity in your mind and heart (*jatanu karahu mana lāī*), so that the whereabouts of Sita can be known.² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was quite amused by what Sugriv had said, so he smiled. Sugriv had found a ready-made excuse for his own follies by blaming the Maya of the Lord, which is universally blamed for the common tendency of all creatures to be indulgent in the material world, become selfish, pervert and sinful, get distracted from the correct path of righteousness and probity, and suffer from their horrible consequences.

The Lord smiled also because if he had not sent Laxman to give Sugriv a threat then the latter would have continued with his earlier ways, but now he seems to have become a philosopher, and it is more out of fear for his life than actually because he is a righteous man of scruples who regrets that he had erred. Why so? Because if Sugriv indeed had some sense of probity and propriety in him, even a rudimentary one, then he would not have thought of getting his own elder brother Baali killed for the sake of the throne of Kishkindha, and then so quickly forgetting the promise he made to someone, in this case Lord Ram, whose support he had taken to get rid of his brother. If he had been a creature of principles and scruples then he would have preferred to ask Lord Ram to help him get his rights back from Baali instead of getting him killed outright. And now he is preaching!

²Anyway, Lord Ram needed Sugriv's help to accomplish the mammoth task that was at hand—first to find out where Sita was, and then launch a campaign to retrieve her. The Lord needed manpower and logistics for this purpose, and so it was wise not to stretch the matter too far to the point that Sugriv is so embarrassed in public and ashamed of himself that he decides to square up his insult and humiliation by quietly revolting against the Lord and pulling the rug from under the Lord's feet at a crucial moment during the campaign to liberate Sita; there were chances that he may even share the secrets of the military strategy with Ravana, or order his troops to turn around when the war is just about to be won.

To wit, if Sugriv felt offended and humiliated in public in any way, and consequentially decides to turn hostile towards Lord Ram and Laxman to avenge his insult, then it would be a very bad thing for the two brothers as they were all alone in an alien land surrounded by unknown persons about whom nothing can be predicted. So it would be literally suicidal to push Sugriv to the corner, and shame him so much that he is too upset and loses his restraint to become emotionally aggressive towards the Lord; should it actually happen it would be fatal, especially because Laxman had threatened Sugriv in his own city while all his subjects were watching, and though Sugriv got scared initially but it is quite possible that he has taken offence in his heart for this public rebuke, and is looking for an excuse to rescind on his promise made to Lord Ram, and even take the two brothers hostage for insulting the king of Kishkindha. In this eventuality, the subjects of the kingdom would obviously and naturally side with their king instead of with total strangers like Lord Ram and Laxman.

So the risks were too great to make Sugriv feel uneasy beyond a limit. Hence, as soon as a window of opportunity came by way of Sugriv himself coming to submit and make excuses, the Lord was too willing to let the matter rest there and then. And so he extended an olive branch to Sugriv by calling him his “dear brother, like Bharat”.

Now Sugriv was bound by two relations with Lord Ram: one as a ‘friend’, and the other as a ‘brother’. By this single polite gesture Lord Ram instantly ensured Sugriv's loyalty and devotion towards himself.

We read in *Adhyatma Ramayan*, *Kishkindha Kand*, Canto 6, verse nos. 20-24 that when Sugriv presented the whole army of monkeys and bears at the service of Lord Ram and requested him to give them orders as he deemed fit, the Lord acted wisely and prudently by leaving the entire responsibility of selecting messengers and sending them to search for Sita, and then launching a campaign to free her from her captors, in on the shoulders of Sugriv. The Lord told Sugriv to appoint suitable messengers and heralds according to his own choice, depending upon the individual's ability and aptitude to succeed in the mission of finding Sita, because Sugriv knew his army better than anyone else, so he was the best judge to decide who amongst these commanders and warriors is the best suited for the job that is to be done. After all, Lord Ram was a stranger and a foreigner who had no experience of the skills, abilities and qualities of the warriors of the army of Kishkindha.

Sugriv was very pleased and felt delighted by this request of Lord Ram as it not only showed that the Lord trusted him and had no hard feelings for him because he had neglected the Lord's work earlier, but also because the Lord gave him due respect and the right to order his troops as a King of the kingdom of Kishkindha. Sugriv was happy that his dignity and self-respect was duly honoured by Lord Ram, and so it now devolves squarely upon his shoulders to ensure that the honour and

dignity and respect and reputation of a great king of a great kingdom are properly taken care of.

To wit, Lord Ram was very wise and prudent in putting the responsibility on Sugriv's shoulders as now he was totally accountable for the success of the mission, and he cannot shrug it off by any sort of lame excuse.]

दो०. एहि बिधि होत बतकही आए बानर जूथ ।

नाना बरन सकल दिसि देखिअ कीस बरूथ ॥ २१ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi hōta batakahī ā'ē bānara jūtha.

nānā barana sakala disī dēkhi'a kīsa barūtha. 21.

While they were conversing in this manner, large groups of monkeys came there one after another in an unending line of troops. In all the four directions (as far as the eyes could see, and extending to the horizon), one could see monkey warriors of all sorts, having a wide variety of complexions, and belonging to as many classes, with varying visages, forms and demeanours¹. (Doha no. 21)

[Note—¹Of what sort were these monkey troops? These monkey warriors have been described elsewhere in (i) Valmiki's Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Sarga/Canto 37-40; and (ii) in Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 9-10. We shall be reading the latter narration in due course in section 6.2 herein below where Adhyatma Ramayan is cited as part of this narrative.

Earlier we have read that Sugriv had given the heralds a time frame of fifteen-days by which the monkeys should come here. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 19.}

Some of these monkey warriors lived in nearby areas, and some in far-off lands. As soon as they received their king Sugriv's orders, they started departing from their dwelling places and arriving at Kishkindha, from where they were directed to Mt. Pravarshan where Lord Ram lived, and now Sugriv too had joined him.

Of course the arrival of troops must have taken some time, but it is certain that the entire army was assembled within fifteen days from the day Lord Ram had sent Laxman to coerce Sugriv to mend his ways, and Hanuman too had alerted him about his duties and responsibilities which Sugriv seemed to have neglected.]

चौ०. बानर कटक उमा में देखा । सो मूरुख जो करन चह लेखा ॥ १ ॥

आइ राम पद नावहिं माथा । निरखि बदनु सब होहिं सनाथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bānara kaṭaka umā mair̥m dēkhā. sō mūrukha jō karana caha lēkhā. 1.

ā'i rāma pada nāvahir̥m māthā. nirakhi badanu saba hōhir̥m sanāthā. 2.

[Lord Shiva, who is the primary narrator of the story of Ram Charit Manas and who was also the first to conceive it in his mind, told his consort Parvati—] 'Oh Uma; I had seen the army of monkeys. Anyone who tries to describe this formidable army

(i.e. about its warriors and their numbers, its astonishing strength, its bubbling enthusiasm, its astounding energy, its incomparable valour, its matchless courage, its powerful force and irresistible punch) would be a foolish person¹. (1)

All the warriors came and bowed their heads at the feet of Lord Ram to pledge their unquestioned support and vow for their allegiance to the Lord and to his cause; all these warriors were in thrall when they observed the form of the Lord (from which effused a halo of divinity and holiness that automatically attracted them, and inspired loyalty and devotion in their hearts and minds) so much so that they unequivocally felt that they were highly honoured and exceptionally privileged to get an opportunity to serve the Lord². (2)

[Note—¹This is because this army of monkeys and bears that assembled to help Lord Ram was so great and unique that defied all descriptions. It was wondrous beyond imagination; it was a stupendous army of exceptional magnificence; it was an army the like of which was not hitherto seen anywhere.

²To wit, the huge army of monkeys and bears was so astonishingly impressed by the very first sight of Lord Ram that all its warriors were in awe and stood enthralled. The Lord's halo of holiness and divinity, his majesty and magnificence was so overpowering that no sooner did the warriors come in contact with the Lord then they decided voluntarily to serve him with all their might and to the best of their abilities.

It was a spontaneous emotional reaction that sprouted in the hearts and the minds of the warriors like the one that is generated inside the bosom of a creature when he feels what he is about to do is a good and noble deed that is done for an equally good and noble cause.

Thus, the participation of the monkeys and bears in the campaign for freeing Sita and elimination of the cruel demons was not done under coercion or any duress at all, but it was a voluntary involvement by each individual who took it as a privilege and an honour to be able to participate. In this scenario, if any one of them would have been told to stay back, he would have taken it as a punishment instead of seeing it as a chance to escape the risks of the impending campaign the result of which was unpredictable.

Every single warrior of the army was raring to go with enthusiasm that spilled over like milk that brims over when the pot is too full!]

अस कपि एक न सेना माहीं । राम कुसल जेहि पूछी नाही ॥ ३ ॥

यह कछु नहिं प्रभु कइ अधिकाई । बिस्वरूप व्यापक रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥

asa kapi ēka na sēnā māhīm. rāma kusala jēhi pūchī nāhīm. 3.

yaha kachu nahīm prabhu ka'i adhikā'ī. bisvarūpa byāpaka raghurā'ī. 4.

There was not a single monkey (and bear) warrior in the whole army whom Lord Ram had not met individually and personally enquired about his welfare¹. (3)

There is no wonder in it, and nothing to be astonished about in this astounding feat of Lord of the Raghus ("raghurā'ī"; Lord Ram) because the Lord is a personified form,

or an embodiment, of the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is all-encompassing, all-pervading and omnipresent in this creation². (4)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after the Lanka campaign, the whole city poured out to meet him and emotionally welcome him. The gracious Lord wished to reciprocate this exuberant emotion of love and affection that the citizens exhibited universally, and also to show them he remembers each of them as much as they remembered him. So the Lord performed a miracle of sorts; he assumed countless forms and met each citizen individually. Everyone thought that the Lord has gone out of his way to meet him first and ask for his welfare before he met others; but it was such a miracle that the Lord met thousands of his subjects simultaneously. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 6.}

Another such occasion where Lord Ram had assumed countless forms at the same instant is found when Bharat lead a party from Ayodhya and went to meet Lord Ram in the forest at Chitrakoot in an attempt to persuade the Lord to return home. When this party arrived at the Lord's hermitage, he met everyone simultaneously by assuming as many forms as there were individuals in the party. This pleased each person and all of them felt that the Lord had shown them special treatment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 244.}

The same mystical feat is achieved here. By this single amiable act of personal affection and graciousness, Lord Ram endeared himself to every single warrior of the army, as it was the first time in their lives that they had been personally shown so much respect and given such attention by anyone. Kings and commanders take a salute from the army regiments en-masse during a parade, but never do they go out of their way and against the rules of protocol to meet and hug each single member of the parade and ask 'how are you'.

Hence, this personal and affable approach of the Lord changed the law of the game instantly; each individual warrior became emotionally overwhelmed and felt that he is obliged to be loyal and obedient to such a nice and friendly Lord who made them all feel very comfortable by treating them all as one of his own.

So what otherwise would simply have been a formal army that was obliged to obey the commands given to it by its king and commanders now instantaneously transmuted itself into an army that was totally devoted and fully committed to Lord Ram, and vowed never to fail him.

²It is difficult for a human mind to understand how it happened if he does not realise that Lord Ram was not a human being, nor a magician. He was a personified form of the 'Supreme Being' who is almighty and omnipresent everywhere; in fact there is no place or spot in this creation where the Lord is not present.

To wit, the Lord is a personified form of Cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout this creation in a uniform manner; it is only that under some circumstances this Consciousness is revealed and under other circumstances it remains invisible, or imperceptible for the senses. That makes the Lord visible at a given point of time, and remain invisible for the rest of the time. One such condition for making the Lord reveal himself is love and devotion. These facts have been affirmed by Lord Shiva himself to the gods and mother earth in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 185. The occasion was the assembly where they gathered together to seek Lord Vishnu and pray to him to help them against the terror unleashed by the demons lead by Ravana.

So therefore we conclude that since the Lord had revealed himself in as many numbers as there were monkeys and bears in the army so as to meet them individually and ask for their welfare, it proves unequivocally and in all sooth that the whole army was totally devoted and completely committed to serve Lord Ram; there is no doubt about it.

We can imagine and explain this phenomenon by a simple example. We know that water molecules exist in the air all around us; there would be no life if there was no moisture on earth. But do we see these water molecules as such? If the temperature drops below a certain point, these same molecules condense to form ‘water vapour’ which we see as a ‘cloud’ or ‘mist’ or ‘fog’, or even ‘steam’ that emerges from the spout of the kettle.

The same thing would apply to a more subtle element such as the ‘fire’. Its presence is felt in the form of ‘warmth’ all around us; even our body is warm due to the presence of this life-giving element inside the body, for a dead body is cold and not warm. But we don’t visibly ‘see’ fire as such, for it is so subtle an element that the gross organs of the eyes are not empowered to perceive it. But however, as soon as circumstances are favourable or conducive, this same fire element makes its visible form clear when we see flames leaping from burning wood or see the lighted wick of a candle.]

ठाढ़े जहँ तहँ आयसु पाई । कह सुग्रीव सबहि समुझाई ॥ ५ ॥
 राम काजु अरु मोर निहोरा । बनर जूथ जाहु चहुँ ओरा ॥ ६ ॥
 जनकसुता कहँ खोजहु जाई । मास दिवस महँ आएहु भाई ॥ ७ ॥
 अवधि मेटि जो बिनु सुधि पाएँ । आवइ बनिहि सो मोहि मराएँ ॥ ८ ॥

ṭhārḥē jahaṁ tahaṁ āyasu pā'ī. kaha sugrīva sabahi samujhā'ī. 5.
 rāma kāju aru mōra nihōrā. bānara jūtha jāhu cahuṁ ōrā. 6.
 janakasutā kahuṁ khōjahu jā'ī. māsa divasa mahaṁ ā'ēhu bhā'ī. 7.
 avadhi mēṭi jō binu sudhi pā'ēṁ. āva'i banihi sō mōhi marā'ēṁ. 8.

After this initial introduction was over, all the warriors were ordered to stand in line wherever they were, in formations according to their ranks and stature in the hierarchy.

Then Sugriv addressed them, and explained everything to all of them. [To wit, Sugriv told them why they were summoned and what is to be done now; he also explained to them the propriety of his decision, and the rewards that await them at the successful conclusion of the campaign.] (5)

He said, ‘It is Lord Ram’s work (rāma kāju), and I also request you all to oblige me (aru mōra nihōrā). Oh monkey troops! Form groups and go in all the directions. (6)

Go and search for the daughter of Janak (“janakasutā”; Sita) everywhere (in all the directions)¹. Return here by the end of one month (i.e. within a month’s time). (7)

If anyone of you returns after this stipulated period, and without acquiring any information about the whereabouts of Sita, then as soon as you return to this forest you shall die at my hands².

[To wit, if you don't search Sita diligently, if you waste your time fooling around, if you take this mission lightly and think you are going to a picnic only to come back and offer excuses that you couldn't find Sita, or if you try to play tricks with me by not going out in the search at all but remain hidden in the forest during this period—then be warned that I will give you severe punishment, and it would be capital punishment; you will have to pay with your life. So don't force my hands, and try your best to find her.]' (8)

[Note—¹Sugriv had “explained everything” to the troops: this obviously means that he had told them what he had already told Lord Ram about his seeing Sita being taken away by the path of the sky in the general direction of the south. Besides this, Laxman also had briefed Sugriv about the events that occurred before they came here. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5 herein above.} That means, Sugriv was told about Lord Ram's meeting with Jatau and Sabari, and that by the time the two brothers arrived at Lake Pampa and onwards at Mt. Rishyamook, they were well aware that Ravana had taken away Sita. It was also well known that Ravana lived in Lanka which lay roughly in the south direction from Kishkindha. So therefore, why did Sugriv order his troops to go in “all the directions”?

Well, though it is true that Ravana lived in the south direction and ordinarily if anyone wished to go after him he would head straight to south. But the case here is different—Ravana is a thief and a kidnapper for he has abducted the wife (Sita) of a noble and brave warrior-prince (Lord Ram) of whom he was so scared that he dared not wait a moment but hurtled away with the lady as fast as he could to escape her husband's wrath if he discovered his evil deed. And no sensible thief or kidnapper would keep his victim in a well-known place, such as his own home.

So therefore it was logical to suppose that Sita was kept captive in a place that no one would guess. This is the reason why Sugriv instructed his troops to “go in every direction”—which means even the northern direction. But the chances of Sita being taken to the north were remote as the general geographical area was populated by human beings and had villages, towns, cities as well as hermitages of sages, seers, ascetics and hermits as compared to the south part of the land, south of the Vindaya Mountains, especially the area that fell beyond the Dandakaranya forest, as it was too desolate, barren, thickly wooded, formidably wild and generally uninhabitable for any civilisation to flourish.

Hence, it is reasonable to guess that that while instructing his troops Sugriv must have told them to proceed in the ‘general direction of the south’, but spread themselves so as to cover all the angles in this direction, viz. from the extreme south-east end to the south-west corner, a rough half-circle of land.

Sugriv told the troops: “Spread yourselves everywhere; look into every nook and corner of the land; in every bower, under every canopy, in each alcove and recess, over glade and under arcade of creepers, in each cave, inside each hole, under each crevice, within all tunnels and vestibule, behind hedges, bushes and palisades of thickets, left and right and top of every ridge, mound and peak, over and beyond all mountains, hills and dales, cover all the gardens, orchards and groves, search under water as well as over land, letting not an inch of ground unexplored or remain unexamined by your vigilant eyes, not one nook or corner must escape your scrutiny. Remember not to miss any sign of life that you may find which might indicate that someone had been forcibly brought there or is being kept there, and then look out for

and follow the tell-tale signs that you may suddenly descry. Keep your eyes open and your ears erect, be on your toes, seeing and hearing attentively and assiduously.

The search-party duly followed this instruction as we shall read shortly in Doha no. 23 herein below.

Besides this, take due precautions: don't go alone; form groups so that you have support and help in case of emergency, and don't get lost or feel scared. Have confidence in yourselves; never give space to hopelessness or dejection, for god will bless you as this is a noble enterprise and a deed done for a noble cause."

We shall read in verses that follow herein below that after the general mass of the troops had dispersed, Sugriv called his chosen companions, i.e. Angad, Nal and Hanuman, the chief monkey warriors, and Jamvant, the chief of the bears, and confidentially told them to go directly and exactly in the south direction. {Doha no. 22 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}

A pertinent question here is this: how will the warriors know who Sita was, how will they recognise her, even when they managed to locate her, for they had never seen her before? The answer is this: Sita would be in grave distress and sorely grieving at her separation from Lord Ram; she would be in a sad and terrified state, physically weak, a shrunken countenance, weeping, lamenting, with tears on her face, unkempt clothes, dishevelled hairs, forlorn and weary appearance, and huddled up in some corner out of fear. So it would not be difficult to recognise her.

Besides this, Sugriv must have given them a general description of how she looked, first from his own observation when he saw her being taken as a hostage by her abductor, and second by a brief about her that Lord Ram was sure to have given him to share with the search teams.

²Another question is this: suppose even after trying their best the monkeys couldn't find Sita; will Sugriv then kill them? It is obvious that Sita would be found by any one of the countless groups, and not by all the groups, for the simple reason that the searchers would go out in different directions, and only one such group will be fortunate enough to go towards a direction that would take them to that spot where Sita was held captive. So does Sugriv mean that he would kill all other groups except the one which locates Sita?

No, not at all; there was nothing of this sort in what he had said. He simply meant that if these monkeys did not return within a month's time, and then came afterwards to say they could not find Sita, it is only then that he would punish them.

In case they failed despite their best efforts, they had nothing to fear if they returned before the stipulated time of one month and explained their position.

The threat of being killed applied only to those monkeys who neither returned within one month, nor brought any news of Sita even after this period. This restraint was necessary to drive home the urgency of the matter, for otherwise they would not take the mission seriously; they would do it leisurely and in their own time, coming back whenever it pleased them. This would derail the whole plan. So, stringent conditions were necessary to enforce discipline.]

दो०. बचन सुनत सब बानर जहँ तहँ चले तुरंत ।

तब सुग्रीवँ बोलाए अंगद नल हनुमंत ॥ २२ ॥

dōhā.

bacana sunata saba bānara jahaṁ tahaṁ calē turanta.
taba sugrīvaṁ bōlā'e aṅgada nala hanumanta. 22.

After hearing these words (i.e. instructions of Sugriv), all the monkeys immediately departed in all the directions whithersoever they decided to proceed.

Then Sugriv called Angad, Nal and Hanuman (the chief amongst the monkeys). (Doha no. 22)

चौ०. सुनहु नील अंगद हनुमाना । जामवंत मतिधीर सुजाना ॥ १ ॥
सकल सुभट मिलि दच्छिन जाहू । सीता सुधि पूँछेहु सब काहू ॥ २ ॥
मन क्रम बचन सो जतन बिचारेहु । रामचंद्र कर काजु सँवारेहु ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu nīla aṅgada hanumānā. jāmavanta matidhīra sujānā. 1.
sakala subhaṭa mili dacchina jāhū. sītā sudhi puṁchēhu saba kāhū. 2.
mana krama bacana sō jatana bicārēhu. rāmacandra kara kāju saṁvārēhu. 3.

Summoning his chiefs, Sugriv advised them as follows: 'Listen Neel, Angad, Hanuman and Jamvant¹. All of you are intelligent, have a resolute mind, and are wise. (1)

All of you excellent warriors must forthwith proceed in the south direction, and ask whosoever you meet about Sita and her whereabouts (because you may not know who will be helpful in your mission; so enquire from everyone). (2)

Use the faculties of your mind, wisdom and words in an intelligent manner, and adroitly adopt all such means and devise a device that may help you to successfully accomplish Lord Ramchandra's work.

[To wit, all of you are wise and intelligent; it is not possible to tell you exactly what, when and how to do a thing or what action is to be taken. You have to take your own decisions on the spot; I can't predict everything, and can only give you a general advice. Take everything and all factors into consideration, weigh all the pros and cons, and then act judiciously and with prudence according to the demands of the prevalent circumstance and the requirements of the current situation.] (3)

[Note—¹Nal and Neel were brothers; they were the architects and engineers for the kingdom of Kishkindha. Angad was Sugriv's nephew; Hanuman was his chief advisor and a faithful devotee of Lord Ram. Jamvant was the chief of the bears.

They were close confidantes of Sugriv. So he called them and told them to go straight to the south—because the chances of Sita being discovered in this direction were far greater than anywhere else. Sugriv guessed that given the haughty and arrogant nature of Ravana, he would think that no one would ever dare to challenge him no matter where he kept Sita. So it is logical to deduce that he would keep her close by in order to exercise a tight vigil on her, which would be easier closer home than in a distant place.]

भानु पीठि सेइअ उर आगी । स्वामिहि सर्ब भाव छल त्यागी ॥ ४ ॥
 तजि माया सेइअ परलोका । मिटहिं सकल भवसंभव सोका ॥ ५ ॥
 देह धरे कर यह फलु भाई । भजिअ राम सब काम बिहाई ॥ ६ ॥
 सोइ गुनग्य सोई बड़भागी । जो रघुबीर चरन अनुरागी ॥ ७ ॥

bhānu pīṭhi sē'i'a ura āgī. svāmihi sarba bhāva chala tyāgī. 4.
 taji māyā sē'i'a paralōkā. miṭahiṁ sakala bhavasambhava sōkā. 5.
 dēha dharē kara yaha phalu bhā'ī. bhaji'a rāma saba kāma bihā'ī. 6.
 sō'i gunagya sō'ī barābhāgī. jō raghubīra carana anurāgī. 7.

Remember this axiom: 'If someone wishes to warm himself by the sun's heat than he should sit with his back towards the sun, while if he wants to warm himself before a fire then he must sit facing the latter.' [To wit, it is advisable to take the heat of the sun on one's back instead of facing the sun directly from the front as it would be harmful, especially if its rays fall on one's eyes per chance and cause blindness. On the contrary, if one wishes to keep warm near a raging fire, it is advisable to sit or stand facing the fire instead of having one's back to it, because the fire is a dangerous thing and must always be watched directly as a safety precaution.]

But when it comes to serving one's lord, one must do it sincerely and without pretensions, and in whatsoever manner it can be done, without reservations or worrying unduly about the means that are adopted to be successful in this service. [Sugriv tells his companions that they should feel free to adopt any method they think fit and proper in order to successfully accomplish the work of Lord Ram, which was to find Sita. They ought naught unduly worry about the risks involved in the effort, but before they take any action they must discuss its pros and cons thoroughly, for he has already told them that they were wise and intelligent enough to see the matter through. So go ahead cheerfully.]¹ (4)

If one gets rid of Maya (worldly delusions and its attendant problems), and instead, strives to ensure a better fate for himself (by devoting himself to spiritual pursuit, and follow the path shown by the scriptures that lead to deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the soul)—then, in all sooth and without gainsay, he would find lasting peace and happiness. (5)

Oh my brothers (bhā'ī)! The best reward that one can expect to have after having taken birth as a creature, an entity that has a gross physical body, is to worship and serve Lord Ram diligently by abstaining from all involvement in worldly matters. (6)

He who has sincere devotion and undiluted affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram is indeed a virtuous person who has all the excellent qualities one is expected to possess, and is also a most fortunate and privileged soul.² (7)

[Note—¹In this verse no. 4, Sugriv basically tells the group not to worry too much about the propriety or the danger of adopting a path or means to discover Sita if they conclude at a specific moment that a particular action is necessary to achieve success. They should not be like a man of vanity who takes pride in following certain dictums in totum without understanding their underlying principles.

For instance, when it is said that one should not face the sun while warming oneself, it is to safeguard against harming one's eyesight or tanning the complexion of the face too much. So if one takes adequate precautions then there is no need whatsoever not to sit facing the sun.

Similarly, if one is in a group sitting around a camp-fire for instance, and there is someone to alert him if anything goes wrong, such as a spark flying from the fire, then there is no risk of getting burnt by fire even if one sits with his back to it.

²The idea behind Sugriv's discourse is to inspire devotion and commitment in the heart of those who were selected by him to go on a mission to search for Sita. If these monkeys and bears were convinced that what they were about to do is not merely carrying out the orders of their king but a deed that would grant them everlasting joy and spiritual contentment. It's not only a noble cause they are serving but it is also a holy service done to the Supreme Lord who is in the form of Lord Ram.

So therefore, they must put their heart and soul in this mission.]

आयसु मागि चरन सिरु नाई । चले हरषि सुमिरत रघुराई ॥ ८ ॥
 पाछें पवन तनय सिरु नावा । जानि काज प्रभु निकट बोलावा ॥ ९ ॥
 परसा सीस सरोरुह पानी । करमुद्रिका दीन्हि जन जानी ॥ १० ॥
 बहु प्रकार सीतहि समुझाएहु । कहि बल बिरह बेगि तुम्ह आएहु ॥ ११ ॥
 हनुमत जन्म सुफल करि माना । चलेउ हृदयँ धरि कृपानिधाना ॥ १२ ॥
 जद्यपि प्रभु जानत सब बाता । राजनीति राखत सुरत्राता ॥ १३ ॥

āyasu māgi carana siru nā'ī. calē haraṣi sumirata raghurā'ī. 8.
 pāchēṁ pavana tanaya siru nāvā. jāni kāja prabhu nikaṭa bōlāvā. 9.
 parasā sīsa sarōruha pānī. karamudrikā dīnhi jana jānī. 10.
 bahu prakāra sītahi samujhā'ēhu. kahi bala biraha bēgi tumha ā'ēhu. 11.
 hanumata janma suphala kari mānā. calē'u hṛdayaṁ dhari kṛpānidhānā. 12.
 jadyapi prabhu jānata saba bātā. rājanīti rākhata suratrātā. 13.

After this briefing, they (i.e. Nal, Neel, Angad, Hanuman, Jamvant etc.) bowed their heads reverentially (before their king Sugriv as well as Lord Ram) to seek permission to depart on their mission. Then they took their leave, and started off cheerfully with gladdened hearts. (8)

The Son of the Wind-God¹ had bowed last; and as he was moving away Lord Ram called him near as the Lord knew that he was the one who would successfully do his work (of finding Sita)². (9)

The Lord caressed Hanuman's head with his lotus-like hands (to bless him and signal that success will be his).

Then Lord Ram took off his finger-ring (karamudrikā; 'kar' = hand; 'mudrika' = ring; literally it means the "ring worn on the hand", which in practical terms means the 'finger-ring')³ and gave it to him as the Lord considered him as his devoted servant who would be the one to accomplish his task. (10)

Then he told Hanuman the message that he should convey to Sita when he met her, 'Reassure Sita in all possible ways. Tell her that I suffer immensely from the grief of separation from her, and assure of my strength and abilities (so that she feels confident that I will certainly come to free her inspite of all the odds). Then you must come back with all the speed you can muster.' (11)

Hanuman realised that he indeed was the privileged one, the chosen one personally selected by the Lord. He felt fulfilled and considered his birth as being fully rewarded.

Then he started off on his mission after enshrining the holy feet of the merciful and compassionate Lord in his heart⁴. (12)

[This above incidence proves that—] Though the Lord (Sri Ram), who dispels the torments of the gods, knew everything⁵, yet he maintained an exterior of ignorance (about Sita) and generally behaved like a human being just in order to conform to the norms and laws of the world. (13)

[Note—¹The use of the epithet 'the Son of the Wind God' for Hanuman is very significant here. In a short while these messengers would come to the shore of the southern ocean, and they will have to overcome this formidable barrier in order to reach Lanka where Sita is held captive by Ravana. The 'wind' has the ability to 'fly' over the surface of the ocean without the latter obstructing its path in any way; on the contrary the wind lifts the water from the surface of the ocean to form huge waves that are then forced to follow the path taken by the wind.

Hence, amongst all the warriors dispatched to bring news of Sita, it would only be possible for Hanuman to achieve success in this enterprise because he is the 'son of the wind god', and hence has the unique quality possessed only by the 'wind', which is agility and speed, as well as the ability to fly unobstructed over the surface of the ocean; none of the others in the whole army of monkeys and bears had this rare ability.

Use of this title was intended to remind Hanuman about his exalted inheritance; to tell him that he is the only one who has this singular and distinctive 'ability to fly or cruise like the wind' that no one else has. So he is advised in a subtle manner to invoke this rare ability of his at the crucial time when the need would arise for someone to cross the ocean to find Sita; at that time he must remember that he is the 'son of the wind god', and thus has the genes of the wind god that gives him the special skill which empowers him to cruise or fly over the surface of the ocean like the wind does.

This will instill confidence and fearlessness in Hanuman's mind and heart as he would be sure that his celestial father, the 'Wind God' who is the Lord of the wind element, would come to his aid most willingly and with full might of his—as the mission of Hanuman was in line with the wishes of all the Gods who had prayed to Lord Vishnu eliminate the scourge of Ravana and his race of cruel demons, a prayer which the Lord answered by coming down in the form of Lord Ram and devising a device by way of Sita's abduction by Ravana as a means towards fulfilling this objective.

Not only crossing the ocean, this unique inheritance of Hanuman that he was the 'son of the wind god', and thus possessed the certain unique qualities of the 'wind element', would come in handy also when he lands on the soil of Lanka. He has to enter the strong fort of Lanka surreptitiously, roam around the city freely and undetected till he meets Sita, and then give a token of punishment to Ravana and the

demons by burning their city to cinders. All this needed the agility and fearlessness from captivity, the ability to surmount the greatest of obstacles with stealth and speed, have access to all corners and nooks, and a formidable punching power to fell the enemy—eclectic qualities that the ‘wind’ possesses. Everyone knows that the wind or the air can easily pass through the smallest fissure or minutest of cracks; it can go unhindered anywhere it likes with speed; it can be so strong as to bend and topple huge trees or raise waves in the ocean to great heights as is seen during powerful storms; it remains hidden from view even while making its presence felt by its mere touch, or by the sound it creates when moving rapidly, or when it creates havoc all around as during severe storms.

And to top it all, when the time would come to spread the fire that would burn Lanka, ‘wind’ would be needed to fan the flames.

To wit, the lineage of Hanuman as being the ‘son of the wind god’ was purposely invoked here.

²Lord Ram had already judged the intelligence, prudence, wisdom and wit of Hanuman who had endeared himself to the Lord from the time they met first. Whenever a commander or an officer or a king needs some special work to be done that can’t be done by a single person, he would appoint a group of persons to do it. While reviewing the skills of the individuals in this group, the commanding officer would zero in on a particular individual whom he thinks, by his personal experience and long time observation, to be the most qualified and best equipped to achieve success. So while a general order is given to the group and the assignment explained to them, this favourite individual is briefed separately and in detail—because the commanding officer feels that this individual is more likely to succeed.

In the same manner, Lord Ram decided that it was Hanuman who would succeed in actually meeting Sita and bringing back news of her. So the Lord called him near and took him into confidence.

³Now about this “finger-ring” (*karamudrikā*). When Lord Ram had departed from his palace at Ayodhya he was completely attired as a hermit; he had discarded all paraphernalia that would indicate that he was a prince of a great kingdom, and had a grand royal heritage. He had doffed all his royal garments and shed all decorative ornaments normally worn by princes; he attired himself as a hermit who covers himself with plain ochre cloth, and kept only his bow and arrows along with the quiver as these had nothing with royalty but were as inseparable from a warrior as were the arms of his body. Though Sita also had worn simple clothes befitting the wife of a forest-dwelling sage, yet she retained some basic ornaments that are essential for a married lady to wear, and one such was her finger ring, the other was the sacred thread known as the ‘Mangal Sutra’, and the third was the ‘Chudamani’, a jewel worn on the crest of a diadem by queens but this term is also used for an ornament that is tucked in the thick plait of hair on the head of all married women.

At the time when Lord Ram, Laxman (his younger brother) and Sita were taken across river Ganges by the boatman known as the Kewat, the Lord wanted to pay his charges, but he had nothing to give to Kewat. So Sita took off her finger ring and offered it to the Lord to give it to Kewat as his fee; the overwhelmed Kewat refused to accept this ring as he knew that the Lord was on his way to the forest and it would be absolutely wrong and exceptionally greedy to take his wife’s finger ring in these circumstances; so he refused and the ring was returned. Sita did not take this ring back, as taking anything back once it is given as a gift to someone would be

wrong for her. So Lord Ram had no option but to keep the ring himself, for obviously he could not do anything else as there was no option left for him. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 102 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

It is this very finger-ring that Lord Ram gave Hanuman to prove to Sita that he was indeed Lord Ram's messenger by giving her this personal ring of hers which no one can return to her but Lord Ram, as the Lord was the only one who could have possessed it. Sita would immediately recognise the ring as being hers, it would dispel all doubts in her mind, and in turn it would instil confidence in her towards Hanuman. This is exactly what had happened when Hanuman met Sita—she had grave misgivings in the beginning but this finger-ring, aided by Hanuman narrating the details of Lord Ram's story—from the time she left Ayodhya with Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman, till the time she was separated from the Lord—made her fully convinced of his authenticity and integrity. We shall be reading these events in due course when we come to this point in our narrative. {However, for the sake of quick referral, the relevant verses from Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, are Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 13.}

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 29 it is said that the finger ring which Lord Ram gave to Hanuman to be carried with him as an identification tool which would convince Sita that he was indeed Lord Ram's messenger “had the initials of the Lord, i.e. the letters of the Lord's name RAM, engraved in it”. This means that it was the ring which Lord Ram had given to Sita at the time of their marriage, because rings are exchanged during formalisation of a marriage. Since that time Sita had worn it, and it must have been the same ring that she gave to her husband Lord Ram to give to the boatman in lieu of his charges for taking them and Laxman across river Ganges.

⁴To wit, when Lord Ram selected Hanuman for giving the ring as a token that would help him establish his identity before Sita, and also gave him the message that he needed to convey to her, Hanuman was exuberant with joy and felt exceptionally happy; his enthusiasm knew no bound, and he decided that he will do everything needed to live up to the trust that the Lord had reposed in him. Surely and certainly, Hanuman vowed in silence, he will never let the Lord down. Hanuman enshrined the Lord inside his heart like one consecrates a deity in a shrine.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24 where we have already read that everything was pre-planned by Lord Ram as it was necessary so that the cause of torments of the gods can be eliminated—i.e. Ravana and his evil demons can be slayed.

Once again in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 27 it is explicitly mentioned that “Lord Ram knew everything that was happening” at the time when Sita asked him to go behind the decoy golden deer and bring it to her.

The use of the word “*suratrātā*” for Lord Ram is also of significance. The Lord is on a mission to end the torments of the gods that Ravana had inflicted upon them. So therefore, inspite of knowing everything, Lord Ram had to maintain secrecy for success in killing Ravana and his clan of cruel demons. The reason is that if Ravana got the hint who the Lord actually was, or that some powerful spy-warrior (i.e. Hanuman) was about to penetrate his fort and enter Lanka, and that he would burn it to ashes, then it was sure that he would immediately take preventive measures,

such reinforce his defenses and barricade the entrance points more carefully, hide Sita somewhere else, and take all precautionary measures to prevent the burning of the city by the invader.

Hence, it was of utmost importance to keep everything under wraps and go about the mission as silently as possible.]

दो०. चले सकल बन खोजत सरिता सर गिरि खोह ।

राम काज लयलीन मन बिसरा तन कर छोह ॥ २३ ॥

dōhā.

calē sakala bana khōjata saritā sara giri khōha.

rāma kāja layalīna mana bisarā tana kara chōha. 23.

All the monkeys and bears departed on their mission to search Sita. They searched for her everywhere, in the forests and the wilderness, rivers and streams, ponds and lakes, mountains and hills along with their caves and ravines.

Their mind and heart were so involved in Lord Ram's mission that they were not even conscious of their own bodies and its comforts. [To wit, they did not bother to rest, eat or sleep; they relentlessly continued with their search day and night. Neither the heat of the sun or the darkness of the night could stop them, nor the wild animals could distract them in their path or the vagaries of Nature could slow their progress.] (Doha no. 23)

Section 6.1.6: One group sent out to search for Sita finally reaches the shore of the ocean and meets Sampati who tells them about Sita being held captive in Lanka. It is then decided to send Hanuman across the ocean to Lanka to ascertain facts, and come back with a first-hand report of Sita:

This privileged group of reconnoitring team headed to the south. They were full of enthusiasm and brimming with zeal and confidence. On the way they felt extremely thirsty and hungry, and searching for some refreshment they met a hermitress inside a splendid cave. She used her mystical powers that can transfer an individual from one point to another by transcendental means to transport this group directly to the shore of the southern ocean. A most fearful sight met them: they faced a formidable barrier in the form of an endless ocean, mighty and un-crossable as it was, that stopped their further progress.

The group was utterly frustrated and dismayed; they were in low spirits and at the end of their wits as they were certain that they had no chance of success any longer; for fate seemed to have stone-walled their progress and dashed all their hopes. Just at this despairing moment they met Sampati, an old vulture and an elder brother of Jatau who had died while trying to protect Sita as she was being taken away by Ravana.

When Sampati learned of the developments he, after paying his last respects to his younger brother Jatau, flew high in the sky, and by the virtue of the ability of

seeing long distances that all vultures are endowed with, he could descry Sita sitting forlorn and distressed under a tree in a garden in Lanka. So anyone who could cross the mighty barrier in the form of the ocean and reach Lanka would be able to meet Sita.

The group huddled together to determine who among them was skilled and qualified enough to achieve this daunting task. The unanimous choice was Hanuman; so he was assigned this job. He confidently launched himself across the water of the ocean, flying over its surface like a plane or a cruise missile, and landed on the soil of Lanka. En-route however he faced some obstacles which he easily overcame.

These developments are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 30 as follows:-

चौ०. कतहुँ होइ निसिचर सैं भेटा । प्रान लेहिं एक एक चपेटा ॥ १ ॥
 बहु प्रकार गिरि कानन हेरहिं । कोउ मुनि मिलइ ताहि सब घेरहिं ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

katahuṁ hō'i nisicara saim bhētā. prāna lēhim ēka ēka capētā. 1.
 bahu prakāra giri kānana hērahim. kō'u muni mila'i tāhi saba ghērahim. 2.

As they moved ahead on their mission, they talked loudly and animatedly amongst themselves, declaring that 'If we meet the demon (who has stolen Sita) anywhere and under any circumstance, we will kill him by each of us fiercely slapping and viciously cuffing him, one by one of us in turn.' (1)

They searched the mountains and hills as well as the forests thoroughly and in all possible ways. Wherever they met some sage or hermit¹, they surrounded him (to ask him if he knew anything of Sita, as exalted sages and hermits are known to have insight into everything). (2)

[Note—¹There were not many sages and hermits living in these parts out of fear of demons. But still here and there, in isolated and secluded pockets on the hills and in the forests, the monkeys and bears did find a few sages and hermits. So they surrounded them and asked for any help or guidance they could give.

But it appears that none of them were of any help; either no one knew where Sita had been taken away, or even if they knew they preferred to keep silent out of fear of the demons' wrath.]

लागि तृषा अतिसय अकुलाने । मिलइ न जल घन गहन भुलाने ॥ ३ ॥
 मन हनुमान कीन्ह अनुमाना । मरन चहत सब बिनु जल पाना ॥ ४ ॥

lāgi tṛṣā atisaya akulānē. mila'i na jala ghana gahana bhulānē. 3.
 mana hanumāna kīnha anumānā. marana cahata saba binu jala pānā. 4.

The reconnoitring team was exhausted by thirst (and hunger); its members were very agitated and dying for water. They searched in vain for water, and in this desperation and agitated state of mind they got lost in the middle of the wild forest. (3)

Hanuman thought to himself that all of them would die for want of water to drink. (4)

चढ़ि गिरि सिखर चहुँ दिसि देखा । भूमि बिबर एक कौतुक पेखा ॥ ५ ॥
चक्रबाक बक हंस उड़ाहीं । बहुतक खग प्रबिसहिं तेहि माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

caḍhi giri sikhara cahuṁ disi dēkhā. bhūmi bibara ēka kautuka pēkhā. 5.
cakrabāka baka hansa urāhīm. bahutaka khaga prabisahim tēhi māhīm. 6.

So he (Hanuman) climbed atop a hill and looked carefully in all the directions. On one side he descried a strange and mysterious view around a cave-like opening (a hole or a cavity) in the ground that marvelled him with excessive marvel. (5)

[What did he see?] He could descry many types of water-birds such as Chakravaks (birds that go round and round over water bodies such as ponds and lakes; the ruddy-goose, the hummingbird or the hawkmoth), Baks (herons), and Hans (swans) hovering over the mouth of the hole, and he could also observe that some of these birds as well as other birds were entering and leaving this cave-like opening¹. [He observed other birds also that usually flock to water bodies where flowers bloom and ripe fruits are to be found in abundance.] (6)

[Note—¹Hanuman was intelligent and wise; he concluded that this was a clear sign of the presence of water inside this hole. He gazed at this marvelous sight to confirm it was not a mirage, and when he was sure it was for real, he was exhilarated and exulted with excess of joy as this sight indicated availability of water, and consequently of life.

‘Eureka’, he exclaimed to his waiting companions, ‘Water has been found’!]

गिरि ते उतरि पवनसुत आवा । सब कहूँ लै सोइ बिबर देखावा ॥ ७ ॥
आगें कै हनुमंतहि लीन्हा । पैठे बिबर बिलंबु न कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

giri tē utari pavanasuta āvā. saba kahūṁ lai sō'i bibara dēkhāvā. 7.
āgēm kai hanumantahi līnhā. paiṭhē bibara bilambu na kīnhā. 8.

The son of the wind god descended hastily from the summit of the hill and summoned all his companions to come with him to the top and see the sight for themselves. (7)

The group put Hanuman in the lead and immediately started for that cave-like hole, and as soon as they reached it, all of them entered it without delaying even for a moment¹. (8)

[Note—¹From the start itself, Hanuman's courage and valour, as well as his patient handling of adversities, has started showing. It was he who did not just lament for

water but ran up the hill to look for it; it was he who was chosen to lead the group to the cave and enter it first.

The cave was dark and damp inside; an exceptional courage and an ability to sense danger was needed to move ahead inside it in pitch darkness and explore it. So all the monkeys and bears held each other's hands to form a line, and Hanuman led them from the front. He moved on inside the labyrinthine cave very cautiously, feeling his way along and keeping all his senses on the alert to catch any tell-tale signs of either danger, so that precautionary measures can be taken, or of water so that they can move in that direction through the tunnels.]

दो०. दीख जाइ उपबन बर सर बिगसित बहु कंज ।
मंदिर एक रुचिर तहँ बैठि नारि तप पुंज ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

dīkha jā'i upabana bara sara bigasita bahu kañja.
mandira ēka rucira tahañ baiṭhi nāri tapa puñja. 24.

Ultimately they saw a wide open space deep inside the splendid cavern (or perhaps this cave ended here) where they found a magnificent garden and a wonderful pond in which many lotus flowers bloomed.

Nearby they perceived a temple-like structure in which sat an exalted hermitress who appeared to be an embodiment of spiritual energy and dynamism inherent in Tapa (austerity and penances) that she was engaged in doing¹. (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹This story of the reconnoitring party discovering a fairy-tale like wondrous garden of a splendid view deep inside a mysterious cave in a desolate forest, complete with a wonderful pond and an astoundingly magnificent surrounding unexpected in an underground labyrinth of dark-and-gloomy tunnels and vestibules, mirrors the fascinating adventure narrated in the 652nd and the 653rd night of the legendary classic “Tale of One Thousand One Arabian Nights” where Prince Ahmed meets the fairy Princess Peri-Banu of the Jinns inside one such magical ‘fairy-cave’.]

चौ०. दूरि ते ताहि सबन्हि सिरु नावा । पूछें निज बृत्तांत सुनावा ॥ १ ॥
तेहिं तब कहा करहु जल पाना । खाहु सुरस सुंदर फल नाना ॥ २ ॥
मज्जनु कीन्ह मधुर फल खाए । तासु निकट पुनि सब चलि आए ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dūri tē tāhi sabanhi siru nāvā. pūchēm nija br̥ttānta sunāvā. 1.
tēhiṁ taba kahā karahu jala pānā. khāhu surasa sundara phala nānā. 2.
majjanu kīnha madhura phala khā'ē. tāsu nikaṭa puni saba cali ā'ē. 3.

The team (of monkeys and bears) bowed their head to her from a distance¹. The hermitress then enquired of them who they were and why they had come here, thereat he (i.e. Hanuman as he was leading the group) briefed her about everything related to

the reason why they had come in this direction, why they had entered the cave, and what their future objective was. (1)

When she heard everything, she advised them to refresh themselves by drinking the water (of the lake), and then eat to their content fruits, ripe, succulent and sweet, that were available in abundance at the place (inside the garden). (2)

The group took a bath and ate sweets fruits; after refreshing themselves all of them went near the hermitress². (3)

[Note—¹The monkeys and bears “bowed to the hermitress from a distance” because they were strangers to her, and neither were they sure how they would be received by her, whether she would welcome them or become annoyed at this intrusion into her privacy unannounced. The distance was also maintained for showing respect to a hermitress who was sitting in a meditative posture as described in Doha no. 24 herein above.

²By the affable manner in which the hermitress received the group, listened to their story with concern, and then affectionately showed them water and fruit trees had by now convinced all of the monkeys and bears that they were in a friendly company, that there is nothing to fear from this mystical woman. So though in the beginning they had stood at some distance to bow their heads to her, but now, after being refreshed with a bath, drinking water and eating fruits, they came near to her.]

तेहिं सब आपनि कथा सुनाई । मैं अब जाब जहाँ रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥
मूदहु नयन बिबर तजि जाहू । पैहहु सीतहि जनि पछिताहू ॥ ५ ॥
नयन मूदि पुनि देखहि बीरा । ठाढ़े सकल सिंधु कें तीरा ॥ ६ ॥

tēhiṁ saba āpani kathā sunāī. maiṁ aba jāba jahāṁ raghurāī. 4.
mūdahu nayana bibara taji jāhū. paihahu sītahi jani pachitāhū. 5.
nayana mūdi puni dēkhaḥiṁ bīrā. ṭhāṛhē sakala sindhu kēṁ tīrā. 6.

Now it was the turn of the hermitress to narrate her own story¹ to the team of visitors, the monkeys and bears, which she did.

Then she said to them, ‘Now I shall go where Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (raghurāī), is. (4)

All of you must close your eyes in order to get out of this cavern; don’t worry, for by-and-by you will indeed find Sita². (5)

The brave warriors closed their eyes as instructed, and when they opened it they found themselves standing on the shore of the (southern) ocean³. (6)

[Note—¹A brief introduction about this “hermitress”: Her name was ‘Swayam Prabha’, literally meaning ‘a lady who shines from the radiance of her own glory’.

Her story is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 51-57. In short it is this: Some long time in the past Vishwakarma, the architect

of gods, had a wife named Hema. She was beautiful, and an expert in the art of music and dance. She had pleased Lord Shiva with this skill of hers, and the Lord gifted her a magnificent but secret place where no one had access. The hermitress whom the troop of monkeys and bears searching for Sita had come to meet deep inside the cavern was a friend of Hema, and her name was ‘Swayam Prabha’.

Swayam Prabha was the daughter of a Gandharva (celestial musician) named Dibya, and she had tarried at this place with her friend Hema for a very long time, roughly ten million years. At the time of departing for heaven (i.e. at the time of her death and going to heaven, in the Brahma-Loka), Hema advised Swayam Prabha to remain behind alone and do Tapa (penances and austerities), with the intention of one day finding deliverance and salvation by having a divine view of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who would come down as Lord Ram. At that future date, the Lord would come to the forest in order to fulfil some promise he would have made to the gods earlier, and here in the wild his consort would be stolen by the demons, monkey messengers would be dispatched to find her and they would come and meet her. She should then help them by showing the path, and go to meet Lord Ram herself. Then she should pray to the Lord and seek his blessings that would entitle her to go the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu.

However, the story of this hermitress as narrated in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 51, verse nos. 10-18 differs from above. According to it the story is as follows: There was a demon named Mayavi. This stupendously beautiful garden was created by him using his magical powers, and it was embellished in gold. The shrine in which the hermitress was sitting when the team of monkeys and bears arrived was constructed in gold by another demon of great architectural skills; his name was Vishwakarma. He had done Tapa for one thousand years in a dense forest and pleased the creator Brahma, from whom he acquired all the construction skills of Sukracharya, the Guru of the demons. The demon Maya lived in this wonderful place for quite some time, but ultimately he was slayed when he got passionately involved with an Apsara (nymph of the heaven; the damsels in the court of the gods) named Hema and kept her as his mistress. After Maya’s death, the creator Brahma gifted this garden to Hema in memory of her former lover Maya.

The hermitress the reconnoitring team found inside this cave was named ‘Swayam Prabha’. She was a friend of Hema, and she had promised the latter to look after her home when she was gone. It was on one such occasion that the group of Lord Ram’s messengers found her inside this cave as narrated in the story of the Ramayan.

²To wit, this is literally a one-way cave, and once one gets inside it one cannot find one’s way out of it. I know its mystical secret, and the only way out is via a transcendental mean which I only possess and you probably don’t. Hence, it will be futile for you to try to find an exit or retrace your steps in order to get out. So listen to me: just close your eyes and I shall employ my magical powers to transport you in an instant to a place where you wish to go—which would be the place from where you can find Sita. In the meantime, I will also quit this place and go meet Lord Ram, for I had been waiting here patiently for the Lord to come so I can be of some help in aiding him to successfully accomplish his mission. Now since this is done—as I shall instantaneously place you near your destination from where Sita can be easily found—my objective in life is done, and after paying my obeisance to the Lord I shall proceed wherever the Lord instructs me to tarry. So rejoice and be ready. Now you will not have to wander aimlessly in the wild, as the distance to your destination is quite a distance, and then you aren’t even aware where it is; but now you shall be

saved of all the time and the trouble endured to travel through the unknown landscape before you can reach the land which will serve your purpose.

And take heart, have courage. You will succeed in your mission of finding Sita.

³Like the magical way individuals were transported by Jinns in the many tales of the “One Thousand One Arabian Nights”, the group of monkeys and bears suddenly found themselves standing on the shore of the southern ocean. The roaring and heaving ocean stretched before them like an insurmountable barrier, a monster facing them with its arms spreading to the left and the right in a formidable challenge to their might, strength and courage, teasing them to their wits end, and horrifying them of the certain failure that stares them on this frontier.

The overwhelmed group gazed at the ocean in awe as they stood in stunned silence, dumbfounded into numbness of the senses, for they knew aught naught what to and what not to.]

सो पुनि गई जहाँ रघुनाथा । जाइ कमल पद नाएसि माथा ॥ ७ ॥

नाना भाँति बिनय तेहिं कीन्ही । अनपायनी भगति प्रभु दीन्ही ॥ ८ ॥

sō puni ga'ī jahāṁ raghunāthā. jā'i kamala pada nā'ēsi māthā. 7.
nānā bhāṁti binaya tēhiṁ kīnhī. anapāyanī bhagati prabhu dīnhī. 8.

The hermitress, in the meantime, went to where Lord Raghunath (“raghunāthā”; Sri Ram) was¹, and bowed her head at the lotus-like feet of the Lord. (7)

She offered her prayers to the Lord in various ways, and the Lord, seeing her devotion and accepting her submission, granted her the boon of having an eternal, true and unwavering form of Bhakti (devotion for the Lord). (8)

[Note—¹Where was Lord Ram? He was on Mt. Pravarshan, waiting for the news of Sita that the messengers sent by him would finally bring.]

दो०. बदरीबन कहूँ सो गई प्रभु अग्या धरि सीस ।

उर धरि राम चरन जुग जे बंदत अज ईस ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

badarībana kahuṁ sō ga'ī prabhu agyā dhari sīsa.
ura dhari rāma carana juga jē bandata aja īsa. 25.

The hermitress (Swayam Prabha) bowed her head as a token of obedience to the Lord's commands (prabhu agyā dhari sīsa), and then, having enshrined Lord Ram's holy feet in her heart, the holy feet that are revered and worshipped (bandata) even by the creator Brahma (āja) and Lord Shiva (īsa), she went to the holy cite known as 'Badrivan' (in the higher reaches of the Himalaya mountain ranges)¹. (Doha no. 25)

[Note—¹Lord Ram first blessed her with steady Bhakti, and then instructed her to proceed to Badri-van, a forested area in the upper reaches of the northern Himalayas, to dwell there and devote her time practicing Bhakti and Tapa. The hermitress obeyed the Lord's instructions and proceeded forthwith to the place directed by the Lord.

As we have already learnt, she had the magical, supernatural power by which she could transport anyone by the transcendental method, as she had herself assured the messengers of Lord Ram inside the cave when she told them that though it is not possible for them to go out once they had entered it, nevertheless if they close their eyes and repose faith in her then she would herself work some magic charm and transport them instantaneously to the place they desire.

So obviously she used this supernatural powers herself first to go to Lord Ram, and then to proceed to Badrivan. This place is a revered pilgrim place in northern India, and is commonly known as Badrinath. It is said to be the gateway to heaven, for it is believed that if Tapa is done here then one is sure to attain a heavenly abode.]

चौ०. इहाँ बिचारहिं कपि मन माहीं । बीती अवधि काजु कछु नाहीं ॥ १ ॥

सब मिलि कहहिं परस्पर बाता । बिनु सुधि लएँ करब का भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ihāṁ bicārahim kapi mana māhīm. bītī avadhi kāju kachu nāhīm. 1.

saba mili kahahim paraspara bātā. binu sudhi la'ēṁ karaba kā bhrātā. 2.

Here meanwhile (i.e. on the shore of the ocean where the search party of Lord Ram had been miraculously transported by the hermitress using her mystical powers of transcendental transfer), the Kapis (monkeys along with their bear companions) became pensive and began to worry that the time frame (of one month fixed by Sugriv) had passed away and yet they haven't been able to do any worthwhile work. (1)

They got together in a huddle and murmured in a sombre mood, 'Brother, what shall we now do if we are not able to acquire any information (of Sita).' (2)

[Note--The group lamented that one whole month has elapsed and still they have no information of Sita. So worried as they were, they got together into a consultation—what was the best course open to them now. Their worst fear was not the expiration of the one-month period, but not finding the whereabouts of Sita, for they knew that though it was too late for them now to return empty handed, as it is quite certain that their king Sugriv will then keep his threat and give them capital punishment should they do so, but if Sita is yet discovered, and then they are late in returning, there would be nothing to fear as Sugriv will spare them for being late because of the success in the mission, understanding that such unusually difficult enterprises may entail transgression of arbitrarily fixed time frame for accomplishment.]

कह अंगद लोचन भरि बारी । दुहुँ प्रकार भइ मृत्यु हमारी ॥ ३ ॥

इहाँ न सुधि सीता कै पाई । उहाँ गएँ मारिहि कपिराई ॥ ४ ॥

पिता बधे पर मारत मोही । राखा राम निहोर न ओही ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि पुनि अंगद कह सब पाहीं । मरन भयउ कछु संसय नाही ॥ ६ ॥

kaha aṅgada lōcana bhari bārī. duhuṁ prakāra bha'i mṛtyu hamārī. 3.
ihāṁ na sudhi sītā kai pā'ī. uhāṁ ga'eṁ mārihi kapiṛā'ī. 4.
pitā badhē para mārata mōhī. rākhā rāma nihōra na ōhī. 5.
puni puni aṅgada kaha saba pāhīm. marana bhaya'u kachu sansaya nāhīm. 6.

Angad (the nephew of Sugriv and the son of his elder brother Baali) said with tears filled in his eyes (and with a grieving and remorseful tone), 'Our death seems certain either way, in both the situations. (3)

Here we have not been able to get any information of Sita (which would have assured us indemnity from punishment or even death at Sugriv's hand), and if we go back, the king of the monkeys (Sugriv) would kill us all¹. (4)

He (Sugriv) would have killed me soon after having slayed my father (Baali), but it was Lord Ram who had saved me at that time. So Sugriv has done no obligation on me and has no merit on my account, and I owe nothing to him in return.² (5)

[Angad grieved and lamented sorely with excess of grief; he was extremely depressed and dejected. He could not suppress his own sorrows as well as his worry about the gloomy fate of his companions so much so that he repeatedly lamented aloud.]

Angad repeatedly said to all of them who had huddled together around them, that death is a certainty, and there seems to be no doubt about it. (6)

[Note—¹The reader would recall Sugriv's warning in this regard: that if anyone returns without any news of Sita after the stipulated time of one month, then he would be given capital punishment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 22 earlier.}

Though it is certainly true that this threat may have been meant to instil a sense of urgency and importance in the messengers who were sent out with the mission of searching Sita, and to keep them on their toes so that the matter is expedited as soon as possible without undue and inordinate delay, but in practical terms Sugriv did not intend to actually implement it. He was a King, and this being the case he would have to take many factors into consideration before carrying out such a cruel action, virtually a genocide, as to kill thousands of his warriors for simply not being able to find the location of a foreigner's wife, because for all practical purposes Lord Ram was a foreigner as far as Kishkindha and its inhabitants were concerned. There were chances therefore of mutiny, and Sugriv being taken a hostage by the angry soldiers many of whom may not have been too favourably inclined towards him, specially those who were favourable to his elder brother Baali whom Sugriv killed with the aid of Lord Ram to ascend on the throne of Kishkindha.

It is also possible that this severe stricture of Sugriv that all the messengers must find Sita by the month's end or come back, or else he would kill them if they returned without her news after the expiry of this period, was only meant to please Lord Ram and Laxman who had by now become suspicious of Sugriv's intentions and also angry at him for the delay and not keeping his promise of sending heralds

everywhere till now. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 18 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.}

But the monkeys and bears were not too sure as they doubted Sugriv's mind and nature. He was very selfish as is evident from the very fact that he had neglected Lord Ram's work once he got the throne, as well as the fact that he had no regrets at taking a stranger's help to kill his own brother Baali just to get this throne. So no one could be sure if he would kill this group of messengers if he fancied it.

What would weigh in favour of Sugriv's such a horrible decision, if he decides to actually take it? For one, he would find a ready excuse to kill Angad, his slain brother's son, as Sugriv had the greatest fear of revenge from him. This is a fact as reiterated by Angad himself when he asserts that Sugriv was on the brink of killing him when he was saved by Lord Ram.

The other possibility was that some other group would have found Sita and return triumphant to the kingdom, in which case too Sugriv will not spare them.

But here, overcome with sorrow and depression as he was, Angad had erred, for he did not ponder on the point that Sugriv would never contemplate of killing his trusted aid Hanuman, as well as Jamvant, the old bear king and Sugriv's trusted advisor; that would be beyond imagination.

²We see in this verse (no. 5) that the greatest fear of death is in the heart of Angad. He feels certain that their failure to find Sita would give his uncle Sugriv a ready-made excuse to get rid of him (Angad), even in case he (Sugriv) finds some subterfuge to excuse or pardon the others. Why so? It is because Sugriv feared that some day Angad would surreptitiously provoke internal rebellion or even assassinate his uncle Sugriv to grab the throne in order to exact retribution for the killing of his father Baali by Sugriv.

Angad therefore presented a perennial danger for Sugriv, so he thought he would be the primary target of his threat to kill.

Another question is this: How would Sugriv explain and justify that he had killed Angad and spared others if he indeed singled out Angad for the killing? Well, Angad was a prince, and as such, in deference to his position in the hierarchy, was put in charge of the group we are dealing with. So in case the mission fails and the group had to be punished, it would seem quite normal to punish the commander and the responsible person instead of all the other members of the group. Even in today's world it is the senior-most officer who bears the brunt of censorship and condemnation for the failure of a mission or any project gone awry, on the behalf of all those who are under his command.

So either way, Angad felt that he is the most unfortunate being—for one, he lost his father, and two, he would be publicly killed this time with Lord Ram refraining from protecting him as he had failed to do the Lord's personal work. This scenario, however, was the product of fear, for nothing of this sort would have been allowed by Lord Ram who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion, munificence, benevolence, beneficence, love and grace. But the ghost of fear is overwhelming, and it robs all reasoning.

But Angad's fears were unfounded and misplaced; Sugriv had no such intention of eliminating Angad as he is believed to have had by the latter as can be judged from the following:

(a) Sugriv had sent Hanuman and Jamvant, as well as Nal and Neel along with Angad, and these warriors were his close confidantes and trusted companions. Had Sugriv any sort of evil design on his nephew Angad, he would have sent him with

some other group consisting of junior messengers, but not with his senior and trusted commanders, as there were countless other groups sent on the errand of finding Sita besides the group Angad accompanied. If success in the mission of finding Sita was to be attained then this particular company was most qualified for it. So therefore no insult was shown to Angad or his stature as the prince of the kingdom was undermined; in fact he was made the head of this reconnoitring team that had almost all the senior nobles and knights, as it were, of the kingdom of Kishkindha.

(b) Sugriv was well aware of Hanuman's and Jamvant's scrupulous nature, bravery and strength; they would never allow any harm to come to Angad, who was their prince, especially more so as he had lost his father which made them all very sympathetic and extremely considerate towards him. They would lay down their own lives to protect Angad.

(c) Angad had already received Lord Ram's protection, as he himself acknowledges in verse no. 5. So therefore, Sugriv would never ever dare to even think of touching Angad's single hair if nothing else then at least for this one single reason—that he has Lord Ram's protective shield covering him.]

अंगद बचन सुनत कपि बीरा । बोलि न सकहिं नयन बह नीरा ॥ ७ ॥
छन एक सोच मगन होइ रहे । पुनि अस बचन कहत सब भए ॥ ८ ॥
हम सीता कै सुधि लीन्हें बिना । नहिं जैहें जुबराज प्रबीना ॥ ९ ॥
अस कहि लवन सिंधु तट जाई । बैठे कपि सब दर्भ डसाई ॥ १० ॥

aṅgada bacana sunata kapi bīrā. bōli na sakahim̐ nayana baha nīrā. 7.
chana ēka sōca magana hō'i rahē. puni asa bacana kahata saba bha'ē. 8.
hama sītā kai sudhi līnhēm̐ binā. nahim̐ jaihair̐ jubarāja prabīnā. 9.
asa kahi lavana sindhu taṭa jā'ī. baiṭhē kapi saba darbha ḍasā'ī. 10.

Hearing the words of lamentations and grief spoken by Angad, all the Kapi warriors were so overcome with sorrow and remorse that none could speak a word even as tears welled up in their eyes. (7)

They were stunned and stupefied into dumbness for a moment, contemplating on the gravity of the situation and the fate that stares them in the face¹. Soon they recovered themselves and got their wits together; then all of them spoke simultaneously in a unanimous voice². (8)

‘Oh Prince who is wise and intelligent; listen to our firm resolve: we will not go back without acquiring information about the whereabouts of Sita³!’ (9)

Saying this, all the Kapis went near the shore of the salty ocean, spread sitting mats made of kush grass on the ground, and sat on it (with a firm determination not to turn back)⁴. (10)

[Note—¹The way Angad spoke with a heavy heart and choked throat, all the members of the group were emotionally affected; they empathised with his sorrow and grief, and mirrored his emotions and fears. The prospect of certain death upon return home on the one end, and an equal certainty of failure in the mission on the other hand,

struck all of them with a doubling force of dismay and gloom, compounded with no hope in sight.

²But though initially they had felt lost and forlorn, they soon recovered as brave and courageous warriors are expected to in the face of adversities. And by this time round they had made a firm and unanimous resolution. What was it? They declare it in the following verse.

³The Kapis promised Angad, “We are determined to find Sita and return safely with the good news, or else we would prefer to live in exile with you. Don’t lament and grieve oh noble Prince; we are not going to die, and neither are we to be separated from each other. Take heart and gather your courage. But there is no point in sitting and weeping like a child. Let’s get up and get cracking, for we have nothing to lose either way.”

⁴The warriors sat down to make a stern vow, a sort of fasting unto death, a hunger-strike, that either they would overcome the barrier of the ocean that obstructs their path and prevents them from proceeding further, or they would end their lives here, putting an ignominious scar and a blackish taint on the face of the patron god of the ocean that he had been instrumental in taking the life of so many innocent creatures who were out doing a noble duty for their Lord. It was a sort of non-violent agitation done peacefully like we observe even in today’s modern society when people think that the government of the day won’t listen to their pleas and justified demands, and they don’t have the power to confront the might of those in authority and power; so the only option left to the citizens is to sit on a hunger strike or fast till death in an attempt to bring some sense to the stone-hearted stubborn rulers.]

जामवंत अंगद दुख देखी । कहीं कथा उपदेस बिसेषी ॥ ११ ॥
तात राम कहूँ नर जनि मानहु । निर्गुन ब्रह्म अजित अज जानहु ॥ १२ ॥
हम सब सेवक अति बड़भागी । संतत सगुन ब्रह्म अनुरागी ॥ १३ ॥

jā mavanta aṅ gada dukha dēkhī. kahīm kathā upadēsa bisēṣī. 11.
tāta rāma kahuṁ nara jani mānahu. nirguna brahma ajita aja jānahu. 12.
hama saba sēvaka ati baṛabhāgī. santata saguna brahma anurāgī. 13.

Observing Angad’s state of mind of abject desperation, despair and hopelessness, Jamvant (the old chief of the bears) spoke to him wise words of wisdom especially meant to rejuvenate his sinking spirits and to reassure him. (11)

Jamvant said, ‘My dear (tāta)! Don’t treat Lord Ram a human being; know him to be the supreme Brahm, the formless supreme Lord of creation who is without attributes (nirguna brahma), the almighty Lord who is invincible (ajita) as well as eternal and unborn (aja).

[To wit, Lord Ram is a human manifestation of the Supreme Being; he is not any ordinary prince of any kingdom though he looks like one. The Lord has cast a veil of Maya, the cloud of delusions over the whole world so that his true identity remains secret. This illusion is necessary to accomplish the mammoth task for which the Lord

had to assume a human form; the cruel Ravana and his demon horde will not be eliminated otherwise.] (12)

We those who serve the Lord are extremely and singularly fortunate to have got this stellar service; we are the lucky ones indeed to be able to regularly serve and be devoted to the visible form of the Supreme Being, the Brahm, whose primary form is invisible and cosmic in nature¹. (13)

[Note—¹Jamvant, the bear chief, was moved by Angad's lamentations; he felt extremely sad when he observed the utterly forlorn and dejected condition of his, for he empathised with Angad. So therefore Jamvant went close and put his arms around Angad, affectionately speaking to him in order to raise his spirits and inspire hope and encouragement inside his bosom.

Jamvant said to Angad, "Son; you must not lose hope. I would have kept quiet, but I couldn't restrain myself seeing your abject condition that seems to have reached alarming proportions. Remember dear: you are our captain and leader; if you go down the dumps so easily and sit down to weep and lament like a stricken person, what will happen to the rest of the group that depends upon your guidance and moral support. It ought to be you who must shore up others' sinking spirits and encourage them if they lose hope and feel dejected, and here on the contrary I see that you yourself seem to be sinking.

So come on Angad; cheer up and get up. Understand that you are on the mission of the Lord who is the Supreme Commander and the Ruler of the whole world; this being the case is it not an irony, something to laugh at and a matter of shame on our pride that you, being a brave and courageous prince yourself, should behave so meekly and hopelessly as if you were a servant of a weakling or a coward yourself? Hence, get your acts together and hold your chin up high; remember all other monkeys and bears are looking up to you for support and courage; their lives and hopes rest with you. I am sure you will live up to your reputation, duties and responsibilities. Be bold and courageous; be an excellent example to the rest of our group.

And why are you so affright that Sugriv would kill you; haven't you yourself acknowledged just now that Lord Ram had saved your life the first time, and don't you have trust in the Lord that he would do it again and again, that the all-merciful and compassionate Lord would never allow any harm to come to you? Perish any other contradictory thought if by some delusion or wrong understanding any such evil thing had even fleetingly touched your mind; banish it immediately. Remember: the Lord would take upon himself any evil eye that may be dared cast upon you; rest assured of it. I am old and experienced, and I love you to an extent that at least I won't either betray or mislead you.

Why are you so despondent, desolate and gloomy; why are you on a tailspin of depression and hopelessness? You are amongst friends and brothers; you are not abandoned and forgotten. We will never ever leave you alone and escape to save our own skins; we will live and die with you—it's my word of honour, and so it is the resolve of all our companions here.

Can't you see that all members of our group have tears in their eyes when they see you sad and hear you talk of dying at the hands of Sugriv? Don't you see that they have cast their lot with you, that they have spread sitting mats on the ground around you, keeping you in the center, so that no one can touch you without first fighting with all of us? In god's name, why do you feel scared and abandoned?

Angad; what has happened to you? Listen: we are brave, bold and honourable warriors, not contemptible cowards and spine-less sycophant courtiers who would bend over backwards to please their lord and king; we have our scruples and principles. We take the enemy in his face, and we face all adversities with a high chin; we don't show either of them our backs.

So say my dear, how come you even allowed such demeaning and degrading thoughts to enter your mind, that Sugriv would kill you, that we will not find Sita, that we will all die, that all hope is lost?

Cheer up; look up. Let us strive to devise a device to get around the unexpected obstacle in the form of this ocean, instead of lamenting and cursing our fates; the way you are behaving does not behove us on any count whatsoever; it will bring shame to all of us. We are all with you, and together we can surmount the greatest of obstacles that dares to challenge us.

You must act with dignity and fortitude, you must show exemplary courage and patience, you must present a stellar example of resilience and equanimity when faced with adversities and seemingly insurmountable difficulties, as these are the virtues that distinguishes a noble soul, and wherein lie an individual's glory for which he is remembered for all times to come. A person's manliness and strength of character lie in facing circumstances with his chin high up, and not timidly buckling his knees in defeat and surrender even before the final results are out.

My dear Angad; remember that fortune smiles on them who are courageous and brave, and not on cowards and runaways. A person is remembered and honoured for the smile he bears on his face when he emerges from the gravest of situations that are most daunting, and a fate that is malevolent and intractable, and not for the smile he bears for emerging from the comfort zone of favourable situations or a fate that is benevolent on him."

It must be remembered by the reader at this juncture that Jamvant was actually Brahma, the creator of this world. His external appearance such as his old age, his wisdom and experience, his calm and thoughtful manners etc.—all mirrored this fact. So when Jamvant himself assured Angad, the latter felt relieved. He sighed and took a deep breath; fresh tears of hope and expectation of life moistened his eyes.]

दो०. निज इच्छाँ प्रभु अवतरइ सुर महि गो द्विज लागि ।

सगुन उपासक संग तहँ रहहिं मोच्छ सब त्यागि ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

nija icchāṁ prabhu avatara'i sura mahi gō dvija lāgi.

saguna upāsaka saṅga tahaṁ rahahiṁ mōccha saba tyāgi. 26.

The Lord has manifested himself in a human form for the good and happiness of the gods, mother earth and the cows (representing defenceless and humble creatures)¹.

Those devotees who prefer to worship the Supreme Being in his visible form that has attributes and can be easily related with in practical terms in this gross world, so that these devotees can enjoy company of the Lord they adore (as compared to those who prefer to worship the Lord in his invisible cosmic form that is all-pervading, sublime and subtle, a form known as 'pure Consciousness', but which is inaccessible, too abstract and intractable for a common creature)—such devotees

would gladly bargain even the fruit of Moksha (deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the soul) if they are given the choice of serving the Lord². (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹The demons led by Ravana had unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem. When their horrors transgressed limits of tolerance, the gods and the earth approached Lord Vishnu to intercede on their behalf and give them protection. The Lord had then promised them that he would come down personally and eliminate Ravana and his demon hordes. To fulfil his promise, Lord Vishnu manifested himself as Lord Ram. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

²But primarily there is no difference between the two forms of the Supreme Lord—i.e. his visible form here in this mortal world as Lord Ram, and his cosmic invisible form as Lord Vishnu. This fact is reiterated by Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 116; and (ii) Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

The devotees are given an easy opportunity to attain liberation and deliverance from the miseries and sorrows associated with life in this mortal world by remembering and singing the stories related to the visible manifestation of the Supreme Being, as this form of the Lord can easily be understood and recalled even by an ordinary creature—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122.

To wit, all devotees worship the same Lord, albeit in different forms in accordance to their liking and preferences. It is like the case of viewing the sky with glasses of different shades of colour: if we see through a blue glass we say the sky is blue, and if through a green-shaded glass, we see the same sky coloured green.

The “saguna upāsaka” is a devotee who worships and adores the form of the Lord God that is visible, has attributes and familiar to him, while the “nirguna upāsaka” is the devotee who worships and adores the invisible cosmic form of the Lord that has no attributes, is all-pervading and subtle, a form that is so abstract that no one can claim that he is fully familiar with it.

It is always easier and better to reach the unknown from what is well known, understand what is unfamiliar after first coming to grasp fully with what is familiar, rather than the other way round. So therefore, a wise devotee is one who first develops devotion, faith and love for the Lord God through the medium of the Lord’s ‘saguna form’, and then gradually evolves to a higher plane where he can have natural devotion, faith and love for the ‘nirguna form’ of the same Lord God. If the foundation of any building is firm and based on solid ground, its superstructure will also be firm, no matter how high this building may rise into the air.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि कथा कहहिं बहु भाँती । गिरि कंदराँ सुनी संपाती ॥ १ ॥

बाहेर होइ देखि बहु कीसा । मोहि अहार दीन्ह जगदीसा ॥ २ ॥

आजु सबहि कहँ भच्छन करउँ । दिन बहु चले अहार बिनु मरउँ ॥ ३ ॥

कबहुँ न मिल भरि उदर अहारा । आजु दीन्ह बिधि एकहिं बारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi kathā kahahiṃ bahu bhāṃtī. giri kandarāṃ sunī sampātī. 1.
 bāhēra hō'i dēkhi bahu kīsā. mōhi ahāra dīnha jagadīsā. 2.
 āju sabahi kahaṃ bhacchana kara'ūṃ. dina bahu calē ahāra binu mara'ūṃ. 3.
 kabahuṃ na mila bhari udara ahārā. āju dīnha bidhi ēkahim bārā. 4.

In this way, the group of monkeys (and bears) were talking aloud amongst themselves on different aspects of the situation and their fate.

Their chatter was heard by a vulture named Sampati¹ (Jatau's elder brother) who lived inside a cave on the side of the mountain (facing the ocean). (1)

He (Sampati) came out to investigate from whence the noise came. When he saw a large number of monkeys (and bears)² animatedly talking on the shore of the ocean, down the slope of the mountain, he felt glad and said to himself, 'It's good that the Creator has granted me something to feed upon. (2)

I would devour all of them today itself, for I have been starving for many days during which I have had nothing to eat. (3)

I had never had enough food to fill my stomach on any day, but the Creator has been so generous with me today that he had recompensed me by granting enough food to fill my empty tummy all at once.' (4)

[Note—¹Sampati would tell his own story to the team of monkeys and bears soon when he meets them—see Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precedes Doha no. 28 herein below. His story is narrated in greater detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 8.

According to the legend narrated in the Srimad Bhagvata Mahapurāṇa, 4.1, there was an ancient sage by the name of Kashyap. He married the thirteen daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati, and his off-springs populated the entire creation. As such, Kashyapa is called the progenitor of all living beings, right from the gods and the demons to the creatures, including all the sub-human species belonging to the zoological kingdom, that inhabit the rest of the mortal world.

One of his wives was called Vinatā; she was the mother of the feathered creatures. From her Kashyap begot two sons—Aruna and Garuda. Aruna became the charioteer of the Sun-God, and Garuda served as the mount of Lord Viṣṇu. Out of these two brothers, Aruna became the father of the two vulture-brothers Sampati and Jatau.

These two brothers had enormous size and strength, could fly high up in the sky, had astounding long life, and miraculously could speak many tongues. This is evident from the fact that Jatau could converse with Lord Rām in the human tongue, and Sampati with the monkeys and bears in their own lingua-franca. Remember: we are talking about an era long past, about which we just have no idea or can imagine about. So what was a normal occurrence in the time it relates to may seem incredulous and wondrous to us today.

²The word used in the text is “kīsā”, which literally translates to a monkey, or more generally to a monkey-like individual. As we have read in a note appended earlier when we read about Lord Rām coming to Mt. Rishyamook and meeting Hanuman, these individuals appeared to be like monkeys because of their physical appearances, habits, nature, living style, manners, languages, culture etc. which were in variance

with those of the members of the human race, prompting the latter to call the former ‘monkeys’. But this variance and oddity was caused over a long period of time due to the habitat and circumstances in which these so-called ‘monkeys’ had to live and survive—such as the harsh realities of their dwelling places, the forest, the mountains, the hills and the valleys, as well as the vagaries of Nature, of weather and climate, and many other factors that played a combined role to shape their behaviour and attitude to life. But nonetheless they were more human-like than being complete animals like monkeys actually are; the metamorphosis had been caused by the process of adaptation and adjustment and reconciliation for which the human race is well known and appreciated.

Besides this factor, the army of Lord Ram consisted of ‘both the monkeys and bears’, and not only the monkeys, as we shall discover in due course during the reading of the enchanting narration of the fierce war of Lanka. One instance will suffice for the time being to illustrate our point: in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 39 we read specifically that when the battle first commenced, “large numbers of bears and monkeys roared thunderously and jumped excitedly as they cheered Lord Ram and raised a cry honouring his glory as they launched their attack on the enemy forces (i.e. on the demon army of Ravana)”.

Moreover, we have just read that Jamvant had comforted Angad, and Jamvant was the chief of the bear community. So therefore it is natural to conclude that both the monkeys and bears constituted the team that was sitting near the ocean, and it was this team which Sampati saw.]

डरपे गीध बचन सुनि काना । अब भा मरन सत्य हम जाना ॥ ५ ॥
कपि सब उठे गीध कहँ देखी । जामवंत मन सोच बिसेषी ॥ ६ ॥

ḍarapē gīdha bacana suni kānā. aba bhā marana satya hama jānā. 5.
kapi saba uṭhē gīdha kahaṁ dēkhī. jāmavanta mana sōca bisēṣī. 6.

The group of monkeys and bears got terrified when they heard the words of the vulture, and they grieved at their fate, saying, ‘Now it is true that we will die; our fate seemed doomed’¹. (5)

The Kapis (monkeys, bears) got up when they saw the (huge) vulture. Meanwhile, Jamvant became pensive; he contemplated for a moment (about how to tackle this new, unforeseen development)². (6)

[Note—¹Sampati had a huge size. When these monkeys and bears heard him roaring loudly and saw his colossal frame hovering over them in the sky, ready to swoop down on them and kill them by fierce attacks of his claws and beak, they were all petrified with fear and were sure that now there is no escape from death.

²Jamvant was alarmed and aghast; he was consternated and flabbergasted. Just a few moments back he had somehow restored calm and confidence in the team by encouraging Angad, assuaging his feelings and building courage in the team as a whole, and now all of a sudden this piquant situation arose—for this hungry vulture would inflict severe injury to the monkeys and bears by striking them ferociously and viciously from the sky, biting and lacerating them with its beak and claws. The

vulture had such a gigantic size when it spread its wings to full span that the sun was covered and a huge shadow fell on the ground as if a dark cloud had completely obscured the sun's light!

This sight itself was terrifying in its own right, and it only went to compound the fear of death that had already been bearing heavily over the mind of the stressed group of monkeys and bears. Jamvant had to think fast; so he became contemplative, as there was no time to lose.]

कह अंगद बिचारि मन माहीं । धन्य जटायू सम कोउ नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥

राम काज कारन तनु त्यागी । हरि पुर गयउ परम बड़ भागी ॥ ८ ॥

kaha aṅgada bicāri mana māhīm. dhan'ya jaṭāyū sama kō'u nāhīm. 7.
rāma kāja kārana tanu tyāgī. hari pura gaya'u parama baṛa bhāgī. 8.

Angad contemplated in his mind and exclaimed, 'In all sooth and without gainsay, there is no one more fortunate and worthy than Jatau. (7)

He had left his mortal body serving the cause of Lord Ram, and in doing so the most fortunate one had got a right of passage to the heavenly abode of Lord Hari (Vishnu)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Jatau died for the cause of Lord Ram, as he died trying to secure Sita's release from Ravana's clutches. And this noble deed of his paved the way for his unhindered passage to heaven where ordinarily a flesh-eating vulture would never have hoped to go ever.

When Angad saw that the new danger is in the form of a vulture, he immediately remembered Jatau about whom we have already read earlier. Jatau was severely wounded when the demon king Ravana cut-off his wings as he tried to save Sita from being kidnapped by the demon. Later on, when Lord Ram reached the spot, Jatau narrated the developments to the Lord, and then died in the Lord's arms. The Lord then performed his last rites as he would have done for his own father. Being graced with this rare privilege, Jatau attained an exalted stature by going straight to heaven in spite of his life being spent in eating cadavers as vultures are accustomed to. {The episode related to Jatau is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Doha no. 32.}

Angad wondered aloud about the ironies of this world: there was one vulture named Jatau who died serving the cause of Lord Ram, and here is another vulture (Sampati) who wants to create an obstacle in the Lord's work by killing his messengers.

Angad thought quickly and decided that if he mentioned the name of Jatau there were more than even chances that this new enemy would recognise the name, and would, in all likelihood, wish to investigate what the matter referred to was. And his guess paid—for Sampati stopped in his path as he indeed recognised this name as being that of his own younger brother.

So Sampati wondered what this monkey was saying, and he descended politely to make quarries. We shall see in the following verses that this is what exactly happened, and this speculation of Angad paid off.]

सुनि खग हरष सोक जुत बानी । आवा निकट कपिन्ह भय मानी ॥ ९ ॥
 तिन्हहि अभय करि पूछेसि जाई । कथा सकल तिन्ह ताहि सुनाई ॥ १० ॥
 सुनि संपाति बंधु कै करनी । रघुपति महिमा बहुबिधि बरनी ॥ ११ ॥

sunī khaga haraṣa sōka juta bānī. āvā nikaṭa kapinha bhaya mānī. 9.
 tinhahi abhaya kari pūchēsī jāī. kathā sakala tinha tāhi sunāī. 10.
 sunī sampātī bandhu kai karanī. raghupati mahimā bahubidhi baranī. 11.

When the bird (“khaga”; the vulture Sampati) heard these sombre words (of Angad) spoken in a sorrowful voice (sunī -- sōka juta bānī), he felt joyous (haraṣa)¹.

But as he approached them, the Kapis felt terrified (as they thought that Sampati would attack them). (9)

Sampati managed to calm them down and remove their fear by his friendly gestures and amiable demeanours. When he was close enough, he asked them the story related to Jatau, which they (here mainly Angad and Jamvant) cheerfully narrated to him. (10)

After hearing the noble deeds of his brother (Jatau), Sampati praised the glory of Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) in various ways². (11)

[Note—¹Sampati had heard the name of his brother Jatau after a long time, so it was natural that he was glad to hear it. But then he also heard that Jatau had died serving Lord Ram’s cause, this made him sad and sorrowful. So we see in Sampati’s case that the two opposing emotions of happiness and sorrows simultaneously revealed themselves.

Sampati thought to himself that he could get more information about his dear brother Jatau from these monkeys and bears as they seem to be well acquainted with him, and the circumstances surrounding him and his death. So he abandoned his bellicose attitude and assumed an amiable countenance. He descended in a friendly manner, and politely approached the group slowly so as not to alarm them.

²After hearing the details of Jatau’s deeds, Sampati was emotionally overwhelmed. The one thing that struck him the most was Lord Ram’s merciful and gracious nature when he heard how the Lord had treated his dear brother affectionately; how he caressed the wounded vulture, wiped his blood and tended to his wounds himself, and finally performed Jatau’s last rites like he would have done for his own father. Sampati choked and somehow managed to hold back his tears. He was all praises for Lord Ram.

No other person would have done what the Lord did—no other person would lift a wounded vulture on his lap, wipe the blood off the vulture’s body with his long hairs as no other means were available, hold the wailing bird close to his bosom, and then taking care to perform his last rites properly—instead of just letting him die.

Verily, Sampati could not find enough words to thank Lord Ram on his dead brother’s behalf; he repeatedly praised the Lord and sang his glories by spreading his wings and lifting his beak to the heaven.

Samapti thanked God he did not act rashly in haste; he felt ashamed at himself that he was contemplating harming the messengers of the Lord for whom his younger brother Jatau had laid down his life. To overcome this guilt, he praised the Lord profusely.]

दो०. मोहि लै जाहु सिंधुतट देउँ तिलांजलि ताहि ।
बचन सहाइ करबि मैं पैहु खोजहु जाहि ॥ २७ ॥
dōhā.

mōhi lai jāhu sindhutata dē'uṁ tilāñjali tāhi.
bacana sahā'i karabi maiṁ paihahu khōjahu jāhi. 27.

He (Sampati) requested the monkeys and bears, 'Please take me to the shore of the ocean so that I can offer oblations of water to the soul¹ of my departed dear brother.

After this, I shall help you with my words by telling you where to find her whom you seek. (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹Offerings are made to the soul of the dead by those related to the departed by using a little water to which sesame seeds are added. The dead individual is remembered, the offerings are made, and a prayer is said for the peace of the soul of the departed.

Why did Sampati ask the monkeys and bears to take him to the shore of the ocean to make oblations to his dead brother, instead of doing it himself? The answer is this:

First—Water is needed to offer oblations, and a vulture cannot collect sufficient water for this purpose. So Sampati needed help.

Second—Vultures don't perform oblations and other post-death rites of dear ones like humans do, but when Sampati heard how Lord Ram had shown due respect to his brother by offering oblations in the course of doing his last rites, he concluded that he should also follow this example. But since he was not accustomed to this rite he thought that the monkeys and bears who closely followed human behaviour and were evolutionary nearer to them would be able to guide him through the process.

Third—He wished to make the messengers feel easy and comfortable with him, especially after his threat of killing and devouring them all, and this purpose would be aided if he takes their help in completing performing the rites of his dead brother.

Four—The rite of the dead after cremation, where water is offered to the soul of the departed by his kin, is usually done near a water body, such as a pond, lake or river. Here the ocean was available, so Sampati asked the messengers to take him there.]

चौ०. अनुज क्रिया करि सागर तीरा । कहि निज कथा सुनहु कपि बीरा ॥ १ ॥
हम द्वौ बंधु प्रथम तरुनाई । गगन गए रबि निकट उड़ाई ॥ २ ॥
तेज न सहि सक सो फिरि आवा । मैं अभिमानी रबि निअरावा ॥ ३ ॥
जरे पंख अति तेज अपारा । परेउँ भूमि करि घोर चिकारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupā'ī.

anuja kriyā kari sāgara tīrā. kahi nija kathā sunahu kapi bīrā. 1.
hama dvau bandhu prathama tarunā'ī. gagana ga'ē rabi nikaṭa urā'ī. 2.
tēja na sahi saka sō phiri āvā. mair̥m abhimānī rabi ni'arāvā. 3.
jarē paṅkha ati tēja apārā. parē'uṁ bhūmi kari ghōra cikārā. 4.

After having performed the post-death rites of his younger brother (Jatau) on the shore of the ocean, Sampati narrated his own story to the monkeys and bears.

He said, 'Listen oh brave and valiant Kapis. (1)

We two (myself and Jatau) were brothers. One day when we were in prime of our youth, we took to the sky and flew towards the sun, getting closer and closer to it. (2)

He (Jatau) could not tolerate the sun's heat and so he turned back. But I continued on my path as I was haughty, egoistic, and full of pride. (3)

Ultimately my wings got burnt by the scorching heat of the sun, and making a fierce cry I fell down to the earth. (4)

मुनि एक नाम चंद्रमा ओही । लागी दया देखि करि मोही ॥ ५ ॥
बहु प्रकार तेहिं ग्यान सुनाव्वा । देह जनित अभिमान छड़ावा ॥ ६ ॥
त्रेता ब्रह्म मनुज तनु धरिही । तासु नारि निसिचर पति हरिही ॥ ७ ॥
तासु खोज पठइहि प्रभु दूता । तिन्हहि मिलें तैं होब पुनीता ॥ ८ ॥
जमिहहि पंख करसि जनि चिंता । तिन्हहि देखाइ देहेसु तैं सीता ॥ ९ ॥

muni ēka nāma candramā ōhī. lāgī dayā dēkhi kari mōhī. 5.
bahu prakāra tēhir̥m gyāna sunāvā. dēha janita abhimāna charāvā. 6.
trētāṁ brahma manuṣa tanu dharihī. tāsu nāri nisicara pati harihī. 7.
tāsu khōja paṭha'ihī prabhu dūtā. tinhahi milēm̐ tair̥m hōba punitā. 8.
jamihahir̥m paṅkha karasi jani cintā. tinhahi dēkhā'i dēhēsu tair̥m sītā. 9.

When I tumbled down with a yell and landed with a thud on the ground, wounded and weeping, a merciful sage named Chandrama took pity on me. (5)

The wise sage enlightened me about the futility of being proud of this gross mortal body. This teaching of the erudite sage made me regret and realise the impermanent nature of my youth and its false charms vis-à-vis the physical body¹. (6)

He told me, "During the Treta Yuga (which is the third era of the four-era one cycle of birth and death according to the scriptures), Brahm, the Supreme Being, would manifest as a human being (in the form of Lord Ram). At that time, his wife (Sita) would be stolen by a king of the demon race (Ravana). (7)

The Lord would send messengers to search for her. When you meet them you shall be restored and purified. [To wit, the scar of burn on your body would be healed, and

you will be freed from the taint of being haughty and proud. Your sins would be washed at that time, and you will find your true peace.] (8)

Your wings would grow back; don't worry. At that time which I mention, show those messengers where Sita was to be found." (9)

[Note—¹The erudite sage asked me the cause of my misery. When I narrated the whole episode to him and said that I went on nearing the sun as I was very proud of my strong and able body as well as my skill in flying high up in the sky and going up as high as I wished, he realised that I had met this horrible fate because of the pride that I had regarding my body. So he first applied emergency care to me and then advised me that one should not be proud of one's youthful body because one day this body will become old and feeble, that this body is subject to diseases and old age, and that no living being is immortal and so his body will die one day.

Hence, there is no sense of being proud of an entity that has no steady value, that is subject to decline and fall, and that will be lost permanently one day.]

मुनि कइ गिरा सत्य भइ आजू । सुनि मम बचन करहु प्रभु काजू ॥ १० ॥
गिरि त्रिकूट ऊपर बस लंका । तहँ रह रावन सहज असंका ॥ ११ ॥
तहँ असोक उपवन जहँ रहई । सीता बैठि सोच रत अहई ॥ १२ ॥

muni ka'i girā satya bha'i ājū. suni mama bacana karahu prabhu kājū. 10.
giri trikūṭa ūpara basa laṅkā. tahaṁ raha rāvana sahaja asaṅkā. 11.
tahaṁ asōka upabana jahaṁ raha'ī. sītā baiṭhi sōca rata aha'ī. 12.

Verily indeed, the great sage's words have become true today (i.e. the sage's words have borne fruit today)¹. Now, listen to my words (and pay attention to what I have to tell you), and then do accordingly so that the Lord's work can be successfully done. (10)

There is great mountain called Trikut (literally a mountain with three peaks). On it is established the city of Lanka. Ravana lives there fearlessly². (11)

In that place there is a garden (or a grove) called 'Ashok'³; Sita is sitting there lost in worries and thoughtful grief. (12)

[Note—¹The "sage's words have borne fruit today and have become true"—how? The wings of Sampati grew back fully, the scar of burn left by the sun vanished, and he got back some of his youthful stamina and energy that he had lost, and his body was restored to some extent with the same abilities that it possessed when he was young.

The proof of this miraculous feat is to be found just now. We will read below in an instant that Sampati flew high up in the sky from where he could see Sita sitting under a tree in the royal garden of Lanka. Now, this clearly means that (i) his youthful energy was quite back if not fully restored because now he was old; (ii) his wings were restored because without them he would not be able to fly in the sky and see the island of Lanka from high up; (iii) his eyesight was as clear and penetrating as it had been in his younger days—because he could see vividly and sharply enough over a long distance, as far away as Lanka which was roughly one hundred yojan (or

approximately eight hundred miles) from the shore of the ocean, and could distinctly see Sita sitting there from this side of the ocean, which is not a small feat.

²To wit, he is the king of the place and hence has nothing to fear from anything or anybody in the city. It also means that Ravana is so confident of his own invincibility as well as the impenetrable nature of his fort that he has no fear from any quarter; he does not fear any rebellion or invasion respectively.

³The word “Ashok” used for the garden or the grove where Sita lived has the following connotations:

(i) It was so pleasant and comfortable that anyone who entered it felt relieved of all sufferings; it was rejuvenating and refreshing for the senses. Ravana wished to keep Sita comfortable, so he selected this particular garden to keep her so that she could get the maximum amount of comfort under the condition of captivity as could be managed without raising suspicion that a favourable treatment was being shown to an enemy’s wife who is held captive in order to punish her husband for insulting the king’s sister—i.e. Supernakha, the sister of Ravana, the king of the demons.

(ii) It had huge Ashoka Trees (“jonesia asoka” or “sarica indica” plant) with shades that had a wide circumference. This afforded a cool place for Sita to pass her days.]

दो०. मैं देखउँ तुम्ह नाहीं गीधहि दृष्टि अपार।

बूढ़ भयउँ न त करतेउँ कछुक सहाय तुम्हार ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

mair̥ dēkha'um̥ tumha nāhīm gīdhahi dṛṣṭi apāra.

būṛha bhaya'um̥ na ta karatē'um̥ kachuka sahāya tumhāra. 28.

I am clearly able to see her while you can't; it is because a vulture is naturally gifted with an eye-sight that is long and penetrating.

Alas I am old (and feeble) and can't help you; for otherwise I would have certainly helped you a bit more¹. (Doha no. 28)

[Note—¹Sampati told the messengers: “Look brothers, I am so sorry that I could not do much to help you and serve Lord Ram like my brother Jatau had done, for he laid down his life for the sake of the Lord and I can't even take you across the ocean on my back. I am full of remorse and very regretful, but I can't help, because old age has made me so feeble that I can't endure the effort of flying a hundred yojans (see Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha herein below) to land on the soil of Lanka, and then cover the same distance back here. Verily, my brother Jatau was more fortunate; he was exceptionally lucky.

Anyhow, I have done the best I could do—for by telling you exactly where to find Sita I have served the noble cause for which you have undertaken this mission; at least now onwards your futile search will end and you know your destination.”

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 54 however, Sampati gives the reason of his ‘not having wings’ (as they were burnt earlier) for his inability to help the reconnoitering team to go and meet Sita in Lanka situated 100 Yojans across the ocean.

The full story of Sampati has been by him narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 8.]

चौ०. जो नाघड़ सत जोजन सागर । करड़ सो राम काज मति आगर ॥ १ ॥
 मोहि बिलोकि धरहु मन धीरा । राम कृपाँ कस भयउ सरीरा ॥ २ ॥
 पापिउ जा कर नाम सुमिरहीं । अति अपार भवसागर तरहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 तासु दूत तुम्ह तजि कदराई । राम हृदयँ धरि करहु उपाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jō nāgha'i sata jōjana sāgara. kara'i sō rāma kāja mati āgara. 1.
 mōhi bilōki dharahu mana dhīrā. rāma kṛpāṁ kasa bhaya'u sarīrā. 2.
 pāpi'u jā kara nāma sumirahīm. ati apāra bhavasāgara tarahīm. 3.
 tāsu dūta tumha taji kadarāī. rāma hṛdayaṁ dhari karahu upāī. 4.

[Sampati continued—] ‘He who is able to jump across the span of the ocean measuring approximately One-hundred Yojans (roughly 800 miles) from here will be able to accomplish Lord Ram’s work (i.e. he will be successful in meeting Sita and bringing back her news)¹. (1)

Look at me and see how miraculously my body has recovered by the grace of Lord Ram. You must draw inspiration and courage from my example². (2)

The Lord whose name is so divine, holy and mystically empowered that even the greatest of sinners are able to cross over this huge, fathomless, endless and intractable ocean-like world of transmigration by merely remembering the Lord’s holy name “RAM (pronounced as Raam or Rāma)”, --- (3)

--- You are the messengers of the same (almighty and all-able) Lord; so stop being disheartened, don’t have gloomy thoughts and lose your nerves. Get up and go cracking; enshrine the holy image of Lord Ram in your hearts and make plans how to accomplish this task (of crossing the ocean for eight hundred miles).³ (4)

[Note—¹One Yojan is equivalent to four, eight or sixteen miles according to different methods of calculation. So the median figure of “eight miles for one yojan” is taken here for our calculation. Hence, 100 Yojans = 800 miles.

Sampati told the monkeys and bears who had anxiously huddled around him as follows:

“Listen. Lanka is situated roughly eight hundred miles from this shore. So any one of you who is able to cross the ocean by any method to cover this distance, by jumping or leaping across it, by spreading your body so huge that you can cover this span with one gigantic stride, or by cruising in the sky non-stop for this distance, he will land at Lanka and be successful in accomplishing Lord Ram’s work by meeting Sita and bringing back her news. But remember one crucial thing: It is a two-way journey; one side is eight hundred miles, so you need to have the skill and the ability to cover double this distance in order to be successful in the to-and-fro journey.

²My body was seriously wounded and had deep gashes because I fell thousands of feet from the sky when my wings were burnt by the scorching heat of the sun as I have already told you (Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 28 herein above). I was physically disabled, and my injuries did not allow me to search for food as I could not fly. That is why I contemplated eating you all because it appeared to me that you were sitting near the shore to fast unto death, and then I would hobble down and have a hearty meal of your dead bodies. But look what miraculous transformation has happened to my decrepit body when I heard the glories of Lord Ram and the service my brother Jatau had rendered to him; merely hearing the Lord's holy name and hearing his glories had healed my body instantly so much that I could fly high once again, high enough to see Lanka across a distance of eight hundred miles. My eyesight too was restored to its level that I had in my prime time as a youth enabling me to peer clearly over this large distance and see small things distinctly; for otherwise how could I have seen Sita, who but looks like a small speck over this immense distance, so clearly, clear enough to be able to distinguish her from other females, the lady demons, in the same garden! Tell me: is it not a miracle and a vivid proof of Lord Ram's mystical powers?

So have courage and draw inspiration from my example. Since you are on the Lord's mission, failure can't come to touch you; what you experience now is a test of your faith and devotion for the Lord. Don't buckle; don't be foolish to surrender, thinking yourselves to be doomed.

Look, I have waited for so long a time for the day when my body would be healed when I meet Lord Ram's messengers and help them find the Lord's wife as advised by sage Chandrama (refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 28 herein above). And you can see for yourselves that I have indeed been healed; there is no pretension in my words. So why do you despair; why do you think that you will have to die because Sita can't be found? Cheer up and get your acts together; banish gloomy thoughts and divert your energy and mind to find a way to cross the ocean for the distance I have told you. Have faith in Lord Ram, and things will be alright."

³Like Jamvant who had encouraged Angad earlier, here it is Sampati who raised the sagging spirit of the messengers, and ignited a fresh fire of hope and success in their hearts. What a moment early was a dark tunnel with no end in sight suddenly became virtually a veritable periscope that showed the light of the day and a green island in the yonder to the sailors who had lost all hopes of survival!]

अस कहि गरुड़ गीध जब गयऊ । तिन्ह कें मन अति बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ५ ॥

निज निज बल सब काहूँ भाषा । पार जाइ कर संसय राखा ॥ ६ ॥

जरठ भयउँ अब कहइ रिछेसा । नहिं तन रहा प्रथम बल लेसा ॥ ७ ॥

जबहिं त्रिबिक्रम भए खरारी । तब मैं तरुन रहेउँ बल भारी ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi garuṛa gīdha jaba gaya'ū. tinha kēm mana ati bisamaya bhaya'ū. 5.

nija nija bala saba kāhū'm bhāṣā. pāra jā'i kara sansaya rākhā. 6.

jarat̥ha bhaya'u'm aba kaha'i richēsā. nahi'm tana rahā prathama bala lēsā. 7.

jabahi'm tribikrama bha'ē kharārī. taba mai'm taruna rahē'u'm bala bhārī. 8.

[It must be noted here that the divine story of the ‘Ramayana’, the story that narrates the life and deeds of Lord Ram, and in its course narrates the story of Ravana and the war of Lanka too as these two stories are inseparable from one another, have been narrated by Lord Shiva to his consort goddess Parvati, also known as Uma, as well as by the saintly crow named Kaagbusund to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to him to listen to it. Both these narratives are said to be the most ancient renderings of the Ramayana, and both are equally authentic and un-tampered.]

That is why in Ram Charit Manas, from which we are reading at present, both these authorities, i.e. Lord Shiva and Kaagbhusund, have been cited, giving equal importance to both. It is to emphasise that the narration of Ram Charit Manas conforms both to the way Lord Shiva had told it to Parvati, as well as the way Kaagbhusund had told it to Garud.

Presently however, the narration quotes Kaagbhusund who said to Garud—]

‘Oh Garud! When the vulture (Sampati) had gone away after giving this advice (as narrated herein above), the messengers were amazed and confounded in their minds and hearts¹. (5)

Each one of them talked about his own strengths, abilities and skills, but they expressed doubts about their being able to go across the ocean². (6)

[The first among the commanders to speak was Jamvant, the bear chief.]

The chief of the bears said, ‘I have become old, and my body doesn’t have the energy and strength that I had in my youthful days. (7)

When the Lord, who is the slayer of demon Khar (“kharārī”; i.e. Lord Ram)³, had won over (or measured) all the three divisions of the world (“tribikrama”; a reference to Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as Lord Vaaman, the dwarf manifestation)⁴—at that time I was in my youth and had immense strength. [In the following Doha no. 29 Jamvant tells about what happened at that time.] (8)

[Note—¹They were amazed at the story narrated by Sampati, the way he was miraculously healed, and the sudden knowledge that Sita was to be found across the ocean in an island situated eight hundred miles from the shore. More than anything else, the prospect of crossing the mighty ocean confounded them; they felt more dismayed than earlier because one after another formidable obstacles are coming their way. First it was the prospect of dying due to thirst and hunger, than getting trapped in a cave from which there was no exit, which was followed by the horrifying prospect of being attacked by a hungry vulture. And to cap it all, now was the greatest of all hurdles—to be able to cross the heaving and roaring ocean that stood like an endless wall in front.

But inspite of the hopelessness of the situation, they still gathered courage as a glimmer of hope began to shine in their despairing hearts when they observed and discussed how magically Sampati’s body was healed by hearing the story of Lord Ram and the chance he had got of playing a helpful role in the successful accomplishment of the Lord’s mission.

²These monkey and bear warriors said that the problem now was to cross the eight hundred miles of ocean that was roaring menacingly at them. The sight of the heaving and splashing ocean itself was frightening even for a stern heart. Had it been any other

obstacle or place over land, they would have easily overcome it and finished the task at hand quickly; but crossing the ocean is something extraordinary and beyond their means. It was a daunting prospect; a discouraging thought.

³Khar was a demon who was slayed by Lord Ram when he and his brother Dushan had attacked the Lord at Panchavti. In the battle that followed, they and their army of demons were killed by the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20 along with the verses that precede it.} This episode has already been narrated in our narrative when we read about the episode of Supernakha.

⁴The word “Tribikram” means one who has conquered the three worlds. “Tri” = three; “Vikram” = one who is invincible, strong and valiant; one who conquers or defeats. This story relates to Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as the dwarf mendicant known as Vaaman. Since Lord Vishnu has also revealed himself as Lord Ram, so therefore the two forms of Vishnu, one as Vaaman and the other as Lord Ram, basically have no difference.

In the chronological order, Vaaman appeared before Lord Ram. Jamvant had a long life, and he spanned many generations and eras. He was young during the period Lord Vaaman appeared on earth, and now during the era of Lord Ram he has become aged.

The Lord is called ‘Tribikram’ because in his incarnation as Vaaman he had measured the whole creation in his steps, a way of saying that he had ‘conquered the entire creation consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world’.

The story is outlined in brief as a note appended to Doha no. 29 herein below as it would help to explain the things better in the right perspective and context.]

दो०. बलि बाँधत प्रभु बाढ़ेउ सो तनु बरनि न जाइ ।
उभय घरी महँ दीन्हिं सात प्रदच्छिन धाइ ॥ २९ ॥

dōhā.

bali bāṁdhata prabhu bāṛhē'u sō tanu barani na jā'i.
ubhaya gharī maham̐ dīnhīm sāta pradacchina dhā'i. 29.

In order to measure the land granted to him as alms by king Bali, the Lord (Vaaman) had expanded his body to assume such a colossus form that even after covering the entire creation there still was some more space needed so as to complete the measurement. So Vaaman tied Bali and made him a prisoner as the latter could not fulfil his vows. Oh, it is impossible to describe that astounding form of the Lord (that exceeded the circumference of the entire universe and then went beyond it)¹.

Nevertheless, I wished to pay my respects to the Lord by going around him clockwise (i.e. by doing a clockwise circumambulation of his colossal form). I had performed seven rounds of this colossus form quickly in two Gharis by running fast, so much was my strength, stamina and energy at that time². (Doha no. 29)

[Note—¹King Bali had wanted to rule over the whole world. The Gods were alarmed as this would violate the law of creation, because no living being can claim to replace the authority of Lord Vishnu as the Lord of the world. So the Lord assumed the form of a Brahmin dwarf and approached Bali at the time he was doing the fire sacrifice to

fulfil his objective, and asked for alms. Bali could not refuse the alms-seeker, and promised Lord Vaaman land equivalent to the area covered by his 'three steps' as desired.

Instantly, Vaaman expanded his body and measured the whole of the nether world and earth in one step; in the second step he measured the entire heaven and the sky. One step was still pending; there was no space left that could be measured by the third step. So in order to fulfil his vow Bali allowed the Lord to measure him by the third step—i.e. the great king voluntarily submitted to Lord Vaaman and allowed himself to be tied and enslaved in lieu of the land for the third step.

One can imagine the size of Lord Vaaman when he measured or girdled or straddled across or walked over the whole creation with just two steps—with one step yet pending!

Lord Vaaman is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

²Such was the wondrous feat of Jamvant of which he refers to here that he quickly circled seven times, in a matter of about two gharis or roughly two hours, Lord Vaaman who had a colossal size that exceeded the span of the entire universe, because after measuring the cosmos by his two steps he still needed space for the third step, at which time Vaaman made Bali offer himself as a compensation. Truly it was an absolutely astounding feat.

What Jamvant intends to say here is that the distance of eight hundred miles to Lanka across the ocean is not even a speck in a canvas of space when compared to the dimension of the universe he had covered seven times in two hours, so quick and agile was his body during his youthful days. So striding across a distance of mere eight hundred miles would have been a child's play for him if he had been younger. But alas he was old now, and so his vigour and agility have ebbed considerably due to old age.]

चौ०. अंगद कहइ जाउँ मैं पारा । जियँ संसय कछु फिरती बारा ॥ १ ॥

जामवंत कह तुम्ह सब लायक । पठइअ किमि सब ही कर नायक ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aṅgada kaha'i jā'uṁ mair̥ pārā. jiyāṁ sansaya kachu phiratī bārā. 1.

jāmavanta kaha tumha saba lāyaka. paṭha'i'a kimi saba hī kara nāyaka. 2.

Angad in his turn said, 'I can go (leap across the ocean), but I have doubts about my chances of coming back (for I may not be able to return)¹.' (1)

Jamvant interposed, saying, 'Even though you are able and competent in every way, but how can we send you because you are our leader?²' (2)

[Note—¹Angad said that he had sufficient strength to leap across the eight hundred miles of ocean and reach the island of Lanka, but this will require effort and he fears that by the time he lands there all his energy would be spent. Then it would not be a picnic: he would have to brave all sorts of odds to meet Sita, such as having to fight the demons who may obstruct him or try to capture him as a prisoner. That would further sap his energy. Perhaps he may also be gravely wounded in the course of the mission, becoming so handicapped that he wouldn't be able to come back. So he says that he has serious doubts and grave misgivings about his chances of returning.

Angad was reluctant to go for another reason too. He had seen Lord Ram calling Hanuman close at the time of their departure, and quietly giving him (Hanuman) his finger-ring with a message for Sita. Angad, being the commander and a leader of the group, was standing close by, and he was intelligent enough to conclude that Lord Ram has chosen Hanuman to be his message-bearer over all others, including Angad and Jamvant. So Angad did not wish to interfere; he had to find a polite excuse to recuse himself in deference to the Lord's wishes.

What will happen when they return and the Lord asks Hanuman about the mission and the news of Sita, about what he did with the finger-ring, how was it received by Sita, and what if anything did she give him in return as a token of hers; what answer would they give to the Lord—that instead of Hanuman it was Angad who had gone. Would it not displease the Lord that his orders were violated? Would it not put poor Hanuman in a seriously piquant situation for no fault of his?

No, no it should not be that way. As a leader it was his moral responsibility to take everything into consideration before taking a decision. It is not the time and circumstance for dare-devilry and showmanship.

²Jamvant did not at all like the idea of Angad going alone to Lanka. The apparent reason he gives is that it is not advisable to send away the leader and commander of the group as this would make them leaderless; there would be no one to take decisions if Angad goes.

Another practical objection to allowing Angad to go was that he was a prince, and it does not behove of a prince to go himself on errands while his attendants and soldiers sit around lazing, gossiping and idling away time.

However, besides these obvious reasons there were other subtle reasons also. One was that Angad was also the prince and the heir-apparent of the kingdom of Kishkindha; it is never wise to send an individual of such a singular importance to an alien land on a mission the outcome of which was completely unknown, and especially if he goes alone and unarmed to a hostile land where he would be surrounded on all sides by vicious enemies in the form of blood-thirsty, vicious and ferocious demons.

The other reason that weighed heavily on the mind of Jamvant, who was farsighted and prudent, was that Angad was already under great mental stress as he himself had expressed his grave fears concerning death at the hands of his uncle Sugriv if Sita was not found. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 26.} So Jamvant had a serious apprehension that if Angad is allowed to go abroad then perhaps he may decide never to return as long as he lived—and Angad's own statement expressing his doubts concerning his coming back reinforced Jamvant's suspicion.

What compounded this Jamvant's apprehension was the fact that Ravana was a friend of Baali, the father of Angad. {This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101. In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line

nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 21, Ravana too refers to this acquaintance when Angad meets him as an emissary of Lord Ram in a last attempt to avoid the war.} So there was this risk of Angad deciding to exploit this friendship and defect to Ravana's camp to avoid being killed or imprisoned by his uncle Sugriv.

Jamvant wondered what, after all, Angad meant when he said that "he can go but there is uncertainty about his return".]

कहइ रीक्षपति सुनु हनुमाना । का चुप साधि रहेउ बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥
 पवन तनय बल पवन समाना । बुधि बिबेक बिग्यान निधाना ॥ ४ ॥
 कवन सो काज कठिन जग माहीं । जो नहिं होइ तात तुम्ह पाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 राम काज लगि तव अवतारा । सुनतहिं भयउ पर्वताकारा ॥ ६ ॥

kaha'i rīkṣapati sunu hanumānā. kā cupa sādhi rahē'u balavānā. 3.
 pavana tanaya bala pavana samānā. budhi bibēka bigyāna nidhānā. 4.
 kavana sō kāja kaṭhina jaga māhīm. jō nahīm hō'i tāta tumha pāhīm. 5.
 rāma kāja lagi tava avatārā. sunatahiṁ bhaya'u parbatākārā. 6.

The king of the bears (i.e. Jamvant) turned to Hanuman (who during this time was sitting quietly and waiting for his turn to be asked to act), and exhorted him by saying, 'Listen Hanuman! Oh you brave one, say why are you sitting quietly; how come you are mum? (3)

You are a great Son of the exalted Wind-God, and verily you have the same characteristic strength, power and energy that the latter possesses. You are indeed a treasury of intelligence, wisdom and prudence. (4)

What work is there in this world that is so difficult that you can't do it; which work is there that you are not sufficiently equipped or competent enough to successfully do? (5)

You have manifested in this world exclusively to do Lord Ram's work and fulfil the Lord's mission! [So Hanuman, realise your true potentials and understand that the time for you to act has finally arrived. Wake up from your dream as it is the clarion call to rise has been sounded; the bugle is asking you to girdle yourself and become active instantly, for there is no time for further procrastination and brooding.]

The moment Hanuman heard these inspiring words (spoken by Jamvant), he expanded his body to assume a form as gigantic as a colossus mountain¹. (6)

[Note—¹These motivating words of Jamvant reminded Hanuman about the mission of his life for which he had taken birth, which was to serve Lord Ram and help him in the mission of eliminating the cruel demons headed by Ravana. He is called "the Son of the Wind-God" because when the Gods were advised by the creator to go down to earth and prepare themselves to serve Lord Vishnu when he manifests himself as Lord Ram in order to eliminate the demons and their villainous king Ravana, the Wind-God decided to become Hanuman. Jamvant was alluding to this fact.

So as soon as he was reminded of his birth and responsibilities, Hanuman recollected everything which he appeared to have forgotten under the influence of

Maya, the Lord's delusion creating powers. Things are to be done at the proper time, and so the Supreme Being cast his Maya upon Hanuman so that he lies dormant till the correct time arrives and he is needed. Till such time Hanuman was made to appear to be dreaming; he appeared to be docile, dumb and humble.

But once the veil of delusion was removed, he woke up from his day-dreaming and realised his true potentials. His growing to a colossus size is a metaphor for his stupendous abilities and astounding potentials that no one else could match.

Let us apply some imaginative skill intelligently, and then we can easily visualise what may have actually happened on that occasion. Remember: Hanuman was the 'son of the wind-god', and like a balloon filled with air his body could easily expand to a huge size. It was a necessary device devised to accomplish the task at hand—there was the need to cross the surface of the ocean, which means, in the absence of any other means of transport such as a ship or a bridge, one would have to 'fly or glide or cruise across the surface of the water' like a bird or an airplane. A hot-air balloon would also do the same thing!

So Hanuman did a bit of Yoga exercise: he held his breath within his body so that it expanded; the trapped air got heated as well, allowing him to rise from the ground and become afloat. Then with a little help from a favourable wind, he literally would glide across the surface of the water of the ocean! And since he was the 'son of the wind-god', things would easily be manoeuvred by the latter in his son's favour so that he can comfortably sail in the air to reach Lanka.

After all, it was in the interest of the Wind-God to do his might, and the best as much as he can at this crucial point of time, when the mission of eliminating the demons had reached a critical juncture. For, failure of being able to reach Lanka and trace Sita would mean that the whole master-plan of Lord Ram devised to help the gods themselves would come tumbling down like a house of cards, and then the gods themselves would be held responsible for the disaster.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 16-21 we read the interesting way how Jamvant inspired Hanuman to act. Here it is:

Verse nos. 16-17: Saying this, Jamvant said to Hanuman who was sitting nearby, 'Oh Hanuman! When this great work of honour and fame has presented itself before you, why are you sitting silently and demurring (16) as if you are unaware of anything or reluctant to act? Come forward, oh the brave and immensely valorous and valiant One! You are the son of the wind-god himself, and as famed and renowned in valour and strength as him. Hence, show your prowess, ability, agility, might, power, skill and proficiency today (for this is the moment for which you and the rest of us had been waiting for so long, to serve Lord Ram, and make ourselves fortunate and our lives fulfilled). Rise to the occasion and step forward! (17).

18-19: The great Wind-God has produced you (i.e. given birth to you) to do the work of Lord Sri Ram. At the time of your birth, seeing the early morning rising sun and thinking it to be a ripe fruit, you had leapt 500 Yojans ($8 \times 500 = 4000$ miles) in the sky to grab it as part of your childhood playful activity, and had fallen back on the earth after that mighty leap (18-19).

20-21: Therefore, who is there who can ever describe your strength, valour and bravery? Oh the righteous and noble One. Stand up and come to the front. Do this job of Lord Ram, and be the protector of our lives¹ (20).

Hearing these encouraging and inspiring words of Jamavant, Hanuman was delighted and felt very pleased and motivated. He roared like a lion, and his shrill cry shook the universe (21).

{¹Jamvant motivated Hanuman by these inspiring words of encouragement: “If you could leap 500 Yojans when still a child, why can’t you now leap merely 100 Yojans when you are grown up and abler? Come, come; step forward and show your true mettle. Why do you feel shy when the time has come to be brave and showcase your powers, prowess and abilities? Come, come; you are a great and illustrious son of the equally great and illustrious wind-god; so you must remember to behave in a way that would make your father extremely proud of you, and not ashamed! You would not only make your father feel happy and proud of you but you will also get the eternal credit of saving the lives of all of us as well as serving Lord Ram who is a manifested form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being himself. Your name and fame would become eternal like no one else’s has ever been; you will endear yourself not only to Lord Ram but to all other devotees of the Lord as well as to the entire community of monkeys and bears who now look up to you as their saviour. So get up cheerfully and get cracking!”}]

कनक बरन तन तेज बिराजा । मानहुँ अपर गिरिन्ह कर राजा ॥ ७ ॥
 सिंहनाद करि बारहिं बारा । लीलहिं नाघउँ जलनिधि खारा ॥ ८ ॥
 सहित सहाय रावनहि मारी । आनउँ इहाँ त्रिकूट उपारी ॥ ९ ॥
 जामवंत मैं पूँछउँ तोही । उचित सिखावनु दीजहु मोही ॥ १० ॥

kanaka barana tana tēja birājā. mānahuṁ apara girinha kara rājā. 7.
 simhanāda kari bārahiṁ bārā. līlahiṁ nāgha'uṁ jalanidhi khārā. 8.
 sahita sahāya rāvanahi mārī. āna'uṁ ihāṁ trikūṭa upārī. 9.
 jāmavanta mairṁ pūṁcha'uṁ tōhī. ucita sikhāvanu dījahu mōhī. 10.

[Now we read how wonderful and wondrous Hanuman looked in his gigantic form.]
 The body of Hanuman was of a golden hue; it glowed radiantly. He appeared to be a ‘king amongst the mountains’. [To wit, he reminded the beholder of Mt. Sumeru, the holy golden mountain where the gods live.] (7)

He repeatedly roared like a lion, saying that he would devour the salty ocean or cross it as instructed to do.

[He could also have meant: “I will drink this ocean if it does not allow me to cross it!”] (8)

And I can and I would kill Ravana together with all his kith and kin and those who help him, and then uproot the mountain named Trikoot (over which Lanka was established) and bring it here. (9)

Jamvant—I am asking you what to do; please give me an appropriate advice.’ (10)

एतना करहु तात तुम्ह जाई । सीतहि देखि कहहु सुधि आई ॥ ११ ॥
 तब निज भुज बल राजिवनैना । कौतुक लागि संग कपि सेना ॥ १२ ॥

ētanā karahu tāta tumha jā'ī. sītahi dēkhi kahahu sudhi ā'ī. 11.
taba nija bhuja bala rājivanainā. kautuka lāgi saṅga kapi sēnā. 12.

Jamvant replied, 'My dear (tāta). Do only this much—go and see (meet) Sita, give her the message (vouchsafed by Lord Ram to you), tell her about the developments here, and then come back. (11)

Then the lotus-eyed Lord ("rājivanainā"; i.e. Lord Ram) would finish the task successfully by employing the strength of his own arms, yet for the sake of sport he would take along with him the army of Kapis (monkeys chiefly, but also including the bears) for the job.

[To wit, as soon as the whereabouts of Sita are known, Lord Ram would go himself and use the strength of his own arms to free her. However, just to give us honour as well as an opportunity to enjoy the game of hunting, as it were, he would take our army of monkeys and bears along.] (12)

छं०. कपि सेन संग सँघारि निसिचर रामु सीतहि आनिहैं । १ ।
त्रैलोक पावन सुजसु सुर मुनि नारदादि बखानिहैं ॥ २ ॥
जो सुनत गावत कहत समुझत परम पद नर पावई । ३ ।
रघुबीर पद पाथोज मधुकर दास तुलसी गावई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kapi sēna saṅga saṁghāri nisicara rāmu sītahi ānihaim. 1.
trailōka pāvana sujasu sura muni nāradādi bakhānihaim. 2.
jō sunata gāvata kahata samujhata parama pada nara pāva'ī. 3.
raghubīra pada pāthōja madhukara dāsa tulasī gāva'ī. 4.

Taking along the army of Kapis, Lord Ram would slay the demons, and bring back Sita. (Chanda line no. 1)

Verily indeed, the Gods and sage Narad would sing the marvels of this marvelous and glorious story for all times to come, hearing of which would purify all the three divisions of the world (i.e. the heaven, the earth, and the nether world).

[To wit, all those who listen to this glorious and magnificent story that describes the adventures of Lord Ram by which he freed Sita from the clutches of the demons, and in the process eliminated them as they had become a thorn for the gods and a painful scourge for mother earth, would feel exhilarated and spiritually fulfilled.] (Chanda line no. 2)

Hearing, singing and reciting, preaching and narrating, as well as understanding the true meaning and spiritual import of this glorious story, humans would be able to attain the final destination of the soul, which is to attain beatitude, felicity and eternal bliss.

[To wit, by carefully listening to, soulfully singing, studies and explains to others the subtle meaning and spiritual significance of this wonderful story of Lord Ram so that it is fully understood and all doubts regarding it are removed—if this happens then the attentive listener, the singer, the student, the preacher, the narrator or

the teacher—all those desirous of attaining liberation and deliverance from the miseries of life in this mortal world, would certainly and surely attain the supreme state of blessedness.] (Chanda line no. 3)

It is the same nectar-like story that takes a creature to an exalted state of existence that Tuslidas is singing, and he enjoys it like a bee would enjoy drinking nectar of the lotus flower. (Chanda line no. 4)

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Section 6.2:

Adhyatma Ramayan

We shall now take a pause in our reading of this marvelous story from Ram Charit Manas, and have a sort of a flash back or a rewind of the story by replaying the episodes narrated herein above in this Chapter no. 6 by reading them as they are told in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas.

To recapitulate, we shall be reading about the following episodes here: Lord Ram begins his search of Sita; meeting Jatau and Sabari; friendship with Sugriv, the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha; sending messengers in all the directions to locate Sita; she is sighted in Lanka by Sampati; the reconnaissance party deputed Hanuman to go and ascertain facts; Hanuman crosses the ocean to land on the shore of Lanka.

These episodes are covered in Adhyatma Ramayan's Aranya Kand, Canto 8—to Kishkindha Kand, Canto 9.

For ease of reading we have divided this Section 6.2 in the following sub-sections, each narrating one important episode and its related events, as follows:-

Sub-section 6.2.1: In this unit we read Lord Ram's state of grief when he found that Sita was missing from the hermitage when he returned there. He and his younger brother Laxman then started the search for Sita, and came to the place where the friendly vulture Jatau lay wounded on the ground because he was gravely injured by Ravana when he tried to save Sita from being taken away by the rascal. These events are narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 8.

Sub-section 6.2.2: In this part we read Lord Ram's meeting with Sabari, the old woman, who guided the Lord to go and meet Sugriv, the monkey prince, on Mt. Rishyamook, situated on the banks of Lake Pampa; he would certainly help the Lord find and recover Sita. This episode is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 10.

Sub-section 6.2.3: Lord Ram meets Sugriv and Hanuman, and befriends them. It is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1.

Sub-section 6.2.4: Sugriv had neglected the Lord's request to make earnest efforts to search Sita by sending scouts and messengers in all the directions. This annoyed the Lord, and Sugriv was warned of the consequences. We read about it in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 5.

Sub-section 6.2.5: A large number of messengers and scouts were dispatched in teams in all the directions to search for Sita. One such reconnoitring team heads south and enters a cave where they meet a hermitress named Swayamprabha. This episode is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 6.

Sub-section 6.2.6: Moving ahead on their mission, this team reaches the shore of the southern ocean across which was situated Lanka where Sita was held captive. On the shore Lord Ram's messengers, the monkeys and bears, met Sampati, the old vulture king who was a brother of Jatau. We read about it in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 7.

Sub-section 6.2.7: When Sampati told the group that Sita was held captive in Lanka and he could clearly see her there sitting under a tree in a garden, the next logical step was to send someone from amongst them across the ocean to Lanka which was situated at a distance of 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles) from the shore as the bird flies. So a consultation was held and it was decided that Hanuman would carry out this expedition. Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 9 describes this fascinating episode.

Now let us start reading this fascinating tale of great wonderment from Adhyatma Ramayan as outlined above.

Sub-section 6.2.1: Lord Ram's state of grief when he found that Sita was missing from the hermitage when he returned there; he and his younger brother Laxman then started the search for Sita; they met Jatau who lay wounded on the ground after being gravely injured by Ravana as he tried to save Sita from being taken away by the rascal.

These events are narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranaya Kand, Canto 8 as follow now:-

॥ अष्टमः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच

रामो मायाविनं हत्वा राक्षसं कामरूपिणम् ।

प्रतस्थे स्वाश्रमं गन्तुं ततो दूराददर्श तम् ॥ १॥

आयान्तं लक्ष्मणं दीनं मुखेन परिशुष्यता ।

राघवश्चिन्तयामास स्वात्मन्येव महामतिः ॥ २॥

॥ aṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca

rāmo māyāvinaṃ hatvā rākṣasaṃ kāmarūpiṇam ।

pratasthe svāśramaṃ gantum tato dūrāddadarśa tam ॥ 1॥

āyāntaṃ lakṣmaṇaṃ dīnaṃ mukhena pariśuṣyatā ।

rāghavaścintayāmāsa svātmanyeva mahāmatih ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Here, when Lord Ram had killed the deceptive demon (Marich), who was an impostor, and had turned back to return to his hermitage, he saw from a distance that Laxman was coming towards him. He had a

remorseful countenance and a grave expression of regret on his face. The most wise Raghav (Sri Ram) thought to himself (1-2)—

लक्ष्मणस्तन्न जानाति मायासीतां मया कृताम् ।
ज्ञात्वाप्येनं वञ्चयित्वा शोचामि प्रकृतो यथा ॥ ३॥
यद्यहं विरतो भूत्वा तूष्णीं स्थास्यामि मन्दिरे ।
तदा राक्षसकोटीनां वधोपायः कथं भवेत् ॥ ४॥

lakṣmaṇastanna jānāti māyāsītāṃ mayā kṛtām ।
jñātvāpyenam vañcayitvā śocāmi prākṛto yathā ॥ 3॥
yadyaḥam virato bhūtvā tūṣṇīm sthāsyāmi mandire ।
tadā rākṣasakoṭīnāṃ vadhopāyaḥ katham bhavet ॥ 4॥

3-4. 'Laxman does not know that I have created an illusionary Sita. I know it, but still I shall conceal this fact from him and lament like an ordinary human (3).

And if while acting thus I go overboard and overreact by pretending that like I a true hermit who is totally dispassionate and unattached to worldly affairs such as being attached to a wife and lamenting her loss, I too am a true recluse and would rather prefer to sit quietly in my cottage like a meditating hermit and keep myself aloof and disinterested in searching for her for it is the will of providence that I am left alone and free from all encumbrances, and sit dumbfounded in my cottage in the hermitage doing nothing out of shock as it were—well, this attitude will not serve my purpose at all, because then how can the means to eliminate the hundreds of thousands of demons be realised?

[To wit, if I don't act wisely, and despite the smokescreen of delusions that I shall create to make the world believe that I am emotionally broken by the loss of my dear wife, yet if I sit like a paralysed man who is totally devastated at such a great loss, then what would happen to the master-plan of eliminating the demons of which Sita's abduction was merely a ploy? So therefore, inspite of some show of grief and lamentation, I must go about my plans with alacrity.] (4).

यदि शोचामि तां दुःखसन्तप्तः कामुको यथा ।
तदा क्रमेणानुचिन्वन् सीतां यास्येऽसुरालयम् ।
रावणं सकुलं हत्वा सीतामग्नौ स्थितां पुनः ॥ ५॥
मयैव स्थापितां नीत्वा यातायोध्यामन्दिनः ।
अहं मनुष्यभावेन जातोऽस्मि ब्रह्मणार्थितः ॥ ६॥
मनुष्यभावमापन्नः किञ्चित्कालं वसामि कौ ।
ततो मायामनुष्यस्य चरितं मेऽनुशृण्वताम् ॥ ७॥
मुक्तिः स्यादप्रयासेन भक्तिमार्गानुवर्तिनाम् ।
निश्चित्यैवं तदा दृष्ट्वा लक्ष्मणं वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ८॥

yadi śocāmi tāṃ duḥkhasantaptaḥ kāmuko yathā ।
tadā krameṇānucinvan sītāṃ yāsyē'surālayam ।
rāvaṇaṃ sakulaṃ hatvā sītāmagṇau sthitāṃ punaḥ ॥ 5॥

mayaiva sthāpitāṃ nītvā yātāyodhyāmatandritaḥ ।
 ahaṃ manuṣyabhāvena jāto'smi brahmaṇārthitaḥ ॥ 6॥
 manuṣyabhāvamāpannaḥ kiñcitkālāṃ vasāmi kau ।
 tato māyāmanuṣyasya caritaṃ me'nuśṛṇvatām ॥ 7॥
 muktiḥ syādaprayāsenā bhaktimārgānuvartinām ।
 nīścityaivam tadā dr̥ṣṭvā lakṣmaṇaṃ vākyamabravīt ॥ 8॥

5-8. On the contrary, if I pretend to be overcome with grief for her initially, and then instead of sitting like a dispassionate hermit I begin to lament woefully like a lustful and passionate person who grieves for his beloved wife, then obviously I shall have an excuse to go in search for Sita, and in due course of time reach Ravana, kill him along with his compatriots, relatives and companions (literally, the entire demon clan who is as evil and sinful as Ravana is), retrieve Sita who has been entrusted to (i.e. put in the custody of) the fire god, and then proceed to Ayodhya.

I have taken a human form due to the prayers of Brahma (the Creator). Hence, I shall stay on this earth and behave like an ordinary human being for some time. By doing this, some devotees who are devotedly inclined towards me and listen to the divine stories of my illusionary human form, they will get a chance to attain easy salvation without making any great effort for it.

[To wit, if I spend some time on earth then a history of my life would be left as a legacy, and my devotees would get an opportunity to recall this story and remember me as a easy means to attain bliss and beatitude. So therefore, I must act like a human being who wails for his lost wife, and not like the Supreme Being for whom all situations are the same, who has neither a wife nor someone who is lost.]'

Deciding thus, Lord Ram looked at Laxman and said (7-8)—

किमर्थमागतोऽसि त्वं सीतां त्यक्त्वा मम प्रियाम् ।
 नीता वा भक्षिता वापि राक्षसैर्जनकात्मजा ॥ ९॥
 लक्ष्मणः प्रोज्जलिः प्रह सीताया दुर्वचो रुदन् ।
 हा लक्ष्मणेति वचनं राक्षसोक्तं श्रुतं तया ॥ १०॥
 त्वद्वाक्यसदृशं श्रुत्वा मां गच्छेति त्वराब्रवीत् ।
 रुदन्ती सा मया प्रोक्ता देवि राक्षसभाषितम् ॥ ११॥

kimarthamāgato'si tvaṃ sītāṃ tyaktvā mama priyām ।
 nītā vā bhakṣitā vāpi rākṣasairjanakātmajā ॥ 9॥
 lakṣmaṇaḥ prāñjaliḥ prāha sītāyā durvaco rudan ।
 hā lakṣmaṇeti vacanaṃ rākṣasoktaṃ śrutaṃ tayā ॥ 10॥
 tvadvākyasadṛśaṃ śrutvā māṃ gaccheti tvarābravīt ।
 rudantī sā mayā proktā devi rākṣasabhāṣitam ॥ 11॥

9-11. Lord Ram expressed his surprise on seeing Laxman coming his way and exclaimed, 'Oh Laxman! How and why did you come here leaving behind my beloved Sita alone? Now by this time the demons must have either stolen her or eaten her up' (9).

Then Laxman wept and submitted to the Lord with folded hands that Sita had made serious allegations against him. Laxman said—"Hearing the words of the demon calling out 'Ah Laxman' in your voice (or in a voice imitating you), Sita told me to come to your help immediately. Then I tried to explain the situation to her as she wept, 'Oh goddess', said I, 'These are not the words of Sri Ram, but the words of a demon. [So you need not worry.] (10-11).

नेदं रामस्य वचनं स्वस्था भव शुचिस्मिते ।
इत्येवं सान्त्विता साध्वी मया प्रोवाच मां पुनः ।
यदुक्तं दुर्वचो राम न वाच्यं पुनस्तव ॥ १२॥
कर्णो पिधाय निर्गत्य यातोऽहं त्वां समीक्षितुम् ।
रामस्तु लक्ष्मणं प्राह तथाप्यनुचितं कृतम् ॥ १३॥
त्वया स्त्रीभाषितं सत्यं कृत्वा त्यक्त्वा शुभानना ।
नीता वा भक्षिता वापि राक्षसैर्नातु संशयः ॥ १४॥

nedam rāmasya vacanam svasthā bhava śucismite ।
ityevam sāntvitā sādhvī mayā provāca mām punaḥ ।
yaduktam durvaco rāma na vācyam puratastava ॥ 12॥
karṇau pidhāya nirgatya yāto'ham tvām samīkṣitum ।
rāmastu lakṣmaṇam prāha tathāpyanucitam kṛtam ॥ 13॥
tvayā strībhāṣitam satyam kṛtvā tyaktā śubhānanā ।
nītā vā bhakṣitā vāpi rākṣasairnātra saṁśayaḥ ॥ 14॥

12-14. Oh the auspicious one with a pleasant smile (śucismite). You should not worry.'

But inspite of my efforts to reassure her, the Sadhvi (the virtuous and chaste) Sita hurled such scornful words full of reprehensible accusation at me which are were so uncouth that they are unworthy to be repeated in front of you (12).

So I shut my ears in disgust and disdain, and decided, though against my will and with great regret, to leave her and come to see you.'

At this, Lord Ram said, 'Oh Laxman! It's alright, but still you have not done the right thing (13) by believing the words of a woman and leaving the auspicious Sita alone. Now there is no doubt that either the demons have stolen her or have eaten her up' (14).

इति चिन्तापरो रामः स्वाश्रमं त्वरितो ययौ ।
तत्रादृष्ट्वा जनकजां विललापातिदुःखितः ॥ १५॥
हा प्रिये क्व गतासि त्वं नासि पूर्ववदाश्रमे ।
अथवा मद्दिमोहार्थं लीलया क्व विलीयसे ॥ १६॥

iti cintāparo rāmaḥ svāśramam tvarito yayau ।
tatrādrṣṭvā janakajāṁ vilalāpātīduḥkhitaḥ ॥ 15॥
hā priye kva gatāsi tvam nāsi pūrvavadāśrame ।

athavā madvimohārthaṃ līlayā kva viliyase ॥ 16॥

15-16. Worrying in this manner, Lord Ram speedily came back to his hermitage, and not finding Sita there, he became very dismayed and began lamenting remorsefully (15), 'Oh dear! You are not visible in the hermitage today; where have you gone? Or is it that you have hidden somewhere to play tricks on me?' (16).

इत्याचिन्वन् वनं सर्वं नापश्यज्जानकीं तदा ।
वनदेव्यः कुतः सीतां ब्रुवन्तु मम वल्लभाम् ॥ १७॥
मृगाश्च पक्षिणो वृक्षा दर्शयन्तु मम प्रियाम् ।
इत्येवं विलपन्नेव रामः सीतां न कुत्रचित् ॥ १८॥

ityācinvan vanam sarvaṃ nāpaśyajjānakīm tadā ।
vanadevyāḥ kutaḥ sītāṃ bruvantu mama vallabhām ॥ 17॥
mrgāśca pakṣiṇo vṛkṣā darśayantu mama priyām ।
ityevaṃ vilapanneva rāmaḥ sītāṃ na kutracit ॥ 18॥

17-18. Lamenting woefully in this manner, Lord Ram searched for her around the forest, but could not find her. Then he said—'Oh the patron goddesses of the forest! Tell me where is my dear wife Sita? Oh the deer, birds and trees! Please show me my beloved Sita' (17). Searching and lamenting in this woeful manner, Lord Ram looked everywhere but could not see (trace) Sita anywhere (18).

सर्वज्ञः सर्वथा क्वापि नापश्यद्रघुनन्दनः ।
आनन्दोऽप्यन्वशोचतामचलोऽप्यनुधावति ॥ १९॥
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारोऽप्यखण्डानन्दरूपवान् ।
मम जायेति सीतेति विललापातिदुःखितः ॥ २०॥
एवं मायामनुचरन्नसक्तोऽपि रघूत्तमः ।
आसक्त इव मूढानां भाति तत्त्वविदां न हि ॥ २१॥

sarvajñāḥ sarvathā kvāpi nāpaśyadraghunandanaḥ ।
ānando'pyanvaśocattāmacalo'pyanudhāvati ॥ 19॥
nirmamo nirahaṅkāro'pyakhaṇḍānandarūpavān ।
mama jāyeti sīteti vilalāpātīduḥkhitaḥ ॥ 20॥
evaṃ māyāmanucarannasakto'pi raghūttamaḥ ।
āsakta iva mūḍhānāṃ bhāti tattvavidāṃ na hi ॥ 21॥

19-21. [What a wonder that—] Raghunandan (Lord Sri Ram), inspite of being wise and all-knowing, seems to be pursuing an illusive deer (who was actually a demon named Marich); inspite of being an embodiment of total bliss, beatitude and contentment, he mourned and grieved for Sita; inspite of being steady, calm and stable, he ran around here and there in search of her (19); inspite of being devoid of all attractions, attachments, endearments or affections towards anyone, despite having

no trace of ego, pride, arrogance or haughtiness; and inspite of being an embodiment of bliss, contentedness, peace and tranquillity that are eternal, imperishable and uniform—the same Supreme Lord wailed most remorsefully, lamenting and calling out like an ordinary human 'Oh Sita; Oh my dearest Sita' (20).

In this manner, following his own decision to act like an ordinary human being surrounded or enveloped by Maya (worldly delusions of all kinds and their accompanying problems), the most exalted Raghu (Lord Ram) appears to be infatuated and wistful like an ignorant and lustful man, inspite of being unattached to and detached from everything in this mortal world—but those who have knowledge of the essential truth, the actual reality of the Lord, those who are aware of the true and real form of things, in short, those who are enlightened and wise, such erudite and spacious people do not have any doubt and suspicion about anything related to Lord Ram¹. (21)

[Note—¹To wit, those who are intelligent and wise know fully understand that the way the Lord behaved like an ordinary man grieving for his lost wife was simply a pretension in order to successfully carry out his mission of eliminating the cruel and sinful demons headed by Ravana, a mission that was promised by the Lord to the gods and mother earth because these demons had wreaked such havoc and had broken all boundaries of tolerance by their exceptional cruelty and reign of terror that had left all the creatures suffering horribly that it had become obligatory for the Supreme Lord who is responsible for maintaining law and order in this creation to intervene and put things in the right order. So such wise, erudite and enlightened persons are not confused or harbour any doubts about who Lord Ram actually was; they never think that because Lord Ram's behaviour was like any other human being he too was one, but they are convinced of his divinity and holy nature as being the Supreme Being himself in the form of Lord Ram—i.e. that Lord Ram was simply a human manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Lord, the Almighty God, ultimate Authority, and the Creator of this creation.]

एवं विचिन्वन् सकलं वनं रामः सलक्ष्मणः ।
भग्नं रथं छत्रचापं कूबरं पतितं भुवि ॥ २२॥
दृष्ट्वा लक्ष्मणमाहेदं पश्य लक्ष्मण केनचित् ।
नीयमानां जनकजां तं जित्वान्यो जहार ताम् ॥ २३॥

evaṃ vicinvaṇ sakalaṃ vanaṃ rāmaḥ salakṣmaṇaḥ ।
bhagnaṃ rathaṃ chatracāpaṃ kūbaraṃ patitaṃ bhuvi ॥ 22॥
dr̥ṣṭvā lakṣmaṇamāhedaṃ paśya lakṣmaṇa kenacit ।
nīyamānāṃ janakajāṃ taṃ jitvānyo jahāra tām ॥ 23॥

22-23. Accompanied by Laxman, Lord Ram searched for Sita in the entire forest, and during it he found the broken parts of the chariot (of Ravana, in which he had abducted Sita from the hermitage at Panchavati)—such as a broken parasol, a bow and many wooden parts of the chariot—lying scattered on the ground (22).

Seeing them, the Lord (became apprehensive and) said to Laxman, 'Oh Laxman! Look! It appears that while Sita was being taken away by her abductor,

some other individual has defeated the first one in a duel, and then has taken Sita away himself¹ (23).

[Note—¹The broken parts of the chariot gave the impression that there has been a severe struggle, a fierce one-to-one duel, between the individual who was taking Sita away in it and another individual who had attacked him en-route. Though it cannot be said with certainty what actually transpired, but it is a fair guess that the attacker had tried to snatch Sita from the abductor in order to take her himself as either a trophy after defeating the first, or as a hostage to demand some sort of ransom either from her husband if he could be found or from first abductor if he wishes to take her away.]

ततः कञ्चिद्भुवो भागं गत्वा पर्वतसन्निभम् ।
 रुधिराक्तवपुर्दृष्ट्वा रामो वाक्यमथाब्रवीत् ॥ २४॥
 एष वै भक्षयित्वा तां जानकीं शुभदर्शनाम् ।
 शेते विविक्तेऽतितृप्तः पश्य हन्मि निशाचरम् ॥ २५॥
 चापमानय शीघ्रं मे बाणं च रघुनन्दन ।
 तच्छ्रुत्वा रामवचनं जटायुः प्राह भीतवत् ॥ २६॥

tataḥ kañcidbhuvo bhāgaṃ gatvā parvatasannibham ।
 rudhirāktavapurdr̥ṣṭvā rāmo vākya mathābravīt ॥ 24॥
 eṣa vai bhakṣayitvā tāṃ jānakīm śubhadarśanām ।
 śete vivikte'titṛptaḥ paśya hanmi niśācaram ॥ 25॥
 cāpamānaya śīghraṃ me bāṇaṃ ca raghunandana ।
 tacchrutvā rāma vacanaṃ jaṭāyuhḥ prāha bhītavat ॥ 26॥

24-26. After going some distance, he saw a huge mountain-like body soaked in blood lying on the ground. Lord Ram said (24), 'Look! Without doubt this is the one who has eaten up Sita who was so charming to look at. After devouring her he felt so satisfied that he is now sleeping here alone. I will kill this demon immediately (25).

Oh Raghunandan (i.e. Laxman; a son of the exalted clan of king Raghu of Ayodhya)! Bring me my bow and arrow quickly¹. Hearing these words of Lord Ram, Jatayu (the vulture) was appalled and terrified (as he feared that the Lord would shoot him even without letting him explain the developments). So Jatayu said (26)—

[Note—¹Lord Ram had been so distraught, dejected, listless and heart-broken after Sita was abducted that he didn't much care for his arms, the bow and the arrow, any longer. So he put them on the ground in the hermitage itself, saying he needs them no longer, for what is the use of his weapons now that he could not use them to give protection to his own wife; what purpose will they now serve? Laxman however maintained his calm; he understood the abysmal emotional state of utter distress of his elder brother which had made him so depressed and hopeless that he does not care for his own life any more, and so feels that he does not need any weapon any longer. So Laxman wisely picked the Lord's bow and arrow and carried them along himself in addition to his own set, for he knew that when the Lord would regain his composure and calm down, he would indeed need his weapons. That is why Lord Ram now

extends his hands and gestures to Laxman to “bring here”, or rather “give” his bow and arrow back to him.]

मां न मास्य भद्रं ते म्रियमाणं स्वकर्मणा ।
अहं जटायुस्ते भार्याहारिणं समनुद्रुतः ॥ २७॥
रावणं तत्र युद्धं मे बभूवारीविमर्दन ।
तस्य वाहान् रथं चापं छित्त्वाहं तेन घातितः ॥ २८॥
पतितोऽस्मि जगन्नाथ प्राणान्स्त्यक्ष्यामि पश्य माम् ॥ २९॥

māṃ na māśya bhadraṃ te mriyamāṇaṃ svakarmaṇā ।
ahaṃ jaṭāyuste bhāryāhāriṇaṃ samanudrutaḥ ॥ 27॥
rāvaṇaṃ tatra yuddhaṃ me babhūvārivimardana ।
tasya vāhān rathaṃ cāpaṃ chittvāhaṃ tena ghātitaḥ ॥ 28॥
patito'smi jagannātha prāṇānstyakṣyāmi paśya mām ॥ 29॥

27-29. 'I am already dying due to my own actions. You be blessed—you do not have to kill me. I am Jatau. I had pursued Ravana who was taking your wife away hastily (27). Oh the Supreme Lord who is the crusher of enemies, those who torment other creatures (babhūvārivimardana)! I had a duel with him and I was able to destroy his chariot, horses and bow, but I was no match for him, and was thus mortally wounded by him (28).

This is why I am lying here. Oh Jagganath (“jagannātha”; Lord of the world and the universe)! Look at me, who (being a vulture) am a humble, a lowly and a sinful creature. I want to die now (for my wounds are extremely serious, and so you need not take the trouble of killing me)' (29).

तच्छ्रुत्वा राघवो दीनं कण्ठप्राणं ददर्श ह ।
हस्ताभ्यां संस्पृशन् रामो दुःखाश्रुवृत्तलोचनः ॥ ३०॥
जटायो ब्रूहि मे भार्या केन नीता शुभानना ।
मत्कार्यार्थं हतोऽसि त्वमतो मे प्रियबान्धवः ॥ ३१॥

tacchrutvā rāghavo dīnaṃ kaṇṭhaprāṇaṃ dadarśa ha ।
hastābhyāṃ saṃsprśan rāmo duḥkhāśruvṛtalocanaḥ ॥ 30॥
jaṭāyo brūhi me bhāryā kena nītā śubhānanā ।
matkāryārthaṃ hato'si tvamato me priyabāndhavaḥ ॥ 31॥

30-31. Hearing this, Raghav (Lord Ram) went near Jatau and found him close to death as he was struggling for breath because his throat was choked. He was in a very serious, miserable and pitiable condition. Seeing this, the Lord's eyes were filled with tears of sorrow, mercy and sympathy; he massaged and caressed Jatau's body affectionately with his hands to sooth his sufferings as much as possible, and to show that he cared for the unfortunate creature. Then Lord Ram told Jatau (30), 'Oh Jatau! Say, who has taken away my wife whose face was so sweet? You have preferred to

die for my sake; you have laid down your life in order to serve me. Hence I affirm that indeed you are my dearest friend' (31).

जटायुः सन्नया वाचा वक्त्राद्रक्तं समुद्रमन् ।
 उवाच रावणो राम राक्षसो भीमविक्रमः ॥ ३२॥
 आदाय मैथिलीं सीतां दक्षिणाभिमुखो ययौ ।
 इतो वक्तुं न मे शक्तिः प्राणान्स्त्यक्ष्यामि तेऽग्रतः ॥ ३३॥
 दिष्ट्या दृष्टोऽसि राम त्वं म्रियमाणेन मेऽनघ ।
 परमात्मासि विष्णुस्त्वं मायामनुजरूपधृक् ॥ ३४॥

jaṭāyuh sannayā vācā vaktrādraktaṁ samudvaman ।
 uvāca rāvaṇo rāma rākṣaso bhīmavikramaḥ ॥ 32॥
 ādāya maithilīm sītāṁ dakṣiṇābhimukho yayau ।
 ito vaktuṁ na me śaktiḥ prāṇānstyaksyāmi te'grataḥ ॥ 33॥
 diṣṭyā drṣṭo'si rāma tvam mriyamāṇena me'nagha ।
 paramātmāsi viṣṇustvaṁ māyāmanujarūpadhrk ॥ 34॥

32-34. Vomiting blood, Jatau spoke with a faltering voice—'Oh Sri Ram! The most valorous, powerful and renowned king of demons, whose name is Ravana (32), has taken away the daughter of the king of Mithila ("maithilīm"; Sita) in the south direction. I do not have the strength left in me to speak more. I want to die in front of you as my ghost (my soul) wants to leave my mortal body immediately (33). Oh Lord Ram! It is my great fortune that I have been able to see you at the time of my death. Oh the sinless, faultless, pure and almighty One (me'nagha)! In all sooth (I know that) you are Lord Vishnu, the Parmatma, the Supreme Lord of this creation, who has disguised himself in the form of an ordinary human being (34).

अन्तकालेऽपि दृष्ट्वा त्वां मुक्तोऽहं रघुसत्तम ।
 हस्ताभ्यां स्पृश मां राम पुनर्यास्यामि ते पदम् ॥ ३५॥
 तथेति रामः पस्पर्श तदङ्गं पाणिना स्मयन् ।
 ततः प्राणान् परित्यज्य जटायुः पतितो भुवि ॥ ३६॥
 रामस्तमनुशोचित्वा बन्धुवत् साशुलोचनः ।
 लक्ष्मणेन समानाय काष्ठानि प्रददाह तम् ॥ ३७॥

antakāle'pi drṣṭvā tvāṁ mukto'haṁ raghusattama ।
 hastābhyāṁ spṛśa māṁ rāma punaryāsyāmi te padam ॥ 35॥
 tatheti rāmaḥ pasparśa tadaṅgaṁ pāṇinā smayan ।
 tataḥ prāṇān parityajya jaṭāyuh patito bhuvi ॥ 36॥
 rāmastamanuśocitvā bandhuvat sāśrulocanaḥ ।
 lakṣmaṇena samānāyya kāṣṭhāni pradadāha tam ॥ 37॥

35-37. Oh the most exalted Raghu (Sri Ram)! Though I have found liberation and deliverance by merely having your holy sight (Darshan), you still must touch me with

divine your hands, for then I shall be blessed and attain the highest stature attainable by the soul (i.e. I shall attain salvation; I shall attain eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity by reaching your abode and having an exalted stature that is equivalent to your own divine self—"punaryāsyāmi te padam")' (35).

Saying 'alright', Sri Ram smiled and touched his body with his hands. Then Jatau's soul exited from his mortal body which fell to the ground, dead and lifeless (36).

Lord Ram mourned for him with tearful eyes as if he were his own kin. Then the Lord asked Laxman to bring some fire-wood and did Jatau's last rites (i.e. cremated him) with his own hands (37).

स्नात्वा दुःखेन रामोऽपि लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितः ।
हत्वा वने मृगं तत्र मांसखण्डान् समन्ततः ॥ ३८॥
शाद्वले प्राक्षिपद्रामः पृथक् पृथगनेकधा ।
भक्षन्तु पक्षिणः सर्वे तृप्तो भवतु पक्षिराट् ॥ ३९॥

snātvā duḥkhena rāmo'pi lakṣmaṇena samanvitaḥ ।
hatvā vane mṛgaṃ tatra māṃsakhaṇḍān samantataḥ ॥ 38॥
śādvale prākṣipadrāmaḥ pṛthak pṛthaganekadhā ।
bhakṣantu pakṣiṇaḥ sarve tṛpto bhavatu pakṣirāṭ ॥ 39॥

38-39. [Deciding to do Jatau's 'Shraadh', the after-death rituals performed for the dead, befitting his birth as a cadaver-eating vulture, Lord Ram made the following arrangement—] Both Lord Ram and Laxman were equally sorry for Jatau and grieved for him. Then they took a bath (to purify themselves before performing the Shraadh ceremony). Thereafter, they went and hunted some prey and cut their flesh into small pieces (38). They then made separate heaps of these pieces of meat on ground at a place covered with grass, and which had a water-body nearby, as a means of offering sacrifices for atonement of sins on behalf of the departed soul. This offering was then eaten by other flesh-eating birds, including vultures, who belonged to the same race as Jatau, because it was a symbolic feast given for the peace of the soul of the departed. This ceremonial ritual gave immense contentment to all the birds as well as to the king of birds (Jatau) himself, as his soul attained bliss and peace by this performance (39).

[Note—The vulture Jatau is the one character in the whole of Ramayana whose 'Shraadh' ceremony—a religious rite performed after the death of a near relative or a loved one so that soul of the deceased finds peace and rest, and it includes a feast for the members of the community—was done so elaborately by Lord Sri Ram himself. The other individual was Sabari, the old tribal woman whose last rites too were done by Lord Ram personally.

Even the Lord's own worldly father Dasrath did not get this privilege at the time of his death at Ayodhya, though a symbolic rite was performed by Lord Ram at Chitrakoot when Bharat, the Lord's brother who had gone to meet him in an effort to bring the Lord back to Ayodhya, had informed him of the death of their father. But the point to note is that Lord Ram had to do Dasrath's Shraadh as a matter of routine and custom, but to do it for a lowly bird as a vulture who eats dead bodies, i.e. Jatau,

is a sterling example of Lord Ram's greatness, grace, mercy and benevolence, of his equanimity and his inherent nature of treating all creatures alike, and his special attention to take care of those who serve him in any way. It's a marvel of the Lord's magnanimity and his extremely beneficent nature.

He had no second thoughts in breaking tradition to do the last rites of a flesh-eating vulture, and completing the process by giving a symbolic feast for the departed soul. It was a feast that conformed to the lifestyle of the individual for whom it was given—i.e. flesh of hunted animals was offered as food to carnivorous birds, as Jatāu, being a vulture, ate flesh of dead animals. To wit, Lord Ram did not hesitate a moment that it is unconventional and very odd for a man to perform cremation of a lowly vulture, and then going through the whole process systematically so much so that the requirement of a 'feast given for the peace of the soul of the dead' was also taken care of. This shows that Lord Sri Ram is a singular Lord who is extremely munificent, merciful, magnanimous, benevolent, beneficent and graceful.]

इत्युक्त्वा राघवः प्राह जटायो गच्छ मत्पदम् ।
मत्सारूप्यं भजस्वाद्य सर्वलोकस्य पश्यतः ॥ ४०॥
ततोऽनन्तरमेवासौ दिव्यरूपधरः शुभः ।
विमानवरमारुह्य भास्वरं भानुसन्निभम् ॥ ४१॥

ityuktvā rāghavaḥ prāha jaṭāyo gaccha matpadam ।
matsārūpyaṁ bhajasvādya sarvalokasya paśyataḥ ॥ 40॥
tato'nantaramevāsau divyarūpadharaḥ śubhaḥ ।
vimānavaramāruhya bhāsvaram bhānusannibham ॥ 41॥

40-41. Raghav (Lord Ram) told him, 'Jatau! Go to my exalted abode in heaven and achieve oneness with me (i.e. attain a stature that will make you divine and holy) ' (40).

After that, he (Jatau) assumed a glorious form that was radiant and divine; then he cheerfully boarded a heavenly chariot which was illuminated like the sun (41).

[Jatau offered his prayers to Lord Ram. When he finished, the Lord blessed him and advised him to go to Vishnu Loka, the heavenly abode of Lord Ram as follows:-]

इत्येवं स्तुवतस्तस्य प्रसन्नोऽभूद्रघूत्तमः ।
उवाच गच्छ भद्रं ते मम विष्णोः परं पदम् ॥ ५४॥
शृणोति य इदं स्तोत्रं लिखेद्वा नियतः पठेत् ।
स याति मम सारूप्यं मरणे मत्स्मृतिं लभेत् ॥ ५५॥
इति राघवभाषितं तदा श्रुतवान् हर्षसमाकुलो द्विजः ।
रघुनन्दनसाम्यमास्थितः प्रययौ ब्रह्मसुपूजितं पदम् ॥ ५६॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामयणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे

ityevam stuvatastasya prasanno'bhūdraghūttamaḥ ।

uvāca gaccha bhadraṃ te mama viṣṇoḥ paraṃ padam ॥ 54॥
 śṛṇoti ya idaṃ stotraṃ likhedvā niyataḥ paṭhet ।
 sa yāti mama sārūpyaṃ maraṇe matsmr̥tiṃ labhet ॥ 55॥
 iti rāghavabhāṣitaṃ tadā śrutavān harṣasamākulo dvijaḥ ।
 raghunandanasāmyamāsthitaḥ prayayau brahmasupūjitaṃ padam ॥ 56॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmamarāmaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde

54-55. When Jatau had prayed to Lord Ram, the most exalted Lord amongst the Raghus, the Lord was very pleased, and said, 'Oh Jatau! You be blessed! You go to the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu, the abode beyond which there is nothing superior ("mama viṣṇoḥ paraṃ padam") (54).

Those persons who listen, write, read or recite the Stotra (prayers; hymns) of mine with which you have offered your prayers to me, and if they do it with due concentration, conviction, faith and dedication, then surely such individuals attain oneness with me, and they get the benefit of remembering me at the time of their death (like you have got). [To wit, those devotees who recite the hymns with which you have offered your prayers to me, they will be surely be blessed by me so much so that if at the time of their death they are unable to remember me or my divine name then still they would attain heaven, and their soul would find deliverance and beatitude.]' (55).

56. The elderly and revered Jatau heard these sweet words spoken by Raghav (Lord Ram) with great delight; thereafter he assumed a divine form similar to Lord Ram and went to the abode which is worshipped and adored by Brahma, the creator, himself (because it is the abode of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being) (56).

Thus ends the conversation between Lord Shiva (Maheshwar) and his divine consort Uma (also known as Parvati) in Kishkindha Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that describes the episode of Jatau.

Sub-section 6.2.2: In this part we read Lord Ram's meeting with Sabari, the old woman, who guided the Lord to go and meet Sugriv, the monkey prince, on Mt. Rishyamook, situated on the opposite bank of Lake Pampa; he would certainly help the Lord find and recover Sita.

This episode is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-19, and 32-44 as follows:-

॥ दशमः सर्गः ॥
 श्रीमहादेव उवाच
 लब्ध्वा वरं स गन्धर्वः पूयास्यन् राममब्रवीत् ।
 शबर्यास्ते पुरोभागे आश्रमे रघुनन्दन ॥ १॥
 भक्त्या त्वत्पादकमले भक्तिमार्गविशारदा ।
 तां पूयाहि महाभाग सर्वं ते कथयिष्यति ॥ २॥

इत्युक्त्वा प्रययौ सोऽपि विमानेनार्कवर्चसा ।
विष्णोः पदं रामनामस्मरणे फलमीदृशम् ॥ ३॥

॥ daśamaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca
labdhvā varam sa gandharvaḥ prayāsyān rāmamabravīt ।
śabaryāste purobhāge āśrame raghunandana ॥ 1॥
bhaktyā tvatpādakamale bhaktimārgaviśāradā ।
tām prayāhi mahābhāga sarvaṁ te kathayiṣyati ॥ 2॥
ityuktvā prayayau so'pi vimānenārka-varcasā ।
viṣṇoḥ padaṁ rāmanāmasmarāṇe phalamīdṛśam ॥ 3॥

[After performing the last rites of Jatau, Lord Ram and Laxman proceeded ahead in the direction indicated by him, i.e. they headed towards the south. After some distance they met a demon named Kabandha, who was a Gandharva (musician in heaven) that became a demon due to a curse. While departing for heaven, Kabandha advised Lord Ram to go to the hermitage of Sabari, an old out-caste woman living alone in an abandoned hermitage down the path. She would help the Lord by guiding him further.]

1-3. Lord Shiva continued with his narration, and said—'Oh Parvati! Having received the requisite blessings from Lord Ram and granted deliverance from his demon-body, the Gandharva (i.e. the demon Kabandha) said, "Oh Raghunandan (Sri Ram)! Sabari lives in a hermitage in the yonder (1). She has great affection for your holy feet and is an ardent devotee of yours. Oh the most fortunate and exalted Lord! Please pay her a visit. She will tell you everything about Sita" (2).

Saying this, the Gandharva boarded a chariot as splendid as the sun, and went to the abode of Lord Vishnu (like the way Jatau had gone). Verily, this is indeed the excellent reward of remembering the holy name of Lord Ram (3).

त्यक्त्वा तद्विपिनं घोरं सिंहव्याघ्रादिदूषितम् ।
शनैरथाश्रमपदं शबर्या रघुनन्दनः ॥ ४॥
शबरी राममालोक्य लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितम् ।
आयान्तमाराद्धर्षेण प्रत्युत्थायाचिरेण सा ॥ ५॥
पतित्वा पादयोरग्रे हर्षपूर्णाश्रुलोचना ।
स्वागतेनाभिनन्द्याथ स्वासने सन्न्यवेशयत् ॥ ६॥

tyaktvā tadvipinaṁ ghoram siṁhavyāghrādīdūṣitam ।
śanairathāśramapadaṁ śabaryā raghunandanaḥ ॥ 4॥
śabarī rāmamālokyā lakṣmaṇena samanvitam ।
āyāntamārāddharṣeṇa pratyutthāyācīreṇa sā ॥ 5॥
patitvā pādayoragre harṣapūrṇāśrulochanā ।
svāgatenābhinandyātha svāsane sannyaवेशayat ॥ 6॥

4-6. Thence, leaving behind that wild forest infested by fierce lions, tigers etc., Raghunandan (Sri Ram) slowly wended his way to reach the hermitage of Sabari (4).

Seeing Lord Ram and Laxman coming near, Sabari stood up instantly with great delight and ecstasy (5). Her eyes welled up with tears of joy and happiness, and she fell at the feet of Lord Ram with an overflowing heart. She welcomed him, asked about his well-being, and after that seated him on a comfortable seat (6).

रामलक्ष्मणयोः सम्यक्पादौ प्रक्षाल्य भक्तिः ।
तज्जलेनाभिषिक्त्याङ्गमथाद्यादिभिराहता ॥ ७॥
सम्पूज्य विधिवद्गमं ससौमित्रिं सपर्यया ।
सङ्गृहीतानि दिव्यानि रामार्थं शबरी मुदा ॥ ८॥
फलान्यमृतकल्पानि ददौ रामाय भक्तिः ।
पादौ सम्पूज्य कुसुमैः सुगन्धैः सानुलेपनैः ॥ ९॥

rāmalakṣmaṇayoḥ samyakpādaḥ prakṣālya bhaktiḥ ।
tajjalēnābhiṣicyāṅgamathārgghyādibhirādr̥tā ॥ 7॥
sampoṇjya vidhivadrāmaṇ sasaumitriṇ saparyayā ।
saṅgr̥hītāni divyāni rāmārthaṇ śabarī mudā ॥ 8॥
phalānyamṛtakalpāni dadau rāmāya bhaktiḥ ।
pādaḥ sampoṇjya kusumaiḥ sugandhaiḥ sānulepanaiḥ ॥ 9॥

7-9. Then she washed the feet of Lord Ram and Laxman reverentially, with due devotion, sprinkled this water on her body, worshipped Lord Ram and Laxman according to established traditions, and then most cheerfully she offered the two brothers refreshment in the form of sweet nectar-like fruits that she had been collecting for specifically for the Lord over a long period of time; she offered these fruits to the Lord with devotion and affection brimming over in her heart. Then she worshipped Lord Ram's lotus-like feet with flowers having the fragrance of sandalwood (7-9).

कृतातिथ्यं रघुश्रेष्ठमुपविष्टं सहानुजम् ।
शबरी भक्तिसम्पन्ना प्राञ्जलिर्वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ १०॥
अत्राश्रमे रघुश्रेष्ठ गुरवो मे महर्षयः ।
स्थिताः शुश्रूषणं तेषां कुर्वती समुपस्थिता ॥ ११॥
बहुवर्षसहस्राणि गतास्ते ब्रह्मणः पदम् ।
गमिष्यन्तोऽब्रुवन्मां त्वं वसातैव समाहिता ॥ १२॥

kṛtātithyaṇ raghuśreṣṭhamupaviṣṭaṇ sahānujaṇ ।
śabarī bhaktisampannā prāñjalirvākyaṇabravīt ॥ 10॥
atrāśrame raghuśreṣṭha guravo me maharṣayaḥ ।
sthitāḥ śuśrūṣaṇaṇ teṣāṇ kurvati samupasthitā ॥ 11॥
bahuvarṣasahasrāṇi gatāste brahmaṇaḥ padam ।
gamiṣyanto'bruvanmāṇ tvaṇ vasātraiva samāhitā ॥ 12॥

10-12. When the formalities of welcoming a guest were over and the most exalted ones in Raghu's clan (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) were comfortably seated, Sabari politely briefed the two brothers about herself, saying with folded hands (10)—'Oh the most exalted Raghu (Lord Ram)! Earlier my Guru, the great sage (Matang), used to stay in this hermitage. I lived here for thousands of years serving him. Now that exalted great sage has gone to the Brahma Lok (i.e. he has died). At the time of his departure to heaven, the sage had instructed me to make my mind calm and steady, and stay right here. (11-12).

रामो दाशरथिर्जातः परमात्मा सनातनः ।
 राक्षसानां वधार्थाय ऋषीणां रक्षणाय च ॥ १३॥
 आगमिष्यति चैकाग्रध्याननिष्ठा स्थिरा भव ।
 इदानीं चित्रकूटाद्रावाश्रमे वसति प्रभुः ॥ १४॥
 यावदागमनं तस्य तावद्रक्ष कलेवरम् ।
 दृष्ट्वैव राघवं दग्ध्वा देहं यास्यसि तत्पदम् ॥ १५॥

rāmo dāśarathirjātaḥ paramātmā sanātanaḥ ।
 rākṣasānāṃ vadhārthāya ṛṣīṇāṃ rakṣaṇāya ca ॥ 13॥
 āgamiṣyati caikāgradhyānaniṣṭhā sthirā bhava ।
 idānīm citrakūṭādrāvāśrame vasati prabhuḥ ॥ 14॥
 yāvadāgamanam tasya tāvadrakṣa kalevaram ।
 drṣṭvaiva rāghavam dagdhvā dehaṃ yāsyasi tatpadam ॥ 15॥

13-15. (He had advised me that—) The eternal Parmatma (the Supreme Lord) has taken birth as Lord Sri Ram, the son of king Dasrath, for the purpose of slaying the demons so as to protect the sages, seers, ascetics and hermits (who were being tormented by these cruel demons) (13). He shall be coming here soon (to this hermitage). So in the meanwhile, you meditate upon the divine form of the Lord and stay here. Nowadays, the Lord is residing on the Chitrakoot mountains (14). Till the time he comes here, look after (take care of) your body. When Raghav (Lord Ram) comes here, you would burn your mortal, gross body while beholding the divine form of the Lord who will be right in front of you, and then due to this fortunate circumstance you will be so highly blessed that you would attain the exalted abode of the Lord itself (i.e. you will find deliverance from this mortal body, and go to heaven) (15).

[Note—This explains why Sabari had been collecting flowers and fruits as she was eagerly awaiting the arrival of Lord Ram and Laxman, because she knew in advance that they will surely come; the words of the great sage can't go in vain.]

तथैवाकरोत् राम त्वद्धानैकपरायणा ।
 प्रतीक्ष्यागमनं तेऽद्य सफलं गुरुभाषितम् ॥ १६॥
 तव सन्दर्शनं राम गुरुणामपि मे न हि ।
 योषिन्मूढाऽप्रमेयात्मन् हीनजातिसमुद्भवा ॥ १७॥

tathaivākaravaṃ rāma tvaddhyānaikaparāyaṇā ।
 pratikṣyāgamanam te'dya saphalam gurubhāṣitam ॥ 16॥
 tava sandarśanam rāma gurūṇāmapi me na hi ।
 yoṣinmūḍhā'prameyātman hīnajāṭisamudbhavā ॥ 17॥

16-17. Oh Lord Ram! According to his instructions, I had been meditating exclusively on you, thinking only of you, and was eagerly awaiting your arrival. Today those words of my Guru have become truthful and have borne fruit (16).

Oh Lord Ram! Even my Guru was not fortunate to have your Darshan (divine sight); but, oh the Supreme Soul that is eternal, universal, infinite and sublime, I am an ignorant, illiterate, ordinary and humble woman born in a low caste (so, I could never ever expect it in my wildest of dreams that I will ever get a chance to meet your holiness)!

[To wit, it's such a great wonder of providence and a wondrous marvel of fate that on the one hand such an exalted sage, sage Matang, could not have the good luck to meet you and get blessed by you during his entire life, and on the other hand a poor and lowly woman like me has had this rarest of rare good fortune that I not only could have your divine sight and an opportunity to have your company by way of hosting you, washing your holy feet, serving you sweet fruits, worshipping you, but also the opportunity to find my deliverance at your holy hands, in your holy presence. I don't know what good deed I did that has borne this fruit for me! I am dazed and amazed.] (17).

तव दासस्य दासानां शतसङ्ख्योत्तरस्य वा ।
 दासीत्वे नाधिकारोऽस्ति कुतः साक्षात्तवैव हि ॥ १८॥
 कथं यमाद्य मे दृष्टस्त्वं मनोवागगोचरः ।
 स्तोतुं न जाने देवेश किं करोमि प्रसीद मे ॥ १९॥

tava dāsasya dāsānām śatasāṅkhyottarasya vā ।
 dāsī'tve nādhikāro'sti kutaḥ sāksāttavaiva hi ॥ 18॥
 katham rāmādy me dr̥ṣṭastvaṃ manovāgagocaraḥ ।
 stotum na jāne deveśa kiṃ karomi prasīda me ॥ 19॥

18-19. I am not worthy even to be called a maid servant of those who are themselves servants far down for a hundred rungs in the hierarchy of servants who directly serve your devotees. Then say, what face do I have to call myself your 'direct or first rung servant', one who serves you directly, one who is your close devotee, your close follower, your near subordinate? [To wit, I am so lowly and humble and unworthy that I cannot claim the privilege of being called your devotee, yet you are so gracious and kind that you have mercifully granted me this stature of being your devotee. How graceful of you!] (18).

Oh Lord Ram! You are not the subject matter of the mind; the mind cannot understand you by application of intelligence, nor can you be understood by using the faculty of speech (i.e. no one can explain who you actually are). This being the case, I just don't know how have I been so lucky and privileged to be able to have your

divine sight, and am able to see your holy form so up close. Oh the Lord of the Gods! I do not know how to pray you and sing your glories. What shall I do now? Please be pleased with me out of your own accord (because I am totally incompetent to pray to you or honour you by sing hymns of your glory)' (19).

[Note— Sabari expresses her humility and astonishment. In verse no. 18 she means that she is so lowly by birth that she can't imagine that she would be able to properly serve pious and saintly souls who are devotees of the Lord. In verse no. 19 she expresses surprise at her good fortune and the rare privilege that she has got; she is extremely astonished at the most unexpected reward that she has been granted, a reward that is beyond her wildest of dreams. She is so dumb-founded and stunned that she is lost for words, and so she says she can't even offer even a simple prayer to welcome and honour the Lord.]

[The simplicity and humility of Sabari on the one hand, and the unbound affection and the purity of devotion that she had for the Lord on the other hand, pleased Lord Ram exceedingly. So he blessed her as follows:-]

श्रीराम उवाच
पुंस्त्वे स्त्रीत्वे विशेषो वा जातिनामाश्रमादयः ।
न कारणं मद्भजने भक्तिरेव हि कारणम् ॥ २०॥
यज्ञदानतपोभिर्वा वेदाध्ययनकर्मभिः ।
नैव द्रष्टुमहं शक्यो मद्भक्तिविमुखैः सदा ॥ २१॥

śrīrāma uvāca
puṁstve strītve viśeṣo vā jātināmāśramādayaḥ ।
na kāraṇaṁ madbhajane bhaktireva hi kāraṇam ॥ 20॥
yajñādānatapobhīrvā vedādhyaṇanakarmabhiḥ ।
naiva draṣṭumahaṁ śakyo madbhaktivimukhaiḥ sadā ॥ 21॥

20-22. (Lord Ram replied—) 'Distinction between a male and female body, or distinction made on the basis of caste, creed, clan, name and section of society, are not conducive for my worship (i.e. they are not the essential elements or a necessity for my worship or devotion; rather they are obstructions as they block one's spiritual progress). The only factor that pleases me and necessary for attaining spiritual peace is to have true devotion for me and to have sincere faith in me. (20).

Those who are devoid of dedication and lack sincerity in having devotion for me as well as while worshipping me, can never expect to attain me by any other means such as by doing fire sacrifices, making charities, performing penances and austerities, or by studying the Vedas (ancient scriptures) in an effort to become acquainted with me and my holy, divine form (21).

इतो मद्दर्शनान्मुक्तिस्तव नास्त्यत्र संशयः ।
यदि जानासि मे ब्रूहि सीता कमललोचना ॥ ३२॥
कुत्रास्ते केन वा नीता प्रिया मे प्रियदर्शना ॥ ३३॥

ito maddarśanānmuktistava nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ ।
 yadi jānāsi me brūhi sītā kamalalocanā ॥ 32॥
 kutrāste kena vā nītā priyā me priyadarśanā ॥ 33॥

32-33. Now that you have had my Darshan (i.e. you have seen my holy and my divine form), your emancipation and salvation are indeed a certainty—there is no doubt about it. Meanwhile, if you know then please do tell me about the whereabouts of the lotus-eyed Sita (32). Who has taken away my beloved wife who is so charming to behold (can you tell me)?' (33).

शबर्युवाच
 देव जानासि सर्वज्ञ सर्वं त्वं विश्वभावन ।
 तथाऽपि पृच्छसे यन्मां लोकाननुसृतः प्रभो ॥ ३४॥
 ततोऽहमभिधास्यामि सीता यत्राधुना स्थिता ।
 रावणेन हता सीता लङ्कायां वर्ततेऽधुना ॥ ३५॥

śabaryuvāca
 deva jānāsi sarvajña sarvaṁ tvaṁ viśvabhāvana ।
 tathā'pi prcchase yanmāṁ lokānanusṛtaḥ prabho ॥ 34॥
 tato'hamabhidhāsyāmi sītā yatrādhunā sthitā ।
 rāvaṇena hṛtā sītā laṅkāyāṁ vartate'dhunā ॥ 35॥

34-35. (Sabari said—) 'Oh Lord who is all-knowing, wise, erudite and omniscient! Oh the one who charms the universe, one who enchants and keeps in his thrall the entire world! You are aware of everything. In spite of that, oh Lord, if you wish to follow the traditional behaviour of an ordinary human and therefore ask me about the whereabouts of Sita (34), then I shall tell you. Sita has been stolen by Ravana, and at this time she is in Lanka (as his prisoner) (35).

इतः समीपे रामाऽऽस्ते पम्पानाम सरोवरम् ।
 ऋष्यमूकगिरिर्नाम तत्समीपे महानगः ॥ ३६॥
 चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिभिः सार्धं सुग्रीवो वानराधिपः ।
 भीतभीतः सदा यत्र तिष्ठत्यतुलविक्रमः ॥ ३७॥
 वालिनश्च भयाद् भ्रातुस्तदगम्यमृषेर्भयात् ।
 वालिनस्तत्र गच्छ त्वं तेन सख्यं कुरु प्रभो ॥ ३८॥
 सुग्रीवेण स सर्वं ते कार्यं सम्पादयिष्यति ।
 अहमग्निं प्रवेक्ष्यामि तवाग्रे रघुनन्दन ॥ ३९॥

itaḥ samīpe rāmā"ste pampānāma sarovaram ।
 ṛṣyamūkagirirnāma tatsamīpe mahānagaḥ ॥ 36॥
 caturbhirmantribhiḥ sārdhaṁ sugrīvo vānarādhipaḥ ।
 bhītabhītaḥ sadā yatra tiṣṭhatyatulavikramaḥ ॥ 37॥

vālinaśca bhayād bhrātustadagamyamṛṣerbhayāt ।
 vālinastatra gaccha tvam tena sakhyam kuru prabho ॥ 38॥
 sugrīveṇa sa sarvam te kāryam sampādayiṣyati ।
 ahamagniṁ pravekṣyāmi tavāgre raghunandana ॥ 39॥

36-39. Oh Lord Ram! There is a lake called Pampa near here. Near it is a large mountain called Rishyamook (36). There, Sugriv, the king of monkeys who is peerless in valour and famed in strength, lives with his four ministers (37) due to the fear of his brother Baali. Because of a curse by a sage, that place is totally out of bounds for Baali. Oh Lord! Go there and befriend yourself with Sugriv (38). Oh Raghunandan (Lord Ram)! Sugriv will fulfil all your requirements (i.e. he will help you first find Sita and then free her from the demon's captivity). Now, I shall enter the sacred fire in front of you (in order to burn my mortal body and let my soul attain deliverance) (39).

मुहूर्तं तिष्ठ राजेन्द्र यावदग्ध्वा कलेवरम् ।
 यास्यामि भगवन् राम तव विष्णोः परं पदम् ॥ ४०॥
 इति रामं समामन्त्र्य प्रविवेश हुताशनम् ।
 क्षणान्निर्धूय सकलमविद्याकृतबन्धनम् ।
 रामपूसादाच्छबरी मोक्षं प्रापातिदुर्लभम् ॥ ४१॥

muhūrtaṁ tiṣṭha rājendra yāvaddagdhvā kalevaram ।
 yāsyāmi bhagavan rāma tava viṣṇoḥ param padam ॥ 40॥
 iti rāmaṁ samāmantrya praviveśa hutāśanam ।
 kṣaṇānnirdhūya sakalamavidyākṛtabandhanam ।
 rāmaprasādācchabarī mokṣaṁ prāpātidurlabham ॥ 41॥

40-41. Oh Rajendra (literally, a King amongst the kings)! Oh Lord Ram! Till the time I burn my mortal coil (my physical gross body) and go to the abode of Lord Vishnu, you must wait here for one Muhurt till then. [To wit, please wait here for some time while I make preparations to leave my gross body and free my soul from its captivity. Wait for about a quarter of an hour, or 1 Muhurt, which is roughly equivalent to 48 minutes.] (40).

After requesting Lord Ram in the above manner, Sabari entered the holy fire, and in a fleeting moment she burnt all her fetters symbolised by worldly delusions and her gross mortal body, thereby freeing her soul which attained deliverance and emancipation by the grace of Lord Ram (41).

Sub-section 6.2.3: Lord Ram meets Sugriv and Hanuman, and befriends them.

After his meeting with Sabari and providing her soul deliverance, Lord Ram followed her advice and moved ahead on his way to reach the other side of Lake Pampa where he came to the base of a mighty mountain called Rishyamook. Here he met Hanuman

and Sugriv, and befriended them. They were great warriors of the kingdom of the monkey race, known as Kishkindha, and were living in exile on the summit of this mountain with some other companions, because Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv and the king of Kishkindha, had thrown him out of the capital due to some misunderstanding between the two brothers.

This episode is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-45 as follows:-

॥ अध्यात्मरामायणे किष्किन्धाकाण्डम् ॥

॥ प्रथमः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

ततः सलक्ष्मणो रामः शनैः पम्पासरस्तटम् ।

आगत्य सरसां श्रेष्ठां दृष्ट्वा विस्मयमाचरौ ॥ १॥

क्रोशमात्रं सुविस्तीर्णमगाधामलशम्बरम् ।

उत्फुल्लाम्बुजकल्हारकुमुदोत्पलमण्डितम् ॥ २॥

॥ adhyātmārāmāyaṇe kiṣkindhākāṇḍam ॥

॥ prathamah sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

tataḥ salakṣmaṇo rāmaḥ śanaiḥ pampāsarastaṭam ।

āgatya sarasāṃ śreṣṭhāṃ dr̥ṣṭvā vismayamāyayau ॥ 1॥

krośamātraṃ suvistīrṇamagādhāmalaśambaram ।

utphullāmbujakalhārakumudotpalamañḍitam ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Thence Lord Ram, accompanied by Laxman, gradually came to the banks of the lake called Pampa. He was very astonished when he saw it; its beauty amazed him (1).

It was one Kosa (appx. 2 miles) in length, was filled with crystal clear water that could not be fathomed, and lotus flowers of various kinds, large and small such as Kalahaar and Utpal, some fully blooming and others still as buds, as well as fully grown water lilies and their newly sprouted buds, adorned the lake in their colourful abundance (2).

हंसकारण्डवाकीर्णं चक्रवाकादिशोभितम् ।

जलकुवकुटकोयष्टिक्रौञ्चनादोपनादितम् ॥ ३॥

नानापुष्पलताकीर्णं नानाफलसमावृतम् ।

सतां मनःस्वच्छजलं पद्मकिञ्जल्कवासितम् ॥ ४॥

haṁsakāraṇḍavākīrṇaṃ cakravākādīśobhitam ।

jalakukkuṭakoyaṣṭikrauñcanādopanāditam ॥ 3॥

nānāpuṣpalatākīrṇaṃ nānāphalasamāvṛtam ।

satām manahsvacchajalam padmakiñjalkavāsitam ॥ 4॥

3-4. Birds such as Hans (swan) and Kaarandav (a flamingo; a duck) were floating on its placid waters; Chakravaks (the ruddy goose) etc. were enhancing its beauty; while the environment around the lake was echoing with the clamour of sounds made by Jalkukut (a type of cock-like bird with a black body and blue feathers that lives on the surface of water bodies), Koyasti (a type of Indian cuckoo), Kronch (the heron bird) etc. (3).

The area surrounding the lake was well endowed with a fascinating array of colourful flowering creepers as well as fruit trees of different types, while its crystal clear water, which was made fragrant and sweet-smelling by yellow lotus flowers that abounded in it, was as clean and clear as the mind of saints and pious souls (4).

तत्रोपस्पृश्य सलिलं पीत्वा श्रमहरं विभुः ।
 सानुजः सरसस्तीरे शीतलेन पथा ययौ ॥ ५॥
 ऋष्यमूकगिरेः पार्श्वे गच्छन्तौ रामलक्ष्मणौ ।
 धनुर्बाणकरो दान्तौ जटावल्कलमण्डितौ ।
 पश्यन्तौ विविधान् वृक्षान् गिरेः शोभां सुविक्रमौ ॥ ६॥

tatropaspr̥śya salilam pītvā śramaharam vibhuḥ ।
 sānujaḥ sarasastīre śītalena pathā yayau ॥ 5॥
 ṛṣyamūkagireḥ pārsve gacchantau rāmalakṣmaṇau ।
 dhanurbāṇakarau dāntau jaṭāvalkalamaṇḍitau ।
 paśyantau vividhān vṛkṣān gireḥ śobhām suvikramau ॥ 6॥

5-6. Reaching the place, the ‘Vibhu’ (i.e. the Lord who is omnipresent, immanent, magnanimous, eternal and almighty; Lord Ram), along with his younger brother (Laxman), sipped and drank its water which was very refreshing, and which removed his weariness. [To wit, the two brothers refreshed themselves by rinsing their mouths, sprinkling water on their tired bodies, and drinking the water of Pampa lake that was clean, sweet and cool.]

Then, having refreshed himself, the Lord moved on along the banks of the lake on a path that was cooled by the shade of the trees lining it (5).

In this manner Lord Ram and Laxman—who were adorned by matted hairs and clothes made of birch, who practiced self-restrain (i.e. they had full control over their sense organs), were most valiant, brave and powerful, and who held a bow and arrow each in their hands—moved slowly to come near the Rishyamook mountain, all the while watching with fascination and enjoying the beautiful sight of different types of trees found on the way, and beholding the beauty of the mountain that loomed in the front (6).

सुग्रीवस्तु गिरेर्मूर्ध्नि चतुर्भिः सह वानरैः ।
 स्थित्वा ददर्श तौ यान्तावारुरोह गिरेः शिरः ॥ ७॥
 भयादाह हनूमन्तं कौ तौ वीरवरौ सखे ।

गच्छ जानीहि भद्रं ते वटुभूत्वा द्विजाकृतिः ॥ ८॥

sugrīvastu girermūrdhni caturbhiḥ saha vānaraiḥ ।
sthitvā dadarśa tau yāntāvāruroha gireḥ śirah ॥ 7॥
bhayādāha hanūmantam kau tau vīravarau sakhe ।
gaccha jānihi bhadram te vaṭurbhūtvā dvijākṛtiḥ ॥ 8॥

7-8. At that time, Sugriv (the prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha, the realm of the monkey race, who had been living in exile on Mt. Rishyamook) was sitting with his four ministers on the summit of a mountain. When he saw the two brothers coming that way, he climbed to the highest peak of the mountain. [It shows that Rishyamook was not a single cone-shaped mountain, but it was a series of undulating hills and mountains with low and high peaks.] (7).

Scared at the sight, he said to Hanuman, 'Oh friend! Look; who are these two braves! You be blessed! You go to them dressed (or disguised) as a Brahmachari Brahmin (a young celibate Brahmin; a student Brahmin) and find out the details about them (8).

वालिना प्रेषितौ किंवा मां हन्तुं समुपागतौ ।
ताभ्यां सम्भाषणं कृत्वा जानीहि हृदयं तयोः ॥ ९॥
यदि तौ दुष्टहृदयौ सन्ज्ञां कुरु कराग्रतः ।
विनयावनतो भूत्वा एवं जानीहि निश्चयम् ॥ १०॥

vālinā preṣitau kiṃvā māṃ hantum samupāgatau ।
tābhyāṃ sambhāṣaṇam kṛtvā jānihi hṛdayam tayoh ॥ 9॥
yadi tau duṣṭahrdayau sanjñāṃ kuru karāgrataḥ ।
vinayāvanato bhūtvā evaṃ jānihi niścayam ॥ 10॥

9-10. Is it that they have come here to kill me at the behest of Vaali¹? You talk with them and find out the reason for their coming here (9). If you find they are wicked, have malicious intentions and a malefic heart, you must indicate it to me by making signs with your fingers. Be careful; find out all about this in a very polite way (so as not to give them a hint about your own identity and why you are asking them questions). [To wit, use all your skills to determine who these two warriors are and why have they come here. Don't do anything to make them suspicious of you, and don't offend them. Be careful, as you will be alone down there, facing two armed warriors.] (10).

[Note—¹“Vaali” was the name of Sugriv's elder brother. In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, which we are currently reading, this word is spelled as “Vaali”, but in Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas it is spelled as “Baali”.

Why was Sugriv so scared of Vaali (or Baali), and why would Vaali send someone to kill his younger brother? Though it is not the subject matter of our book, but a brief note would not be out of place to outline this fascinating story of love between the two siblings that turned into hate. It is as follows:

We read in the story of the Ramayana that Sugriv and Vaali were two brothers, Vaali being the elder of the two siblings. They were the rulers of the monkey race and had their capital at Kishkindha. Once, a demon named Dundhubhi came to challenge Vaali for a duel. Vaali killed him and flung his dead body on the mountain called Rishyamook. Blood of the demon sprayed in all the directions, and this blood defiled a hermitage of a sage who lived on this mountain. So he cursed that if Vaali ever came in that place he would die. It was out of this fear that Vaali never came near Mt. Rishyamook.

Earlier, the two brothers had very cordial relations. Once a demon named Maayaawi, the son of Maye, came to Kishkindha and challenged Vaali. When Vaali rushed towards him, the demon fled and hid inside a cave. Vaali pursued him inside, but while entering the cave he told his younger brother Sugriv to guard the mouth of the cave and wait for him for at least a fortnight. Sugriv waited for one full month, but Vaali did not come back. At the end of this period blood started seeping out of the mouth of the cave. Thinking that the demon has killed his brother and would come out to kill him also, Sugriv covered the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder and fled from there. When he returned to Kishkindha, the courtiers had no choice but to anoint him as the king in place of his brother whom they all thought was killed by the demon.

Meanwhile it so happened that the blood that had seeped out of the cave's mouth was that of the demon who was killed by Vaali. When Vaali came out, he did not find Sugriv, and to make matters worse he found the mouth of the cave closed by a heavy boulder. When he came back to Kishkindha he found Sugriv on the throne. Naturally of course he went mad with anger, and beat his brother mercilessly. Sugriv, though not at all at fault, tried his best to explain the situation to Vaali, but the seed of misunderstanding and animosity was already sown, and seeing no way out, Sugriv fled with his life. Vaali usurped the kingdom and the wife of Sugriv forcibly. Sugriv was so terrified of Vaali who was baying for his blood that he escaped to the summit of a mountain called Rishyamook along with his trusted aides, and lived a forlorn and sorrowful life in hiding, because he knew that Vaali would never come to harm him here because of the sage's earlier curse.

The story goes that on some previous occasion Vaali had collected seven fruits of the coconut tree and kept them on the ground to take bath in the lake known as Pampaa. When he returned he found that a huge python was sitting on these seven fruits. This was tantamount to defiling the fruits and so Vaali cursed the serpent that the seven fruits would pierce his body and grow into tall trees. When the mother of the serpent came to know of this curse, she also cursed Vaali that anyone who would cut these seven coconut trees with a single arrow would be the one who would also kill him.

When Lord Ram was wandering in the forest in search of Sita, his wife who was abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, he passed that way. By-and-by, the Lord and Sugriv struck a bond of friendship, and the Lord promised him to restore his lost dignity and right to the kingdom of Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom, from which he was disinherited. In return, Sugriv promised the Lord that he would do all he can to help the Lord find Sita and recover her, even if that meant a war with Sita's abductor.

Sugriv knew about the secret of the seven coconut trees. As he wished to be sure that Lord Ram was indeed capable to restore him to the throne of Kishkindha by eliminating Vaali, and that the things wouldn't go out of hands and make life further tormenting for him, Sugriv asked the Lord to fell these seven tall coconut trees with a

single arrow. So when Lord Sri Ram felled the seven trees with an arrow, Sugriv knew that the Lord would indeed be able to kill his arch enemy Vaali.

With Lord Sri Ram's patronage and support, Sugriv went and challenged his elder brother Vaali for a duel. Vaali was absolutely stunned, as he had never expected Sugriv to ever have enough courage and strength to challenge him like this. His wife Taaraa also tried to dissuade him by pointing out that Sugriv has the support of Lord Sri Ram who is the Supreme Being incarnate, but Vaali was wiser because he decided that either way he was the winner. If he managed to eliminate Sugriv then he would get rid of this constant nuisance of a brother, and if he gets killed at the hands of Lord Sri Ram then also he will be lucky as his emancipation and salvation was absolutely sure. Where, he thought to himself, will he get such an opportunity again in life. In the first bout, Sugriv got bruised and beaten badly. He limped back to Sri Ram and complained bitterly. The Lord replied that he did not shoot Vaali because the two brothers looked exactly alike and he could not distinguish between them. There was a hidden message in this statement—the Lord wished to convey to Sugriv that for him all the creatures are alike. But at the same time he had to keep the words he had given to Sugriv that he would eliminate his enemy Vaali. So the Lord put a garland around his neck, purportedly to identify him but actually to finally warn Vaali that the victory of Sugriv is decided, and if he wants to save himself then he must make a truce. This time around too, Vaali beat Sugriv black and blue. The Lord was watching the proceedings from behind a tree. When the situation became worst and Sugriv was about to be knocked down, the Lord shot an arrow that hit Vaali and he fell down.

It is said that Lord Sri Ram had to shoot Vaali from hiding because the latter had a boon which said that half of the enemy's strength would pass on to Vaali if the enemy is within his sight. Nevertheless, Vaali felt privileged that the Lord of the world has himself killed him and given his soul the chance of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the gross body of a monkey. At the time of death, Vaali put his son Angad in the Lord's custody. This showed that Vaali was extremely prudent and wise. By entrusting the conqueror Ram with the safety and security of his son Angad he ensured that Angad would be safe from any kind of evil design of his uncle Sugriv who would now never try to kill him overtly or covertly.

Besides this thing of the Lord giving Sugriv his word to kill his enemy and undo the grave injustice done to him and restore his dignity and right to the kingdom, there was another very important reason why Vaali had to be eliminated. On some previous occasion a reciprocal military pact was made between Vaali and Ravana that essentially said that they would not allow their respective territories to be used to launch an attack on the other, and also that they would come to each others aid should either of them is called to do so. The story is that once Vaali had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Vaali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. This story is narrated in *Anand Ramayan*, Saar Kanda (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 96-101.

Since Lord Sri Ram needed to cross the territory of Kishkindha and also take the help of the army of this place to launch an assault on Lanka it was militarily wise and prudent to eliminate the foe in the backyard.

But the Lord knew the constraints under which he had to eliminate Vaali though the latter had not offended the Lord in any manner whatsoever. The Lord was

well aware of his responsibilities towards Angad and he wished to rectify this apparent biased action of his of killing Vaali at the behest of Sugriv—so he ensured that the final right to the kingdom of Kishkindha went to the heir of Vaali, instead of the heir of Sugriv, by appointing Angad as the heir-apparent or the prince regent, and declaring that though Sugriv was made the king of Kishkindha upon Vaali's death it was Angad who would succeed to the throne after Sugriv instead of any direct descendent of Sugriv such as his own son.

The full story of Vaali and Sugriv is narrated in detail in (i) sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttarkand, Canto 3; (ii) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand (Chapter), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse no. 140-152; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 11.]

तथेति वटुरूपेण हनुमान् समुपागतः ।
 विनयावनतो भूत्वा रामं नत्वेदमब्रवीत् ॥ ११॥
 कौ युवां पुरुषव्याघ्रौ युवानौ वीरसम्मताौ ।
 द्योतयन्तौ दिशः सर्वाः प्रभया भास्करविव ॥ १२॥

tatheti vaṭurūpeṇa hanumān samupāgataḥ ।
 vinayāvanato bhūtva rāmaṁ natvedamabravīt ॥ 11॥
 kau yuvāṁ puruṣavyāghrau yuvānau vīrasammatau ।
 dyotayantau diśaḥ sarvāḥ prabhayā bhāskarāviva ॥ 12॥

11-12. Then Hanuman disguised himself as a Brahmachari and came to meet Lord Ram, bowed before him, and said most politely (11)—'Oh the one who is like a lion amongst men! Who are you two? You are young with a youthful body, and you look very brave, courageous and strong. You look so radiant and glorious that you resemble the sun that illuminates all the directions of the compass with its brilliance (12).

[Note—As we observe here and in the verses that follow herein below, Hanuman was extremely polite and courteous while meeting Lord Ram and Laxman. He was all praises for the Lord. What could have been the reason?

For one, he was actually overwhelmed by the Lord's holy presence. For another, he decided to take all precautions by first speaking in the language of the two brothers instead of in his own dialect, and secondly to be highly polite and heap praises on the strangers to avoid any risk of either making them suspicious of his intentions by his unsolicited offer of acquaintance and enquiry about their identity in a wild and alien land.]

युवां त्रैलोक्यकर्तारविति भाति मनो मम ।
 युवां प्रधानपुरुषौ जगद्धेतू जगन्मयौ ॥ १३॥
 मायया मानुषाकारौ चरन्ताविव लीलया ।
 भूभारहरणार्थाय भक्तानां पालनाय च ॥ १४॥

yuvāṁ trailokyakartārāviti bhāti mano mama ।

yuvāṃ pradhānapuruṣau jagaddhetū jaganmayau ॥ 13॥
 māyayā mānuṣākārau carantāviva līlayā ।
 bhūbhāraharaṇārthāya bhaktānāṃ pālanāya ca ॥ 14॥

13-14. My heart and mind says, and I have a hunch that you are the creator of the Triloki (the 3 worlds—the heaven, the earth and the nether world), are the primary cause of the whole world (i.e. it is you who had caused this universe to come into existence), are all-pervading and immanent in this world (in the form of the universal Atma, the universal pure Consciousness), are a personified form of the Viraat Purush (the cosmic Male; the Father of this creation; Lord Vishnu) (13).

It appears that in order to remove the burden of the earth and to protect and sustain your devotees, you have playfully assumed a human form by virtue of your Maya (delusion creating powers)¹, and are roaming around like an ordinary man (14).

[Note—¹The Supreme Lord of this creation had used his delusion-creating powers to hide his true identity so that the people of the world would think that he was an ordinary human being like all others. This smoke-screen was necessary in order to eliminate the cruel demons led by Ravana, because the latter had voluntarily exempted humans when he sought a boon of invincibility from Brahma, the first of the Trinity Gods, as he thought that if the Gods, who are mighty and immortal, would not be able to kill or harm him, then what is there to worry about from a human being who could easily be overcome and crushed as they would be no match for Ravana in strength or any other matter.

Hence, Lord Vishnu had to assume this particular form, i.e. the form of a ‘human being’ as the prince of Ayodhya known as Lord Ram, to exploit this single loop-hole in the otherwise solid armour of Ravana’s defence in order to slay this villainous demon king.]

अवतीर्णाविह परौ चरन्तौ क्षत्रियाकृती ।
 जगत्स्थितिलयौ सर्गं लीलया कर्तुमुद्यतौ ॥ १५॥
 स्वतन्त्रौ प्रेरकौ सर्वहृदयस्थाविहेश्वरौ ।
 नरनारायणौ लोके चरन्ताविति मे मतिः ॥ १६॥

avatīrṇāviha parau carantau kṣatriyākṛtī ।
 jagatsthithilayau sargaṃ līlayā kartumudyatau ॥ 15॥
 svatantrau prerakau sarvahr̥dayasthāviheśvarau ।
 naranārāyaṇau loke carantāviti me matiḥ ॥ 16॥

15-16. You are verily the Supreme Lord himself, for it is truly him who has revealed himself in the form of a Kshatriya prince known as “Lord Sri Ram”, and wandering on this earth like an ordinary human. You are the Lord who actively and diligently create and sustain this entire universe, and finally bring about its end, as if it was a mere game or a sport for you (15).

As per my wisdom and understanding, it looks that you reside in the heart (the inner-self) of all living beings as their true ‘self’ (i.e. as their Atma, the pure conscious soul); you are the one who motivates and inspires all; you are absolutely independent and do not need any help or support to carry out your wishes. Oh Lord!

Indeed I am sure that you are the same Supreme Being who is roaming here in this wild forest' (16).

श्रीरामो लक्ष्मणं प्राह पश्यैनं वटुरुपिणम् ।
शब्दशास्त्रमशेषेण श्रुतं नूनमनेकधा ॥ १७॥
अनेन भाषितं कृत्स्नं न किञ्चिदपशब्दितम् ।
ततः प्राह हनूमन्तं राघवो ज्ञानविग्रहः ॥ १८॥

śrīrāmo lakṣmaṇaṁ prāha paśyainaṁ vaṭurūpiṇam ।
śabdaśāstramaśeṣeṇa śrutaṁ nūnamanekadhā ॥ 17॥
anena bhāṣitaṁ kṛtsnaṁ na kiñcidapaśabditam ।
tataḥ prāha hanūmantam rāghavo jñānavigrahaḥ ॥ 18॥

17-18. Hearing these well-spoken words of Hanuman, Lord Ram confided to Laxman, 'Oh Laxman! Look at this individual who is standing in front of us attired as a Brahmachari. Surely he has studied the science of language (i.e. grammar) thoroughly and diligently (17). Listen! He has said so many things, but there has been no error in his speech or use of words. His language is perfect and he is very cultured in his mannerism. [So obviously he has had an excellent education.]'

Then Raghav (Lord Ram), who is an embodiment of knowledge and wisdom, turned to answer Hanuman and said (18)—

अहं दाशरथी रामस्त्वयं मे लक्ष्मणोऽनुजः ।
सीतया भार्यया सार्धं पितुर्वचनगौरवात् ॥ १९॥
आगतस्तत्र विपिने स्थितोऽहं दण्डके द्विज ।
तत्र भार्या हता सीता रक्षसा केनचिन्मम ।
तामन्वेष्टुमिहायातौ त्वं को वा कस्य वा वद ॥ २०॥

aḥaṁ dāśarathī rāmastvayaṁ me lakṣmaṇo'nujaḥ ।
sītayā bhāryayā sārddhaṁ piturvacanagauravāt ॥ 19॥
āgatastatra vipine sthito'haṁ daṇḍake dvija ।
tatra bhāryā hata sītā rakṣasā kenacinmama ।
tāmanveṣṭumihāyātau tvaṁ ko vā kasya vā vada ॥ 20॥

19-20. 'I am the son of king Dasrath, and this is my younger brother Laxman. I have come to the forest, along with my wife Sita, to obey the words of my father (19).

I used to stay in the Dandkaranya forest. There, some demon has stolen my wife Sita. We have come here to search for her. Pray be kind to tell us, who you are and whose son are you?' (20).

वटुरुवाच ।
सुग्रीवो नाम राजा यो वानराणां महामतिः ।
चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिभिः सार्धं निरिमूर्धनि तिष्ठति ॥ २१॥

भ्राता कनियान् सुग्रीवो वालिनः पापचेतसः ।
तेन निष्कासितो भार्या हता तस्येह वालिना ॥ २२॥

vaṭuruvāca ।
sugrīvo nāma rājā yo vānarāṇām mahāmatih ।
caturbhirmantribhiḥ sārdham girimūrdhani tiṣṭhati ॥ 21॥
bhrātā kaniyān sugrīvo vāliṇaḥ pāpacetasah ।
tena niṣkāsito bhāryā hṛtā tasyeha vālinā ॥ 22॥

21-22. The Brahmachari (vaṭuka) said, 'Oh Lord! Sugriv is the king of the monkey race; he is wise and great. He stays on the summit of this mountain with his four ministers (21).

He is the younger brother of Vaali, who is sinful, wicked, evil and pervert in his mind and heart. He (Vaali) has forcefully taken away Sugriv's wife, and has thrown him out of the house (22).

तद्भयादृष्यमूकाख्यं गिरिमाश्रित्य संस्थितः ।
अहं सुग्रीवसचिवो वायुपुत्रो महामते ॥ २३॥
हनुमान्नाम विख्यातो ह्यञ्जनीगर्भसम्भवः ।
तेन सख्यं त्वया युक्तं सुग्रीवेण रघूत्तम ॥ २४॥
भार्यापहारिणं हन्तुं सहायस्ते भविष्यति ।
इदानीमेव गच्छाम आगच्छ यदि रोचते ॥ २५॥

tadbhayādṛṣyamūkākhyam girimāśritya saṁsthitaḥ ।
aham sugrīvasacivo vāyuputro mahāmate ॥ 23॥
hanumānnāma vikhyaṭo hyañjanīgarbhasambhavaḥ ।
tena sakhyam tvayā yuktaṁ sugrīveṇa raghūttama ॥ 24॥
bhāryāpahāriṇam hantum sahāyaste bhaviṣyati ।
idānīmeva gacchāma āgaccha yadi rocate ॥ 25॥

23-25. Hence, out of his fear, Sugriv stays on this Rishyamook mountain. Oh the great and wise one (Lord Ram)! I am a minister of Sugriv, and am the son of the Wind-God (23).

I have taken birth from the womb of mother Anjani, and am known in the world by the name of Hanuman. Oh the most exalted Raghu (Lord Ram)! You should make friends with Sugriv (24).

He will be of help to you to kill the one who has stolen your wife. Come, if you wish, we shall go to him' (25).

श्रीराम उवाच ।
अहमप्यागतस्तेन सख्यं कर्तुं कपीश्वर ।
सख्युस्तस्यापि यत्कार्यं तत्करिष्याम्यसंशयम् ॥ २६॥

हनुमान् स्वस्वरूपेण स्थितो राममथाब्रवीत् ।
 आरोहतां मम स्कन्धौ गच्छामः पर्वतोपरि ॥ २७॥
 यत् तिष्ठति सुग्रीवो मन्त्रिभिर्वालिनो भयात् ।
 तथेति तस्यारुहो स्कन्धं रामोऽथ लक्ष्मणः ॥ २८॥

śrīrāma uvāca ।

ahamapyāgatastena sakhyam kartum kapīśvara ।
 sakhyustasyāpi yatkāryam tatkarisyāmyasamśayam ॥ 26॥
 hanumān svasvarūpeṇa sthito rāmamathābravīt ।
 ārohatām mama skandhau gacchāmaḥ parvatopari ॥ 27॥
 yatra tiṣṭhati sugrīvo mantribhirvālino bhayāt ।
 tatheti tasyāruroha skandham rāmo'tha lakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 28॥

26-28. Lord Ram replied, 'Oh the Lord of Monkeys! I too have come to befriend him (Sugriv)¹. I will also try to do any work of that friend if there is any I can do. There is no doubt about it' (26).

Hearing this, Hanuman shed his disguised form and presented himself in his true form, and said to Lord Ram, 'Both of you sit on my shoulders. Then we shall go up the mountain (27) where Sugriv, along with his ministers, keeps hiding out of fear of Vaali'. Saying 'alright', Lord Ram and Laxman mounted on the shoulders of Hanuman, one on each side (28).

[Note—¹We have already read that Sabari had advised Lord Ram to come to Rishyamook mountain where he would find Sugriv. The Lord should make him a friend as he would help the Lord to find Sita and free her from her abductor. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranaya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 34-39.]

उत्पपात गिरिर्मूर्ध्नि क्षणादेव महाकपिः ।
 वृक्षच्छायां समाश्रित्य स्थितौ तौ रामलक्ष्मणौ ॥ २९॥
 हनुमानपि सुग्रीवमुपगम्य कृताञ्जलिः ।
 व्येतु ते भयमायातौ राजन् श्रीरामलक्ष्मणौ ॥ ३०॥
 शीघ्रमुत्तिष्ठ रामेण सख्यं ते योजितं मया ।
 अग्निं साक्षिणमारोप्य तेन सख्यं द्रुतं कुरु ॥ ३१॥

utpapāta girermūrdhni kṣaṇādeva mahākapiḥ ।
 vṛkṣacchāyām samāśritya sthita tau rāmalakṣmaṇau ॥ 29॥
 hanumānapi sugrīvamupagamya kṛtāñjaliḥ ।
 vyetu te bhayamāyātau rājan śrīrāmalakṣmaṇau ॥ 30॥
 śīghramuttiṣṭha rāmeṇa sakhyam te yojitam mayā ।
 agniṁ sākṣiṇamāropya tena sakhyam drutaṁ kuru ॥ 31॥

29-31. The great Lord of monkeys jumped (i.e. made a great leap) to reach the summit of the mountain so quickly as if in a flash. There, Lord Ram and Laxman

stood under the shade of a tree (waiting for Hanuman to go and brief Sugriv, and then bring him to introduce the two brothers to him) (29).

Hanuman went to Sugriv to report, apprised him of the developments, and said to him politely with folded hands—'Oh king! Remove your doubts and suspicions because Lord Ram and Laxman have come to visit you (as a friend, and not as an enemy as you had feared) (30). So get up quickly. I have arranged for your friendship with Lord Ram. Make friends with him soon, with the sacred fire as a witness. [Don't harbour apprehensions, for when I recommend them to you I am responsible for my actions. Remember that I am absolutely loyal to you; that I owe my allegiance to you first and foremost, and it is my moral responsibility to ensure no harm comes to you. So don't worry in the least.]' (31).

ततोऽतिहर्षात्सुग्रीवः समागम्य रघूत्तमम् ।
 वृक्षशाखां स्वयं छित्वा विष्टराय ददौ मुदा ॥ ३२॥
 हनूमान्लक्ष्मणायादात्सुग्रीवाय च लक्ष्मणः ।
 हर्षेण महताविष्टाः सर्व एवावतस्थिरे ॥ ३३॥
 लक्ष्मणस्त्वब्रवीत्सर्वं रामवृत्तान्तमादितः ।
 वनवासाभिगमनं सीताहरणमेव च ॥ ३४॥

tato'tiharṣātsugrīvaḥ samāgamyā raghūttamam ।
 vṛkṣaśākhāṃ svayaṃ chitvā viṣṭarāya dadau mudā ॥ 32॥
 hanūmānllakṣmaṇāyādātsugrīvāya ca lakṣmaṇaḥ ।
 harṣeṇa mahatāviṣṭāḥ sarva evāvatasthire ॥ 33॥
 lakṣmaṇastvabravītsarvaṃ rāmaṇvṛttāntamāditaḥ ।
 vanavāsābhigamaṇaṃ sītāharaṇameva ca ॥ 34॥

32-34. Then Sugriv was very happy to hear the news, and so he came to Lord Ram delightfully¹. He broke a branch of a tree with his own hands and gave it to the Lord to sit upon (32).

Similarly, Hanuman gave a seat to Laxman, and Laxman offered one to Sugriv in turn. Everyone sat down on their respective seats, happily and comfortably (33).

Thence, Laxman narrated the whole story of Lord Ram from the beginning (i.e. from the time they left Ayodhya) to their coming to the forest to live here, and the subsequent abduction of Sita from their hermitage in the forest (34).

[Note—¹We have already read in a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 4 in sub-section 6.1.4 of our Book why Sugriv so readily agreed to be friends with Lord Ram on the suggestion of Hanuman. It was because Sugriv trusted Hanuman so much that when the latter told him that he has brought the two brothers up the mountain with a promise that Sugriv would welcome them as a friend, and that Sugriv must not hesitate to meet the two guests immediately and make friends with them, Sugriv did not think twice or in any way doubt the correctness of Hanuman's decision, because he knew that Hanuman was not only exceptionally wise and intelligent but also very faithful and loyal to him. Sugriv was confident that the Creator may turn against him, but Hanuman would never betray him ever, no matter what happens.

Hanuman explained to Sugriv the strategic importance to have the two warrior brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, as his allies as their friendship would deter his arch enemy, Vaali, from tormenting him further. The race to which the two brothers belonged was far superior in intelligence, strength and abilities compared to the race to which Sugriv and his brother Vaali belonged. Hence, as soon as Vaali discovers that Sugriv has forged an alliance with superior warriors like Lord Ram and Laxman, he would stop bothering him any further, and so the constant fear of attack and harm from Vaali in which Sugriv passed his days would be a thing of the past.

This logic of Hanuman was sound enough to convince Sugriv that he has a lot to gain by making Lord Ram and Laxman his friends.]

लक्ष्मणोक्तं वचः श्रुत्वा सुग्रीवो राममब्रवीत् ।
अहं करिष्ये राजेन्द्र सीतायाः परिमार्गणम् ॥ ३५॥
साहाय्यमपि ते राम करिष्ये शत्रुघातिनः ।
शृणु राम मया दृष्टं किञ्चित्ते कथयाम्यहम् ॥ ३६॥

lakṣmaṇoktaṁ vacaḥ śrutvā sugrīvo rāmamabravīt ।
aham kariṣye rājendra sītāyāḥ parimārgaṇam ॥ 35॥
sāhāyyamapi te rāma kariṣye śatrughātināḥ ।
śṛṇu rāma mayā dr̥ṣṭaṁ kiñcitta kathayāmyaham ॥ 36॥

35-36. Hearing the words of Laxman, Sugriv said to Lord Ram, 'Oh the King of kings! I shall search for Sita (35). I shall help you to slay your enemy. Oh Lord Ram! I shall now tell you all that I have seen myself. Listen carefully (36)—

एकदा मन्त्रिभिः सार्धं स्थितोऽहं गिरिमूर्धनि ।
विहायसा नीयमानां केनचित्प्रमदोत्तमाम् ॥ ३७॥
क्रोशन्तीं रामरामेति दृष्ट्वास्मान् पर्वतोपरि ।
आमुच्याभरणान्याशु स्वोत्तरीयेण भामिनी ॥ ३८॥
निरीक्ष्याधः परित्यज्य क्रोशन्ती तेन रक्षसा ।
नीताहं भूषणान्याशु गुहायामक्षिपं प्रभो ॥ ३९॥

ekadā mantribhiḥ sārdham sthito'ham girimūrdhani ।
vihāyasā nīyamānāṁ kenacitpramadottamām ॥ 37॥
krośantīṁ rāmarāmeti dr̥ṣṭvāsmān parvatopari ।
āmucyābharaṇānyāśu svottariyeṇa bhāminī ॥ 38॥
nirīkṣyādhaḥ parityajya krośantī tena rakṣasā ।
nītāham bhūṣaṇānyāśu guhāyāmakṣipam prabho ॥ 39॥

37-39. One day I was sitting with my ministers on the top of the mountain. At that time we saw that some demon was taking away some most attractive and charming woman by the path of the sky (37).

That lady was wailing aloud 'Ram, Ram'. Seeing us sitting atop the mountain, she took off her ornaments, tied them in a cloth (probably her scarf), and seeing us,

she threw it down. Oh Lord! In this way, that demon took away that gentle lady who was constantly and woefully lamenting and wailing. I immediately picked up those ornaments and kept it aside (i.e. I hid them) in a mountain cave (38-39).

इदानीमपि पश्य त्वं जानीहि तव वा न वा ।
 इत्युक्त्वानीय रामाय दर्शयामास वानरः ॥ ४०॥
 विमुच्य रामस्तदृष्ट्वा हा सीतेति मुहुर्मुहुः ।
 हृदि निक्षिप्य तत्सर्वं रुरोद प्रकृतो यथा ॥ ४१॥

idānīmapi paśya tvaṃ jānīhi tava vā na vā ।
 ityuktvanīya rāmāya darśayāmāsa vānaraḥ ॥ 40॥
 vimucya rāmastaddr̥ṣṭvā hā sīteti muhurmuḥuḥ ।
 hr̥di nikṣipya tatsarvaṃ ruroda prākṛto yathā ॥ 41॥

40-41. You must have a look at them and see if they are yours or not. [See for yourself to check if you can recognise those things as belonging to your wife, for if you can identify them then it is sure that the lady of whom I am talking about was indeed Sita, your wife. In that case we will be sure also about the direction in which she was being taken away by the demon. So please have a close look.]

Saying this, the monkey (Sugriv) brought them and showed them to Lord Ram (40).

When the Lord opened the bundle and saw the ornaments, he immediately recognised them to belong to his wife Sita; so he clasped them to his heart. Like an ordinary man suddenly remembering his lost wife after discovering some signs of her that she left behind, the Lord began to cry, wailing repeatedly 'Oh Sita, Oh Sita!' (41).

आश्वास्य राघवं भ्राता लक्ष्मणो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।
 अचिरेणैव ते राम प्राप्यते जानकी शुभा ।
 वानरेन्द्रसहायेन हत्वा रावणमाहवे ॥ ४२॥
 सुग्रीवोऽप्याह हे राम प्रतिज्ञां करवाणि ते ।
 समरे रावणं हत्वा तव दास्यामि जानकीम् ॥ ४३॥

āśvāsya rāghavaṃ bhrātā lakṣmaṇo vākyamabravīt ।
 acireṇaiva te rāma prāpyate jānakī śubhā ।
 vānarendrasahāyena hatvā rāvaṇamāhave ॥ 42॥
 sugrīvo'pyāha he rāma pratijñāṃ karavāṇi te ।
 samare rāvaṇaṃ hatvā tava dāsyāmi jānakīm ॥ 43॥

42-43. Then brother Laxman consoled him, saying—'Oh Raghav; with the help of the king of monkeys (Sugriv) you shall soon kill Ravana in the war and retrieve the auspicious Janki (Sita). [So you must not lament; have patience and courage. The time is not far away when you shall once again meet Sita.]' (42).

Sugriv also reassured Lord Ram and promised all help, saying 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! I make a promise to you that I shall get Sita back to you by killing Ravana in the war' (43).

ततो हनूमान् प्रज्वाल्य तयोरग्निं समीपतः ।
तावुभौ यमसुग्रीवावग्नौ साक्षिणि तिष्ठति ॥ ४४॥
बाहू प्रसार्य चालिङ्ग्य परस्परमकल्मषौ ।
समीपे रघुनाथस्य सुग्रीवः समुपाविशत् ॥ ४५॥

tato hanūmān prajvālya tayoragniṃ samīpataḥ ।
tāvubhau rāmasugrīvāvagnau sākṣiṇi tiṣṭhati ॥ 44॥
bāhū prasārya cālīṅgya paraspamakalmaṣau ।
samīpe raghunāthasya sugrīvaḥ samupāviśat ॥ 45॥

44-45. Then Hanuman lit a fire near them. Both Lord Ram and Sugriv made the sacred fire as a witness (44), and once again formally met and embraced each other with wide open arms. Thereafter, Sugriv sat down near the Lord. [Earlier, before the ritual of making friendship with fire as a witness, Sugriv sat in front of Lord Ram. But after their friendship was formalised, Sugriv sat by the side of the Lord. This indicates closeness and formalisation of their relationship as friends.] (45).

Sub-section 6.2.4: In due course of time, Sugriv dispatched a large number of messengers and heralds as spies and scouts in all the directions to search for Sita. One such reconnoitring team consisting of prominent monkey and bear warriors heads towards south and enters a cave where they meet a hermitress named Swayamprabha.

After a bond of friendship was forged between Lord Ram and Sugriv, they chatted and shared information about each other. During this intercourse Lord Ram enquired from Sugriv the reason for his living a life of fear and seclusion away from his capital, at which Sugriv confided with the Lord about his misfortunes, about the grave injustice done to him by his elder brother Vaali who had thrown him out of the kingdom, kept his wife, and threatened him with death if he ever dared to re-enter the capital city of Kishkindha. Lord Ram took pity on him, and as a good friend he assured to help Sugriv regain his honour and wife.

Supported and encouraged by the almighty Lord, Sugriv challenged and managed to slay his inimical brother Vaali in a fierce face-to-face duel. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranaya Kand, Canto 2.}

Thereafter, by the grace of Lord Ram, Sugriv ascended the throne and became the king of Kishkindha. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranaya Kand, Canto 3.}

But such is the way of this selfish world that once Sugriv had got back his kingdom, he neglected to do Lord Ram's work—i.e. he forgot to make efforts to search for Sita by sending scouts and messengers in all the directions.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Laxman took up dwelling on a nearby mountain called Pravarshan to pass the four months of the rainy season, because for one, it would very difficult to launch the search operation in the wild forest during rains, and second, some practical time must be given to Sugriv to help him establish his authority and grip as the kingdom's new ruler and put things in order.

Since Sugriv had got so involved in worldly matters that he neglected the Lord's work, Hanuman warned and alerted him about his mistake and the gravity of consequences of annoying Lord Ram. In the meantime, Lord Ram too went Laxman to make Sugriv see sense and mend his ways immediately as time was fast running out. {These developments are narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto no. 5.}

That said briefly, and in order to remain focused on our story, we shall skip these above referred events as they do not bear any direct relation to the theme of our story, and come straight to the point when Sugriv felt very sorry for his folly of neglecting to send teams to search Sita, and in the process inadvertently offending Lord Ram. He immediately made amends by meeting and apologising to the Lord, and then ordered a large number of monkeys and bears to go in every direction of the earth and diligently search Sita.

One such team was special as it consisted of prominent and trusted members of Sugriv's court—such as Hanuman (his most trusted and wise lieutenant), Jamvant (the elderly chief of the bears who was equally trusted and wise), Angad (his nephew and heir apparent), Nal and Neel (expert architects and construction engineers), and other confidantes like them. This particular group headed in the south direction.

By-and-by this team reached a cave and met a hermitress named Swayamprabha, who transported them instantly, in a magical way, to the shore of the southern ocean by employing her transcendental mystical powers of movement.

Now we shall proceed to read about these episodes from Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto no. 6 as follows:-

॥ षष्ठ सर्गः ॥

दृष्ट्वा रामं समासीनं गुहाद्वारि शिलातले ।
चैलाजिनधरं श्यामं जटामौलिविराजितम् ॥ १॥
विशालनयनं शान्तं स्मितचारुमुखाम्बुजम् ।
सीताविरहसन्तप्तं पश्यन्तं मृगपक्षिणः ॥ २॥
रथादूरात्समुत्पत्य वेगात्सुग्रीवलक्ष्मणौ ।
रामस्य पादयोरग्रे पेततुर्भक्तिसंयुतौ ॥ ३॥

॥ ṣaṣṭha sargaḥ ॥

dr̥ṣṭvā rāmaṁ samāsīnaṁ guhādvāri śilātale ।
cailājinaḥ dharaṁ śyāmaṁ jaṭāmaulivirājitaṁ ॥ 1॥
viśālanayanaṁ śāntaṁ smitacārumukhāmbujam ।
sītāvirahasantaptaṁ paśyantaṁ mṛgapakṣiṇaḥ ॥ 2॥
rathāddūrātsamutpatya vegātsugrīvalakṣmaṇau ।
rāmasya pādayoragre petaturbhaktisaṁyutau ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! They (i.e. Sugriv, Hanuman, and Laxman who was sent by Lord Ram to bring Sugriv to him) saw Lord Ram sitting on a stone slab on the mouth of the cave. He was attired in a deer skin, was dark complexioned, had a crown of matted hairs on his head (1), had large eyes, was calm, tranquil and serene, and his charming face had a smile of a man lost in some pleasant thoughts so much so that he is unaware of his surroundings. The Lord was so overwhelmed by the emotional torment created due to the agony of separation from his beloved wife Sita that he appeared to be weary and haggard even as he gazed absent-mindedly at the deer and birds that moved around him¹ (2).

Sugriv and Laxman got down from the chariot a little away, and came and fell down at his feet with devotion and reverence (3).

[Note—¹When Sugriv arrived at the cave where Lord Ram dwelt on Mt. Pravarshan, he found him sitting motionless, lost in deep thoughts. The Lord had a melancholic expression spread over his countenance that betrayed his emotional state of extreme sadness and profound gloom which was made all the more striking by the presence of a frozen smile on his dark-complexioned face and lotus-like eyes that were transfixed at a distant point where some deer and birds were moving around carelessly, for the smile and the gaze indicated that a huge emotional storm was blowing inside him as he was deeply lost in reminiscences and thoughts of Sita.]

रामः सुग्रीवमालिङ्ग्य पृष्टवानामयमन्तिके ।
स्थापयित्वा यथान्यायं पूजयामास धर्मवित् ॥ ४॥
ततोऽब्रवीद्रघुश्रेष्ठं सुग्रीवो भक्तिनम्रधीः ।
देव पश्य समायान्तीं वानराणां महाचमूम् ॥ ५॥

rāmaḥ sugrīvamāliṅgya pṛṣṭvānāmayamantike ।
sthāpayitvā yathānyāyaṁ pūjayāmāsa dharmavit ॥ 4॥
tato'bravīdraghuśreṣṭhaṁ sugrīvo bhaktinamradhīḥ ।
deva paśya samāyāntīṁ vānarāṇāṁ mahācamūm ॥ 5॥

4-5. Lord Ram—who is an expert in the laws of Dharma (one's lawful duty, noble conduct, righteousness, probity, propriety)—embraced Sugriv and asked about his welfare. The Lord seated Sugriv close to himself, and duly honoured him (4).

Then Sugriv said to the most exalted Raghu (Lord Ram) very reverentially, 'Oh Lord! Look around and you will observe that a huge army of monkeys has started arriving¹ (5).

[Note—¹Sugriv came straight to the point as he was already aware what, in all probability, was going on in the mind of Lord Ram, for Laxman had briefed him on this point when he told Sugriv that the Lord is very annoyed that he (Sugriv) has forgotten to keep his promise to the Lord concerning the search for Sita.

So Sugriv did not wish to take any risk; he had arranged things in a way that by the time he came to where Lord Ram was, a large number of monkey and bear warriors had started arriving. This clever move pre-empted any chance of Lord Ram expressing any sort of anger at Sugriv.]

कुलाचलाद्रिसम्भूता मेरुमन्दरसन्निभाः ।
 नानाद्वीपसरिच्छैलवासिनः पर्वतोपमाः ॥ ६॥
 असङ्ख्याताः समायान्ति हरयः कामरूपिणः ।
 सर्वे देवांशसम्भूताः सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः ॥ ७॥

kulācalādrisambhūtā merumandarāsannibhāḥ ।
 nānādvīpasaricchailavāsinaḥ parvatopamāḥ ॥ 6॥
 asaṅkhyātāḥ samāyānti harayaḥ kāmarūpiṇaḥ ।
 sarve devāṁśasambhūtāḥ sarve yuddhaviśārādāḥ ॥ 7॥

6-7. [Briefing Lord Ram about the army of monkeys that was gradually assembling there, Sugriv said—] These monkeys are born on the Himalayas and other great mountains; they have bodies as colossus as the Sumeru and Mandrachal mountains¹; they live in different continents, along river banks and on mountains, and are as huge and enormous as mountains themselves! (6).

All of them have been born from the sperms of Gods (i.e. these monkeys carry the genes of Gods, and are their manifested forms)². They can assume any form they like, and are very expert in the art of warfare (7).

[Note—¹Mt. Sumeru is the heavenly golden-hued mountain where Gods live. Mt. Mandrachal was a huge legendary mountain that was used as the churning rod by the Gods and the Demons to churn the first ocean in the beginning of creation in order to produce Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss.

²“The monkeys and bears having the genes of Gods” means that they possess unique qualities, strength and power that only Gods possess. At the time Lord Vishnu had promised these Gods and Mother Earth that he would come down as Lord Ram to eliminate Ravana and the race of cruel demons that was oppressing them, the Gods were advised by the Creator Brahma to come down to earth as monkeys and bears to serve Lord Ram. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 22-32.]

अत्र केचिद्गजबलाः केचिदशगजोपमाः ।
 गजायुतबलाः केचिदन्येऽमितबलाः प्रभो ॥ ८॥
 केचिदञ्जनकूटाभाः केचित्कनकसन्निभाः ।
 केचिद्रक्तान्तवदना दीर्घवालास्तथापरे ॥ ९॥
 शुद्धस्फटिकसङ्काशाः केचिद्राक्षससन्निभाः ।
 गर्जन्तः परितो यान्ति वानरा युद्धकाङ्क्षिणः ॥ १०॥

atra kecidgajabalāḥ keciddaśagajopamāḥ ।
 gajāyutabalāḥ kecidanye'mitabalāḥ prabho ॥ 8॥
 kecidañjanakūtābhāḥ kecitkanakasannibhāḥ ।
 kecidraktāntavadanā dīrghavālāstathāpare ॥ 9॥
 śuddhasphaṭikasāṅkāśāḥ kecidrākṣasasannibhāḥ ।

garjantaḥ parito yānti vānarā yuddhakāṅkṣiṇaḥ ॥ 10॥

8-10. Oh Lord! Out of them, some have the strength of one, some of ten and some of 10 thousand elephants taken together, while there are so many of them whose strength and valour can't even be compared with anything at all (8).

Look, some are black (dark complexioned) like the Kajjal Giri (the mountain of solidified soot), some are fair complexioned like gold, some have red faces like the colour of blood, while some have long (creeper-like hairs on their bodies (9).

Some look charming as they are clean, gentle and polite like pure crystal is, while others look terrible and frightening like demons. All of these monkeys are very eager for battle, and that's why they are so agitated, running hither and thither energetically, raring to go, and roaring all the while (10).

त्वदाज्ञाकारिणः सर्वे फलमूलाशनाः प्रभो ।

ऋक्षाणामधिपो वीरो जाम्बवान्नाम बुद्धिमान् ॥ ११॥

एष मे मन्त्रिणां श्रेष्ठः कोटिभल्लूकवृन्दपः ।

हनूमानेष विख्यातो महासत्त्वपराक्रमः ॥ १२॥

tvadājñākāriṇaḥ sarve phalamūlāśanāḥ prabho ।

ṛkṣāṇāmadhipo vīro jāmbavānnāma buddhimān ॥ 11॥

eṣa me mantriṇāṃ śreṣṭhaḥ koṭibhallūkavṛndapaḥ ।

hanūmāneṣa vikhyāto mahāsattvaparākramaḥ ॥ 12॥

11-12. Oh Lord! They will all obey you and they will survive by eating only fruits and roots etc. [To wit, you will not have to worry about logistics and ration for this huge army.]

[Then Sugriv introduced the chief commanders of the army to Lord Ram—] This king of bears, Jamvant, is very brave, wise and intelligent (11). He is the Lord (commander) of 10 million bears, and is foremost among my ministers. Next, this is Hanuman, the son of the wind-god; he is famous for his great strength and valour, and is most glorious, brilliant and radiant by the virtue of his excellent character and magnificent qualities (12).

वायुपुत्रोऽतितेजस्वी मन्त्री बुद्धिमतां वरः ।

नलो नीलश्च गवयो गवाक्षो गन्धमादनः ॥ १३॥

शरभो मैन्दवश्चैव गजः पनस एव च ।

वलीमुखो दधिमुखः सुषेणस्तार एव च ॥ १४॥

केसरी च महासत्त्वः पिता हनुमतो बली ।

एते ते यूथपा राम प्रधान्येन मयोदिताः ॥ १५॥

vāyuputro'titejasvī mantrī buddhimatāṃ varaḥ ।

nalo nīlaśca gavayo gavākṣo gandhamādanaḥ ॥ 13॥

śarabho maindavaścaiva gajaḥ panasa eva ca ।

valīmukho dadhimukhaḥ suṣeṇastāra eva ca ॥ 14॥

kesarī ca mahāsattvaḥ pitā hanumato balī ।
ete te yūthapā rāma prādhānyena mayoditāḥ ॥ 15॥

13-15. He is foremost amongst the wise ones, and is my chief (most senior) minister. Besides these two, my other army chief commanders are as follows—Nal, Neel, Gawai, Gawaksha, Gandhamadan, Sharav, Maindav, Gaj, Panas, Valimukh, Dadhimukh, Sushen, Taar, and the father of Hanuman known by the name of Kesari; the latter is most valorous, a great warrior, very famous, extremely steadfast and exceptionally agile (13-15).

महात्मानो महावीर्याः शक्रतुल्यपराक्रमाः ।
एते प्रत्येकतः कोटिकोटिवानरयूथपाः ॥ १६॥
तवाज्ञाकारिणः सर्वे सर्वे देवांशसम्भवाः ।
एष वालिसुतः श्रीमानङ्गदो नाम विशुतः ॥ १७॥

mahātmāno mahāvīryāḥ śakratulyaparākramāḥ ।
ete pratyekataḥ koṭikoṭivānarayūthapāḥ ॥ 16॥
tavājñākāriṇaḥ sarve sarve devāṃśasambhavāḥ ।
eṣa vālisutaḥ śrīmānaṅgado nāma viśrutaḥ ॥ 17॥

16-17. All of them are of a noble and great heart; they are strong, valorous, valiant and mighty like Indra (the king of Gods). Each of them is the Lord (commander) of millions of monkeys (i.e. each one of the commanders I have named has a huge army of monkeys under his orders) (16). All of them are obedient to you, and they have been born out of the miniscule fraction (or sperms) of Gods. This is Baali's son, the most famous Angad (17).

वालितुल्यबलो वीरो रक्षसानां बलान्तकः ।
एते चान्ये च बहवस्त्वदर्थे त्यक्तजीविताः ॥ १८॥
योद्धारः पर्वताग्रैश्च निपुणाः शत्रुघातने ।
आज्ञापय रघुश्रेष्ठ सर्वे ते वशवर्तिनः ॥ १९॥

vālitulyabalo vīro rākṣasānāṃ balāntakaḥ ।
ete cānye ca bahavastvadarthe tyaktajīvitāḥ ॥ 18॥
yoddhāraḥ parvatāgraiśca nipuṇāḥ śatrughātane ।
ājñāpaya raghuśreṣṭha sarve te vaśavartinaḥ ॥ 19॥

18-19. He is also as strong as Baali, and is capable of crushing the demon hordes. In this manner, these monkeys as well as many others are eager to lay down their lives for you (18).

They fight with large rocks uprooted from mountains, and they are all very expert in crushing and destroying the enemy. Oh the most exalted Raghu (Sri Ram)! All of them are under your control and command. So therefore, order them as you deem fit' (19).

रामः सुग्रीवमालिङ्ग्य हर्षपूर्णाश्रुलोचनः ।
 प्राह सुग्रीव जानासि सर्वं त्वं कार्यगौरवम् ॥ २०॥
 मार्गणार्थं हि जानक्या नियुङ्क्ष्व यदि रोचते ।
 श्रुत्वा रामस्य वचनं सुग्रीवः प्रीतमानसः ॥ २१॥
 प्रेषयामास बलिनो वानरान् वानरर्षभः ।
 दिक्षु सर्वासु विविधान् वानरान् प्रेष्य सत्वरम् ॥ २२॥
 दक्षिणां दिशमत्यर्थं प्रयत्नेन महाबलान् ।
 युवराजं जाम्बवन्तं हनूमन्तं महाबलम् ॥ २३॥
 नलं सुषेणं शरभं मैन्दं द्विविदमेव च ।
 प्रेषयामास सुग्रीवो वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ॥ २४॥

rāmaḥ sugrīvamāliṅgya harṣapūrṇāśrulocanaḥ ।
 prāha sugrīva jānāsi sarvaṃ tvaṃ kāryagauravam ॥ 20॥
 mārgaṇārthaṃ hi jānakyā niyuṅkṣva yadi rocate ।
 śrutvā rāmasya vacanaṃ sugrīvaḥ prītamānasaḥ ॥ 21॥
 preṣayāmāsa balino vānarān vānararṣabhaḥ ।
 dikṣu sarvāsu vividhān vānarān preṣya satvaram ॥ 22॥
 dakṣiṇām diśamatyartham prayatnena mahābalān ।
 yuvarājaṃ jāmbavantaṃ hanūmantaṃ mahābalaṃ ॥ 23॥
 nalaṃ suṣeṇaṃ śarabhaṃ maindaṃ dvidivameva ca ।
 preṣayāmāsa sugrīvo vacanaṃ cedamabravīt ॥ 24॥

20-24. Lord Ram's eyes were filled with tears of joy and delight, and he embraced Sugriv. He said, 'Oh Sugriv! You are aware of the difficulty of my task that is to be accomplished (20). If you think proper, you must appoint them (i.e. assign them) the task of searching out Sita according to their ability and aptitude. [You are the best judge to decide who amongst these commanders and warriors is the best suited for the job that is to be done, which is to search for Sita first and then to launch a campaign to free her from her captors, for I am but a stranger and a foreigner who have no experience of their skills, abilities and qualities. Hence you are the one who is best placed to select the messengers and then assign them the work as you think fit and proper.]'

Hearing these words of advice from Lord Ram, Sugriv was very delighted and pleased¹ (21). He gladly sent many monkeys in search of Sita. Having sent other monkeys in the various directions (22), he most carefully, after deep thought and considering all aspects, selected the most valorous prince Angad, the bear chief Jamavant, his trusted lieutenant Hanuman, and his other ministers such as Nal, Sushen, Sharav, Maind and Dwividh etc., and sent them towards the south. He said to them (23-24)—

[Note—¹When Lord Ram left the details of the planning and the implementation of the project of searching out Sita and recovering her on Sugriv, the latter felt very glad and delighted as it not only showed that the Lord trusted him and had no hard feelings for him because he had neglected the Lord's work earlier, but also because the Lord

gave him due respect and the right to order his troops as a King of the kingdom of Kishkindha. Sugriv was happy that his dignity and self-respect was duly honoured by Lord Ram, and so it now devolves squarely upon his shoulders to ensure that the honour and dignity and respect and reputation of a great king of a great kingdom are properly taken care of.

To wit, Lord Ram was very wise and prudent in putting the responsibility on Sugriv's shoulders as now he was totally accountable for the success of the mission, and he cannot shrug it off by any sort of lame excuse.]

विविन्वन्तु प्रयत्नेन भवन्तो जानकीं शुभाम् ।
मासादर्वाङ्निवर्तध्वं मच्छासनपुरःसराः ॥ २५॥
सीतामदृष्ट्वा यदि वो मासादूर्ध्वं दिनं भवेत् ।
तदा प्राणान्तिकं दण्डं मतः प्राप्स्यथ वानराः ॥ २६॥

vicinvantu prayatnena bhavanto jānakīm śubhām ।
māsādarvāñnivartadhvaṃ macchāsanapuraḥsarāḥ ॥ 25॥
sītāmadṛṣṭvā yadi vo māsādūrdhvaṃ dinaṃ bhavet ।
tadā prāṇāntikaṃ daṇḍaṃ mattaḥ prāpsyatha vānarāḥ ॥ 26॥

25-26. 'By my orders, all of you must diligently, industriously and sincerely, make all possible efforts to search out the most auspicious and virtuous Janki (Sita), and return within one month (25).

If you return after one month without having found or seen her, then oh monkeys, be warned that you shall suffer capital punishment at my hands. [To wit, if you come back after the stipulated period of one month with no positive news of Sita, then you will suffer as I will severely punish you.]¹ (26).

[Note—¹This threat was merely meant to tell the army that their king, Sugriv, was very serious about this matter. They should not waste time in loitering around, and go about the search seriously. Fixing a time was important for maintaining discipline and order, for otherwise there would have been no control over the thousands of monkeys and bears who were dispatched on the mission, for there were fair chances that they would spend time fooling around somewhere, and then take their own time to come back leisurely to report that they could not find Sita.]

इति प्रस्थाप्य सुग्रीवो वानरान् भीमविक्रमान् ।
रामस्य पार्श्वे श्रीरामं नत्वा चोपविवेश सः ॥ २७॥
गच्छन्तं मारुतिं दृष्ट्वा रामो वचनमब्रवीत् ।
अभिज्ञानार्थमेतन्मे ह्यङ्गुलीयकमुत्तमम् ॥ २८॥
मन्नामाक्षरसंयुक्तं सीतायै दीयतां रहः ।
अस्मिन् कार्ये प्रमाणं हि त्वमेव कपिसत्तम ।
जानामि सत्त्वं ते सर्वं गच्छ पन्थाः शुभस्तव ॥ २९॥

iti prasthāpya sugrīvo vānarān bhīmavikramān ।

rāmasya pārśve śrīrāmaṃ natvā copaviveśa saḥ ॥ 27॥
 gacchantam mārutiṃ dr̥ṣṭvā rāmo vacanamabravīt ।
 abhijñānārthametanme hyaṅgulīyakamuttamam ॥ 28॥
 mannāmākṣarasamyuktaṃ sītāyai dīyatāṃ rahaḥ ।
 asmin kārye pramāṇaṃ hi tvameva kapisattama ।
 jānāmi sattvaṃ te sarvaṃ gaccha panthāḥ śubhastava ॥ 29॥

27-29. Having thus dispatched those most strong, valiant and brave monkeys on their mission, Sugriv came and bowed before Lord Ram. He sat down near him (27). At that moment, seeing the son of the wind-god, Hanuman, about to go on his mission, Lord Ram called him near and said, 'Take my finger ring which has my initials (i.e. letters of my name) engraved on it with you. You should give this to Sita when she is alone as a means of your identification. Oh the best among monkeys (kapisattama)! You are the only one who is capable of doing this difficult task. I know your strength and intelligence. Alright then, proceed now on your path. Be blessed and have good luck!' (28-29).

एवं कपीनां राज्ञा ते विसृष्टाः परिमार्गणे ।
 सीताया अङ्गदमुखा बभ्रमुस्ततः तत्र ह ॥ ३०॥
 भ्रूमन्तो विन्ध्यगहने ददृशुः पर्वतोपमम् ।
 राक्षसं भीषणाकारं भक्षयन्तं मृगान् गजान् ॥ ३१॥
 रावणोऽयमिति ज्ञात्वा केचिद्वानरपुङ्गवाः ।
 जघ्नुः किलकिलाशब्दं मुञ्चन्तो मुष्टिभिः क्षणात् ॥ ३२॥
 नायं रावण इत्युक्त्वा ययुरन्यन्महद्वनम् ।
 तृषार्ता सलिलं तत्र नाविन्दन् हरिपुङ्गवाः ॥ ३३॥

evaṃ kapināṃ rājñā te visṛṣṭāḥ parimārgaṇe ।
 sītāyā aṅgadamukhā babhramustatra tatra ha ॥ 30॥
 bhramanto vindhyagahane dadṛśuḥ parvatopamam ।
 rākṣasaṃ bhīṣaṇākāraṃ bhakṣayantaṃ mṛgān gajān ॥ 31॥
 rāvaṇo'yamiti jñātvā kecidvānarapuṅgavāḥ ।
 jaghnuḥ kilakilāśabdaṃ muñcanto muṣṭibhiḥ kṣaṇāt ॥ 32॥
 nāyaṃ rāvaṇa ityuktvā yayuranyanmahadvanam ।
 tṛṣārtā salilaṃ tatra nāvindan haripuṅgavāḥ ॥ 33॥

30-33. In this manner, Angad and other monkeys were dispatched by the king of monkeys with his clear mandate. They began to roam about on this earth in search of Sita (30).

While wandering, they came to a dense forest of the Vindhyachal mountain. There they saw a mountain-like formidable demon who was catching hold of deer and elephants of the forest and eating them (31). Some monkeys mistakenly thought that he was Ravana, so they chuckled loudly and excitedly, and punched him to death in a fraction of a moment (32). Then they realised that he cannot be Ravana because of the

ease with which he could be killed. So they went to another dense forest in search of Sita. There they felt very thirsty, but water was not visible anywhere (33).

विभ्रमन्तो महारण्ये शुष्ककण्ठोष्ठतालुकाः ।
ददृशुर्गह्वरं तत्र तृणगुल्मावृतं महत् ॥ ३४॥
आर्द्रपक्षान् कूर्चैश्चहंसाग्निःसृतान् ददृशुस्ततः ।
अत्रास्ते सलिलं नूनं प्रविशामो महागुहाम् ॥ ३५॥
इत्युक्त्वा हनुमानग्रे प्रविवेश तमन्वयुः ।
सर्वे परस्परं धृत्वा बाहून् बाहुभिरुत्सुकाः ॥ ३६॥

vibhramanto mahārāṇye śuṣkakaṇṭhoṣṭhātālukāḥ ।
dadṛśurgahvaram tatra tṛṇagulmāvṛtaṁ mahat ॥ 34॥
ārdrapakṣān krauñcahaṁsānniḥsṛtān dadṛśustataḥ ।
atrāste salilaṁ nūnaṁ praviśāmo mahāguhām ॥ 35॥
ityuktvā hanumānagre praviveśa tamanvayuh ।
sarve parasparam dhṛtvā bāhūn bāhubhirutsukāḥ ॥ 36॥

34-36. Roaming around thirsty in that un-inhabitable and dense forest, their throat, lips and palate became parched. Then they saw a large cave covered by grass and creepers (34). Coming out of it they saw herons and swans with wet wings. Guessing that the cave must have a water body, they all decided to enter it in search of water. Hanuman went in first, and behind him all the monkeys followed arm-in-arm very eagerly, but scared to enter an unknown and labyrinthine cave (35-36).

[Note—The cave must have been dark. They went in arm-in-arm so that they aren't lost in the pitch darkness of the labyrinthine cave or to face God-only-knew what was inside it.]

अन्धकारे महद्दूरं गत्वापश्यन् कपीश्वराः ।
जलाशयान् मणिनिभतोयान् कल्पद्रुमोपमान् ॥ ३७॥
वृक्षान् पक्वफलैर्नम्रान् मधुद्रोणसमन्वितान् ।
गृहान् सर्वगुणोपेतान् मणिवस्त्रादिपूरितान् ॥ ३८॥
दिव्यभक्ष्यान्नसहितान् मानुषैः परिवर्जितान् ।
विरिमितास्तत्र भवने दिव्ये कनकविष्टरे ॥ ३९॥
प्रभया दीप्यमानां तु ददृशुः स्त्रियमेककाम् ।
ध्यायन्तीं वीरवसनां योगिनीं योगमास्थिताम् ॥ ४०॥

andhakāre mahaddūraṁ gatvāpaśyan kapīśvarāḥ ।
jalāśayān maṇinibhatoyān kalpadrumopamān ॥ 37॥
vṛkṣān pakvaphalairnamrān madhudroṇasamanvitān ।
grhān sarvagūṇopetān maṇivastrādipūritān ॥ 38॥
divyabhakṣyānnasahitān mānuṣaiḥ parivarjitān ।

vismitāstatra bhavane divye kanakaviṣṭare ॥ 39॥
 prabhayā dīpyamānām tu dadṛśuḥ striyamekakām ।
 dhyāyantīm cīravasanām yoginīm yogamāsthītām ॥ 40॥

37-40. After proceeding far in pitch darkness, the monkeys found a pond with water as clean and pure as crystal. There were Kalpa tree-like evergreen trees (37) laden with fruits near it, and they had honeycombs hanging from them. Nearby they saw a pleasant dwelling that was richly decorated with colourful clothes and ornaments, and well endowed with all sorts of delectable eatables. It had all the auspicious signs befitting a hermitage, but was completely desolate. They were utterly astonished and stunned to see a beautiful lady with divine radiance sitting alone on a golden throne in one of the rooms of the dwelling. That lady was a Yogini (a female ascetic) sitting in deep meditation. Her glowing radiance illuminated the place. She wore clothes made from birch (37-40).

पूणेमुस्तां महाभागां भक्त्या भीत्या च वानराः ।
 दृष्ट्वा तान् वानरान् देवी प्राह यूयं किमागताः ॥ ४१॥
 कुतो वा कस्य दूता वा मत्स्थानं किं प्रधर्षथ ।
 तच्छ्रुत्वा हनुमानाह शृणु वक्ष्यामि देवि ते ॥ ४२॥
 अयोध्याधिपतिः श्रीमान् राजा दशरथः प्रभुः ।
 तस्य पुत्रो महाभागो ज्येष्ठो राम इति श्रुतः ॥ ४३॥

praṇemustāṃ mahābhāgāṃ bhaktyā bhītyā ca vānarāḥ ।
 dr̥ṣṭvā tān vānarān devī prāha yūyaṃ kimāgatāḥ ॥ 41॥
 kuto vā kasya dūtā vā matsthānaṃ kiṃ pradharṣatha ।
 tacchrutvā hanumānāha śṛṇu vakṣyāmi devi te ॥ 42॥
 ayodhyādhīpatiḥ śrīmān rājā daśarathaḥ prabhuḥ ।
 tasya putro mahābhāgo jyeṣṭho rāma iti śrutah ॥ 43॥

41-43. Seeing that great soul, the monkeys bowed before her with respect and awe. Then that lady ascetic looked at them and said, 'Why and from whence have you all come? (41). Whose messengers are you? And why are you defiling my place?'

Hearing this, Hanuman replied, 'Oh goddess! I shall tell you everything. Listen (42)—'A most famous and majestic king known by the name of Dasrath was the ruler of Ayodhya. His exalted eldest son is famed by the name of Lord Sri Ram (43).

पितुराज्ञां पुरस्कृत्य सभार्यः सानुजो वनम् ।
 गतस्तत्र हता भार्या तस्य साध्वी दुःसत्मना ॥ ४४॥
 रावणेन ततो रामः सुग्रीवं सानुजो ययौ ।
 सुग्रीवो मित्रभावेन रामस्य प्रियवत्तन्नाम् ॥ ४५॥

piturājñāṃ puraskṛty sabhāryaḥ sānujo vanam ।

gatastatra hr̥tā bhāryā tasya sādhvī durātmanā ॥ 44॥
 rāvaṇena tato rāmaḥ sugrīvaṃ sānujo yayau ।
 sugrīvo mitrabhāvena rāmasya priyavallabhām ॥ 45॥

44-45. Obeying the words of his father, the Lord has come to the forest with his wife and younger brother. Here, his most virtuous and chaste wife has been abducted by the vile and wicked (44) Ravana. After that he has come to Sugriv along with his younger brother (Laxman) in search of Sita, his wife. Being friendly with Lord Ram, Sugriv has ordered us to search for the beloved wife of the Lord (45).

मृगयध्वमिति प्राह ततो वयमुपागताः ।
 ततो वनं विचिन्वन्तो जानकीं जलकाङ्क्षिणः ॥ ४६॥
 प्रविष्टा गह्वरं घोरं दैवादत् समागताः ।
 त्वं वा किमर्थमतृप्सि का वा त्वं वद नः शुभे ॥ ४७॥

mṛgayadhvamiti prāha tato vayamupāgatāḥ ।
 tato vanaṃ vicinvanto jānakīm jalakāṅkṣiṇaḥ ॥ 46॥
 praviṣṭā gahvaraṃ ghoram daivādatra samāgatāḥ ।
 tvam vā kimarthamatrāsi kā vā tvam vada naḥ śubhe ॥ 47॥

46-47. Hence, we have come from there (in our effort to find the whereabouts of Sita). Here we felt the need for water because we have become very thirsty while roaming here and there in search of Sita (46). That is why all of us entered this formidable cave, and by chance have come here. Oh the blessed and auspicious One! Why do you stay here, and who are you? Do tell us please' (47).

योगिनी च तथा दृष्ट्वा वानरान् प्राह हृष्टधीः ।
 यथेष्टं फलमूलानि जग्ध्वा पीत्वामृतं पयः ॥ ४८॥
 आगच्छत ततो वक्ष्ये मम वृत्तान्तमादितः ।
 तथेति भुक्त्वा पीत्वा च हृष्टास्ते सर्ववानराः ॥ ४९॥
 देव्याः समीपं गत्वा ते बद्धाञ्जलिपुटाः स्थिताः ।
 ततः प्राह हनूमन्तं योगिनी दिव्यदर्शना ॥ ५०॥

yoginī ca tathā dr̥ṣṭvā vānarān prāha hr̥ṣṭadhīḥ ।
 yatheṣṭaṃ phalamūlāni jagdhvā pītvāmṛtaṃ payaḥ ॥ 48॥
 āgacchata tato vakṣye mama vṛttāntamāditaḥ ।
 tatheti bhuktvā pītvā ca hr̥ṣṭāste sarvavānarāḥ ॥ 49॥
 devyāḥ samīpaṃ gatvā te baddhāñjalipuṭāḥ sthitāḥ ।
 tataḥ prāha hanūmantam yoginī divyadarśanā ॥ 50॥

48-50. The lady ascetic was very pleased and delighted to learn about this. She said to the monkeys, 'First, you should eat fruits and edible roots according to your wish, and

quench your thirst by drinking water (48). Then come to me and I shall tell you my full story from the beginning'.

At this advice all the monkeys said 'alright', and they ate fruits and drank water to their hearts' content (49). Thus refreshed and feeling cheerful, they came with a delighted heart to the exalted lady, and stood before her with folded hands. The glorious looking hermitress then said to Hanuman (50)—

हेमा नाम पुरा दिव्यरूपिणी विश्वकर्मणः ।
पुत्री महेशं नृत्येन तोषयामास भामिनी ॥ ५१॥
तुष्टो महेशः प्रददाविदं दिव्यपुरं महत् ।
अत्र स्थिता सा सुदती वर्षाणामयुतायुतम् ॥ ५२॥

hemā nāma purā divyarūpiṇī viśvakarmaṇaḥ ।
putrī maheśaṃ nr̥tyena toṣayāmāsa bhāminī ॥ 51॥
tuṣṭo maheśaḥ pradadāvidaṃ divyapuraṃ mahat ।
atra sthitā sā sudatī varṣāṇāmayutāyutam ॥ 52॥

51-52. 'In some ancient time, Vishwakarma (the architect of the gods) had a divine and beautiful looking daughter named Hema. She pleased Lord Shiva with her dance (51). He granted this large and magnificent city to her as a present (because he was very pleased with her dance). That lady with beautiful rows of teeth ("sudatī"; i.e. when she opened her mouth it revealed shining white teeth that resembled two rows of pearls) stayed here for thousands of years (52).

तस्या अहं सखी विष्णुतत्परा मोक्षकाङ्क्षिणी ।
नाम्ना स्वयम्प्रभा दिव्यगन्धर्वतनया पुरा ॥ ५३॥
गच्छन्ती ब्रह्मलोकं सा मामाहेदं तपश्चर ।
अत्रैव निवसन्ती त्वं सर्वप्राणिविवर्जिते ॥ ५४॥

tasyā ahaṃ sakhī viṣṇutatparā mokṣakāṅkṣiṇī ।
nāmnā svayamprabhā divyagandharvatanayā purā ॥ 53॥
gacchantī brahmalokaṃ sā māmāhedaṃ tapaścara ।
atraiva nivasantī tvaṃ sarvaprāṇivivarjite ॥ 54॥

53-54. I am her friend Swyamprabha, daughter of a Gandharva (a celestial musician) named Divya. I am desirous of emancipation and salvation (53). When she (Hema) went back to the heavens, she advised me, 'You should stay at this lonely place and do severe austerities and penances (Tapa) (54).

त्रेतायुगे दाशरथिर्भूत्वा नारायणोऽव्ययः ।
भूभारहरणार्थाय विचरिष्यति कानने ॥ ५५॥
मार्गन्तो वानरास्तस्य भार्यामायान्ति ते गुहाम् ।

पूजयित्वाथ तान् नत्वा रामं स्तुत्वा प्रयत्नतः ॥ ५६॥
 यातासि भवनं विष्णोर्योगिनम्यं सनातनम् ।
 इतोऽहं गन्तुमिच्छामि रामं द्रष्टुं त्वरान्विता ॥ ५७॥

tretāyuge dāśarathirbhūtvā nārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ ।
 bhūbhāraharaṇārthāya vicariṣyati kānane ॥ 55॥
 mārganto vānarāstasya bhāryāmāyānti te guhām ।
 pūjayitvātha tān natvā rāmaṃ stutvā prayatnataḥ ॥ 56॥
 yātāsi bhavanaṃ viṣṇoryogigamyam sanātanam ।
 ito'haṃ gantumicchāmi rāmaṃ draṣṭuṃ tvarānvitā ॥ 57॥

55-57. During the Treta Yuga, the supreme, unmanifest and attributeless Lord Narayan (Lord Vishnu) will reveal himself (as Lord Ram) in the household of king Dasrath (of Ayodhya), and in due course of time he would roam in the forest to remove the burden of the earth. [To wit, the Supreme Being will make the earth holy and sanctified by walking on it barefoot; all taints of sins and evil that has darkened the earth's soil would then be removed, and the mother earth would once again regain her pristine purity that she possessed before the advent of sinful creatures that spoil her beauty and trampled upon her primary untarnished and unblemished form that was bestowed upon her by Nature at the time of beginning of creation.] (55).

Some monkeys shall come to your cave while searching for his wife (Sita). You should then welcome them with due respect, and then you should go to Lord Ram and worship him by singing his glories (i.e. say prayers to him in the form of Stotras), after which you would proceed to the eternal abode of Lord Vishnu which is attainable by Yogis (ascetics) alone. [That is why I am advising you to do penances, austerities and meditation, i.e. Tapa and Yoga, as by this means you will clean your inner-self and prepare to have a divine sight of Lord Ram that is available only to a selected few who are eligible for this rare privilege, glory and honour. When that happens, your wish of attaining emancipation and salvation for your soul would be fulfilled.] '.

Hence, I immediately wish to go and meet Lord Ram (because my long and patient wait has ended now) (56-57).

यूयं पिदध्वमक्षीणि गमिष्यथ बहिर्गुहाम् ।
 तथैव चक्रुस्ते वेगाद्गताः पूर्वस्थितं वनम् ॥ ५८॥
 सापि त्यक्त्वा गुहां शीघ्रं ययौ राघवसन्नधिम् ।
 तत्र रामं ससुग्रीवं लक्ष्मणं च ददर्श ह ॥ ५९॥
 कृत्वा प्रदक्षिणं रामं पूज्य बहुशः सुधीः ।
 आह गद्गदया वाचा रोमान्विततनूरुहा ॥ ६०॥

yūyam pidadhvamakṣiṇi gamiṣyatha bahirguhām ।
 tathaiva cakruste vegādgatāḥ pūrvasthitaṃ vanam ॥ 58॥
 sāpi tyaktvā guhām śīghraṃ yayau rāghavasannidhim ।
 tatra rāmaṃ sasugrīvaṃ lakṣmaṇaṃ ca dadarśa ha ॥ 59॥

kṛtvā pradakṣiṇaṃ rāmaṃ praṇamya bahuśaḥ sudhīḥ ।
āha gadgadayā vācā romāñcitatanūruhā ॥ 60॥

58-60. All of you close your eyes; you will be out of the cave instantly'. They (the monkeys and bears) did so and found themselves instantaneously outside the cave in the forest from where they had entered it¹ (58).

The Yogini too left the cave and immediately came to Lord Ram and had a Darshan (divine viewing) of the Lord who was with Sugriv and Laxman (on Mt. Pravarshan) (59). That wise hermitress paid her respects to Lord Ram by going around him clockwise repeatedly even as her body became thrilled by this holy experience. Then, after performing circumambulation of the Lord, she offered her prayers to him in an emotionally choked voice (60).

[Note—¹This version of Adhyatma Ramayan differs from what we have read in Ram Charit Manas in sub-section 6.1.6 of our Book where the reconnoitring team of monkeys and bears was directly transported to the shore of the southern ocean instead of the forest in front of the mouth of the cave from where they entered it.]

[We shall now proceed to read about what happened after the team of monkeys and bears found themselves back in the forest at the place from where they had entered the mysterious cave. They resumed their search and eventually arrived on the shore of the southern ocean where they meet Sampati, the old vulture, who would guide them further and tell them that Sita was held captive in Lanka. Therefore, anyone who was able to cross the mighty ocean would succeed in meeting her and accomplishing Lord Ram's work. This part of the story is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto nos. 7 and 9 as follows.]

Sub-section 6.2.5: Moving ahead on their mission, this team reaches the shore of the southern ocean across which was situated Lanka where Sita was held captive. On the shore, Lord Ram's messengers, the monkeys and bears, met Sampati, the old vulture king who was a brother of Jatau.

We read about it in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 7 as follows:-

॥ सप्तम सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

अथ तत्र समासीना वृक्षखण्डेषु वानराः ।

चिन्तयन्तो विमुह्यन्तः सीतामार्गणकर्षिताः ॥ १॥

तत्रोवाचाङ्गदः काञ्चिद्गानयान् वानरर्षभः ।

भूमतां गह्वरेऽस्माकं मासो नूनं गतोऽभवत् ॥ २॥

॥ saptama sargah ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

atha tatra samāsīnā vṛkṣakhaṇḍeṣu vānarāḥ ।
 cintayanto vimuhyantaḥ sītāmārgaṇakarśītāḥ ॥ 1॥
 tatrovācāṅgadaḥ kāmāścidvānarān vānararṣabhaḥ ।
 bhramatām gahvare'smākaṁ māso nūnaṁ gato'bhavat ॥ 2॥

Canto 7

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Meanwhile, the monkeys were very tired and weary from search of Sita. They sat worried and gloomy at a place surrounded by dense trees near the cave (1). At that time, the exalted monkey Angad said to some of the monkeys, 'It looks that we have already spent one month wandering in this cave (2).

सीता नाधिगतास्माभिर्न कृतं राजशासनम् ।
 यदि गच्छाम किष्किन्धां सुग्रीवोऽस्मान् हनिष्यति ॥ ३॥
 विशेषतः शत्रुसुतं मां मिषान्निहनिष्यति ।
 मयि तस्य कुतः प्रीतिरहं रामेण रक्षितः ॥ ४॥

sītā nādhigatāsmābhirna kṛtaṁ rājaśāsanam ।
 yadi gacchāma kiṣkindhāṁ sugrīvo'smān haniṣyati ॥ 3॥
 viśeṣataḥ śatrusutaṁ mām miṣānnihaniṣyati ।
 mayi tasya kutaḥ prītirahaṁ rāmeṇa rakṣitaḥ ॥ 4॥

3-4. But till date we have not found Sita. We have not been able to obey the orders of the king (Sugriv). If we now return to Kishkindha empty-handed, it is certain that he will kill us (3). Especially he will find this as an excuse to kill me because I am the son of his enemy (Baali). How can he ever have any affection for me? I have been protected by Lord Ram alone (i.e. he is the only one who favours me) (4).

इदानीं रामकार्यं मे न कृतं तन्मिषं भवेत् ।
 तस्य मद्भनने नूनं सुग्रीवस्य दुरात्मनः ॥ ५॥
 मातृकल्पां भ्रातृभार्या पापात्मानुभवत्यसौ ।
 न गच्छेयमतः पार्श्वं तस्य वानरपुङ्गवाः ॥ ६॥

idānīm rāmakāryaṁ me na kṛtaṁ tanmiṣaṁ bhavet ।
 tasya maddhanane nūnaṁ sugrīvasya durātmanaḥ ॥ 5॥
 mātṛkalpāṁ bhrātrbhāryāṁ pāpātmānubhavatyasau ।
 na gaccheyamataḥ pārśvaṁ tasya vānarapuṅgavāḥ ॥ 6॥

5-6. Now that I have not been successful in doing Lord Ram's work, it will give that evil and wicked Sugriv a ready made excuse to eliminate (kill) me (5). That vile and sinful one is enjoying the wife of his elder brother who is like his mother¹. Hence, oh the most superior monkeys, I shall not go back to him at any cost (6).

[Note—¹Verse nos. 4-6 highlights Angad's hate, indignation and complete loathe for Sugriv, especially for his ignominious deed of keeping as a mistress his elder brother's wife who happens to be Angad's mother. It also highlights Angad's resolve not to go back to his kingdom if he fails to be successful in finding Sita as he fears that his uncle Sugriv will find this as an excuse to eliminate him as he sees Angad as the greatest threat to his crown and security. This fear of Angad has been expressed by him in Ram Charit Manas as well—refer: Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precedes Doha no. 26.]

त्यक्ष्यामि जीवितं चात्र येन केनापि मृत्युना ।
इत्यश्रुनयनं केचिदृष्ट्वा वानरपुङ्गवाः ॥ ७॥
व्यथिताः साश्रुनयना युवराजमथाब्रुवन् ॥ ८॥
किमर्थं तव शोकोऽत्र वयं ते प्राणरक्षकाः ।
भवामो निवासामोऽत्र गुहायां भयवर्जिताः ॥ ९॥

tyakṣyāmi jīvitam cātra yena kenāpi mṛtyunā ।
ityaśrunayanam keciddṛṣṭvā vānarapuṅgavāḥ ॥ 7॥
vyathitāḥ sāśrunayanā yuvarājamathābruvan ॥ 8॥
kimartham tava śoko'tra vyaṁ te prāṇarakṣakāḥ ।
bhavāmo nivasāmo'tra guhāyām bhayavarjitāḥ ॥ 9॥

7-9. By some means I shall end my life here (for it would be better for me to die than to go back home to face public humiliation and get killed by my own uncle for no fault of mine)'.
Seeing him with such a despondent mood, overcome with an extreme sense of remorse, dejection and hopelessness, with tears welling up in his eyes (7), many a senior monkeys felt extremely gloomy, indignant and sorrowful. They said to the crown prince (Angad) with tearful eyes (8), 'Why do you regret and feel so sorry and remorseful? We shall all protect you and fearlessly live with you in this cave. [Fear not our beloved prince, for we are all with you; never fear that we would ever abandon you. We will spend our lives together in this cave, for it provides all the means for a comfortable living—there are abundant fruit trees and water bodies sufficient enough for us to survive happily. Is it not so?] (9).

सर्वसौभाग्यसहितं पुरं देवपुरोपमम् ।
शनैः परस्परं वाक्यं वदतां मारुतात्मजः ॥ १०॥
श्रुत्वाङ्गदं समालिङ्ग्य प्रोवाच नयकोविदः ।
विचार्यते किमर्थं ते दुर्विचारो न युज्यते ॥ ११॥
राज्ञोऽत्यन्तप्रियस्त्वं हि तारापुत्रोऽतिवल्लभः ।
रामस्य लक्ष्मणात्प्रीतिस्त्वयि नित्यं प्रवर्धते ॥ १२॥

sarvasaubhāgyasahitam puram devapuropamam ।
śanaiḥ parasparam vākyaṁ vadatām mārutātmajaḥ ॥ 10॥

śrutvāṅgadaṃ samāliṅgya provāca nayakovidah ।
 vicāryate kimarthaṃ te durvicāro na yujyate ॥ 11॥
 rājñō'tyantapriyastvaṃ hi tārāputro'tivallabhaḥ ।
 rāmasya lakṣmaṇātpṛitistvayi nityaṃ pravardhate ॥ 12॥

10-12. The city inside the cave (where Swayamprabha Yogini used to live) is fully provided with all the requirements of comforts and necessities of life'.

When these reassuring words that were spoken with a soothing touch to comfort Angad and which spread through the rank and file of the assembled messengers who all readily gave their assent to this approach finally reached the ears of Hanuman (i.e. when Hanuman became aware of these murmurings) (10), he—who was wise and an expert in all the rules and codes of conduct governing life in this world—embraced Angad and said, 'Oh Angad! Why do you feel so sorry and worry in this way. You must not have any bad and depressing thoughts (11). You are a dear son of Tara (the wife of Baali whom Sugriv has kept as his mistress), and this means that you are also dear to Sugriv. [This is because Sugriv would not do anything to annoy Tara, and since you are her beloved son, it follows that he would never touch you.]

And as for Lord Ram, his love and affection for you gets enhanced by each passing day as compared to Laxman. [To wit, Laxman is Lord Ram's own brother, and as such the Lord's love and affection for him is steady and deep from the very beginning. But in your case, ever since the Lord took upon himself the responsibility of your welfare and happiness after your father's death, this love and affection goes on increasing and becoming more and more deep and strong by each passing day as the Lord sees how you are totally devoted to and dependant upon him. So you have nothing to fear from any quarter: remember this—the Lord would ensure that Sugriv does not harm you in any way even if we were not to take into account the element of Tara, your mother, whom Sugriv too would not like to offend as she is held in high esteem by the citizens of Kishkindha as their erstwhile queen.] (12).

अतो न राघवाद्भूतिस्तव राज्ञो विशेषतः ।
 अहं तव हिते सक्तो वत्स नान्यं विचारय ॥ १३॥
 गुहावासश्च निर्भेद्य इत्युक्तं वानरैस्तु यत् ।
 तदेतद्रामबाणानामभेद्यं किं जगत्त्रये ॥ १४॥

ato na rāghavādbhītistava rājñō viśeṣataḥ ।
 ahaṃ tava hite sakto vatsa nānyaṃ vicāraya ॥ 13॥
 guhāvāsaśca nirbhedyā ityuktaṃ vānaraistu yat ।
 tadetadrāmabāṇānāmabhedyāṃ kiṃ jagattraye ॥ 14॥

13-14. Hence, you should have no fear or doubt either from Raghav's (Sri Ram's) side or from the king's (Sugriv's side). Besides, I am always with you and eager to look after your welfare. So, oh son (vatsa)¹, you should not worry unnecessarily for imaginary things (13). And what about these monkeys who said that there is no danger in this cave and we can live there comfortably? Say, which place is there in the

whole world that cannot be pierced by the arrows of Lord Ram (should he decide to punish any one of us)² (14).

[Note—¹Remarkable indeed it is for Hanuman to address Angad as his “son—*vatsa*”! One can well imagine how Angad must have been emotionally affected by such an affectionate overture of Hanuman; one can imagine what a miraculously soothing effect it would have had on Angad who felt orphaned and alone in this world when his father Baali was killed and his mother Tara was kept by his uncle Sugriv. Now he has a ‘foster father’ in the form of Hanuman to look after him, and this father was not an ordinary one—for there was no one stronger and wiser and able in the whole of the kingdom of Kishkindha than Hanuman. With this one stroke of use of an affectionate word, Hanuman was able to help Angad overcome all his fears, apprehensions and consternations. Angad cheered up and was overcome with gratitude even as he must have thanked his benefactor Hanuman from the deepest corners of his grateful heart for this reassurance. Once and for all, Hanuman now became Angad’s best friend and confidante for life.

²And don’t think that by merely hiding and spending your life in this cave you will be safe as advised by our monkey friends. If Lord Ram gets angry with you for not reporting back to him and should he decide to withdraw his protective umbrella from over your head, then tell me which place on this earth is safe from the Lord’s wrath? Look at the gravity of the situation—if Sugriv actually wants to kill you and knows he can’t do it himself, then in case you do not go back and submit yourself to Lord Ram and tell him frankly about our failure of finding Sita, then is it not possible that Sugriv whom you call your arch enemy might somehow instigate the Lord and provoke him to cast his wrath on you. And if this happens, and should the Lord unfortunately decide to shoot his infallible arrow aimed at you, then tell me my dear son Angad what protection would you have; do you think that by hiding in this cave you would be safe. No, not at all; for the arrow of Lord Ram can penetrate anything and no place is safe from its attack.

So my dear son, don’t be misled to believe that you are safe in this cave as these monkey friends have advised you. The best option for all of us is to invoke the grace of Lord Ram and continue to make efforts for finding Sita. Remember: It’s the Lord’s mission and it is he would help us to be successful in it; but we must have faith, patience and resilience to pass this test.]

ये त्वां दुर्बोधयन्त्येते वानरा वानरर्षभ ।
पुत्रदासदिकं त्यक्त्वा कथं स्थास्यन्ति ते त्वया ॥ १५॥
अन्यदुह्यतमं वक्ष्ये रहस्यं शृणु मे सुत ।
रामो न मानुषो देवः साक्षान्नारायणोऽव्ययः ॥ १६॥

ye tvām durbodhayantyetē vānarā vānararṣabha ।
putradāradikaṃ tyaktvā katham sthāsyanti te tvayā ॥ 15॥
anyadguhyatamaṃ vakṣye rahasyaṃ śṛṇu me suta ।
rāmo na mānuṣo devaḥ sāksānnārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ ॥ 16॥

15-16. Oh the exalted one who is the best amongst the monkeys (“vānararṣabha”; Angad)! Those monkeys who are giving you this advice, how will they live with you without their wives and sons? [To wit, it would not be practical for these monkeys to leave their families and stay in exile for any length of time. So sooner or later they would find some excuse to live you and escape to be united with their families. My advice to you is that you must think for yourself and be practical instead of placing too much reliance on what these monkey friends tell you to alleviate your immediate sufferings and worries. I don’t mean that they are not faithful or they don’t love you; what I mean is that in the long run you will be left to fend for your own self. So my sane advice to you is that it is better to be prudent and alert from the very start in whatever you chose to do.] (15).

Besides this, oh son (suta), I shall tell you a secret (i.e. a thing which is not known by everyone but remains within the confined knowledge of a few enlightened souls)—listen carefully. Lord Ram is no ordinary human. Is the personification of the eternal, unchanging, imperishable Lord Narayan (i.e. he is Lord Vishnu himself) (16).

सीता भगवती माया जनसम्मोहकारिणी ।
लक्ष्मणो भुवनाधारः साक्षाच्छेषः फणीश्वरः ॥ १७॥
ब्रह्मणा प्रार्थिताः सर्वे रक्षोगणविनाशने ।
मायामानुषभावेन जाता लोकैकरक्षकाः ॥ १८॥

sītā bhagavatī māyā janasammohakāriṇī ।
lakṣmaṇo bhuvanādhāraḥ sākṣāccheṣaḥ phaṇīśvaraḥ ॥ 17॥
brahmaṇā prārthitāḥ sarve rakṣogaṇavināśane ।
māyāmānuṣabhāvena jātā lokaikarakṣakāḥ ॥ 18॥

17-18. Verily indeed, Sita is Bhagwati (the eternal Goddess of Creation; she is the One-half of the cosmic form of the Supreme Lord) as well as is the Lord's Maya personified (i.e. Sita symbolises the Lord’s delusion creating powers, as well as his dynamic energy that is infinite and cosmic in its dimension) which enchants, enthrals and attracts the world and keeps it under its spell.

Laxman himself is the personification of Sheshnath, the legendary king of serpents who holds the creation on its hood (17).

They have manifested or revealed themselves in the form of human beings on the prayers of Brahma (the Creator) in order to destroy or eliminate the demons (representing the combined forces of evilness and sinfulness in this mortal world). Each one of them, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, therefore is capable of saving and protecting the world independently without the help of others¹ (18).

[Note—¹Lord Ram represents the Supreme Being known as Brahm who is the ultimate Lord of this entire creation; Sita represents Brahm’s cosmic energy and dynamic powers by which Brahm does anything; and Laxman represents that aspect of Brahm by which he sustains and protects the creation metaphorically depicted as Sheshnath, the cosmic serpent, supporting the world on his thousand hoods.

To wit, all the three—i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman—represent the different aspects of the same supreme Brahm; they symbolise the same Supreme Being performing different tasks and playing different roles. Hence, they are independently

empowered to do what is needed to support and protect the world for the simple reason that it is the same Brahm operating through them.

Inspite of this fact, since some subtle differentiation in roles did exist between these three forms of Brahm, so when the Lord decided to end the lawlessness created by the demonic forces representing evils, vices and sins in this world, he therefore thought it fit to coordinate the roles of all the above three forms so that their combined force could be harnessed and their joint energy could be focused to achieve sure success in the formidable task that was to be accomplished.]

वयं च पार्षदाः सर्वे विष्णोर्वैकुण्ठवासिनः ।

मनुष्यभावमापन्ने स्वेच्छया परमात्मनि ॥ १९॥

वयं वानररूपेण जातास्तस्यैव मायया ।

वयं तु तपसा पूर्वमाराध्य जगतां पतिम् ॥ २०॥

vayaṃ ca pārṣadāḥ sarve viṣṇorvaikuṇṭhavāsinaḥ ।

manuṣyabhāvamāpanne svecchayā paramātmāni ॥ 19॥

vayaṃ vānarakūpeṇa jātāstasyaiva māyayā ।

vayaṃ tu tapasā pūrvamārādhyā jagatāṃ patim ॥ 20॥

19-20. All of us are fortunate to serve Lord Vishnu, who has his abode in Vaikunth, as his servants and subordinates (pārṣadāḥ). When the Parmatma (the supreme Soul; the Supreme Being) decided out of his own free will to assume a human form (19), we too became monkeys by employing the Lord's powers known as Maya (in order to serve him)¹.

During some previous time, we had all worshipped the Lord of the World, and by doing austerities and penances (Tapa) we had become his subordinates by his grace and kindness (20).

[Note—¹To wit, all of us had been serving Lord Vishnu in his heavenly abode called Vaikunth. When the Lord decided to come down to this mortal world in the form of a human prince known by the name of Lord Ram, we too decided to accompany the Lord here to this mortal world in order to continue serving him. In order to give effect to our decision we harnessed the Lord's delusion creating powers known as Maya and assumed the form of monkeys and bears to coincide and be in sync with the Lord's form as a human being.

We all were so eager to accompany the Lord and serve him here in this mortal world too like we did in the heaven that we did a lot of Tapa so that our wishes are fulfilled. In short, we, the Gods of heaven who had been serving Lord Vishnu, voluntarily and willingly became monkeys and bears; no one compelled us, nor did Lord Vishnu request us to become monkeys and bears, because the Lord was himself competent to eliminate the demons even if we had not come to help him.

But since we volunteered to help the Lord he could not refuse our offer out of his affection for us. So though he could have independently known where Sita is—actually the fact is that the Lord does know everything in advance as he is all-knowing and omniscient—and he would have gone to free her by slaying her captors, the demons lead by their king Ravana of Lanka, yet he wishes to oblige us and give us a

chance to let us serve him for our own contentment and joy. That is why he has asked us to find out where Sita is.

So therefore, Angad, know who we actually are, and our purpose of coming down to earth. Hence, cheer up, and stop feeling remorseful and sad.]

तेनैवानुगृहीताः स्मः पार्षदत्वमुपागताः ।
 इदानीमपि तस्यैव सेवां कृत्वैव मायया ॥ २१॥
 पुनर्वैकुण्ठमासाद्य सुखं स्थास्यामहे वयम् ।
 इत्यङ्गदमथाश्वस्य गता विन्ध्यं महाचलम् ॥ २२॥
 विचिन्वन्तोऽथ शनकैर्जानकीं दक्षिणाम्बुधेः ।
 तीरे महेन्द्राख्यगिरेः पवित् पादमाययुः ॥ २३॥

tenaivānugrhitāḥ smaḥ pārṣadatvamupāgatāḥ ।
 idānīmapi tasyaiva sevāṃ kṛtvaiva māyayā ॥ 21॥
 punarvaikuṇṭhamāsādyā sukhaṃ sthāsyāmahe vayam ।
 ityaṅgadamathāśvāsya gatā vindhyaṃ mahācalam ॥ 22॥
 vicinvanto'tha śanakairjānakīm dakṣiṇāmbudheḥ ।
 tīre mahendrākhyagireḥ pavitraṃ pādamāyayuh ॥ 23॥

21-23. Even now, inspired and impelled by the Lord's Maya, we shall continue to serve him as his servants and subordinates (21), and at the end we shall all go back to Vaikunth and live happily with him'.

In this manner, Hanuman consoled, encouraged and reassured Angad. Thence, all of them went to the Vindhyaachal mountain (22).

They gradually moved southwards in search of Sita and reached the shores of the southern ocean near the holy valley of Mt. Mahendra (23).

[Note—In verse nos. 11-22, Hanuman has shown his wisdom and wit in order to remove all the misgivings of Angad.]

दृष्ट्वा समुद्रं दुष्पारमगाधं भयवर्धनम् ।
 वानरा भयसन्तस्ताः किं कुर्म इति वादिनः ॥ २४॥
 निषेदुरुदधेस्तीरे सर्वे चिन्तासमन्विताः ।
 मन्त्रयामासुरन्योन्यमङ्गदाद्या महाबलाः ॥ २५॥

dr̥ṣṭvā samudraṃ duṣpāramagādhaṃ bhayavardhanam ।
 vānarā bhayasantrastāḥ kiṃ kurma iti vādinaḥ ॥ 24॥
 niṣedurudadhestīre sarve cintāsamānvitāḥ ।
 mantrayāmāsuryanyonyamaṅgadādyā mahābalāḥ ॥ 25॥

24-25. There, they became extremely frightened and utterly dismayed on seeing the vast ocean stretched endlessly before them. This ocean-like barrier seemed to have no end; it was very awe inspiring and formidable to behold. Its mere sight aroused grave

fear and abject despair in the heart of the monkeys and bears. They wondered what to do next (24).

Angad and other monkeys, who were otherwise very valiant and courageous, however lost their zeal and confidence when they saw the mighty ocean. They sat down near the shore, extremely worried and confused; they were once again overwhelmed with bewilderment and doubts, not knowing what next to do.

After a while, there was heard a murmur in the group as these messengers began expressing their fears and consternations even as they discussed among themselves about their fate and the gravity of the situation as follows (25)—

भ्रमतो मे वने मासो गतोऽत्रैव गुहान्तरे ।
न दृष्टो रावणो वाद्य सीता वा जनकात्मजा ॥ २६॥
सुग्रीवस्तीक्ष्णदण्डोऽस्मान्निहन्त्येव न संशयः ।
सुग्रीववधतोऽस्माकं श्रेयः प्रयोपवेशनम् ॥ २७॥
इति निश्चित्य तत्रैव दर्भानास्तीर्य सर्वतः ।
उपाविवेशुस्ते सर्वे मरणे कृतनिश्चयाः ॥ २८॥

bhramato me vane māso gato'traiva guhāntare ।
na dr̥ṣṭo rāvaṇo vādya sītā vā janakātmajā ॥ 26॥
sugrīvastīkṣṇadaṇḍo'smānnihantyeva na saṁśayaḥ ।
sugrīvavadhato'smākaṁ śreyaḥ prāyopaveśanam ॥ 27॥
iti niścitya tatraiva darbhānāstīrya sarvataḥ ।
upāviveśuste sarve maraṇe kṛtaniścayāḥ ॥ 28॥

26-28. 'Ah! Alas! We spent a month wandering in the forest and roaming in that cave. But we have not yet been able to see either Ravana or the daughter of Janak (Sita) till now (26).

Sugriv is severe in his punishment. He shall instantly and without doubt kill all of us. Instead of dying at the hands of Sugriv, it is better for us to die without food and water' (27).

Deciding thus, they spread grass on the floor and sat on it determined to end their lives by fasting (from hunger and thirst) (28).

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे तत्र महेन्द्राद्रिगुहान्तरात् ।
निर्गत्य शनकैरागादृध्रुः पर्वतसन्निभः ॥ २९॥
दृष्ट्वा प्रयोपवेशेन स्थितान् वानरपुङ्गवान् ।
उवाच शनकैर्गृध्रः प्राप्तो भक्ष्योऽद्य मे बहुः ॥ ३०॥
एकैकशः कूमात्सर्वान् भक्षयामि दिने दिने ।
श्रुत्वा तदृध्रवचनं वानरा भीतमानसाः ॥ ३१॥

etasminnantare tatra mahendrādriguhāntarāt ।
nirgatya śanakairāgādgr̥dhraḥ parvatasannibhaḥ ॥ 29॥
dr̥ṣṭvā prāyopaveśena sthitān vānarapuṅgavān ।

uvāca śanakairgrdhraḥ prāpto bhakṣyo'dya me bahuḥ ॥ 30॥
 ekaikaśaḥ kramātsarvān bhakṣayāmi dine dine ।
 śrutvā tadgrdhnavacanam vānarā bhītamānasāḥ ॥ 31॥

29-31. At this time, a mountain-like huge vulture came out of a cave in Mt. Mahendra and slowly walked towards them (29).

Seeing those huge monkeys ready to die without food and water, he said softly and contentedly to himself, 'Today I have got a lot of food to eat (30). I shall eat them one by one daily. [And since there are a large number of monkeys and bears in the group ready to die near the shore of the ocean, I am so lucky that I will have plenty to eat for a long time!']

[The vulture was so excited that at last he would be able to have a grand feast by eating these monkeys and bears when they die one by one due to their determination to fast-unto-death that he could not suppress his joy and spoke loud enough to enable the monkeys to hear his voice.]

When the terrified monkeys heard these horrifying words of the vulture, they said (31)—

भक्षयिष्यति नः सर्वानसौ गृध्रो न संशयः ।
 रामकार्यं च नास्माभिः कृतं किञ्चिद्गरीश्वरः ॥ ३२॥
 सुग्रीवस्यापि च हितं न कृतं स्वात्मनामपि ।
 वृथानेन वधं प्राप्ता गच्छामो यमसादनम् ॥ ३३॥

bhakṣayiṣyati naḥ sarvānasau grdhro na saṁśayaḥ ।
 rāmakāryam ca nāsmābhiḥ kṛtaṁ kiñcidddharīśvarāḥ ॥ 32॥
 sugrīvasyāpi ca hitaṁ na kṛtaṁ svātmanāmapi ।
 vṛthānena vadhaṁ prāptā gacchāmo yamasādanam ॥ 33॥

32-33. 'Alas! Without doubt, this vulture shall eat all of us. Oh the deity whom we monkeys worship and who is our patron god (ddharīśvarāḥ)! We have not done the job of Lord Ram nor of Sugriv, and neither have we done any good thing for ourselves or have done any noble deed in our lives that would stand in good stead for us now. All our efforts and life has gone in vain, and now we shall surely be killed by this vulture and go to hell (32-33).

[Note—One is left to wonder about the depressive and hopeless mood of these monkeys. These are the same brave fellows who had punched an ogre and killed him in Canto 6, verse no. 32, but are now afraid of an old vulture. The lesson which we learn from this episode is that if we lose our courage and enthusiasm, even trifles and the not-so-trifles might seem like insurmountable hurdles and formidable obstacles, while if we retain our enthusiasm, zeal and courage, we can surmount the greatest of difficulties and overcome the most unexpected of adversities that may obstruct our path to success.

The same was the case with the monkeys and bears when they saw the formidable ocean in front of them. When Hanuman decided finally to cross it, the ocean could not stop him from doing so. Similarly, Lord Ram also was able to tame this ocean by getting a bridge constructed across it once he finally decided to it. In

both the cases of Hanuman and Lord Ram the same ocean yielded which earlier seemed to be an almost unconquerable obstacle.

Hence, with a little grit and courage and confidence it is actually possible for a man to achieve the impossible.]

अहो जटायुर्धर्मात्मा रामस्यार्थे मृतः सुधीः ॥
मोक्षं प्राप दुःखापां योगिनामप्यरिन्दमः ॥ ३४॥
सम्पातिस्तु तदा वाक्यं श्रुत्वा वानरभाषितम् ।
के वा यूयं मम भ्रातुः कर्णपीयूषसन्निभम् ॥ ३५॥
जटायुरिति नामाद्य व्याहरन्तः परस्परम् ।
उच्यतां वो भयं मा भून्मतः प्लवगसत्तमाः ॥ ३६॥

aho jaṭāyurdharmātmā rāmasyārthe mṛtaḥ sudhīḥ ॥
mokṣaṃ prāpa durāvāpaṃ yogināmapyarindamaḥ ॥ 34॥
sampātistu tadā vākyaṃ śrutvā vānarabhāṣitam ।
ke vā yūyaṃ mama bhrātuḥ karṇapīyūṣasannibham ॥ 35॥
jaṭāyuriti nāmādya vyāharantaḥ parasparam ।
ucyatāṃ vo bhayaṃ mā bhūnmattaḥ plavagasattamāḥ ॥ 36॥

34-36. 'Ah! The righteous Jatau was blessed and fortunate. That wise one died while doing the work of Lord Ram¹. He attained emancipation and salvation which is rare and difficult even for the Yogis (ascetics) to attain' (34).

Hearing these words of the monkeys, Sampati said, 'Oh you great monkeys! Who are you that you talk amongst yourselves about my brother Jatau? These words appear sweet like nectar for my ears. Do not at all be afraid of me, and tell me about yourselves' (35-36).

[Note—¹Jatau had died while trying to save Sita from the clutches of Ravana as he was taking her away on his chariot to Lanka. Ravana had cut Jatau's wings, and the vulture died due to this wound. But since he died serving Lord Ram, and at the time of his death he was fortunate to have Lord Ram himself caressing him and tending to his wounds, Jatau had found deliverance and gone to heaven even though he was a flesh-eating bird of lowly birth. This episode is narrated in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranaya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 51-58; and Canto 8, verse nos. 26-56.]

तमुवाचाङ्गदः श्रीमानुत्थितो गृध्रसन्निधौ ।
रामो दाशरथिः श्रीमान् लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितः ॥ ३७॥
सीतया भार्यया सार्धं विचचार महावने ।
तस्य सीता हता साध्वी रावणेन दुरात्मना ॥ ३८॥

tamuvācāṅgadaḥ śrīmānutthito gr̥dhrasannidhau ।
rāmo dāśarathīḥ śrīmān lakṣmaṇena samanvitaḥ ॥ 37॥
sītayā bhāryayā sārddhaṃ vicacāra mahāvane ।
tasya sītā hṛtā sādhvī rāvaṇena durātmanā ॥ 38॥

37-38. Then Angad got up, went near that vulture, and said, 'Dasrath's son Lord Ram, along with Laxman (37) and wife Sita, was roaming in the dense Dandkaranya forest which is very wild and uninhabitable. There, his most chaste and virtuous wife Sita was abducted by the evil-hearted and wicked Ravana (38).

मृगयां निर्गते रामे लक्ष्मणे च हता बलात् ।
रामरामेति क्रोशन्ती श्रुत्वा गृध्रः प्रतापवान् ॥ ३९॥
जटायुर्नाम पक्षीन्द्रो युद्धं कृत्वा सुदारुणम् ।
रावणेन हतो वीरो राघवार्थं महाबलः ॥ ४०॥

mrgayāṃ nirgate rāme lakṣmaṇe ca hṛtā balāt ।
rāmarāmeti krośanti śrutvā gṛdhraḥ pratāpavān ॥ 39॥
jaṭāyurnāma pakṣīndro yuddhaṃ kṛtvā sudāruṇam ।
rāvaṇena hato vīro rāghavārthaṃ mahābalaḥ ॥ 40॥

39-40. When Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to hunt a deer, he (Ravana, disguised as a mendicant) forcefully took her away. At that time, she wept and cried aloud, lamenting woefully 'Oh Ram'. Hearing her lamentations, the valiant and brave vulture (39) Jatau, the king of birds, fought a ferocious battle with Ravana to the best of his ability on behalf of Lord Ram. But at last, unfortunately, that brave, courageous and most strong vulture (i.e. Jatau) was killed at the hands of Ravana (40).

रामेण दग्धो रामस्य सायूज्यमगमत्क्षणात् ।
रामः सुग्रीवमासाद्य सख्यं कृत्वाग्निसाक्षिकम् ॥ ४१॥
सुग्रीवचोदितो हत्वा वालिनं सुदुरासदम् ।
राज्यं ददौ वानराणां सुग्रीवाय महाबलः ॥ ४२॥

rāmeṇa dagdho rāmasya sāyūjyamagamatkṣaṇāt ।
rāmaḥ sugrīvamāsādy sakhyaṃ kṛtvāgnisākṣikam ॥ 41॥
sugrīvacodito hatvā vāliṇaṃ sudurāsadam ।
rājyaṃ dadau vānarāṇāṃ sugrīvāya mahābalaḥ ॥ 42॥

41-42. Thereafter, his last rites were done by Lord Ram himself, and he instantly attained the supreme stature by being one with the Lord himself. After that, Lord Ram came to Sugriv and befriended him with the sacred fire as a witness (41).

Then, on the request of Sugriv (and taking pity on him), the most valorous and strong Lord killed the invincible and formidable Baali (Sugriv's elder brother who had become his arch enemy) and gave the kingdom of monkeys (known as Kishkindha) to Sugriv (42).

सुग्रीवः प्रेषयामास सीतायाः परिमार्गणे ।
अस्मान् वानरवृन्दान् वै महासत्त्वान् महाबलः ॥ ४३॥

मासादर्वाङ्गिनवर्तध्वं नो चेत्प्राणान् हरामि वः ।
इत्याज्ञया भ्रमन्तोऽस्मिन् वने गह्वरमध्यगाः ॥ ४४॥

sugrīvaḥ preṣayāmāsa sītāyāḥ parimārgaṇe ।
asmān vānaravṛndān vai mahāsattvān mahābalaḥ ॥ 43॥
māsādarvāṇnivartadhvaṃ no cetprāṇān harāmi vaḥ ।
ityājñayā bhramanto'smin vane gahvaramadhyagāḥ ॥ 44॥

43-44. Sugriv has sent numerous monkeys and bears, who are extremely brave, strong and courageous like we are, in search of Sita (43), and has warned us that we must return and report back to him within a period of one month or else he would kill us (as punishment). On his orders, while roaming in the forest, we entered a deep cave (44).

गतो मासो न जानीमः सीतां वा रवणं च वा ॥
मर्तुं प्रायोपविष्टा स्मस्तीरे लवणवारिधेः ॥ ४५॥
यदि जानासि हे पक्षिन् सीतां कथय नः शुभाम् ।
अङ्गदस्य वचः श्रुत्वा सम्पातिर्हृष्टमानसः ॥ ४६॥
उवाच मत्प्रीयो भ्राता जटायुः प्लवणेश्वराः ।
बहुवर्षसहस्रान्ते भ्रातृवार्ता श्रुता मया ॥ ४७॥

gato māso na jānīmaḥ sītāṃ vā rāvaṇaṃ ca vā ॥
martuṃ prāyopaviṣṭā smastīre lavaṇavāridheḥ ॥ 45॥
yadi jānāsi he pakṣin sītāṃ kathaya naḥ śubhām ।
aṅgadasya vacaḥ śrutvā sampātirhr̥ṣṭamānasaḥ ॥ 46॥
uvāca matpriyo bhrātā jaṭāyuh plavageśvarāḥ ।
bahuvarṣasahasrānte bhrātr̥vartā śrutā mayā ॥ 47॥

45-47. There we spent a month, but till now we have neither found out anything about Sita nor about Ravana (her abductor). So we have decided to forsake food and water and die on the shores of this salty ocean (45).

Oh Bird! If you have any information about the auspicious Sita, please do tell us'.

Hearing these words of Angad, Sampati was delighted in his heart (46), and said 'Oh the great monkeys! Jatau was my dear brother. I have heard about my brother after a gap of many thousand years (47).

वाक्साहाय्यं करिष्येऽहं भवतां प्लवणेश्वराः ।
भ्रातुः सलिलदानाय नयध्वं मां जलान्तिकम् ॥ ४८॥
पश्चात्सर्वं शुभं वक्ष्ये भवतां कार्यसिद्धये ।
तथेति निन्युस्ते तीरे समुद्रस्य विहङ्गमम् ॥ ४९॥

vāksāhāyyaṃ kariṣye'haṃ bhavatāṃ plavageśvarāḥ ।

bhrātuḥ saliladānāya nayadhvaṃ mām jalāntikam ॥ 48॥
 paścātsarvaṃ śubhaṃ vakṣye bhavatām kāryasiddhaye ।
 tatheti ninyuste tīraṃ samudrasya vihaṅgamam ॥ 49॥

48-49. Oh great monkeys! I shall definitely help you verbally. Take me near water of the ocean first so that I can offer him (Jatau) water for the last time as an oblation to the soul of my departed dear brother (Jatau) (48).

Then I shall tell you everything that will ensure success in your work'. Saying 'alright', they took (escorted) Sampati to the shore of the ocean (49).

सोऽपि तत्सलिले स्नात्वा भ्रातुर्दत्त्वा जलाञ्जलिम् ।
 पुनः स्वस्थानमासाद्य स्थितो नीतो हरीश्वरैः ।
 सम्पातिः कथयामास वानरान् परिहर्षयन् ॥ ५०॥

so'pi tatsalile snātvā bhrāturdattvā jalāñjalim ।
 punaḥ svasthānamāsādyā sthito nīto harīśvaraiḥ ।
 sampātiḥ kathayāmāsa vānarān pariharṣayan ॥ 50॥

50. There he purified himself by bathing in the water and gave oblations (offering of water) to his dead brother. Then the monkeys took him to the previous place¹. Sitting there, Sampati said things that delighted the heart of the monkeys (50)—

[Note—¹This shows that Sampati was very old and unable to walk properly; he must have hobbled along taking the support of the monkeys and bears.

There is another important reason why Sampati had sought the help of the monkeys and bears to escort him to the ocean and help him perform the post-death rites of his dead brother Jatau: he wished to become friendly with them and tell them that he means no harm to them. This confidence-building gesture was necessary as earlier Sampati, when he had first seen the group determined to die by fasting, had expressed his joy that now he, being a vulture, would have a lot to eat for a long time hence without having to search for food anywhere; his statement had terrified the monkeys and bears. So now Sampati wished to express his regrets and ask for forgiveness, and the best way he thought it can be done was to spend some time being very close and friendly with the monkeys and bears as if he was one of them.

This is quite a normal and natural way of removing all misgivings and striking a friendly note with someone whom we have inadvertently offended; sharing meals together, eating a piece of bread cut from the loaf that is shared by all others, and drinking from the same vessel from which all drink, are gestures that create instant rapport.]

लङ्का नाम नगर्यास्ते त्रिकूटगिरिर्मूर्धनि ।
 तत्र शोकवने सीता राक्षसीभिः सुरक्षिता ॥ ५१॥
 समुद्रमध्ये सा लङ्का शतयोजनदूरतः ।
 दृश्यते मे न सन्देहः सीता च परिदृश्यते ॥ ५२॥

laṅkā nāma nagaryāste trikūṭagirimūrdhani ।
 tatrāśokavane sītā rākṣasībhiḥ surakṣitā ॥ 51॥
 samudramadhye sā laṅkā śatayojanadūrataḥ ।
 dr̥śyate me na sandehaḥ sītā ca paridr̥śyate ॥ 52॥

51-52. 'A city named Lanka exists on a mountain called Trikut. There, Sita lives in the Ashok Van (a garden; a grove) under the care and vigilant eyes of demonesses (51).

That Lanka is approximately 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles) from here in the centre of the ocean (i.e. it was a large island 800 miles from the shore). There is no doubt about it—I can see both the city as well as Sita from here (52).

गृध्रत्वादूरदृष्टिर्मे नात्र संशयितुं क्षमम् ।
 शतयोजनविस्तीर्णं समुद्रं यस्तु लङ्घयेत् ॥ ५३॥
 स एव जानकीं दृष्ट्वा पुनरायास्यति ध्रुवम् ।
 अहमेव दुरात्मानं रावणं हन्तुमुत्सहे ।
 भ्रातुर्हन्तारमेकाकी किन्तु पक्षविवर्जितः ॥ ५४॥

gr̥dhratvāddūradr̥ṣṭirme nātra saṁśayitum kṣamam ।
 śatayojanavistīrṇaṁ samudraṁ yastu laṅghayet ॥ 53॥
 sa eva jānakīm dr̥ṣṭvā punarāyāsyati dhruvam ।
 ahameva durātmānaṁ rāvaṇaṁ hantumutsahe ।
 bhrāturhantāramekāki kintu pakṣavivarjitaḥ ॥ 54॥

53-54. You should have no doubts or confusions about it. Being a vulture, my eyesight has a long range. Anyone amongst you who can leap across 100 Yojan wide ocean (53) can certainly go and see (meet) Janki (Sita), and then come back. I am myself capable and proficient enough to kill that evil hearted and wicked Ravana, but unfortunately I do not have wings now (because they had been burnt while I had tried to reach the sun)¹ (54).

[Note—¹Sampati's story, and how and why his wings were burnt, has been narrated in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 8, which we shall skip here as it is not directly related to the theme of our Book.

However, it has been briefly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 28, which we have already read in our Book earlier in its sub-section 6.1.6.

In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 28 however, the reason which Sampati gives for his inability to personally help the reconnoitring team go across the ocean was his 'old age', while currently in Adhyatma Ramayan he says that he is unable to help them because 'he has no wings as they were burnt earlier'.]

यतध्वमतियत्नेन लङ्घितुं सरितां पतिम् ।
 ततो हन्ता रघुश्रेष्ठो रावणं राक्षसाधिपम् ॥ ५५॥

उल्लङ्घ्य सिन्धुं शतयोजनायतं
 लङ्कां प्रविश्याथ विदेहकन्यकाम् ।
 दृष्ट्वा समाभाष्य च वारिधिं पुन-
 स्तर्तुं समर्थः कतमो विचार्यताम् ॥ ५६॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे किष्किन्धाकाण्डे
 सप्तमः सर्गः ॥ ७॥

yatadhvamatiyatnena laṅghitum saritām patim ।
 tato hantā raghuśreṣṭho rāvaṇaṃ rākṣasādhipam ॥ 55॥
 ullāṅghya sindhum śatayojanāyataṃ
 laṅkāṃ praviśyātha videhakanyakām ।
 dr̥ṣṭvā samābhāṣya ca vāridhiṃ puna-
 startum samarthaḥ katamo vicāryatām ॥ 56॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde kiṣkindhākāṇḍe
 saptamaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 7॥

55-56. You should try to leap across the ocean somehow. Then the king of demons, Ravana, will be slayed by the most exalted of the Raghus (Lord Sri Ram) himself (55).

You should discuss and find out amongst yourself who is able to cross 100 Yojan wide ocean, see and meet the daughter of king Videha (Sita), talk with her, and then cross the ocean again to come back here' (56).

Thus ends the discourse that Lord Shiva gave for Uma in Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto no. 7.

Sub-section 6.2.6: When Sampati told the group that Sita was held captive in Lanka and he could clearly see her there sitting under a tree in a garden, the next logical step was to send someone from amongst them across the ocean to Lanka which was situated at a distance of 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles) from the shore as the bird flies. So a consultation was held and it was decided that Hanuman would carry out this expedition.

Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 9 describes this fascinating episode as follows:-

॥नवम सर्गः ॥
 श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।
 गते विहायसा नृधूराजे वानरपुङ्गवाः ।
 हर्षेण महताविष्टाः सीतादर्शलालसाः ॥ १॥
 ऊचुः समुद्रं पश्यन्तो नक्रचक्रभयङ्करम् ।

तरङ्गादिभिरुन्नद्धमाकाशमिव दुर्गहम् ॥ २॥
 परस्परमवोचन् वै कथमेनं तरामहे ।
 उवाच चाङ्गदस्तत्र शृणुध्वं वानरोत्तमाः ॥ ३॥

||navama sargaḥ ||
 śrīmahādeva uvāca ।
 gate vihāyasā gr̥dhrarāje vānarapuṅgavāḥ ।
 harṣeṇa mahatāviṣṭāḥ sītādarśalālasāḥ ॥ 1॥
 ūcuḥ samudraṃ paśyanto nakracakrabhayaṅkaram ।
 taraṅgādibhirunnaddhamākāśamiva durgraham ॥ 2॥
 parasparamavocan vai kathamenam tarāmahe ।
 uvāca cāṅgadastatra śṛṇudhvaṃ vānarottamāḥ ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! When the king of vultures had gone away through the path of the sky, the throng of brave monkeys, who were very eager to find out about the whereabouts of Sita, became extremely delighted (because they had come to know finally where she was located) (1).

But after the initial euphoria subsided and they saw the most awesome, insurmountable, formidable and frightening barrier in the form of the mighty ocean which blocked their way with its rapidly churning and swirling whirlpools, high waves that were buffeting against the shore and heaving across its surface, and which was as unfathomable as the sky (2)—they were utterly dismayed and wondered amongst themselves how to cross it. Then Angad said, 'Oh the most superior and excellent monkeys (vānarottamāḥ)! Listen (3)—

भवन्तोऽत्यन्तबलिनः शूराश्च कृतविक्रमाः ।
 को वात्र वारिधिं तीर्त्वा राजकार्यं करिष्यति ॥ ४॥
 एतेषां वानराणां स प्राणदाता न संशयः ।
 तदुत्तिष्ठतु मे शीघ्रं पुरतो यो महाबलः ॥ ५॥

bhavanto'tyantabalinaḥ śūrāśca kṛtavikramāḥ ।
 ko vātra vāridhiṃ tīrtvā rājakāryaṃ kariṣyati ॥ 4॥
 eteṣāṃ vānarāṇāṃ sa prāṇadātā na saṃśayaḥ ।
 taduttiṣṭhatu me śīghraṃ purato yo mahābalaḥ ॥ 5॥

4-5. All of you are very strong, brave, courageous and powerful. Hence, tell me, who among you is capable to leap across the ocean and do the king's work? (4).

That monkey will undoubtedly be the saviour of the life of all of us. Therefore, anyone of you who is brave, courageous and strong enough to undertake this mission should step forward and come in front of me (5).

वानराणां च सर्वेषां रामसुग्रीवयोरपि ।
 स एव पालको भूयान्नात्र कार्या विचारणा ॥ ६॥

इत्युक्ते युवराजेन तूष्णीं वानरसैनिकाः ।
आसन्नोचुः किञ्चिदपि परस्परविलोकिनः ॥ ७॥

vānarāṇāṃ ca sarveṣāṃ rāmasugrīvayorapi ।
sa eva pālako bhūyānnātra kāryā vicāraṇā ॥ 6॥
ityukte yuvarājena tūṣṇīm vānarasainikāḥ ।
āsannocuh kiñcidapi parasparavilokinaḥ ॥ 7॥

6-7. There is no doubt that he will be the saviour of the life of all us monkeys, Sugriv as well as of Lord Ram himself¹ (6).

When the crown prince (Angad) has said so, all the monkey and bear commanders sat quietly, contemplating on what to do. No one could speak a word. They just stared at each other. [The messengers sat still in dismay and frustration—as it was an extremely daunting task to go and come back across the length of one hundred Yojans of water of the unfriendly ocean. No one had the courage to volunteer; gloom and despair once again overcame them.] (7).

[Note—¹By saying that anyone from the team who would be able to cross the ocean will be able to save the life of all the monkeys (as well as the bears who were implied as they also were part of the reconnoitring team, though not explicitly mentioned), Angad meant that otherwise Sugriv will kill all of them (see Canto 6, verse no. 26).

That monkey will be the saviour of Sugriv because otherwise he will be the victim of shame of not having fulfilled the promise he had given to Lords Ram at the time of making friendship with him—that he would find out about Sita and help the Lord recover her. So by all chances Sugriv may commit suicide in disgust and shame at having failed to do Lord Ram's work.

That monkey will also be the saviour of Lord Ram because otherwise the Lord will be so overwhelmed with sorrows and anguish and grief of separation from Sita that seeing no hope of ever seeing her again, he might also end his life.]

अङ्गद उवाच ।
उच्यतां वै बलं सर्वैः प्रत्येकं कार्यसिद्धये ।
केन वा साध्यते कार्यं जानीमस्तदनन्तरम् ॥ ८॥
अङ्गदस्य वचः श्रुत्वा प्रोचुर्वीरा बलं पृथक् ।
योजनानां दशारभ्य दशोत्तरगुणं जगुः ॥ ९॥

aṅgada uvāca ।
ucyatāṃ vai balaṃ sarvaiḥ pratyekaṃ kāryasiddhaye ।
kena vā sādhyate kāryaṃ jānīmastadanantaram ॥ 8॥
aṅgadasya vacaḥ śrutvā procurvīrā balaṃ pṛthak ।
yojanānāṃ daśārabhya daśottaraguṇaṃ jaguḥ ॥ 9॥

8-9. [Seeing that no one spoke, and observing that all the monkeys were extremely perturbed and frustrated—] Angad said once again, 'Alright; let us see. All of you tell me, one by one, about your individual strength vis-à-vis the job at hand. Then it shall be known who can accomplish this task successfully' (8).

Hearing these words of Angad, all the monkeys described their own strengths separately. They told him about their ability to go from as little as 10 Yojans (roughly 80 miles) to varying distances that progressively increased in multiples of 10 Yojans (9).

शतादर्वजाम्बवांस्तु प्राह मध्ये वनौकसाम् ।
पुरा त्रिविक्रमे देवे पादं भूमानलक्षणम् ॥ १०॥
त्रिःसप्तकृत्वोऽहमगां प्रदक्षिणविधानतः ।
इदानीं वार्धकग्रस्तो न शक्नोमि विलङ्घितुम् ॥ ११॥

śatādarvāgjāmbavāṃstu prāha madhye vanaukasām ।
purā trivikrame deve pādaṃ bhūmānalakṣaṇam ॥ 10॥
triḥsaptakṛtvo'hamagāṃ pradakṣiṇavidhānataḥ ।
idānīm vārdhakagrasto na śaknōmi vilāṅghitum ॥ 11॥

10-11. At last, Jamvant, the bear king, said that his strength falls short of 100 Yojans (which was the distance needed to be covered in order to land on the soil of Lanka). He said, 'In an earlier time, when the Lord had manifested himself in the form of Tribikram (Lord Vaaman)¹, I had circumambulated his holy feet, which were equivalent in length to the dimension (circumference) of the earth, twenty one times. But old age has overcome me now, and that is why I cannot leap across the ocean at present' (10-11).

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29 in sub-section 6.1.6 of our Book.]

अङ्गदोऽप्याह मे गन्तुं शक्यं पारं महोदधेः ।
पुनर्लङ्घनसामर्थ्यं न जानाम्यस्ति वा न वा ॥ १२॥
तमाह जाम्बवान् वीरस्त्वं राजा नो नियामकः ।
न युक्तं त्वां नियोक्तुं मे त्वं समर्थोऽसि यद्यपि ॥ १३॥

aṅgado'pyāha me gantum śakyaṃ pāraṃ mahodadheḥ ।
punarlaṅghanasāmarthyam na jānāmyasti vā na vā ॥ 12॥
tamāha jāmbavān vīrastvaṃ rājā no niyāmakah ।
na yuktaṃ tvām niyoktum me tvam samartho'si yadyapi ॥ 13॥

12-13. Even Angad expressed his inability and said, 'I can go across the great ocean but I do not know (i.e. I am not certain) whether I will be able to leap back across it' (12).

Then the brave Jamvant said to him, 'Oh Angad! Though you are able and proficient enough to do this work (and you simply underestimate your capabilities), but we do not think it appropriate to appoint you for this job because you are our leader and commander (and we can't put you to risk)' (13).

अङ्गद उवाच ।
 एवं चेत्पूर्ववत्सर्वे स्वप्स्यामो दर्भविष्टरे ।
 केनापि न कृतं कार्यं जीवितुं च न शक्यते ॥ १४॥
 तमाह जाम्बवान् वीरो दर्शयिष्यामि ते सुत ।
 येनास्माकं कार्यसिद्धिर्भविस्यत्यचिरेण च ॥ १५॥

aṅgada uvāca ।
 evaṃ cetpūrvavatsarve svapsyāmo darbhaviṣṭare ।
 kenāpi na kṛtaṃ kāryaṃ jīvitum ca na śakyate ॥ 14॥
 tamāha jāmbavān vīro darśayaṣyāmi te suta ।
 yenāsmākaṃ kāryasiddhirbhaviṣyatyacireṇa ca ॥ 15॥

14-15. Angad replied, 'If this is the case, then we should adopt our earlier defiant policy of dying without food and water while lying on mats made of grass. Since this work cannot be done by anyone, then say how can we expect to live or survive for long?'¹ (14).

At this abjectly despaired and distraught mood of Angad, Jamvant consoled him and said, Oh son (suta)! Have comfort, for the one by whose hands our work shall soon be done, I will now show you that brave fellow!' (15).

[Note—¹Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 27-28 in sub-section 6.2.5 of our Book herein above.

इत्युक्त्वा जाम्बवान् प्राह हनूमन्तमवस्थितम् ।
 हनूमन् किं रहस्तूष्णीं स्थीयते कार्यगौरवे ॥ १६॥
 प्राप्तेऽङ्गेनेव सामर्थ्यं दर्शयाद्य महाबल ।
 त्वं साक्षाद्वायुतनयो वायुतुल्यपराक्रमः ॥ १७॥

ityuktvā jāmbavān prāha hanūmantamavasthitam ।
 hanūman kiṃ rahastūṣṇīm sthīyate kāryagaurave ॥ 16॥
 prāpte'jñeneva sāmārthyaṃ darśayādya mahābala ।
 tvaṃ sākṣādvāyutanayo vāyutulyaparākramaḥ ॥ 17॥

16-17. Saying this, Jamvant said to Hanuman who was sitting nearby, 'Oh Hanuman! When this great work of honour and fame has presented itself before you, why are you sitting silently and demurring (16) as if you are unaware of anything or reluctant to act? Come forward, oh the brave and immensely valorous and valiant One! You are the son of the wind-god himself, and as famed and renowned in valour and strength as him. Hence, show your prowess, ability, agility, might, power, skill and proficiency today (for this is the moment for which you and the rest of us had been waiting for so long, to serve Lord Ram, and make ourselves fortunate and our lives fulfilled). Rise to the occasion and step forward! (17).

रामकार्यार्थमेव त्वं जनितोऽसि महात्मना ।
जातमात्रेण ते पूर्वं दृष्ट्वोद्यन्तं विभावसुम् ॥ १८॥
पक्वं फलं जिघृक्षामीत्युत्प्लुतं बालचेष्टया ।
योजनानां पञ्चशतं पतितोऽसि ततो भुवि ॥ १९॥

rāmakāryārthameva tvam janito'si mahātmanā ।
jātamātreṇa te pūrvam drṣṭvodyantaṁ vibhāvasum ॥ 18॥
pakvaṁ phalaṁ jighrkṣāmītyutplutaṁ bālaceṣṭayā ।
yojanānāṁ pañcaśataṁ patito'si tato bhuvi ॥ 19॥

18-19. The great Wind-God has produced you (i.e. given birth to you) to do the work of Lord Sri Ram. At the time of your birth, seeing the early morning rising sun and thinking it to be a ripe fruit, you had leapt 500 Yojans ($8 \times 500 = 4000$ miles) in the sky to grab it as part of your childhood playful activity, and had fallen back on the earth after that mighty leap (18-19).

अतस्त्वद्बलमाहात्म्यं को वा शक्नोति वर्णितुम् ।
उत्तिष्ठ कुरु रामस्य कार्यं नः पाहि सुव्रत ॥ २०॥
श्रुत्वा जाम्बवतो वाक्यं हनूमानतिहर्षितः ।
चकार नादं सिंहस्य ब्रह्माण्डं स्फोटयन्निव ॥ २१॥

atastvadbalamāhātmyaṁ ko vā śaknoti varṇitum ।
uttiṣṭha kuru rāmasya kāryaṁ naḥ pāhi suvrata ॥ 20॥
śrutvā jāmbavato vākyaṁ hanūmānatiharṣitaḥ ।
cakāra nādaṁ siṁhasya brahmāṇḍaṁ sphoṭayanniva ॥ 21॥

20-21. Therefore, who is there who can ever describe your strength, valour and bravery? Oh the righteous and noble One. Stand up and come to the front. Do this job of Lord Ram, and be the protector of our lives¹ (20).

Hearing these encouraging and inspiring words of Jamavant, Hanuman was delighted and felt very pleased and motivated. He roared like a lion, and his shrill cry shook the universe (21).

[Note—¹Jamvant motivated Hanuman by these inspiring words of encouragement: “If you could leap 500 Yojans when still a child, why can’t you now leap merely 100 Yojans when you are grown up and abler? Come, come; step forward and show your true mettle. Why do you feel shy when the time has come to be brave and showcase your powers, prowess and abilities? Come, come; you are a great and illustrious son of the equally great and illustrious wind-god; so you must remember to behave in a way that would make your father extremely proud of you, and not ashamed! You would not only make your father feel happy and proud of you but you will also get the eternal credit of saving the lives of all of us as well as serving Lord Ram who is a manifested form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being himself. Your name and fame would become eternal like no one else’s has ever been; you will endear yourself not only to Lord Ram but to all other devotees of the Lord as well as to the entire

community of monkeys and bears who now look up to you as their saviour. So get up cheerfully and get cracking!”]

बभूव पर्वताकारस्त्रिविक्रम इवापरः ।
 लङ्घयित्वा जलनिधिं कृत्वा लङ्कां च भस्मसात् ॥ २२॥
 रावणं सकुलं हत्वाऽऽनेष्ये जनकनन्दिनीम् ।
 यद्वा बद्ध्वा गले रज्ज्वा रावणं वामपाणिना ॥ २३॥
 लङ्कां सपर्वतां धृत्वा रामस्याग्रे क्षिपाम्यहम् ।
 यद्वा दृष्ट्वैव यास्यामि जानकीं शुभलक्षणाम् ॥ २४॥

babhūva parvatākārastrivikrama ivāparaḥ ।
 laṅghayitvā jalanidhiṃ kṛtvā laṅkāṃ ca bhasmasāt ॥ 22॥
 rāvaṇaṃ sakulaṃ hatvā"neṣye janakanandinīm ।
 yadvā baddhvā gale rajjvā rāvaṇaṃ vāmapāṇinā ॥ 23॥
 laṅkāṃ saparvatāṃ dhṛtvā rāmasyāgre kṣipāmyaham ।
 yadvā dr̥ṣṭvaiva yāsyāmi jānakīm śubhalakṣaṇām ॥ 24॥

22-24. He (Hanuman) immediately became colossus like a huge mountain as if he were a second Lord Trivikram. [To wit, Hanuman expanded his body to such a huge size that he, if he so wished, could measure the whole earth by his single step like Lord Trivikram, or Lord Vaaman, had done earlier when he had measured the entire universe in his two steps, the earth in the first and the rest of the creation in the second, and the great king Bali then had to surrender his own head to the Lord to measure it in the third step which was still pending.]

Then Hanuman said to Jamavant, 'I will leap across the ocean and burn Lanka to ashes (22), kill Ravana along with his kin and other members of his race, and bring the daughter of Janak (Sita) back. Or, if you say, I shall tie Ravana with a rope around his neck, and lift Lanka together with Mt. Trikoot on which it is situated in my left hand, and put it in front of Lord Ram. Or should I come back after just meeting the auspicious Janki (Sita)? [Tell me Jamvant what I ought to do. I can do whatever you suggest me.]' (24).

श्रुत्वा हनुमतो वाक्यं जाम्बवानिदमब्रवीत् ।
 दृष्ट्वैवागच्छ भद्रं ते जीवन्तीं जानकीं शुभाम् ॥ २५॥
 पश्चाद्रामेण सहितो दर्शयिष्यसि पौरुषम् ।
 कल्याणं भवताद्भद्रं गच्छतस्ते विहायसा ॥ २६॥

śrutvā hanumato vākyaṃ jāmbavānidamabravīt ।
 dr̥ṣṭvaivāgaccha bhadraṃ te jīvantīm jānakīm śubhām ॥ 25॥
 paścādrāmeṇa sahito darśayiṣyasi pauruṣam ।
 kalyāṇaṃ bhavatādbhadra gacchataste vihāyasā ॥ 26॥

25-26. Hearing these words of Hanuman, Jamvant said, 'Oh the blessed one! You just go and see that the auspicious Janki (Sita) is alive, and come back (25).

Then you can go along with Lord Ram and showcase your strength, courage and valour. Let you be blessed and have all welfare while you go by the path of the sky! (26).

गच्छन्तं रामकार्यार्थं वायुस्त्वामनुगच्छतु ।
इत्याशीर्भिः समामन्त्र्य विसृष्टः प्लवगाधिपैः ॥ २७॥
महेन्द्राद्रिशिरो गत्वा बभूवद्भुतदर्शनः ॥ २८॥

gacchantam rāmakāryārtham vāyustvāmanugacchatu ।
ityāśīrbhiḥ samāmantrya visrṣṭaḥ plavagādhīpaiḥ ॥ 27॥
mahendrādriśiro gatvā babhūvādbhutadarśanaḥ ॥ 28॥

27-28. Let the wind follow you in your wake and aid you in your noble mission while you are on your way to do Lord Ram's work. [To wit, let the wind-god help you by making the wind favourable to you and blowing it in the same direction as the one in which you are moving in the sky towards Lanka so as to make your journey easy and comfortable. Let him help you by supporting you in the air and making you sail effortlessly in the firmament as if you would do if you had been sailing across the calm ocean in a beautiful ship!]

In this manner, when Hanuman was thus honoured and blessed by all the ministers and commanders of the monkeys and bears, and bidden farewell by them (27), he went and stood atop the summit of Mt. Mahendra. There he assumed a stupendously majestic, an extremely strange and very awe-inspiring formidable form that defied imagination (28).

महानगेन्द्रपूतिमो महात्मा सुवर्णवर्णोऽरुणचारुवक्त्रः ।
महाफणीन्द्राभसुदीर्घबाहुर्वातात्मजोऽदृश्यत सर्वभूतैः ॥ २९॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे किष्किन्धाकाण्डे
नवमः सर्गः ॥ ९॥

mahānagendrapratimo mahātmā suvarṇavarṇo'ruṇacāruvaktraḥ ।
mahāphaṇīndrābhasudīrghabāhurvātātma'jo'dṛśyata sarvabhūtaiḥ ॥ 29॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmaramāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde kiṣkindhākāṇḍe
navamaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 9॥

29. At that time, all the creatures of this world saw Hanuman, the son of the wind-god, as a mountain-like colossus, with a countenance resembling the radiance of molten gold with a reddish hue (like the colour and shade of the rising sun in the morning or red hot liquid gold), and having long arms resembling the great legendary cosmic Serpent (known as Seshnath)! (29).

Thus ends Canto 9 of Kishkindha Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that describes the conversation of Lord Shiva and Uma.

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Section 6.3:

Geetawali Ramayan

In Geetawali Ramayan, as also in Kavಿತawali Ramayan, the pattern adopted for narration of this epic Story is different from both Ram Charit Manas and Adhyatma Ramayan, as while in the latter two instances the narrative is in the form of a continuous flow of events in a seamless manner, but in the former two instances, i.e. in Geetawali and Kavಿತawali, the stress is on focusing attention on some selected interesting and important events or episodes that stand out as watershed landmarks in the background of the epic Story as a whole, and then describing them in greater detail from different angles and perspectives.

So now therefore, we shall read how the main events of the part of the Story which we have covered in our present Chapter no. 6 are narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, as a sort of recapitulation. For this purpose, the following verses of Geetawali are being cited: (a) Aranya Kand, verse nos. 12-16 (Lord Ram meeting Jatāu, the vulture, and the latter's deliverance), verse nos. 17/1—17/8 (Lord Ram's meeting with Sabari and her deliverance); (b) Kishkindha Kand, verse no. 1 (Lord Ram's friendship with Sugriv), and verse no. 2 (the search for Sita begins).

जटायुसे भेंट
(3/12)

मेरे एकौ हाथ न लागी ।
गयो बपु बीति बादि कानन ज्यों कलपलता दव दागी ॥ 1 ॥
दसरथसों न प्रेम प्रतिपाल्यौ, हुतो जो सकल जग साखी ।
बरबस हरत निसाचर पतिसों हठि न जानकी राखी ॥ 2 ॥
मरत न मैं रघुबीर बिलोके तापस बेष बनाए ।
चाहत चलन प्रान पाँवर बिनु सिय—सुधि प्रभुहि सुनाए ॥ 3 ॥
बार—बार कर मीजि, सीस धुनि गीधराज पछिताई ।
तुलसी प्रभु कृपालु तेहि औसर आइ गए दोउ भाई ॥ 4 ॥

jaṭāyusē bhēṇṭa
(3/12)

mērē ēkau hātha na lāgī.
gayō bapu bīti bādi kānana jyōm kalapalatā dāva dāgī.. 1..
dasarathasōm na prēma pratipālyau, hutō jō sakala jaga sākhī.
barabasa harata nisācara patisōm haṭhi na jānakī rākhī.. 2..
marata na mairā raghubīra bilōkē tāpasa bēṣa banā'ē.
cāhata calana prāna pāmvara binu siya-sudhi prabhuhi sunā'ē.. 3..

bāra-bāra kara mīñji, sīsa dhuni gīdharāja pachitā'ī.
tulasī prabhu kṛpālu tēhi ausara ā'i ga'ē dō'u bhā'ī.. 4..

Lord Ram meets Jatau-I

Verse no. 3/12—[Verse nos. 3/12—3/16 describe Lord Ram's meeting with the injured Jatau, the old vulture who had fought valiantly with Ravana in an attempt to rescue Sita but was unable to protect her as he was mortally wounded. He fell down on the ground when Ravana clipped-off his wings with his sword. Lying bleeding and writhing in pain, Jatau concentrated his mind and heart in the holy feet of Lord Ram and waited for his arrival so that he could convey the developments regarding Sita to the Lord, and find an eternal rest for his soul in the presence of the Lord whom he knew to be a personified form of the Supreme Being.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram reached that spot while he was wondering in the wilds in search of Sita. He heard a soft and pitiful groan like someone dying from a little way off his path, and when he espied the cause he discovered Jatau. The Lord immediately recognized him as he had met him earlier also when the two had struck a friendship, and Jatau had said that he was an acquaintance of Dasrath, Lord Ram's father, and he would be in constantly on the vigil and stay near about to afford protection to the Lord, Sita and Laxman to the best of his ability. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.

Now, when Lord Ram descried Jatau in such a pathetic condition, he was extremely sorry and moved emotionally. He extended all love and affection that one would do to one's father, tended to Jatau's wounds, cleaned them with his long tresses, and picked him up gently onto his lap, resting his head on his arms. Jatau conveyed to the Lord all the tidings, and then though the Lord told him that if he wished he could grant him a long life but Jatau preferred to leave this mortal body which he would nevertheless have to one or the other day, but this unique opportunity of having the Lord tending to him and sitting so close to him won't come again. So, Jatau discarded his mortal body and obtained liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Say, how luck he was: while alive he offered himself at the service of the Lord, and while dying he had the Lord in front of his eyes. Lord Ram performed his last rites with tears in his eyes as he would have done for his own father. This was a rarest of rare privilege that was extended to Jatau by the Lord as not even Dasrath had got this benefit. In this singular way, Jatau made himself immortal in the annals of history, and even the gods found no sufficient words to praise his good fortune.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Doha no. 32.]

[The vulture Jatau was full of anguish and remorse as he lay on the ground, mortally wounded and writhing in pain. He sorely lamented—] 'Alas! I have lost everything (or literally, I could not lay my hands on anything worthwhile!). Even as the Kalpa-creeper dies in a forest fire without being of any good to anyone, my body too was spent in vain (1).

The whole world is witness and knows very well that I and Dasrath were friends; we were affectionately acquainted with each other. But unfortunately I could not sustain (uphold, live up to) that relationship because when the king of demons (Ravana) was taking Sita away, I could not forcibly stop him from doing so (2).

Even at the time of my death (which is imminent), I could not see Lord Sri Ram attired as a hermit.

Now this sinful soul wishes to make its exit (from my sinful body) even before I could convey Sita's news, whereabouts and welfare to him (Sri Ram).' (3).

In this way, the king of vultures repeatedly wrings his hands and beats his head in utter frustration and despair. Just at that precise moment, Tulsidas' kind and gracious Lords, the two brothers (Sri Ram and Laxman)¹, came there. (4)

[¹The words "Tulsidas' kind and gracious Lords, the two brothers" (tulasī prabhu kṛpālu---dō'u bhā'ī) are very important in as much as they establish—and assert—that Tulsidas has equal respect for both Lord Ram and Laxman albeit he has focused his writings on Lord Ram as he is the Supreme Being himself.

Further, Tulsidas means that if Jatau, a vulture by birth, could inspire so much love and affection for himself in the heart of Sri Ram by asserting that he (Jatau) was a friend of Lord Ram's father, king Dasrath, so much so that the Lord treated the bird with the same respect as he would have had for his father as stressed in stanza 2 of this verse, Tulsidas goes a step further and says that: "Well, if this is the case then I too have a right to assert that the two brothers, Lord Sri Ram and Laxman, are dear to me equally, and they have affection for me as well." This is because he, i.e. Tulsidas, too is a devotee of the Lord and loves him as dearly as did Jatau.]

(3 / 13)

राघौ गीध गोद करि लीन्हों।
नयन—सरोज सनेह—सलिल सुचि मनहु अरघजल दीन्हों॥ 1॥
सुनहु लषन ! खगपतिहि मिले बन मैं पितु—मरन न जान्यौ।
सहि न सक्थौ सो कठिन बिधाता, बड़ो पछु आजुहि भान्यौ॥ 2॥
बहु बिधि राम कह्यो तनु राखन, परम धीर नहि डोल्याँ।
रोकि, प्रेम, अवलोकि बदन—बिधु, बचन मनोहर बोल्यौ॥ 3॥
तुलसी प्रभु झूठे जीवन लागि समय न धोखो लैहौं।
जाको नाम मरत मुनिदुरलभ तुमहि कहाँ पुनि पैहौं ?॥ 4॥

(3/13)

rāghau gīdha gōda kari līnhōm.

nayana-sarōja sanēha-salila suci manahu araghajala dīnhōm.. 1..
sunahu laṣana! khagapatihi milē bana mair̥m pitu-marana na jān'yau.
sahi na sakyau sō kaṭhina bidhātā, baṛō pachu ājuhi bhān'yau.. 2..
bahu bidhi rāma kahyō tanu rākhana, parama dhīra nahi ḍōlyau.
rōki, prēma, avalōki badana-bidhu, bacana manōhara bōlyau.. 3..
tulasī prabhu jhūṭhē jīvana lagi samaya na dhōkhō laihaum̃.
jākō nāma marata muniduralabha tumahi kahāṁ puni paihaum̃?.. 4..

Lord Ram meets Jatau-II

Verse no. 3/13—Lord Ram lifted the wounded Jatau on to his lap, and washed him with his tears full of love and affection¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

Then he said, ‘Oh Laxman, listen! When I had met the vulture king in the forest, I forgot about the death of our father². But the wicked gods could not tolerate my peace and they destroyed even this solace which I had been left with (2).’

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.

It is to be noted here that Jatau is the only and the exclusive character in the whole of the story of the Ramayana who has this privilege of being put on the same or even a notch higher pedestal than Dasrath. It is indeed remarkable that Lord Ram openly accepted him as his father given the fact that a vulture is a meat-eating bird. It indeed remarkable Lord Ram went further to honour Jatau by cremating him with his own hands, something he didn’t do for his own father Dasrath. In Hindu system, it is the eldest son who gets this privilege, and it is a curse, or most unusual, that a father is cremated by someone else. However, by cremating Jatau, Lord Ram gave him the rarest of rare privilege which is not even available to the gods, or for that matter to those great sages and ascetics who spend their entire lives in doing austerity and penances.

The underlying idea is that the only relationship that Lord Ram knows and acknowledges is that of sincere and abiding love, affection, devotion, submission and complete faith in him as the ‘Supreme Redeemer, Supreme Atma and Supreme Protector’ of creation. Anything less is not upto the mark. The Lord does not weigh the merits of a creature on the basis of his physical body, and by extension by the natural inclinations of this body such as what it would eat to survive or whether it does penances and austerities, because the body is nevertheless gross by nature and cannot be expected to behave like a sublime and holy entity. What matters is the driver of this body: the ‘soul’, or the ‘self’ that lives inside it and controls the body like a driver of a motor vehicle. If any accident occurs, it is not the vehicle that is to be blamed, but the driver whose carelessness that has caused it.

Therefore, if the soul of the individual creature is pure and reflects its purity by exhibiting characters possessed by the supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram, the ‘Parmatma’, the mutual attraction is spontaneous and natural. Only a pure magnet would attract iron, and not something that masquerades as a magnet while being merely a piece of lead. Polishing and pretensions can deceive the world, but not the Lord.

In the present context we deduce that albeit Jatau was born as a meat-eating vulture that is universally regarded as sinful and vile, his Atma was purer than the rest of the creatures, and hence it qualified for the highest form of peace and blessedness that it indeed got.]

Then Lord Ram requested Jatau to keep his body (not to die)³, but the courageous vulture did not move from his resolve, and said (3)—

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

‘Oh Lord! I wouldn't be cheated for this false life (i.e. I don't want to trade the rare opportunity I've got to attain salvation with living a life which is false and illusionary).

Well, he—whose name is unavailable even to the sages at the time of death—is standing before me. Say, in all sooth, where shall I find you again, where shall I find such a golden chance to attain liberation and deliverance again? [I'm not so stupid that I'll let go of such a golden and god-sent opportunity for attaining emancipation and salvation that leads the soul to eternal blessedness, beatitude and bliss by bargaining it with a life that is mortal.]⁴ (4).

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 31.]

(3 / 14)

नीके कै जानत राम हियो हौं ।
 प्रनतपाल, सेवक—कृपालु—चित, पितु पटतरहि दियो हौं ॥ 1 ॥
 त्रिजगजोनि—गत गीध, जनम भरि खाइ कुजंतु जियो हौं ।
 महाराज सुकृती—समाज सब—ऊपर आजु कियो हौं ॥ 2 ॥
 श्रवन बचन, मुख नाम, रूप चख, राम उछंग लियो हौं ।
 तुलसी मो समान बड़भागी को कहि सकै बियो हौं ॥ 3 ॥

(3/14)

nīkē kai jānata rāma hiyō haum̃.
 pranatapāla, sēvaka-kṛpālu-cita, pitu paṭatarahi diyō haum̃.. 1..
 trijagajōni-gata gīdha, janama bhari khā'i kujantu jiyō haum̃.
 mahārāja sukṛtī-samāja saba-ūpara āju kiyō haum̃.. 2..
 śravana bacana, mukha nāma, rūpa cakha, rāma uchaṅga liyō haum̃.
 tulasī mō samāna baṛabhāgī kō kahi sakai biyō haum̃.. 3..

Lord Ram meets Jatau-III

Verse no. 3/14—[Jatau continued—] ‘Oh Lord Sri Ram! I recognise the true nature and graciousness of your heart. You are the protector of those who have taken your shelter and refuge, and are kind, benevolent and merciful towards your servants (devotees, those who have surrendered themselves to you and serve you selflessly).

This is why you have compared me with your father (or, have raised me to the exalted stature of being your father)¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 3/13, stanza no. 2 herein above.]

I was born from a lowly womb (i.e. I had a very low form of birth from an egg) in the family of vultures, and survived by eating numerous lowly, uneatable creatures (cadavers). Today, oh great king, you have raised such a vile creature (i.e. me) to the highest pedestal in the assembly of those who are righteous, noble and exalted! [Tell me, what more would I want!] (2).

Oh (how lucky am I)! My ears hear you speak; I am taking your holy name with my mouth; I am enjoying seeing your beautiful form sitting right before me, with my own eyes; and to top it all, you are having me in your lap!

Then say, who else is there who can call himself more lucky than me?² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

(3 / 15)

मेरे जान तात ! कछू दिन जीजै ।
 देखिअ आपु सुवन-सेवासुख, मोहि पितुको सुख दीजै ॥ 1 ॥
 दिब्य-देह, इच्छा-जीवन जग बिधि मनाइ मैंगि लीजै ।
 हरि-हर-सुजस सुनाइ, दरस दै, लोग कृतार्थ कीजै ॥ 2 ॥
 देखि बदन, सुनि बचन-अमिय, तन रामनयन-जल भीजै ।
 बोल्यो बिहग बिहसि रघुबर ! बलि, कहाँ सुभाय, पतीजै ॥ 3 ॥
 मेरे मरिबे सम न चारि फल, होंहि तौ, क्यों न कहीजै ।
 तुलसी प्रभु दियो उतरु मौन हीं, परी मानो प्रेम सहीजै ॥ 4 ॥

(3/15)

mērē jāna tāta! kachū dina jījai.
 dēkhi'a āpu suvana-sēvāsukha, mōhi pitukō sukha dījai.. 1..
 dibya-dēha, icchā-jīvana jaga bidhi manā'i maṅgi lījai.
 hari-hara-sujasa sunā'i, darasa dai, lōga kṛtāratha kījai.. 2..
 dēkhi badana, suni bacana-amiya, tana rāmanayana-jala bhījai.
 bōlyō bihaga bihaṁsi raghubara! bali, kahauṁ subhāya, patījai.. 3..
 mērē maribē sama na cāri phala, hōnhi tau, kyōṁ na kahījai.
 tulasī prabhu diyō utaru mauna hīm, parī mānō prēma sahījai.. 4..

Lord Ram meets Jatau-IV

Verse no. 3/15—Lord Ram said, ‘Oh Dear (tāta)! In my view, you should live a bit longer for a few more days. Give me an opportunity to serve you as a son, so that you can enjoy the privileges of being a father’¹ (1).

[¹This emotion is an extension of what Lord Ram has said in verse no. 3/13, stanza no. 2 herein above. Lord says in essence that he hadn’t been able to serve his own father Dasrath at Ayodhya, but at least he would be able to serve his ‘another father’ Jatau if he agrees to live a bit longer. Since Jatau was a bird, it would be easier for the latter to remain close in the vicinity of Lord Ram whom he should treat as his son, and this would also give the Lord an opportunity to serve Jatau in the best way he could so that it would mitigate his sense of sorrow at losing his human father to some extent.]

Gods are now pleased with you, so ask them for a divine form and a boon to live according to your wishes, and please everyone by praising and singing the Glory of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva (2).²

[²Lord Ram advises Jatau to discard this evil body of a vulture and assume some holy form, or the form of a holy Spirit like one of the gods, and live in that form for as long as he wants while enjoying the benefits of heaven.]

Then, hearing such sweet-as-nectar voice and words of Lord Ram, and finding his body drenched in the tears overflowing from Lord Ram's eyes, Jatau looked up to him and said, 'Son! I'm so exceptionally lucky and so very glad! Believe me, I speak from my heart (3).

Even the four fruits (i.e. "Artha" or prosperity, wealth; "Dharma" or righteousness; "Kaam" or wish fulfillment; and "Moksha" or liberation from transmigration of soul) are no match to my death (while I am in your arms)!

[So, what do you expect me to ask for? Nay, I don't want any of the forms you have suggested as ultimately my soul would be trapped in that form. Nay, I don't want any entrapments now. Even a holy body is a trap for the soul. The true freedom for the soul is when it is freed from all encumbrances and becomes one with the Supreme Soul. I don't want to be cheated at this juncture by any of the honey-traps you have promised me. I yearn for final liberation and deliverance that would give eternal salvation and emancipation to me and rest to my soul. I want beatitude and felicity and bliss that cannot come with assuming any form, holy or otherwise as all of them have their own set of problems. Say, even if I become god-like, will I become eternal? Surely not, because when the good effects of my service to you wears off, I would have to suffer the consequences of all that I do in the new form which I may assume now. What would happen then? When ultimately my soul would yearn for peace, will I get to see you again, or place my head on your lap again? So, my answer is 'no', I don't want all this stuff. To wit, if thou wiltst forsooth want to express thine gratitude to me, and if thou can grant emancipation to a soul, then grant me eternal bliss and beatitude by way of salvation and deliverance, nothing less than that my soul yearnest for!]

Tulsidas says that this argument and logic of Jatau made Lord Ram speechless because it was the irrefutable truth of existence. Lord Ram's silence was a seal of approval of Jatau's devotion and love for the Lord, as well as his views regarding his destiny that was sealed in the form of his emancipation and salvation inspite of his having a body that is regarded as most despicable and vile and lowly (because it was that of a vulture) (4).

(3 / 16)

मेरो सुनियो, तात ! सँदेसो ।
 सीय-हरन जनि कहेहु पितासों, हैहै अधिक अँदेसो ॥ 1 ॥
 रावरे पुन्यप्रताप-अनल महुँ अलप दिननि रिपु दहिहैं ।
 कुलसमेत सुरसभा दसानन समाचार सब कहिहैं ॥ 2 ॥
 सुनि प्रभु-बचन, राखि उर मूरति, चरन-कमल सिर नाई ।
 चल्यो नभ सुनत राम-कल-कीरति, अरु निज भाग बड़ाई ॥ 3 ॥
 पितु-ज्यों गीध-क्रिया करि रघुपति अपने धाम पढायो ।
 ऐसो प्रभु बिसारि तुलसी सठ ! तू चाहत सुख पायो ॥ 4 ॥

(3/16)

mērō suniyō, tāta! saṁdēsō.

sīya-harana jani kahēhu pitāsōm, hvaihai adhika aṁdēsō.. 1..
 rāvarē pun'yapratāpa-anala mahaṁ alapa dinani ripu dahihaiṁ.
 kulasamēta surasabhā dasānana samācāra saba kahihaiṁ.. 2..
 suni prabhu-bacana, rākhi ura mūrati, carana-kamala sira nāī.
 calyō nabha sunata rāma-kala-kīrati, aru nija bhāga baṛāī.. 3..
 pitu-jyōm gīdha-kriyā kari raghupati apanē dhāma paṭhāyō.
 aisō prabhu bisāri tulasī saṭha! tū cāhata sukha pāyō.. 4..

Lord Ram meets Jatau-V

Verse no. 3/16—[Lord Sri Ram replied to Jatau—] ‘Oh Dear (tāta)! Please hear my message. Do not tell father (Dasrath) anything about Sita being abducted, as this will enhance his sorrows and worries¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 31.]

All the enemies and opponents would burn themselves soon in the fire of your glory, fame, righteousness and noble deeds. [This is a way of Lord Ram showing respect to Jatau.]

At that time, Ravana would himself, along with all his kin and relatives, go and convey all this news in the assembly of Gods. [By saying these words, Sri Ram has ensured a place for Ravana amongst the ‘assembly of Gods’ in the heaven. Indeed, though being a ferocious, cruel, vile and most despised creature because he was a ‘demon’ by birth, Ravana and his near and dear ones nevertheless went to the heaven just by the virtue of them constantly remembering Lord Ram, which, in practical terms, became a sort of meditation for them even as a spiritual aspirant constantly remembers the Lord and repeats his holy name to attain the Lord. This fact is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71; (iii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.] (2).’

Hearing these words (of Sri Ram), keeping his beauteous image in his mind and heart, bowing his head reverentially at his holy feet, and hearing Sri Ram's fames and glories as well as his own being sung in the sky (by the Gods), the vulture left for his heavenly abode through the path of the sky. [Here, by saying ‘Jatau went to heaven’, it alludes to his soul that went to the heaven or the abode of the Lord.]² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 32.]

Raghupati (Sri Ram) performed the last rites of the vulture as if he were his (Sri Ram's) own father, and thereafter, the Lord sent him to his own abode³.

Tulsidas addresses himself and wonders, ‘Oh you idiot and wicked fool! Do you want to have comfort, happiness, joy and bliss by forsaking (or forgetting, ignoring, neglecting, being opposed to) such a (benign, merciful, gracious, compassionate, benevolent, magnanimous, munificent) Lord?’⁴ (4).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 33.]

शबरीसे भेंट
राग सूहो
(3/17/1)

सबरी सोइ उठी, फरकत बाम बिलोचन-बाहु।
सगुन सुहावने सूचत मुनि-मन-अगम उछाहु॥
मुनि-अगम उर आनंद, लोचन सजल, तनु पुलकावली।
तृन-पर्नसाल बनाइ, जल भरि कलस, फल चाहन चली॥
मंजुल मनोरथ करति, सुमिरति बिप्र-बरबानी भली।
ज्यो कलप-बेलि सकेलि सुकृत सुफूल-फूली सुख-फली॥ 1॥

śabarīsē bhēṇṭa
rāga sūhō
(3/17-1)

sabarī sō'i uṭhī, pharakata bāma bilōcana-bāhu.
saguna suhāvanē sūcata muni-mana-agama uchāhu..
muni-agama ura ānanda, lōcana sajala, tanu pulakāvalī.
tṛna-parṇasāla banā'i, jala bhari kalasa, phala cāhana calī..
mañjula manōratha karati, sumirati bipra-barabānī bhalī.
jyōm kalapa-bēli sakēli sukṛta suphūla-phūlī sukha-phalī.. 1..

Lord Ram's meeting with Sabari

[Geetawali describes the meeting of Lord Ram and his ardent devotee Sabari in beautiful words. The text has been divided into eight verses, each having four lines.

The Lord's meeting with Sabari has also been described in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

After granting liberation and emancipation to Jatau, Lord Ram moved ahead in the direction told to him by Jatau. He reached the hermitage of Sabari, an old tribal woman devotee of the Lord who had been waiting the Lord's arrival for a long time.

*A brief life-sketch of Sabari is given at the end of this verse no. 3/17/1.

She extended motherly-like affection to Lord Ram and Laxman, worshipped them and fed them with fruits she had plucked herself. Lord Ram had preached her the famous 'nine-deemed paths of Bhakti'. Finally, like Jatau, she discarded her gross body in the fire of Tapa and her last rites were done by Lord Ram himself! Its again noteworthy that Lord Ram had done the last rites of another living being who was regarded as out-cast by the society. Lord Ram made Jatau exalted by elevating him to the high pedestal of being his 'father' by performing his last rites with his own hands, and now he elevates Sabari to the rank of his own mother by performing her last rites

himself. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it; and (ii) Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 3/17/8.

This fact has also been reiterated in ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 39—41.

Before attaining salvation, Sabari had told Lord Ram to proceed towards lake Pampa where he will meet Sugriv and his companions who would help the Lord to trace and recover Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precedes Doha no. 36.]

Verse no. 3/17/1—Ever since Sabari woke up today morning, her left eyelids and left arms are fluttering (quivering; palpitating, vibrating)¹. These auspicious signs indicate that some good tidings which would give joy and happiness even to the sages and hermits are in the offing.

Her heart has filled with immense bliss and joy which is rare even for the sages. Her eyes are full of tears, and the body is thrilled.

She erected a thatched hut of reeds and grass, filled a pot with water, and started towards the forest path (from where she expected Sri Ram and Laxman to arrive). [To wit, she hurriedly repaired her hut and prepared it to welcome Lord Ram and Laxman whom she had been expecting for a very long time. The auspicious signs she witnessed convinced her that her wait is about to end.]

She has pleasant hopes in her heart and repeatedly recalls the auspicious prophesy made by her preceptor sage Matang (that she will have the good fortune of seeing the divine form of Lord Sri Ram one day of the days).

It appears that the Kalpa-creeper, already blooming with beautiful flowers, has collected all the rewards (fruits) of the good deeds there are in Sabari’s fate, converted them into fruits of bliss, happiness and joy, and has got itself laden with them². (3/17/1).

[¹It is believed that if the left arms and eyes of a male flutters then it is deemed a bad sign, whereas for a woman it is a good omen.

²Here, the creeper is Sabari, the flowers are her virtues and noble characters, the good deeds are the long services she had rendered to sage Matang after being castrated by the society and condemned by it, and the fruit is her final reward in the form of having Darshan or divine and holy viewing of the Lord, followed by her emancipation and final salvation.

*According to the story of Ramayana, Shabari was a woman belonging to a forest tribe called ‘Shabari’. This tribe was classified as Shudras or lower caste, and sustained themselves by collecting and selling honey and fruits from the forest trees. Being of a low caste, she is said have been ostracized by others. She served a sage named Matanga very devotedly. The sage was a realised soul, and so pleased was he with her devotion and service that he blessed her at the time of leaving his body that she would find her emancipation and salvation when Lord Ram visits her while searching for Sita. Like her Guru, Shabari too left her mortal body after having the privilege of meeting and worshipping the Lord in person by lighting the pyre herself with her mystical powers. According to Adhyatma Ramayana of sage Veda Vyas, it was Lord Ram who had performed her last rites himself, a rare privilege that was even denied to his own worldly father Dasrath.

Shabari used to live in the hermitage where earlier sage Matanga lived. This hermitage was near Mount Rishyamook where Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of the king of monkeys Vali, lived with his close confidantes Hanuman, Jamvant, Naal

and Neel etc. This place was about ten Yojans or eighty miles from Kishkindha, the capital of the forest kingdom of which Vali was the king.

There is a story about Lake Pampa on the banks of which she lived. The great sage Matang had his hermitage here. Shabari used to get up very early and clean the path around this lake before her Guru went there for his daily bath and other chores. It so happened that one day, the sages and seers who lived in that area saw her cleaning the path leading to the lake very early in the morning. Since she was of a low caste, they cursed and scolded her because they regarded her appearance as defiling the place. This misplaced notion of superiority and high stature immensely displeased the Lord. So as soon as those haughty and proud sages went and took a dip in that lake, its water turned turbid, polluted and infested by warms and filth. When Sri Ram had gone there during his forest exile, the sages and seers requested him to purify that lake. Sri Ram, being all-knowing, knew the secret behind that pollution, and in order to teach those sages a lesson of their lives, he asked them to request Sabari to take a dip in it. As soon as she did it, the water regained its former pristine purity, and the lake its former exceptional scenic beauty. This made the haughty sages and seers feel ashamed at their ignorance and behaviour.

According to the story of Ramayana, Sri Ram had visited her hermitage and enjoyed the fruits offered by her just like he would have enjoyed them if they were given to him by his mother. In the 'Ram-Sarawali of Surdas', verse no. 11, it is said that 'Sabari was a long time ardent devotee and a humble follower of Raghupati (Sri Ram). He accepted and ate fruits offered by her, preached her on the concept of complete devotion, and then liberated her by giving her residence in his own abode.'

It was Shabari who had advised Sri Ram to go towards the Rishyamook mountain and make friends with Sugriv, the monkey king, who in turn would help the Lord in finding out Sita and freeing her from the clutches of her captors.

The entire episode of Sabari appears in Ram Charit Manas in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 34, to Doha no. 36. In these verses of Ram Charit Manas, the episode of Sabari is described in detail.]

(3/17/2)

प्रानप्रिय पाहुने ऐहैं राम-लषन मेरे आजु।
जानत जन-जियकी मृदु चित राम गरीबनिवाज॥
मृदु चित गरीबनिवाज आजु बिराजिहैं गृह आइकै।
ब्रह्मादि संकर-गौरी पूजित पुजिहौं अब जाइकै॥
लहि नाथ हौं रघुनाथ-बानो पतितपावन पाइकै।
दुहु ओर लाहु अघाइ तुलसी तीसरेहु गुन गाइकै॥ 2॥

(3/17-2)

prānapriya pāhunē aihaiṁ rāma-laṣana mērē āju.
jānata jana-jiyakī mṛdu cita rāma garībanivāja..
mṛdu cita garībanivāja āju birājihaiṁ gr̥ha ā'ikai.
brahmādi saṅkara-gaurī pūjita pujihaum̐ aba jā'ikai..
lahi nātha haum̐ raghunātha-bānō patitapāvana pā'ikai.

duhu ōra lāhu aghā'i tulasī tīsarēhu guna gā'ikai.. 2..

Verse no. 3/17/2—[She contemplates—] ‘Ah! How lucky am I today that my dearer-than-life guests Sri Ram and Laxman would come.

Lord Sri Ram—who is of a sweet temperament, is the sustainer and benefactor of the underdog, the poor, lowly, humble and downtrodden—knows what is inside the mind of his devotees (because he is all-knowing, all-pervading, omniscient, omnipresent and resides in the heart of his devotees).

Now, I shall (go and) worship Lord Sri Ram who is worshipped by Brahma, Shiva, Parvati and other Gods.

Invoking Raghunath's (Sri Ram's) promise and famed glories that he makes even the downtrodden, the sinful, the lowly and the wretched ones into pure and holy ones, I shall now see him as my “Lord” (i.e. as my benefactor, liberator, purifier, sustainer and protector as well as one who provides for my succour and solace).

Thereby, I shall, as a result, reap multifold benefits: the rarest of rare rewards that one can have in this existential world (i.e. I will be getting the rewards of being alive, and especially at a time when the Lord has manifested himself on this earth and is passing this way so that I can personally serve and worship him), and also the rarest of rare rewards by way of spiritual bliss and beatitude that comes with attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Besides this, the third beneficiary would be Tulsidas who would benefit by singing the virtues and glories of the Lord for eternity¹ (3/17/2).’

[¹The point to note here is that Sabari has kept Tulsidas in mind while thinking of the benefits she will get on seeing Sri Ram. Perhaps Tulsidas was present as a ‘spirit’ on that occasion to witness that rarest of rare occasion just as he was present at Janakpur garden where Sri Ram had met Sita. Lovely indeed!

Sabari would become Videha Mukta, i.e. she would discard her gross mortal body and attain salvation and emancipation when she meets Lord Ram, while Tulsidas would become Jivan Mukta, i.e. he would continue to live in this body but attain an equivalent sense of bliss and beatitude by singing the divine stories of Lord Ram as well as the Lord’s holy name and glories for as long as he does not one day attain the same fate as that of Sabari!

The narration of these verses is in the present tense which also indicates the poet's presence on the occasion in a ‘spirit’ form. Here he acts as a scribe, a correspondent, a first hand witness to the unfolding drama of ardent devotion, matchless faith and conviction, as well as of the liberation of a downtrodden, an outcaste and an old wretched lady who was lifted instantaneously to a pedestal higher than that of a mother. This will be evident as we read on—]

(3/17/3)

दोना रुचिर रचे पूरन कंद-मूल, फल-फूल ।
 अनुपम अमियहुतें अंबक अवलोकत अनुकूल ॥
 अनुकूल अंबक अंब ज्यों निज डिंब हित सब आनिकै ।
 सुंदर सनेहसुधा सहस जनु सरस राखे सानिकै ॥
 छन भवन, छन बाहर, बिलोकति पंथ भूपर पानिकै ।
 दोउ भाइ आये सबरिकाके प्रेम-पन पहिचानिकै ॥ ३ ॥

(3/17-3)

dōnā rucira racē pūrana kanda-mūla, phala-phūla.
 anupama amiyahutēm ambaka avalōkata anukūla..
 anukūla ambaka amba jyōm nija ḍimba hita saba ānikai.
 sundara sanēhasudhā sahasa janu sarasa rākhē sānikai..
 chana bhavana, chana bāhara, bilōkati pantha bhūpara pānikai.
 dō'u bhā'i āyē sabarikākē prēma-pana pahicānikai.. 3..

Verse no. 3/17/3—Then, Sabari made beautiful cups or bowls (out of green and freshly plucked leaves), and filled them with the most pleasant, the sweetest and the most appealing edible roots, stems, fruits and flowers that she could find, all of which were most succulent, tastier than Amrit (elixir of life) and most charming to behold.

Even as a mother gathers, prepares and keeps the best of things for her loving child, she brought most attractive and lovely fruits etc. for the Lord, dipped them symbolically in the nectar of love and affection which was thousands of times more succulent and sweeter than Amrit, and kept them away safely for Lord Sri Ram.

She spiritedly went inside her hut one moment, came out horridly a moment later, shaded her old worn-out eyes with her palms that acted like a hood over her thick set of eyebrows, and looked intently, expectantly, yearningly and most eagerly down the path from where Lord Sri Ram was expected to approach her hermitage.

Just at that moment, realizing the intensity of Sabari's love, affection, devotion, endearment and yearning, the two brothers came to her Ashram (3/17/3).

(3 / 17/4)

स्रवन सुनत चली, आवत देखि लषन-रघुराउ ।
 सिथिल सनेह कहै, 'है सुपना बिधि, कैधौ सति भाउ' ॥
 सति भाउ कै सपनो ? निहारि कुमार कोसलरायके ।
 गहे चरन, जे अघहरन नत-जन-बचन-मानस-कायके ॥
 लघु-भाग-भाजन उदधि उमग्यो लाभ-सुख चित चाय कै ।
 सो जननि ज्यों आदरी सानुज, राम भूखे भायकै ॥ 4 ॥

(3/17-4)

sravana sunata calī, āvata dēkhi laṣana-raghurā'u.
 sithila sanēha kahai, 'hai supanā bidhi, kaidhaurā sati bhā'u'..
 sati bhā'u kai sapanō? nihāri kumāra kōsalarāyakē.
 gahē carana, jē aghaharana nata-jana-bacana-mānasa-kāyakē..
 laghu-bhāga-bhājana udadhi umagyō lābha-sukha cita cāya kai.
 sō janani jyōm ādarī sānuja, rāma bhūkhē bhāyakai.. 4..

Verse no. 3/17/4—When Sabari heard of the arrival of Lord Sri Ram and Laxman, she went forward, and seeing them with her eyes she became overwhelmed with affection, wondering in amazement at her good fortune and the divine sight she beheld—‘Oh God! Is this a dream or a reality?’

Saying this, she welcomed the Lord by falling at his feet and clasping them with her hands. These are the same holy feet that provide liberation to the devotees from all their sins. [This is because the Lord's holy feet are not only so pure and holy but they also possess so great a dynamic force and energy in them that any thing that is unholy and unclean immediately is transmuted into one that is holy and clean as soon as it comes into contact with these feet.]

Realising that she is immensely blessed, most fortunate, exceptionally lucky and very privileged though being of a low birth, an ocean of joy emerged from Sabari's heart. The Lord regarded her as if she was his own mother. (3/17/4).

(3 / 17/5)

प्रेम-पट पाँवड़े देत, सुअरघ बिलोचन-बारि।
 आस्रम लै दिए आसन पंकज-पाँय पखारि॥
 पद-पंकजात पखारि पूजे, पंथ-श्रम-बिरति भये।
 फल-फूल अंकुर-मूल धरे सुधारि भरि दोना नये॥
 पुभु खात पुलकित गात, स्वाद सराहि आदर जनु जये।
 फल चारिहू फल चारि दहि, परचारि-फल सबरी दये॥ 5॥

(3/17-5)

prēma-ṣaṭa pām̐varē dēta, su'aragha bilōcana-bāri.
 āsrama lai di'ē āsana paṅkaja-pām̐ya pakhāri..
 pada-paṅkajāta pakhāri pūjē, pantha-śrama-birati bhayē.
 phala-phūla aṅkura-mūla dharē sudhāri bhari dōnā nayē..
 pubhu khāta pulakita gāta, svāda sarāhi ādara janu jayē.
 phala cārihū phala cāri dahi, paracāri-phala sabarī dayē.. 5..

Verse no. 3/17/5—She laid a red-carpet of affection to welcome them (Sri Ram and Laxman), washed their feet by the water of her tears, and then brought them reverentially inside the hermitage and seated them.

She washed Lord Ram's feet and worshipped him, and this helped Lord Ram to overcome the weariness of the journey. Then she brought edible bulbs, roots, fruits, and germinated seeds etc. in new bowls made of leaves and placed them in front of them (Sri Ram-Laxman). Lord Ram started eating them, all the while relishing them and enjoying their delicious taste—thereby showing his due respects to the poor old woman.

Symbolically, Lord Ram, by eating those fruits, devoured all the four worldly fruits¹ that Sabari may have accumulated over time due to her austerities and penances, while compensating her with divine fruits that are far superior and rarer to obtain (in the form of spiritual bliss and beatitude, as well as liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for her soul). (3/17/5).

[¹The usual fruits or rewards one gets for a well-conducted life are the following: “Artha” (prosperity), “Dharma” (righteousness), “Kaam” (wish fulfillment), and “Moksha” (freedom). But these rewards are not imperishable and it may happen that they may be nullified by some evil deeds done by the creature even unawares.

So, Lord Ram replaced these transient rewards with the fruit of devotion and eternal bliss that are a rarity to attain.]

(3/17/6)

सुमन बरषि, हरषे सुर, मुनि मुदित सराहि सिहात ।
 'केहि रुचि केहि छुधा सानुज माँगि माँगि प्रभु खात ॥
 प्रभु खात माँगत देति सबरी, राम भोगी जागके' ।
 पुलकत प्रसंसत सिद्ध-सिव-सनकादि भाजन भागके ॥
 बालक सुमित्रा कौसिलाके पाहुने फल-सागके ।
 सुनि समुझि तुलसी जानु रामहि बस अमल अनुरागके ॥ 6 ॥

(3/17-6)

sumana baraṣi, haraṣē sura, muni mudita sarāhi sihāta.
 'kēhi ruci kēhi chudhā sānuja māṁgi māṁgi prabhu khāta..
 prabhu khāta māṁgata dēti sabarī, rāma bhōgī jāgakē'.
 pulakata prasansata sid'dha-siva-sanakādi bhājana bhāgakē..
 bālaka sumitrā kausilākē pāhunē phala-sāgakē.
 suni samujhi tulasī jānu rāmahi basa amala anurāgakē.. 6..

Verse no. 3/17/6—The Gods are happily showering flowers and feeling very glad, while the sages and saints too feel extremely delighted and praise Sabari for her good fortune.

They observed, 'Look how Lord Ram and Laxman are enjoying the offerings (of fruits, edible roots and stems) made by her (Sabari), and relishing their taste as if they were very hungry.

Lord Sri Ram (as the macrocosmic Viraat Purush or the Supreme Soul of creation) is the consumer of the various offerings made in a fire sacrifice. It is a great marvel that he is relishing these ordinary and humble fruits, desiring more of them, and Sabari is also repeatedly giving him the fruits one by one with great joy and cherish in her heart'.

This is how Sabari is being praised by the most exalted and fortunate persons such as the Siddhas (mystics, attained ones), sages Sankadi etc., and Lord Shiva. They all feel thrilled and emotional at the sight of the Lord being served by her.

Ah! The sons of Kaushalya and Sumitra (Sri Ram and Laxman respectively)¹ are partaking (or relishing, enjoying the taste of) raw fruits and vegetables offered to them (by Sabari) as her most honoured guests.

[¹By referring to their mothers, Tulsidas means that Lord Sri Ram and Laxman were born to queens, were accustomed to most delicious of foods, and were pampered with the choicest of delicacies. But today, in order to uphold the sanctity of the old Sabari's love and affection for them, they are relishing raw fruits and vegetable products as if they were the most delicious and choicest of eatables offered in the royal palace by their respective mothers.]

Tulsidas asserts that after hearing what he (Tulsidas) says, one must become certain and convinced that Sri Ram is moved only by, or is subject to control only by,

or can be overcome only by devotion and love which are sincere, pure and without any trace of deceit, and by nothing else².

[²Indeed, even the most humble, downtrodden, out castes and lowly creatures were embraced by Sri Ram relying on the basis of their having undiluted love, affection and devotion of the highest order for the Lord. Some of these examples are the following—the Kols, Kirats, Bhils (forest tribal), Nishad (the boatman), Guha (cave dwellers), vulture (Jatau), Sabari (the outcaste old lady), monkeys (Sugriv), bears (Jamvant), demons (Vibhishan) etc.] (3/17/6).

(3 / 17/7)

रघुबर अँचइ उठे, सबरी करि प्रनाम कर जोरि।
हौं बलि बलि गई, पुरई मंजु मनोरथ मोरि॥
पुरई मनोरथ, स्वारथहु परमारथहु पूरन करी।
अघ—अवगुनन्हिकी कोठरी करि कृपा मुद मंगल भरी॥
तापस—किरातिनि—कोल मृदु मूरति मनोहर मन धरी।
सिर नाइ, आयसु पाइ गवने, परमनिधि पाले परी॥ 7॥

(3/17-7)

raghubara aṁca'i uṭhē, sabarī kari pranāma kara jōri.
haum bali bali ga'i, pura'i mañju manōratha mōri..
pura'i manōratha, svārathahu paramārathahu pūrana karī.
agha-avagunanhikī kōṭharī kari kṛpā muda maṅgala bhari..
tāpasa-kirātini-kōla mṛdu mūrati manōhara mana dharī.
sira nā'i, āyasu pā'i gavanē, paramanidhi pālē parī.. 7..

Verse no. 3/17/7—[After eating—] Raghubar (Sri Ram) drank a sip of water (i.e. he sipped a little quantity of water just enough to clean his mouth), and got up.

Then Sabari brought together her hands and joined her palms as a sign of surrender and prayer. She bowed her head reverentially before Lord Ram and said, 'I sacrifice myself upon you (literally, thank you very much indeed) for you have fulfilled my most earnest desire.

You have fulfilled my (life long) quest and have also satisfied my self interest related to this mundane existence (by accepting my fruits, by being my honoured guest and letting me serve you with the same affection as you would have allowed your own mother), as well as my spiritual well being (by ensuring my emancipation and salvation).

I was a store-house (treasury, fount) of sins, evils, vices, unrighteousness and what not, but you have (eliminated all these and) filled it instead with happiness, bliss, joy and auspiciousness.'

At that time, the hermits and sages who had practiced austerities and penances, as well as the Kirats and Kols and other such forest-dwelling tribes (who were present on that happy and auspicious occasion), established the Lord's beautiful, pleasant and magnificent image in their respective hearts, bowed their heads in front of him (in reverence and to pay obeisance), got his permission (to leave), obtained the most

precious gift (literally, wealth) of devotion, affection and love for the Lord, and then went their ways. (3/17/7).

(3/17/8)

सिय-सुधि सब कही नख-सिख निरखि-निरखि दोउ भाइ ।
 दै दै प्रदच्छिना करति प्रनाम, न प्रेम अघाइ ॥
 अति प्रीति मानस राखि रामहि, राम-धामहि सो गई ।
 तेहि मातु-ज्यों रघुनाथ अपने हाथ जल-अंजलि दई ॥
 तुलसी-भनित, सबरी-प्रनति, रघुबर-प्रकृति करुनामई ।
 गावत, सुनत, समुझत भगति हिय होय प्रभु पद नित नई ॥ ८ ॥

(3/17-8)

siya-sudhi saba kahī nakha-sikha nirakhi-nirakhi dō'u bhā'i.
 dai dai pradacchinā karati pranāma, na prēma aghā'i..
 ati prīti mānasa rākhi rāmahi, rāma-dhāmahi sō ga'ī.
 tēhi mātu-jyōm raghunātha apanē hātha jala-añjali da'ī..
 tulasī-bhanita, sabarī-pranati, raghubara-prakṛti karunāma'ī.
 gāvata, sunata, samujhata bhagati hiya hōya prabhu pada nita na'ī.. 8..

Verse no. 3/17/8—Sabari gave Lord Ram the entire news about Sita. Then, watching the beautiful countenance of the two brothers, she reverentially circumambulated them repeatedly even as her affection (motherly love) for them knew no bounds.

She made her heart the abode of Lord Ram, and brimming with devotion, she went to the heavenly abode of the Lord. Lord Ram cremated her and performed her last rites as befitting his own mother.

By singing the verses of Tulsidas, remembering the prayers and devotion of Sabari and singing the praises of the Lord of a benevolent and merciful nature, one can surely achieve the Eternal Blissful state of consciousness (existence) obtained by attaining the Shanti Pad (i.e. by obtaining the Holy Feet of the Lord that gives eternal peace and bliss to the soul of the creature). (3/17/3).

ऋष्यमूकपर राम
 राग केदारा
 (4/1)

भूषन-बसन बिलोकत सियके ।
 प्रेम-बिबस मन, कंप पुलक तनु, नीरजनयन नीर भरे पियके ॥ १ ॥
 सकुचत कहत, सुमिरि उर उमगत, सील-सनेह-सुगुनगन तियके ।
 स्वामि-दसा-लखि लषन सखा कपि, पिघले हैं आँच माठ मानो धियके ॥ २ ॥
 सोचत हानि मानि मन, गुनि-गुनि गये निघटि फल सकल सुकियके ।
 बरने जामवंत तेहि अवसर, बचन बिबेक बीररस बियके ॥ ३ ॥
 धीर बीर सुनि समुझि परसपर, बल-उपाय उघटत निज हियके ।
 तुलसिदास यह समउ कहेतें कबि लागत निपट निदुर जड़ जियके ॥ ४ ॥

ṛṣyamūkapara rāma
rāga kēdārā

(4/1)

bhūṣana-basana bilōkata siyakē.

prēma-bibasa mana, kampa pulaka tanu, nīrajanayana nīra bharē piyakē.. 1..

sakucata kahata, sumiri ura umagata, sīla-sanēha-sugunagana tiyakē.

svāmi-dasā-lakhi laṣana sakhā kapi, pighalē hairi āṁca māṭha mārō
ghiyakē..2..

sōcata hāni māni mana, guni-guni gayē nigḥaṭi phala sakala sukiyakē.

baranē jānavanta tēhi avasara, bacana bibēka bīrarasa biyakē.. 3..

dhīra bīra suni samujhi parasapara, bala-upāya ughaṭata nija hiyakē.

tulasidāsa yaha sama'u kahētēm kabi lāgata nipaṭa niṭhura jaṛa jiyakē.. 4..

Lord Ram's meeting with Sugriv

Verse no. 4/1—[As advised by Sabari, Lord Ram wended his way towards Lake Pampa and seeing its pleasant surroundings he tarried there for a while to take rest and refresh himself as well as Laxman. From there the Lord moved to the foothills of the Rishyamook mountain. Sugriv, the monkey prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha abided there with his few chosen companions after he was expelled from the capital by his elder brother Baali due to some unfortunate misunderstanding between the two brothers.

When Sugriv espied Lord Ram and Laxman wandering below he was sore affright, thinking that his inimical brother has sent some warrior to locate him and kill him in exile. So, to find out the truth, he sent Hanuman, one of his trusted companions. Hanuman, who in due course would become Lord Ram's most trusted and faithful follower and devotee, came down the slope disguised as a young Brahmin. He asked Lord Ram who he was and why was he wandering and looking here and there so eagerly as if searching for some lost thing. The Lord briefed him about his condition, whereby Hanuman immediately realized who he was: forsooth Lord Ram was no one else but Lord Vishnu for whose arrival the gods had been waiting for so long disguised as monkeys and bears as advised by their patriarch Brahma, the creator. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it.

Hanuman and Lord Ram whereat had an emotional meeting, with Hanuman falling at the Lord's feet and clasping it with devotion, and Lord Ram lifting him and affectionately embracing him. After that, Hanuman told Lord Ram about his master Sugriv, and proposed that they become friends, with the assurance that Sugriv would do his best to help the Lord find and rescue Sita.

Lord Ram, wise as he was, realised that the enterprise of finding Sita and rescuing her was no mean task, and that he would need help in any form it came. If that help meant the support of an army, so much the better. So, seizing the

opportunity, Lord readily agreed, whereat Hanuman made the two brothers sit on his shoulders and took them up the mountain to its summit.

Hanuman introduced the two brothers to Sugriv with a hint to the latter that if they became friends it would be for mutual benefit. To wit, Hanuman subtly hinted to Sugriv that Lord Ram may help him settle scores with his enemy brother Baali and restore his rightful claim to the throne of Kishkindha, and in return Sugriv must oblige the Lord to locate and recover his wife Sita. It was a gain-gain situation for both, each being able to help the other's cause. So a solemn deal of friendship was made, with Hanuman and others as well as the fire as witnesses.

This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no.15 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 4.

After making friendship with Sugriv, Lord Ram sat down with him and both exchanged news and information about each other. Then Sugriv showed him some of the ornaments and pieces of clothes that Sita had thrown from the sky as Ravana's chariot was passing over the Rishyamook mountain towards Lanka. She thought it wisely that if anyone picks them up and showed them to the Lord when he comes that way searching for her trail, these things would help to convince the Lord that she was being taken in the direction where the Lord was heading. It also helped to establish the authenticity of Sugriv's story about his seeing Sita being taken away by Ravana.

Sugriv had picked them up at that time, and now he showed them to the Lord for identification. Then, Sugriv promised the Lord that he would do whatever was necessary and within his means to find Sita and get her back. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 5.

Now a word about the inhabitants of Kishkindha as being 'monkeys' would be in order. First of all, they weren't like some animal whose image is conjured up in the mind by the use of the word "monkey". This is clear in the very beginning of Kishkindha Kand. Lord Ram and Hanuman had conversed fluently with each other, and surely this dialogue was intelligible to both of them. It would be incredulous to think that a monkey, an animal that is, would talk in a tongue spoken by high-bred human prince. In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas it is clearly said that they conversed in Sanskrit, the classical language spoken by educated humans; Hanuman's speech was immaculate in grammar and accent, and Lord Ram had praised him for his manners and articulate language. Refer Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 17-18.

Not only Hanuman, but Lord Ram was freely able to talk with others too amongst the so-called 'monkeys and bears'. Therefore in all sooth they weren't "animals" as we would be inclined to identify them and think of them with the common use of the word 'monkey' for the residents of the kingdom of Kishkindha.

So here lies the catch. The 'Monkey race of Kishkindha' were, in all logical probabilities, a forest-dwelling warrior tribe more like the 'Pygmies' of inter-tropical Africa. They were dwarfs in appearance, because compared to the ordinary height of a man of other human races they had a short stature, perhaps a 'two-cubit man'. There were many like tribes in Africa (such as Akka, the Doko, the Tiki-Tiki, the Wambilikimo etc.) that shared land that was surrounded by habitats of taller men.

This tribe sprouted from mutation of the human gene, and normal men took their abnormalities of their ugly contours and stunted growth, which was around four spans high, as having been caused because of some curse or because they were possessed by some demon or evil spirit. So this tribe was pushed to the fringes of

civilization, and cast-off by the society they were forced out of habited areas and into the wilderness of the forests and mountains. Thus, they moved south of the Vindhya mountain range and lived in the densely forested mountainous region in the present day state of Karnataka in South India. It was called Kishkindha in earlier times.

Living in the midst of the wild-life of the forest and the wilderness of the mountains, this tribe, with the passage of time, had to adopt itself to the life-style and habits of the dwellers of the wilderness who were cut off from civilization and its trappings. They hunted and ate and lived like apes and monkeys, by way of necessity of survival, to adapt themselves to the forest and its cruel environs, becoming, over time, ferocious, and vicious in nature and completely different and unrecognizable from their ancestors who were in the era gone by were pushed out by the society into the jungle. Their external appearances underwent gradual but sure metamorphosis, such as they grew long hairs over the whole body like felt, had long nails and agile limbs that could aid them to climb and leap from trees to suit life in the forest, yellow-eyed, black-faced and speaking a language alien to humankind. In South Africa, the aboriginals speak a tongue called 'Bantu' which is a corrupted version of the main language of the southern part of the continent.

These sort of unconventional men were encountered by Sindabad the Sailor in his third journey across the oceans where he and his companions met such men on the 'Mountain of the Zughb' as narrated in the original version of the legendary tale of the 1001 Arabian Nights.

Nevertheless, though quite at odds with what civilization knew as 'men', they traced their roots to the human race, of course to back in time by, say, a couple of dozen or even a hundred or so centuries. During the intervening long period of time, the original tribe may have multiplied and diversified into many sub-tribes much like the humans of the civilized world. Each went its own way, and populated far-off places on earth when their original home, the area around Kishkindha, could not support the demands of an ever-increasing population. This is why we read that when Lord Ram's army of monkeys was to be assembled, they came from 'all corners of the earth, and its members were of different appearances and of various countenances, means and habits'. But they had their capital city and headquarters at Kishkindha. It's like people today migrating to different corners of the planet to make a living, even settling down there, but they are rooted to their mother-land and always recognized by the country of their forefathers. [Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Doha no. 21; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 54; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 5-6.

Some were very wise among them, like among other members of the human race. Eager to relate to and trace their past roots, and to find ways to integrate with the society of the current time, as during the era of Lord Ram's birth in Treta-yug when the Lord had gone to Kishkindha on his way to search for his stolen wife Sita, these ancient inhabitants of Kishkindha made efforts to learn the modern language of India, which was Sanskrit. Some excelled in it—such as the case was with Hanuman. [Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 17-18.]

By this time of course, the present generation of humans around Kishkindha had all but forgotten the bitterness and the circumstances of castration of this primitive tribe of yore, and so there were few inhibitions for learning and interacting.

Coming back to our narration of the story as it appears in Geetawali, when Sugriv showed to Lord Ram the ornaments that Sita had dropped from the sky from the chariot in which she was being whisked away by Ravana to Lanka, the Lord recognized them, and holding them close to his heart he was jubilant because it proved that he was proceeding in the right direction, but at the same time he wailed as these ornaments refreshed her memory and caused the agony of separation to get stoked.]

On seeing Sita's ornaments, Lord Ram was thrilled; his eyes became wet with tears, and his heart overflowed with affection and joy (1).

He hesitated at overtly praising the glory of Sita¹, but her memory filled his heart with joy as well as grief. Seeing his condition, Laxman, Sugriv and other monkeys also felt very emotional as if butter has started melting on contact with (emotional) heat (2).

[¹Sita was Lord Ram's wife, and therefore it would look highly unconventional and inappropriate to utter praises for her in front of other male companions.]

They became dejected and distressed at the thought of Sita's sufferings. At that time, the old bear-king called Jamvant consoled Lord Ram in different ways, using words of wisdom and courage (3).

Encouraged by him, the assembly began to ponder on ways to find and rescue Sita instead of wasting time in wailings and lamenting uselessly.

Addressing himself, Tulsidas says that a poet's heart appears to be emotionless, merciless and harsh because he is describing those moments (i.e. he should not describe such a pitiful and heart-wrenching scene, but there is no way out as he has to narrate the story as it happened)² (4).

[²Here, Tulsidas is referring to himself because he is the poet who is describing these moments. What he actually means is that one should not regard him as being merciless and heartless simply because he describes such poignant moments, but one should understand that as a poet and a scribe it is his moral duty that he narrates everything as it happened in a neutral manner, regardless of whether any event or moment is painful or not.]

सीताजीकी खोजका आदेश (4 / 2)

प्रभु कपि—नायक बोलि कह्यो है।
 बरषा गई, सरद आई, अब लागि नहि सिय—सोधु लह्यो है॥ 1॥
 जा कारन तजि लोकलाज, तनु राखि बियोग सह्यो है।
 ताको तौ कपिराज आज लागि कछु न काज निबह्यो है॥ 2॥
 सुनि सुग्रीव सभित नमित—मुख, उतरु न देन चह्यो है।
 आइ गए हरि जूथ, देखि उर पूरि प्रमोद रह्यो है॥ 3॥
 पठये बदि—बदि अवधि दसहु दिसि, चले बलु सबनि गह्यो है।
 तुलसी सिय लागि भव—दधिनिधि मनु फिर हरि चहत मह्यो है॥ 4॥

sītājīkī khōjakā ādēśa
(4/2)

prabhu kapi-nāyaka bōli kahyō hai.
 baraṣā ga'īm, sarada ā'īm, aba lagi nahi siya-sōdhu lahyō hai.. 1..
 jā kārana taji lōkalāja, tanu rākhi biyōga sahyō hai.
 tākō tau kapiṛāja āja lagi kachu na kāja nibahyō hai.. 2..
 suni sugrīva sabhīta namita-mukha, utaru na dēna cahyō hai.
 ā'i ga'ē hari jūtha, dēkhi ura pūri pramōda rahyō hai.. 3..
 paṭhayē badi-badi avadhi dasahu disi, calē balu sabani gahyō hai.
 tulasī siya lagi bhava-dadhinidhi manu phira hari cahata mahyō hai.. 4..

Search for Sita Begins

Verse no. 4/2—[Sugriv was made the king of Kishkindha by the intervention of Lord Ram. The Lord himself tarried on the summit of a mountain called 'Prabarshan' during the four wet months of the rainy season. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 12.

At the end of this period, Lord Ram sent Laxman to remind Sugriv of the promises he had made in connection with Sita, because as is the usual habit of all living beings, Sugriv had forgotten the Lord's work after he was crowned king and got involved in routine work of the realm, as well as in enjoying the comforts and pleasures of kingdom. Hereat, Sugriv assembled groups of wise and agile monkeys and bears and send them in all the directions to search for Sita, with strict injunction that they are to report in a month's time. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 22.]

Lord Ram summoned Sugriv and said, 'Brother! The rainy season has gone and winter has come, but you have not yet made any effort to search Sita (1) for whom I have borne this body (i.e. I have not died due to the sorrow of parting with my beloved in the hope that one day I will see her). You have not done my work yet (2).'

Hearing this polite admonishment from the Lord, Sugriv became afraid (that he has offended the Lord who has obliged him so much, and his inaction in helping the Lord and fulfilling his promises made to him at the time of making friendship on the Rishyamook mountain, he may invite the wrath and punishment of the Lord).

Sugriv humbly bowed his head in shame. At that moment, huge companies of monkeys arrived in the town of Kishkindha, and their arrival led to celebrations (3).

All of them were sent in the 10 directions¹ and ordered to report back within a specified time-frame².

Tulsidas says that it appeared that Lord Ram wished to churn the ocean in search of Sita (an allegory to the mythical churning of ocean by the demons and the gods in search of nectar) (4).

[¹The 10 directions are the following = north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.

²In Ram Charit Manas it is mentioned that this time limit was one month. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 22.]

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Section 6.4:

Kavitawali Ramayan

Kavitawali Ramayan, another of Goswami Tulsidas' classic narration of the epic story of the life and time of Lord Ram universally known as the "Ramayana", is very brief while dealing with the topic which we have covered in Chapter no. 6 of our Book so much so that it has only two verses devoted to cover the entire period of the Story from the time Lord Ram went behind Marich, the decoy deer with the golden hide, till the time Hanuman was preparing to leap across the ocean to reach Lanka, the phase that is generally narrated under the titles of Aranya Kand and Kishkindha Kand respectively. So let's have a quick glimpse at Kavitawali before we move on with the narrative that will take us to the captivating story of Hanuman landing at Lanka, his meeting with Sita, and the subsequent burning of Lanka, which are very interesting and described in fine detail in the next Chapter of our Book.

पंचवटीं बर पर्नकुटी तर बैठे हैं राम सुभायँ सुहाए ।
सोहै प्रिया, प्रिय बंधु लसै, 'तुलसी' सब अंग घने छबि छाए ॥
देखि मृगा मृगनैनी कहे प्रिय बैन, ते प्रीतमके मन भाए ।
हेमकुरंगके संग सरासनु सायकु लै रघुनायकु धाए ॥१॥

1. pañcabaṭīṁ bara parṇakuṭī tara baiṭhē haiṁ rāmu subhāyaṁ suhā'ē.
sōhai priyā, priya bandhu lasai, 'tulasī' saba aṅga ghanē chabi chā'ē.
dēkhi mṛgā mṛganainī kahē priya baina, tē prītamakē mana bhā'ē.
hēmakuraṅgakē saṅga sarāsanu sāyaku lai raghunāyaku dhā'ē..1..

Verse no. 3/1—Lord Ram is sitting near the hut in Panchvati along with Sita and Laxman. Tulsidas says that the three look extremely beautiful and enchanting (1).

Seeing a golden deer (a fawn), Sita asked Lord Ram to go and fetch it for her. Then, Lord Ram picked up his bow and arrow and rushed towards that deer¹ (2).

[Note—It ought to be noted here that this Chapter called 'Aranya Kand' has been summed up by Tulsidas in merely a single verse in Kavitawali. This Chapter actually deals with the events in the life of Lord Ram after he left Chitrakoot with Sita and Laxman and entered the deeper part of the forest, which is called 'Aranya', which was very dense and far away from civilisation. It was here that the majority of hermits and sages lived in secluded hermitages in pursuit of their spiritual goals, doing penances, austerity, meditation and contemplation and undertaking all other such activities as prescribed in the scriptures. Here Lord Ram had met some of the greatest sages of

their times, such as Atri and his wife Anusuiya, Sharbhanga, Agastya. This part of the forest was infested with ferocious and vicious demons, and they had been killing the resident sages with impunity over a long period of time so much so that a huge mountain of their bones was formed. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.}

It was during this journey through the forest that the demon Viradh was liberated and the Lord had befriended the vulture Jatayu.

After leaving Chitrakoot, the next hermitage where Lord Ram stayed for some time was located deep in this forbidden part of the forest called 'Dandak', at a place called 'Panchvati' as it had five tall trees in a circle. It was at this place that the Lord implemented the next phase of his plan that would culminate in the elimination of the demons—and it was to maneuver the abduction of Sita by the demon king Ravana so that an excuse could be found to eliminate him in the tussle to free Sita. This incident is the one that has been cited in our aforesaid verse of Kavitawali. It was a watershed development as it was the stepping stone for the next phase of the operation so that the very purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down to earth in the form of Lord Ram could be served. Had Sita not been abducted by Ravana, the story would have been completely different: in all probability it would have been that the Lord wandered here and there in the forest to pass the 14 years of exile and return home to receive the crown of Ayodhya. But that was not the reason why the Lord had come to the forest in the first place.

Therefore, Tulsidas has skipped all other events that are narrated in the full version of the story of Ram's life and time in the deep recesses of the terrifying forest as they were only incidental to the main story and inconsequential to the fulfillment of the main aim of Lord Ram's coming to the forest—which was to get Sita abducted and plant her in the fort of the demons so that the Lord could go there kill the evil demons so as to keep the promise he had made to the sages, the gods and mother earth when they had gone to pray to Lord Vishnu to protect them against the tyranny of Ravana and his demon race, and the Lord had promised them that it shall be done. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Doha no. 187.}

So, Tulsidas cut short the other details of this Chapter which he had already narrated in great detail in his epic narration of Lord Ram's story in his timeless and ageless book known by the name 'Ram Charit Manas' in its Aranya Kand, because, as has been said by the sayers, "that it is needless to repeat it, for there is no avail in a twice-told tale".

Hence, the clever narrator Tulsidas used only one peg to link two ends of the story just like one uses a rock or any other support to jump from this side to the other side of a narrow stream. The first part of the story ends in Ayodhya Kand with the Lord leaving Chitrakoot with his wife and brother, and the other part begins in Kishkindha Kand with the Lord wondering in the forest in search of his abducted wife and preparing to launch the next phase of the campaign of eliminating the demons by moving ahead towards their stronghold at Lanka and taking along the gods who had been waiting for his arrival at Kishkindha in the guise of monkeys and bears (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it).

This incident of Lord Ram running behind the golden deer, who was actually the demon Marich in disguise, has been described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 28; and in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto nos. 6-7.

We have already read it in detail in Chapter 6, sections 6.1 and 6.2 of our Book.]

जब अङ्गदादिनकी मति-गति मंद भई,
 पवनके पूतको न कूदिबेको पलु गो।
 साहसी है सैलपर सहसा सकेलि आइ,
 चितवत चहूँ ओर, औरनि को कलु गो॥
 'तुलसी' रसातलको निकसि सलिलु आयो,
 कोलु कलमल्यो, अहि-कमठको बलु गो।
 चारिहू चरनके चपेट चाँपें चिपिटि गो,
 उचकें उचकि चारि अंगुल अचलु गो॥१॥

1. jaba aṅgadādinakī mati-gati manda bhaī,
 pavanakē pūtakō na kūdibēkō palu gō.
 sāhasī hvai sailapara sahasā sakēli ā'i,
 citavata cahūṁ ōra, aurani kō kalu gō..
 'tulasi' rasātalakō nikasi salilu āyō,
 kōlu kalamalyō, ahi-kamaṭhakō balu gō.
 cārihū caranakē capēṭa cāṁpēm cipiṭi gō,
 ucakēm ucaki cāri aṅgula acalu gō..1..

Verse no. 4/1—When Angad and other monkeys became distressed, dejected and hopeless because no one was capable to leap across the vast ocean (and therefore, would be unable to achieve success in finding about Sita), in that circumstance the Wind-God's son Hanuman did not take more than a moment to jump up a mountain. Then he began to survey the landscape in all directions. [His courage and bold demeanour instilled fear among the adversaries / enemies, and confidence in the monkeys.] Tulsidas says that water sprouted from the earth's bosom, the God Varaaha (the Boar) wriggled, and God Sheshnath and legendary Tortoise lost their strength and courage. [God Varaaha had enough strength to rescue earth on his snout from the clutches of a demon; the serpent god Shesh holds earth on his hood; while the legendary Tortoise supports the huge mountain, used to churn the mythological ocean by the Gods and demons on his back. It simply means that the earth shook violently when Hanuman leapt upwards.]

When he made the final launch, the huge mountain flattened by the downward pressure of Hanuman's feet; and as soon as he was air-borne and the pressure removed, it rose a little bit—about the height measured by four fingers—from its flattened position. [This indicates a spring-like effect. In modern scientific terms, it is simple to visualize the event if compared to a rocket launch. The downward thrust generated by the leap-frog action of Hanuman's legs was sufficient to flatten the protuberance on the earth (the hill), and having thus become airborne because of the counter thrust upwards, Hanuman launched himself like a rocket. The pressure thus removed, the spring (the hill) tried to regain its former shape, but such was the weight launched that it could rise only four fingers, and not to the original height.]

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Part 2

Chapter 7: Hanuman meets Sita; The Burning of Lanka by Hanuman; His return to give the Good News of Sita's discovery to Lord Ram

In this Chapter no. 7 we read how Hanuman crosses the ocean successfully after overcoming a few obstacles, and lands in Lanka where he meets Vibhishan, who then guides him to the place where Sita was held captive in a garden called 'Ashok Van'. Hanuman proceeds to meet her; Sita is elated to see him and receive assurance that Lord Ram is on his way to free her. Then Hanuman goes on the rampage and ruins that magnificent garden, which was Ravana's personal garden-of-pleasure, and during it he kills a large section of the demon army that tried to capture him. He, however, voluntarily submitted in the end and was brought to the demon court in the presence of their king Ravana.

A hot and acrimonious exchange of words between Ravana and Hanuman followed, at the end of which the infuriated demon king ordered Hanuman's tail be burned as a token of insult and humiliation of Lord Ram's messenger, and an implied rebuff to the Lord himself. Once the foolish demons tied Hanuman's ever-elongating tail with cloth, doused it with oil and lit it, he suddenly freed himself and ran amok in the city, jumping and leaping across the city's streets and buildings, gardens and yards, setting the whole place afire. Finally, the whole city of Lanka was turned into a smouldering place resembling a dark hulk of a burnt-out ship, or a verdant forest whose tall green trees are reduced to ash after a fierce wildfire ravages through it, turning what earlier was a magnificent gilded 'city of gold', that was the envy of even the heaven, into a heap of darkened ruins that were either still smoking or were covered with black ghastly soot at the time Hanuman left it to return to Kishkindha to report to Lord Ram about the success of his mission.

These events are traditionally covered in 'Sundar Kand' of the Ramayana. We shall read about them by citing (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto nos. 1-5; (c) Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-21; and (d) Kavitaawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-32.

Section 7.1:

Ram Charit Manas

{Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34}

चौ०. जामवंत के बचन सुहाए । सुनि हनुमंत हृदय अति भाए ॥ १ ॥

तब लगि मोहि परिखेहु तुम्ह भाई । सहि दुख कंद मूल फल खाई ॥ २ ॥
जब लगि आवौं सीतहि देखी । होइहि काजु मोहि हरष बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥
यह कहि नाइ सबन्हि कहूँ माथा । चलेउ हरषि हियँ धरि रघुनाथा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jā mavanta kē bacana suhā'ē. suni hanumanta hṛdaya ati bhā'ē. 1.
taba lagi mōhi parikhēhu tumha bhā'ī. sahi dukha kanda mūla phala khā'ī. 2.
jaba lagi āvaum sītahi dēkhī. hō'ihi kāju mōhi haraṣa bisēṣī. 3.
yaha kahi nā'i sabanhi kahūṁ māthā. calē'u haraṣi hiyaṁ dhari raghunāthā. 4.

[We must recall here what Jamvant had told Hanuman earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-12 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 30, that he had the privilege to be the chosen one to do the work of Lord Ram, which was to go and meet Sita and then return to convey the good news about her to the Lord. Thus inspired and motivated, Hanuman, the fortunate son of the wind-god, immediately proceeded to accomplish the task assigned to him as follows—]

Jamvant's words were welcomed by Hanuman who received them with a cheerful and gladdened heart¹. (1)

Hanuman said, 'Brothers! Wait for me till the time I come back after meeting Sita. During the intervening period, cope with a little hardship and sustain yourselves somehow by eating fruits and edible roots [2], because a sixth sense makes me feel certain that the work will be done successfully as my heart is feeling cheerful, thrilled and elated as it usually happens when one is about to embark on an auspicious mission that is destined to be successful [3].²' (2-3)

Saying thus, Hanuman bowed his head to all his brethrens, invoked Lord Ram and enshrined the Lord's divine image in his heart, and proceeded on his mission³. (4)

[Note—¹Jamvant had made two points—viz. (i) first he had praised Hanuman and encouraged him by saying that his birth itself was for doing Lord Ram's work, so he must no longer procrastinate, but rather act swiftly to go across the ocean to find out about Sita's exact whereabouts (Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 30), (ii) and second, to just go and meet Sita and inform her about the latest situation, assuring her that soon Lord Ram would come himself with an army to free her from captivity (Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-12 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 30).

These two pieces of advice gladdened Hanuman's hear as he felt exceptionally happy that he had been selected for this prestigious project.

²These verses show that Hanuman had full confidence in attaining success in the effort of seeing Sita. When a person does any thing with confidence and certainty of success, with his heart and mind fully devoted to the project at hand, than the chances of his actually attaining success are extremely high, as compared to when he does any thing half-heartedly and with an uncertain mind.

³The message is clear—when a person is about to start on a new project or enterprise, when he is just about to launch himself on a journey fraught with all sorts of

uncertainties and dangers, the best insurance for success and the guard against failures he has is to remember the Lord God, the deity whom he worships and reveres, offer himself to the Lord, and then proceed with a cheerful and confident heart—success would be his.]

सिंधु तीर एक भूधर सुंदर । कौतुक कूदि चढ़ेउ ता ऊपर ॥ ५ ॥
 बार बार रघुबीर सँभारी । तरकेउ पवनतनय बल भारी ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहिं गिरि चरन देइ हनुमंता । चलेउ सो गा पाताल तुरंता ॥ ७ ॥
 जिमि अमोघ रघुपति कर बाना । एही भाँति चलेउ हनुमाना ॥ ८ ॥

sindhu tīra ēka bhūdhara sundara. kautuka kūdi caṛhē'u tā ūpara. 5.
 bāra bāra raghubīra saṁbhārī. tarakē'u pavanatanaya bala bhārī. 6.
 jēhim giri carana dē'i hanumantā. calē'u sō gā pātāla turantā. 7.
 jimi amōgha raghupati kara bānā. ēhī bhāṁti calē'u hanumānā. 8.

There was a beautiful hill on the shore of the ocean; Hanuman sprang up to its summit with swift and light steps as if he was playing a sport. (5)

Remembering Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) and submitting himself to the Lord's care repeatedly (bāra bāra raghubīra saṁbhārī), Hanuman, who had immense strength and energy, jumped on it like a powerful spring (of a catapult that is about to launch a ball across the sky). (6)

[In order to gain momentum and thrust, Hanuman leapt from one hill to another in the chain of hills that dotted the shore.] Whichever hill Hanuman placed his foot upon and sprang from it to the next one, that hill sank deep down into the bowls of the earth instantly (calē'u sō gā pātāla turantā)¹. (7)

In this way, Hanuman zoomed across the sky like an invincible arrow of Lord Ram streaking towards its target. [To wit, Hanuman was moving very speedily and in a straight line across the sky like an arrow would fly.] (8)

[Note—¹As Hanuman jumped from one hill to another to gain speed and traction, and during each such jump he increased his upward and forward thrust like a rocket that is about to be launched from its pad and head skyward, each of these hills sank in to the earth by the downward thrust exerted by his huge, bulky and muscular body before it finally became air-borne! The soil near the ocean was not as hard and solid as it is in the upcountry plains because water of the ocean made the earth soft around the shore. So when a pressure was exerted by Hanuman during his launch, these hills 'sank' in the soil instead of crumbling into rocky pieces.

In the period of history to which we are referring in this grand epical Story, the coast of the ocean bordering the southern edge of the landmass of the Indian continent would have certainly been different from what it is today, for the timeline we allude to was hundreds and thousands of years in the past. The shore-line had a chain of small and large protuberances, such as hills, hillocks, outcrops, cliffs and reefs, spreading for quite a distance not only along its length and extending back for many miles up-

land, but even jutting out into the water itself like gigantic natural piers and breakwaters.

Hanuman raced up these protuberances with a spring in his steps as he gradually picked up speed to gain momentum and traction till he reached the last hill or reef or cliff or outcrop which was the highest point along the line, and from here he made his giant leap into the air to become air-borne. Once in the air, he cruised in a straight line like the crow flies in order not to waste a single unit of his energy to cover even a single extra mile by making any deviation from this straight line. When it is said that he moved like Lord Ram's arrow it is meant that "he flew through the sky with great speed and in a straight line" because this is how any arrow would fly.]

जलनिधि रघुपति दूत बिचारी । तैं मैनाक होहि श्रमहारी ॥ ९ ॥

jalanidhi raghupati dūta bicārī. tair̥ maināka hōhi śramahārī. 9.

The Ocean (jalanidhi), (or its patron deity), realised that he (Hanuman) was Lord Ram's messenger; so he asked Mt. Mainak to prepare itself to give some rest to this messenger during the journey¹. (9)

[Note—¹Here, the 'ocean' has been personified. If not the ocean's water than at least its patron deity, the Varun-God, saw that Lord Ram's messenger, Hanuman, was on a mission for the Lord. Wishing to give Hanuman some sort of rest mid-way, the ocean or its patron deity requested a mountain located somewhere in the middle of the ocean to allow Hanuman to alight on it and take some rest before he moves ahead.

The ocean was willing to help Lord Ram's messenger because it owed its existence to one of the ancestors of the Lord, a great King of the Ikshwaku dynasty who was known as 'Sāgar', from whom the ocean derived its vernacular name 'sāgar'.

The story of creation of 'sagar' is closely related to the story of 'river Ganges' coming down to earth from heaven. It is briefly as follows: King Sagar had done a great horse sacrifice known as 'Ashwamedh Yagya'. This sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of Gods who was renowned for his mischief and jealous nature, in the guise of a demon. The reason was that king Sagar had already done 99 such sacrifices, and if he successfully completed this 100th sacrifice, he would have become eligible for the stature of Indra. This Indra could not tolerate.

King Sagar ordered his sixty thousand sons to go and find the horse. They dug-up the entire earth in search of this horse. Though they failed in their effort to find the concerned horse, but the earth that they dug-up formed the 'great hollow' that would be filled with water to form the 'ocean', which is like a great lake covering three-fourths of the surface of earth.]

दो०. हनूमान तेहि परसा कर पुनि कीन्ह प्रनाम ।

राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहाँ बिश्राम ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

hanūmāna tēhi parasā kara puni kīnha pranāma.
rāma kāju kīnhēm binu mōhi kahām̐ bīsrāma. 1.

Hanuman merely touched Mainak with his hands (without spending any precious time resting on it) and bowed before it to pay his respects.

[When Mainak asked him to take some rest—] Hanuman told the Mountain, ‘How can I take rest before completing Lord Ram’s work?’¹ (Doha no. 1)

[Note—¹We must note here that even inanimate entities such as the ocean and the mountain have assumed an animate form to speak. This is in accordance with ancient style of writing poetry where inanimate things are given life and breath by the poet, enabling them to communicate emotions and sentiments that the poet likes to convey himself through these mediums.

This fact of Mt. Mainak assuming a human form is specifically mentioned in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 111-112.

Mt. Mainak was a friend of the Wind-God, and so he was willing to help the latter’s son Hanuman. Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132.

This action of the Mountain pleased Indra, the king of the gods, who thanked him and told him that in future he need not have any fear from his weapon known as Vajra, the thunderbolt. Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 137-140.

Ancient legend holds that in earlier times, mountains could fly like birds. Indra did not like it, so he threw his thunderbolt at the flying mountains to cut their wings so that they became stationery. However, Mainak managed to escape because with the aid of its friend the wind-god it moved with tremendous speed ahead of the thunderbolt and hid itself under the water of the ocean where it was very deep, i.e. in its middle. This way, Mt. Mainak became obliged to both the Ocean and the Wind-God. Hence, when the time came to repay his debts, Mainak was more than willing, especially since Hanuman was, besides being the son of the wind-god, also the messenger of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being.

Mt. Mainak was situated in the middle of the ocean for the reason cited above—i.e. at a distance midway between the shore of the ocean that bordered the northern continent, and the shore that lined the land of the island of Lanka. To wit, it was situated roughly 50 Yojans from the either shores.

Therefore, by the time Hanuman reached this mountain he had covered half of the total distance to Lanka, i.e. approximately 50 Yojans out of the total 100 Yojans.

A very important lesson is learnt here—it is that we must not allow ourselves to become lax, careless and weary, or be distracted by anything no matter how tempting it may be, before we reach our objective. We must strive tirelessly and relentlessly to achieve our goal, and not let our guard down somewhere midway, as no one can say if such breaks may not take the wind out of the sail of success and ground the ship.]

चौ०. जात पवनसुत देवन्ह देखा । जानैं कहूँ बल बुद्धि बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥

सुरसा नाम अहिन्ह कै माता । पठइन्हि आइ कही तेहिं बाता ॥ २ ॥

आजु सुरन्ह मोहि दीन्ह अहारा । सुनत बचन कह पवनकुमारा ॥ ३ ॥

राम काजु करि फिरि मैं आवौं । सीता कइ सुधि प्रभुहि सुनावौं ॥ ४ ॥

तब तव बदन पैठिहउँ आई । सत्य कहउँ मोहि जान दे माई ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

jāta pavanāsuta dēvanha dēkhā. jānaim kahuṃ bala bud'dhi bisēṣā. 1.
surasā nāma ahinḥa kai mātā. paṭha'inhi ā'i kahī tēhim bātā. 2.
āju suranḥa mōhi dīnḥa ahārā. sunata bacana kaha pavanakumārā. 3.
rāma kāju kari phiri maim āvaum. sītā ka'i sudhi prabhuhi sunāvaum. 4.
taba tava badana paiṭhiha'um āī. satya kaha'um mōhi jāna dē māī. 5.

When the gods saw that the son of the wind-god was on his way, they wished to ascertain whether he had the necessary strength, wit, intelligence and maneuverability to be successful in the mission¹. (1)

So these gods sent Sursa, the mother of the serpents, to test Hanuman. She came and stood in his way, saying—(2)

‘Today the gods have given me sufficient food (for I shall gobble up this creature and satisfy my hunger).’

When the son of the wind-god (Hanuman) heard her say this, he replied—(3)

‘I will accomplish Lord Ram’s work and return, then I will go and inform the Lord about Sita and her well-being, --- (4)

--- After that, I will come and offer myself to you voluntarily by entering your stomach (i.e. I shall allow you to eat me whole, and I will cheerfully surrender myself to you for this purpose).

I promise to you mother that what I say is the truth, and trust me that I will truly do what I say to you, but I beg you to let me go ahead now and wait till I come back to you once again.² (5)

[Note—¹The mission was exceptionally tough, and the enemy equally formidable. Hanuman was about to enter, all alone and unarmed, the citadel of the ferocious and vicious demons! The Gods were worried if he would actually succeed; they knew how strong and powerful Ravana was, and to overcome such a formidable adversary it was absolutely essential to have a level of strength and power that exceeded the opponent so that he can be outwitted. So the gods held a quick parley and decided to test Hanuman’s eligibility, his aptitude and intelligence, to determine if he needed some extra help from them, for which they must prepare in advance, or if he would accomplish the mission successfully independently. They thought that it was better to be on the safe side and take precautionary measures—but the need of the hour was to judge what sort of help was needed to be extended to Hanuman, and for this he must first be tested.

²A very remarkable statement by Hanuman—it shows his commitment, dedication and devotion to his duty as well as to his Lord. He is not afraid of death; he would rather willingly embrace it, but what bothers him most was the fear of failure to carry out his Lord’s orders and serve him fully before dying, because if this happens and Sursa eats him before he finishes the mission then he would not be able to get a

chance of being blessed by Lord Ram, which in turn would entitle him to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Besides this, he wished to see his beloved Lord Ram for one last time before dying. That is why he asked Sursa to give him some time so that he could first meet Sita, convey her news to Lord Ram, and pay his last respects to his beloved Lord before taking leave from him to come back and offer himself to her for feeding her hunger!

This first test proved to the gods that Hanuman does not fear death, that he was totally devoted to Lord Ram and committed to carry out the Lord's command with due diligence and faith, and that he is not haughty and egoist.

The next group of verses herein below will show that though Hanuman was humble and polite, yet he was not to be taken for granted, because if he was not allowed to do what he thought was right and correct then he had the ability and the intelligence, the wit and the craft, to out-manuever his opponent and bring the latter to heel.]

कवनेहुँ जतन देइ नहिं जाना । ग्रससि न मोहि कहेउ हनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥
 जोजन भरि तेहिं बदन पसारा । कपि तनु कीन्ह दुगुन बिस्तारा ॥ ७ ॥
 सोरह जोजन मुख तेहिं ठयऊ । तुरत पवनसुत बतिस भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥
 जस जस सुरसा बदन बढावा । तासु दून कपि रूप देखावा ॥ ९ ॥
 सत जोजन तेहिं आनन कीन्हा । अति लघु रूप पवनसुत लीन्हा ॥ १० ॥

kavanēhuṁ jatana dē'i nahim jānā. grasasi na mōhi kahē'u hanumānā. 6.
 jōjana bhari tēhim badanu pasārā. kapi tanu kīnha duguna bistārā. 7.
 sōraha jōjana mukha tēhim ṭhaya'ū. turata pavanasuta battisa bhaya'ū. 8.
 jasa jasa surasā badanu baṛhāvā. tāsu dūna kapi rūpa dēkhāvā. 9.
 sata jōjana tēhim ānana kīnhā. ati laghu rūpa pavanasuta līnhā. 10.

No matter how hard Hanuman tried to politely persuade Sursa and convince her to allow him to proceed, she would not listen to him, and stood blocking his way.

Finally he decided that it was enough. So at last Hanuman bluntly told her, 'You will not devour me. [Listen, oh wretch of a woman! It seems you are hell-bent for a showdown. Come, face it now you evil one. Let me see how you can put me in your hideous mouth!]' (6)

Thus challenged, Sursa expanded her body for one yojan (roughly 8 miles)¹. The Kapi (Hanuman) immediately enlarged his body to twice that dimension (i.e. Hanuman expanded his body for 16 miles). (7)

Peeved and angry, Sursa expanded herself so much that her mouth opened wide to measure sixteen yojans (128 miles). [Sursa opened her mouth so wide that its diameter was about 128 miles.]

Not to be outwitted, the son of the wind-god instantly enlarged his body to measure thirty-two yojans (256 miles). (8)

As Sursa continued to increase the size of her body (mouth) progressively, the Kapi (Hanuman) enlarged his body instantly to twice that dimension². (9)

When finally Sursa had expanded her body so much so that the hollow cavity of her yawning mouth measured one hundred yojans (roughly 800 miles in diameter), the son of the wind-god suddenly reduced his body to a miniature size (i.e. he immediately shrank his huge body to revert back to its original size, or even smaller than what it actually was)³. (10)

[Note—¹Sursa expanded her body for “one yojan”—which actually means her ‘mouth and stomach’ were enlarged to a sufficient size that would enable her to devour Hanuman wholly. This clearly implies that Hanuman’s own form was roughly of this size, or a little smaller than one yojan. We have already read that at the time Jamvant inspired Hanuman to get ready to do Lord Ram’s work and praised him, Hanuman had assumed a colossus size. It was his bulky and muscular form that had played a crucial role in making the hills, hillocks, cliffs and reefs sink into the earth when he ran across their tops in leaps and bounds in order to gain momentum, speed and thrust to acquire the lift that was needed to launch himself into the air from the shore of the ocean. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 30.

²The reader must remember that we are reading of events occurring in some long gone era when mountains could sink, vultures and monkeys could speak the human tongue, warriors used bows and arrows that never seemed to end in numbers, when great sages and ascetics lived in forests to do sacrifices and practice meditation, when certain forms of creatures could change their forms and go anywhere they wished by using the transcendental path of movement, and so on and so forth. There is no wonder or fantasy in anything that we describe in this Book as happening during that era as the mind may not be able to fully understand or even imagine certain things which it has not actually seen or experienced in the present world, things to which it is not exposed or accustomed to. For instance, even a hundred or so years back it would have been difficult for a person to imagine and believe that one day there will be a certain thing called a mobile or cell phone, or internet, or computer or the so many other wonders of science that have completely revolutionized life in the world.

If a hot air balloon can be inflated to a multi-storey size and made to lift in the air and float, it is certainly possible that the body of a creature, which also has wind inside it in the form of breath and other vital airs, and is definitely hot from the within, can be expanded. Everyone can expand his chest and abdomen by at least a few inches by inhaling deeply, though in today’s world we lack the knowledge to do anything further. But that does not mean that in earlier times men had not mastered the art of expanding their bodies to whatever size they wished, and even time-travel using the transcendental path of movement.

In which direction did Sursa extend her body? Well, obviously it was in the latitudinal or vertical direction for the simple reason that Hanuman, whom she wished to put into her mouth whole, was standing before her, and not lying prostrate in which case she would have been compelled to expand herself in the longitudinal or horizontal direction.

To wit, when she had finally reached the maximum expansion of her body it stood at a height of 800 miles from the surface of the ocean!

³This trick of Hanuman proved to the gods that he was exceptionally witty and clever enough to out-manuever his opponent. First he enlarged his body to such an extent

that even if Sursa wanted she would not be able to eat him as every time his body was twice as large as Sursa's mouth, so he wouldn't fit into it. When she grew to such a huge size that extended for 800 miles into the sky like a gigantic tower bulging around its middle to represent her wide open mouth—mind you, this length is not a joke, for it extended high up into the blue sky, almost touching the outer ring of the atmosphere—her eyes would have become so large and situated so high up from the surface of the earth that she would fail to see anything low down on the surface of the ocean, close to her chin.

At this point, when Hanuman suddenly, and without any hint, reduced his size to the ordinary, he seemed to virtually vanish from the level of vision of Sursa's massive eyeballs; she suddenly realized to her dismay that she couldn't see him. She rolled her eyes wildly in search of Hanuman, like a gigantic planet spinning rapidly in the middle of the Milky Way.]

बदन पड़िठि पुनि बाहेर आवा । मागा बिदा ताहि सिरु नावा ॥ ११ ॥

मोहि सुरन्ह जेहि लागि पठावा । बुधि बल मरमु तोर मैं पावा ॥ १२ ॥

badana pa'iṭhi puni bāhēra āvā. māgā bidā tāhi siru nāvā. 11.

mōhi suranha jēhi lāgi paṭhāvā. budhi bala maramu tōra mairṁ pāvā. 12.

[Then, in deference to Sursa's wish, whom he had already addressed as a 'mother' in verse no. 5, Hanuman played another trick.] He entered her body and came out of it (swiftly, unopposed and unstopped)¹.

Then he bowed his head to her (because he had already called her a 'mother') and asked her to grant him leave to proceed². (11)

Sursa was pleased. She exclaimed, 'I have ascertained (judged) the extent of your wit, intelligence and strength (i.e. your competence and skills) for which the gods had sent me. [To wit, I have found out that you are fully eligible to accomplish Lord Ram's work; you will successfully do it as you have the brains and the guts for it. Moreover, since you have shown me respect, I also bless you.] (12)

[Note—¹To wit, Sursa was at present 800 miles high; so she could not know or feel that anything of as small a size as an ordinary creature had entered and then exited from her colossus cavern-like mouth. So Hanuman easily entered and came out from her mouth.

²By doing this, Hanuman fulfilled Sursa's wish—which was that she wanted to devour him wholly and put him inside her mouth. He had called Sursa a 'mother' as a show of respect to a woman (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 herein above), but once she was called a 'mother' it became obligatory for Hanuman to fulfill her wishes. So he entered her mouth.

Addressing Sursa as a 'mother' was a highly commendable act of Hanuman as it proved that he had no intention of insulting her, and he confronted and challenged her only because she was creating a hurdle in his path. He had even offered to come back to let her eat him, but she still wouldn't budge. Hence, Hanuman had no choice left to him.

This test showed to the gods that Hanuman knew how to respect even to his enemies, a character that is exceptionally noble and rarely found in a person. Only a great warrior and a noble person of high birth and great heart would know to show due respect to his opponent, especially after defeating him, as Hanuman had bowed to Sursa and sought permission from her to move ahead ‘even after’ subduing her.]

दो०. राम काजु सबु करिहहु तुम्ह बल बुद्धि निधान ।
आसिष देइ गई सो हरषि चलेउ हनुमान ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

rāma kāju sabu karihahu tumha bala bud'dhi nidhāna.
āsiṣa dē'i ga'ī sō haraṣi calē'u hanumāna. 2.

[Sursa said—] I bless you that you will successfully do all of Lord Ram's works¹ as you are a treasury of (i.e. you possess immense) strength, intelligence, wit and skill needed for the purpose.'

After blessing him Sursa went her way, and then Hanuman too resumed his journey with an exhilarated heart. (Doha no. 2)

[Note—¹While blessing Hanuman Sursa has said a very interesting thing—she has prophesized that he would do “all the works” of Lord Ram—“rāma kāju sabu karihahu”. Presently he had only one work at hand—which was to see where Sita was and report back to the Lord. Even Jamvant had expressly told him that this was the only thing he was required to do. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.}]

So now it was predicted that not only success in this mission was a foregone conclusion but many other such missions would be successfully done by Hanuman on behalf of Lord Ram.

This was the reason why Hanuman felt so joyous in his heart as he resumed his onward journey—“haraṣi calē'u hanumāna”.]

चौ०. निसिचरि एक सिंधु महँ रहई । करि माया नभु के खग गहई ॥ १ ॥
जीव जंतु जे गगन उड़ाहीं । जल बिलोकि तिन्ह कै परिछाहीं ॥ २ ॥
गहइ छाहँ सक सो न उड़ाई । एहि बिधि सदा गगनचर खाई ॥ ३ ॥
सोइ छल हनूमान कहँ कीन्हा । तासु कपटु कपि तुरतहिं चीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥
ताहि मारि मारुतसुत बीरा । बारिधि पार गयउ मतिधीरा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

nisicari ēka sindhu mahum̐ raha'ī. kari māyā nabhu kē khaga gaha'ī. 1.
jīva jantu jē gagana urāhīm̐. jala bilōki tinha kai parichāhīm̐. 2.
gaha'i chāham̐ saka sō na urā'ī. ēhi bidhi sadā gaganacara khā'ī. 3.
sō'i chala hanumāna kaha'm̐ kīnhā. tāsū kapaṭu kapi turatahīm̐ cīnhā. 4.
tāhi māri mārutasuta bīrā. bāridhi pāra gaya'u matidhīrā. 5.

[After overcoming the first obstacle in the way, i.e. Sursa, Hanuman was confronted with another formidable one in the form of a demoness who had the power to pull down anything flying over the surface of the ocean by holding its shadow which fell on the surface of the water as that object flew overhead. This was Ravana's way of ensuring security of his city of Lanka. In modern-day world we can visualize this phenomenon in the form of a military radar that would automatically capture images of all flying objects within the air space of a country, and a robotic instrument operating in sync with it that would automatically pull down or disable the intruding object by some kind of ray or use of powerful magnets.]

In the ocean there lived a female demon¹ who would use her magical powers to capture birds ("khaga"; or anything that flew over the ocean). (1)

Any creature such as birds and insects or any other kind of living being (jīva jantu) that flew in the sky overhead, and if the demoness could see its shadow falling on the water of the ocean, --- (2)

--- She would hold the shadow so that the creature could not fly and proceed further. In this way she used to regularly eat those who lived and moved in the sky (gaganacara). (3)

As was her wont, she employed her usual trick on Hanuman, but unfortunately for her the Kapi (Hanuman) immediately recognized it². (4)

So the valiant, brave and courageous son of the wind-god (Hanuman) immediately killed her³. After that (there being no other hindrance on the way), he, with a calm and stable mind (matidhīrā), crossed the ocean which was a huge and endless reservoir of water (bāridhi). [To wit, after slaying this demoness, Hanuman landed on the soil of Lanka un-opposed. The obstacles he had encountered en-route had not at all affected his composure and stability of mind.]⁴ (5)

[Note—¹This second obstacle was different than the one Hanuman met a little while ago. The first one, Sursa, was not a "demoness"; she was the mother of serpents, but this lady whom Hanuman met now was one of the race of demons. Sursa was sent by the gods to test Hanuman's eligibility for the great task at hand, but this demoness was appointed by Ravana or one of his commanders to safeguard the borders of the island of Lanka.

So therefore, this demoness would not stop any demon flying overhead; she would stop only the non-demons.

The story goes that this demoness was known by the name of "Singhika". {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 35.} She was the daughter of the demon Hiranyakshyap and a wife of the demon Viprachiti. Her son was the demon Rahu who, according to mythology, is known to devour the sun and the moon gods that cause the solar and lunar eclipses respectively. Singhika had the ability, like all members of the demon race, that enabled her to assume any form she wanted, and a special power to catch and pull down any flying object by holding its shadow, an ability that made her unique. This singular skill of hers was the reason why Ravana selected her to guard his borders from the ocean which formed a sort of an intractable moat that ringed his capital of Lanka.

We can say that like a child pulls down his kite with the help of its string, this demoness could pull down the flying object by catching hold of an invisible subtle link that existed between that object and its shadow that fell on the surface of the water of the ocean.

As we have already noted in the introductory paragraph to these verses, some kind of magnetic radiation or other form of energy such as some kind of ray was employed by this demoness to stop and pull down the object which cast the shadow. Singhika lived below the surface of the water, and as soon natural light falling on the surface of the ocean was obstructed by the a dark patch of the shadow she would know that something was flying overhead, and then she would immediately activate her holding mechanism.

²Hanuman was flying with a certain regular speed. So when he suddenly found that something was dragging him and pulling him down, he realized that there was something amiss. When he looked down he saw the gaping hole of the mouth of this wicked demoness waiting for the flying object to fall down straight into her mouth.

She must have resembled a huge shark or whale floating on the ocean with its jaws wide open.

³So without wasting any time Hanuman killed her. Valmiki's Ramayan says that Hanuman entered her wide open mouth and ferociously tore through her mouth and gullet with his sharp pointed nails so she bled profusely and died instantly. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 181-191.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 38, Hanuman had killed her by kicking at her violently.

⁴This demoness, Singhika, was the last obstacle for Hanuman. As we have noted in our reading, Mt. Mainak was located at half the distance to Lanka; then came Sursa first and Singhika second. Singhika was stationed nearer to the shore of Lanka as she was a member of the demon race and appointed by Ravana, the king of the demons, with a special mandate to guard the coast of the island from somewhere offshore.

The point to be noted here is that Hanuman was so confident of himself that inspite of facing formidable obstacles he did not lose his self-control, poise and mental balance as he, being prudent, wise and intelligent, knew fully well that these virtues were necessary to succeed in any enterprise.

Once again, the gods, who were watching the proceedings silently from heaven, cheered and applauded Hanuman. They were overjoyed to discover that the son of the wind-god was absolutely fit to do the job for which he had been selected—for Hanuman had wit and intelligence, strength and power, calmness and self-control, steadfastness and diligence, fearlessness and boldness, and the ability to handle odd situations as and when they present themselves even unannounced.]

तहाँ जाइ देखी बन सोभा । गुंजत चंचरीक मधु लोभा ॥ ६ ॥
 नाना तरु फल फूल सुहाए । खग मृग बृंद देखि मन भाए ॥ ७ ॥
 सैल बिसाल देखि एक आगें । ता पर धाड़ चढ़ेउ भय त्यागें ॥ ८ ॥

tahāñ jā'i dēkhī bana sōbhā. guñjata cañcarīka madhu lōbhā. 6.
 nānā taru phala phūla suhā'ē. khaga mṛga bṛnda dēkhi mana bhā'ē. 7.

saila bisāla dēkhi ēka āgēm̐. tā para dhā'i caṛhē'u bhaya tyāgēm̐. 8.

When he landed on the other side of the ocean he saw a magnificent sight there. He saw beautiful forests where honey-bees were buzzing around coveting sources of honey. (6)

He saw different kinds of beautiful trees, fruits and flowers, as well as wonderful birds and animals—the pleasant sight of all these things cheered Hanuman's heart¹. (7)

In the front of him Hanuman saw a huge hill; so he sprang forward and ran to its top fearlessly². (8)

[Note—¹Though Lanka was notorious as being the capital city of the demon race who were cruel and blood-thirsty, who relished plunder and laying to waste cities and villages, killing and burning what came their way, yet they ensured that their own capital was well-maintained and looked after. The very entrance of Lanka presented a very enchanting sight with its verdantly rich forests, colourful trees and flowers, sweet fruits, buzzing honey-bees, and cheerful birds and animals who roamed around fearlessly.

The demons ate flesh of animals and humans, but they spared the animals and birds in their own gardens, forests and parks. Ravana's own royal garden where he had held Sita captive was exceptionally beautiful, vying with the garden of heaven.

²Which hill was this? It was not an ordinary 'hill', but one of huge size, almost like a 'mountain'. Hence it was aptly called 'Mt. Subel'. It was so high that it gave Hanuman a panoramic view of Lanka. It was one of the three high hills or mountains that formed the kingdom of the demons called 'Lanka'. The other two mountains were called 'Trikoṭ' and 'Sundar'.

Later on in the story we shall read that when Lord Ram landed on the soil of Lanka with his army, he too mounted this Mt. Subel and pitched his camp here. It was from here that he could have a good view of the capital city of the demon kingdom of Lanka that was situated on the second mountain called Trikoṭ which was on the south of Subel. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 11; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13.}

उमा न कछु कपि कै अधिकाई । प्रभु प्रताप जो कालहि खाई ॥ ९ ॥
गिरि पर चढ़ि लंका तेहि देखी । कहि न जाइ अति दुर्ग बिसेषी ॥ १० ॥
अति उतंग जलनिधि चहु पासा । कनक कोट कर परम प्रकासा ॥ ११ ॥

umā na kachu kapi kai adhiḱā'ī. prabhu pratāpa jō kālahi khā'ī. 9.
giri para caḍhi laṅkā tēhiṁ dēkhī. kahi na jā'i ati durga bisēṣī. 10.
ati utaṅga jalanidhi cahu pāsā. kanaka kōṭa kara parama prakāsā. 11.

[Lord Shiva, who is the principal narrator of this epic Story, told his listener Uma, his consort—] Listen Uma; there is no wonder or any special credit that can be assigned to the Kapi (Hanuman) for the marvelous things that had happened—for all of it was

achieved owing to Lord Ram's own cosmic powers that are so stupendous in proportion and astounding in their abilities that they do not spare even Kaal, the god of death¹. (9)

When Hanuman reached to top of the hill (that overlooked the city), he looked at the city of Lanka from this vantage point. He saw that its fort was so remarkable that no words could describe it². (10)

The ocean with its heaving waves surrounded the city and its fort from all sides like a gigantic moat. The fort itself had very high walls, with its turrets and ramparts shining brilliantly from the light reflecting from their gilded surfaces³. (11)

[Note—¹To wit, Shiva told Uma that she need not be surprised at the miraculous way Hanuman crossed the mighty ocean after overcoming formidable obstacles, and still retained his calm and vigour as nothing had happened when he landed in Lanka because he was feeling so relaxed and energized as if he had just stood up from rest. There was nothing to be astonished that Hanuman had no fear while entering the dense forest in enemy's land, and crossing it to its other end where he saw a huge hill on which he jumped without fear of any kind, such as being caught or attacked by the ferocious and vicious demons. For indeed, the credit for all these unimaginable events goes to Lord Ram's cosmic mystical powers that are truly so great as they are able to control the working of the entire universe itself. Nay, not only this, but they are so strong that they can even devour the god of death, known as Kaal, himself.

This being the case, crossing the ocean, or defeating the demoness, or moving in forest of Lanka fearlessly, and going on the top of one of its hills that overlooked the city without the fear of being caught or attacked by the demons were inconsequential deeds of Hanuman as he was acting on the behalf of Lord Ram himself, and not on his own accord.

²Refer a note appended to Chaupai line no. 8 herein above regarding this 'hill' on which Hanuman climbed to have a panoramic view of Lanka.

³The view from the top of the hill was fantastic and enthralling. On one side was the forest through which Hanuman had just traveled, on the opposite side was a huge gilded fort encircling a magnificent city that resembled a land of fairies, as one of the fabulous cities described in "The One Thousand and One Arabian Nights". It was situated in the middle of the ocean which formed a natural moat around it. This made Lanka an impregnable citadel for the demons.

The magnificence and grandeur of the capital city of Lanak, named after the demon kingdom bearing the same name, has also been alluded to in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 178 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

To wit, the present set of verses present a panoramic view of the grand and golden city of Lanka that was famed for its grandeur and magnificence, a city that rivaled Heaven, the city of the gods in general, and Amravati, the city of Indra, the king of gods, in particular.]

छं०. कनक कोट बिचित्र मनि कृत सुंदरायतना घना । १ ।

चउहट्ट हट्ट सुबट्ट बीथीं चारु पुर बहु बिधि बना ॥ २ ॥

गज बाजि खच्चर निकर पदचर रथ बरूथन्हि को गनै । ३ ।
 बहुरूप निसिचर जूथ अतिबल सेन बरनत नहिं बनै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kanaka kōṭa bicitra mani kṛta sundarāyatanā ghanā. 1.
 ca'uhaṭṭa haṭṭa subaṭṭa bīthim cāru pura bahu bidhi banā. 2.
 gaja bāji khaccara nikara padacara ratha barūthanhi kō ganai. 3.
 bahurūpa nisicara jūtha atibala sēna baranata nahim banai. 4.

The surrounding wall of the city (the ramparts of the fort) were gilded and inlaid with precious stones of different kinds. It had, at intervals, many grand towers and tall turrets of immense dimensions. (Chanda line no. 1)

The magnificent city itself had broad squares, wonderful market-places, beautiful avenues, wide streets and well laid out by-lanes. The city was very enthralling, well designed, and wonderfully decorated in various ways (Chanda line no. 2)

Who could count the multitudes of elephants, horses and mules, as well as the countless numbers of foot soldiers and chariots that dotted the city and roamed around it? (Chanda line no. 3)

One could see a lot many hordes of demon warriors of different forms and features, all of whom were immensely brave and strong in their own right. Verily indeed, it is not possible to describe the teeming demon army that was patrolling the place (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—As Hanuman stood atop the hill and looked around him, he observed a wonderful spectacle. There in the front he beheld the mesmerizing sight of the golden city of Lanka. Its outer perimeter was protected by the fort made of golden bricks; the city was well planned with streets and squares that were beautifully laid out and decked up; and the army and the military police that was patrolling the city were formidable and awe-inspiring.]

बन बाग उपबन बाटिका सर कूप बापीं सोहहीं । ५ ।
 नर नाग सुर गंधर्ब कन्या रूप मुनि मन मोहहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 कहूँ माल देह बिसाल सैल समान अतिबल गर्जहीं । ७ ।
 नाना अखारेन्ह भिरहिं बहु बिधि एक एकन्ह तर्जहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bana bāga upabana bāṭikā sara kūpa bāpīm sōhahīm. 5.
 nara nāga sura gandharba kan'yā rūpa muni mana mōhahīm. 6.
 kahuṁ māla dēha bisāla saila samāna atibala garjahīm. 7.
 nānā akhārēnha bhirahim bahu bidhi ēka ēkanha tarjahīm. 8.

Forests, gardens, orchards and parks, as well as lakes, ponds and other water-bodies that abounded in the city looked very charming and attractive. (Chanda line no. 5)

There were also seen in the city countless daughters and ladies belonging to the human race (who lived on earth), the serpent race (who inhabited the subterranean world), and the Gods and the Gandharvas (who lived in heaven), who were so exceptionally beautiful and charming that they could even tempt the mind and heart of great sages, hermits and ascetics who are supposed to practice strict self-control over their senses and desire for pleasures of the world¹. (Chanda line no. 6)

At many places were seen roaring wrestlers who were exceptionally strong and had bodies as huge as mountains. (Chanda line no. 7)

Many such mighty wrestlers were challenging each other and engaged in fierce duels in many a courts and arenas earmarked for such sport. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹Ravana had overrun the world—the surface of the earth, the subterranean world, and the heaven; and as a trophy of his successful campaigns he had brought with him women belonging to the different races he had vanquished, such as the humans, the serpents, the gods and the gandharvas respectively. Out of these ladies he filled his own harems with the choicest and most beautiful ones who took his fancy, and he rewarded all his soldiers and commanders with the rest of these women.

The net effect was that the city of Lanka was full of male and female demons who were its original inhabitants, but at the same time it was also teeming with beautiful ladies of different age groups belonging to other non-demon races such as humans, serpents, gods and gandharvas. Most of these women were employed as harlots and concubines by the demons who were famed for their pervert, lustful and promiscuous nature, as they had no moral scruples worth the name.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182.]

करि जतन भट कोटिन्ह बिकट तन नगर चहुँ दिसि रच्छहीं । ९ ।
 कहुँ महिष मानुष धेनु खर अज खल निसाचर भच्छहीं ॥ १० ॥
 एहि लागि तुलसीदास इन्ह की कथा कछु एक है कही । ११ ।
 रघुबीर सर तीरथ सरीरन्ह त्यागि गति पैहहिं सही ॥ १२ ॥

kari jatana bhaṭa kōṭinha bikaṭa tana nagara cahuṁ disi racchahīm. 9.
 kahuṁ mahiṣa mānuṣa dhēnu khara aja khala nisācara bhacchahīm. 10
 ēhi lāgi tulasīdāsa inha kī kathā kachu ēka hai kahī. 11.
 raghubīra sara tīratha sarīranhi tyāgi gati paihahīm sahī. 12.

Ferocious and vicious demon warriors who had terrible bodies of all forms and sizes, and who numbered hundreds and thousands, were guarding the city from all the four sides¹. (Chanda line no. 9)

In some of the places could be seen cruel demons feasting on raw (uncooked) buffalos, humans, cows, mules and goats. (Chanda line no. 10)

The poet-saint Tulsidas (who penned this epic Ram Charit Manas) says that he has recorded in brief this scene of Lanka and its inhabitant demon hordes because they were lucky as they would soon discard their demonic bodies at the altar of arrows shot

by Lord Ram which would surely grant them (i.e. their souls) deliverance from their sinful bodies just like the fate of those creatures who die in some holy pilgrim place². (Chanda line no. 11-12)

[Note—¹After Ravana had brought Sita as captive, he used to remain on his tenterhooks, feeling very uneasy and highly alarmed as he was always apprehensive of some kind of powerful invasion to free her. He knew about the strength of Lord Ram from what he had heard from his sister Supernakha about the way the Lord had not only decimated the demon army led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira which attacked him but had also killed these mighty demons themselves. It was not a child's play to achieve this feat single-handedly. He had also heard how the Lord had earlier protected the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra by killing the demon Subahu along with his demon army, and throwing another demon Marich hundreds of miles away by shooting a headless arrow at him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.}

So therefore Ravana had deployed additional troops to secure the city, and these troopers were carefully selected for their strength, skill, power and vigour; for Ravana wished to be extra cautious and could not afford to take any chances.

This is the reason why at the time Hanuman was examining the city from the hill-top he saw it teeming with soldiers.

²This fact has also been endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.]

दो०. पुर रखवारे देखि बहु कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
अति लघु रूप धरौं निसि नगर करौं पड़सार ॥ ३ ॥

dōhā.

pura rakhavārē dēkhi bahu kapi mana kīnha bicāra.
ati laghu rūpa dharauṁ nisi nagara karaṁ pa'isāra. 3.

When Kapi (Hanuman) observed that there were a large number of demons guarding the city, he decided that it would be wise and prudent to enter it by assuming a very small size for his body, and then sneaking in by taking advantage of the cover of darkness during the night. (Doha no. 3)

[Note—If Hanuman could expand his body to become huge as he did while facing Sursa, it was also possible for him to reduce it to a small size. To wit, Hanuman had that mystical ability to assume any size he wished.

Since the entrance points of Lanka were well guarded so he decided to sneak in with a very small frame, almost like that of a mosquito, so that no one would notice him. This is what he actually would do as we shall read below in the next verse.

Further, since it would be too risky to enter Lanka during daytime, so the best time would be the night when it would be completely dark. This implies that the day was of the new moon as there would be total darkness on that night.

Hanuman also thought that night would be safer because in all probability the guards would be fast asleep; during the day they had been feasting and drinking

heavily or fighting duels, so by night-time they will get sufficiently drowsy and feel lethargic enough to fall prey to sleep.]

चौ०. मसक समान रूप कपि धरी । लंकहि चलेउ सुमिरि नरहरी ॥ १ ॥
 नाम लंकिनी एक निसिचरी । सो कह चलेसि मोहि निंदरी ॥ २ ॥
 जानेहि नहीं मरमु सठ मोरा । मोर अहार जहाँ लगि चोरा ॥ ३ ॥
 मुठिका एक महा कपि हनी । रुधिर बमत धरनीं ढनमनी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

masaka samāna rūpa kapi dharī. laṅkahi calē'u sumiri naraharī. 1.
 nāma laṅkinī ēka nisicarī. sō kaha calēsi mōhi nindarī. 2.
 jānēhi nahīm maramu saṭha mōrā. mōra ahāra jahāṁ lagi cōrā. 3.
 muṭhikā ēka mahā kapi hanī. rudhira bamata dharanīm ḍhanamanī. 4.

Deciding that he must assume a very small size to avoid detection at the time of entering Lanka, Hanuman became as small as a house fly or a mosquito¹ and started on his way to Lanka (from his perch on the hill top where he had passed the day, waiting for nightfall) by first remembering (and praying) to Lord Ram, who was a human incarnation of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu; “*naraharī*”). (1)

There was a female demon by the name of Lankini. Unfortunately, as Hanuman attempted to sneak in surreptitiously, he was sighted by this vigilant demoness².

She intercepted him and called out aloud, ‘Oh you stranger; where are you going; how dare you insult me by attempting to go inside without seeking my permission? (2)

Oh you stupid fellow! Don’t you know my nature that I am habituated to feed on intruders who try to enter Lanka surreptitiously like a thief?’ (3)

Hearing this challenge and seeing this unexpected obstacle, Hanuman wasted no time to punch the demoness fiercely with his clenched fist that made her swoon and fall to the ground vomiting blood³. (4)

[Note—¹First of all it was darkness of the night, and secondly it is common for mosquitoes to roam wildly during the night—so Hanuman thought that this was the best plan to avoid detection, and to enter the city unnoticed.

This verse should not be interpreted to mean that Hanuman ‘actually’ became a fly or a mosquito in physical terms, but that he became only ‘as small as’ a fly or a mosquito in size. How did he manage to do it? Well, in ancient times some few living creatures had certain mystical abilities that empowered them to assume whatever form and size they wished; they could become huge and small, they could change their original forms to resemble some other creature, and even vanish from sight if they so wished only to suddenly reappear elsewhere. These abilities are called ‘*Siddhis*’; they are rare magical skills that enable the possessor to perform miracles beyond the abilities of ordinary creatures.

Since Hanuman was the ‘son of the wind-god’, so the latter aided his entry by blowing a breeze towards the city from the side of the ocean, and with this breeze Hanuman drifted towards the fort.

²She was so called because she was the captain of the sentries assigned the duty to protect the outer rim of the city from any intruder. She was selected because she was always very diligent in her duties; so while the other guards and soldiers slumbered and snored away, she kept strict eye on all entrance and exit points as she stayed wide awake and alert. Besides this diligence and steadfastness in doing her assigned duty, she had another excellent skill to her credit—which was sharp eyesight and the ability to see in the darkness of the night like nocturnal animals do. Because of these qualities she was assigned night duty, and was at her sentinel post when Hanuman tried to sneak in.

³Hanuman acted very swiftly to silence her as any hesitation would have been catastrophic, because if this demoness started yelling then all those demon soldiers who were fast asleep all around the entrance would have woken up, and that would have meant an instant clash even before he had a chance to put his foot in the city. He was not afraid of any clashes, but this encounter at the gate would have caused a general state of emergency and turmoil in the city, and the risk was that Ravana, who was very intelligent, would have guessed that someone has come searching for Sita, and this meant that she could be put to some form of grave and unknown danger. This risk could not be afforded at any cost; so Hanuman decided to silence the demoness immediately.

Earlier we have read how he had killed the demoness of the ocean, the one named Singhika, by a single blow (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 3 herein above). He has proved his prowess and mettle once again by felling Lankini by a single hard blow here too; Lankini was not given a chance to utter another word. This precaution worked marvelously because all other sentries continued to sleep soundly, and Hanuman could enter Lanka unnoticed by anyone more.]

पुनि संभारि उठी सो लंका । जोरि पानि कर बिनय ससंका ॥ ५ ॥
जब रावनहि ब्रह्म बर दीन्हा । चलत बिरंचि कहा मोहि चीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥
बिकल होसि तैं कपि कें मारे । तब जानेसु निसिचर संघारे ॥ ७ ॥
तात मोर अति पुन्य बहूता । देखेउँ नयन राम कर दूता ॥ ८ ॥

puni sambhāri uṭhī sō laṅkā. jōri pāni kara binaya sasaṅkā. 5.
jaba rāvanahi brahma bara dīnhā. calata birañci kahā mōhi cīnhā. 6.
bikala hōsi taim kapi kēm mārē. taba jānēsu niscara saṅghārē. 7.
tāta mōra ati pun'ya bahūtā. dēkhē'um nayana rāma kara dūtā. 8.

Then that guardian of Lanka recovered herself and got up, but she was very terrified. She clasped her hands in supplication and prayed for mercy. (5)

She (Lankini) said, ‘At the time Brahma, the creator, gave boons to Ravana¹, and was on his way back, his sight fell on me, and recognizing me he gave me the following sign or clue that prophesized the doom of the demon race. (6)

He said to me, “When one day you become extremely agitated and are seriously wounded by being hit or punched by a Kapi (a monkey-like being), then at that time you must become aware that all was over for the demon race and their time was up (i.e. their extermination was near)². (7)

Since that event has happened just now, I realize that the time has arrived indeed. My dear (tāta), forsooth I say that I am very fortunate to be able to see with my own eyes a messenger of Lord Ram. [So you be blessed.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 177.

²A very important observation can be made here—and it is this: Everything in the Creator’s creation is destined to come to an end. Even the boons granted by the Creator Brahma himself could not ensure eternity for Ravana and his demon race, for the Creator himself predicted the end.]

दो०. तात स्वर्ग अपबर्ग सुख धरिअ तुला एक अंग ।
तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

tāta svarga apabarga sukha dhari'a tulā ēka aṅga.
tūla na tāhi sakala mili jō sukha lava satasaṅga. 4.

My dear (tāta)! If one were to put all the pleasures and happiness of Swarga (heaven) as well as of Moksha (deliverance from this world of miseries and transmigration) on one side of a scale, and weigh it against the happiness and joy derived by even a little time spent in Satsang—verily indeed and without gainsay it can be affirmatively said that all the best types of pleasures and happiness of the former kind simply cannot match even a fraction of the joy and happiness pertaining to the latter category¹. (Doha no. 4)

[Note—¹In this verse the importance of ‘Satsang’ is being stressed. It is said here that there is absolutely no comparison between the intensity and depth of spiritual bliss, beatitude, peace, happiness, fulfillment and contentedness that are attained by the virtue of Satsang done even for a little time on the one hand, and all the pleasures, comforts and joys that are obtained by going to heaven or getting freedom from worldly problems that torment the creature endlessly on the other hand—because the former is multiple times superior to and supersedes the latter many times over.

The term “Satsang” means having communion with saintly and pious souls; meeting holy people who are devoted to Lord God; talking with them who have offered themselves in the service of the Lord.

Here, meeting of Lankini with Hanuman is likened to a ‘Satsang’ because he is on a mission of Lord Ram, he is devoted to the Lord and committed to his work, he has offered himself and sacrificed his personal safety completely in order to accomplish the mission of the Lord, which is to eliminate the cruel demon and restore peace in the world. Hanuman has no personal agenda to accomplish; all he wishes is

to serve his dear Lord Ram to the best of his ability, and in this effort he would not tolerate any obstacle or make any compromise. An aura of holiness and divinity effuses from his being and spreads out on all directions, bestowing spiritual peace, bliss and happiness on all those who come in contact with him, just like the rays of light from the sun or the moon radiate in all directions to spread cheer in this world.

Just imagine what would have happened if the world had not been blessed with the light emanating from the sun and the moon; would artificial light of the best kind that man has ever produced from any source, say from electricity or atomic energy, have ever given life, energy and vitality to this world like the rays of the sun and the moon do? Likewise, the joy and bliss of Satsang simply have no parallel; all the joys and pleasures of heaven as well as the freedom from miseries of life in this mortal gross world taken together simply cannot match the elation and bliss that a single source in the form of nectar of Satsang provides to a creature.]

चौ०. प्रबिसि नगर कीजे सब काजा । हृदयँ राखि कोसलपुर राजा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

prabisi nagara kijē saba kājā. hr̥dayaṁ rākhi kōsalapura rājā. 1.

[Lankini blessed Hanuman and gave him permission to enter the city of Lanka.] She said, ‘Enter the city, and keeping the Lord of Kaushal (Lord Ram) in your heart (i.e. by steadily remembering the Lord and invoking his blessings in your heart), do all the work (which have been assigned to you by the Lord). [I gladly allow you to enter the city. Invoke Lord Ram’s grace and remember him at all times as you go about accomplishing your task. I bless you of success on my part; have no worries from me.] ’ (1)

[Note—In the previous verses she has disclosed the secret known only to her; it was a prophesy by the Creator himself—that one day a Kapi would hit her hard, then at that time she must realize that time of the end of the demon race had arrived. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 4 herein above.}

This is a mortal world; whatever and whosoever that has taken birth in this world is as mortal as the world itself. Even the gods of heaven, who seemingly have endless life, actually have a limited life-span; their life seems ‘endless’ simply because we measure it with the scale with which we measure life in this mortal human world, which is extremely small in length. It is just like comparing distances between galaxies and celestial bodies using scales of measurement that we use to measure distances on the surface of the earth, viz. inches, feet and miles, instead of a scale fit for cosmic measurements, such as in light-years. Come to think of it—even Brahma the creator has a limited life-span, and one fine ‘cosmic day’ he would too cease to exist like the other two gods of the Trinity.

To wit, what Brahma told Lankini was a mere reiteration of the universal and well-known Law of Creation—that all that has come into being would also come to an end! This being the incontrovertible, irrefutable and irrevocable Truth pertaining to this creation, the demons, no matter what boon their king had extracted from the Creator, were bound to die; it was only that Brahma gave a sign to Lankini when that would actually happen, and there was nothing more to it nor any new thing that was predicted by the Creator.

Now since the doom of the demon race was near at hand, and it was beyond the powers of Lankini to stop it, she was clever to take the credit of helping the messenger deputed by the Supreme Being to implement the Law of Creation as stated above. It would also enable her to be in the good books of the Supreme Judge on the 'Day of Reckoning'—for surely she would merit some concession for not harassing and causing unnecessary hurdles in the path of the Supreme Lord's messenger, in this case Hanuman, in carrying out his orders successfully.

Another important point to note here is that Lankini advises Hanuman to remember Lord Ram constantly throughout his stay in Lanka, as this would be his sure-shot formula for success. She reminds him that he must always remember that whatever wondrous feats he shall accomplish during this campaign are made possible only by the virtue of authority and power of the supreme Lord Ram himself, as they would not be at all possible otherwise, so he must never think that he had done anything great or noteworthy on his own accord.

A similar idea was expressed by Jamvant when the victorious team went to Lord Ram to report to him about the success of the mission—that whatever was achieved and all success that was obtained were due to the grace of the Lord, and no individual, including Hanuman, should take credit for anything. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.]

गरल सुधा रिपु करहिं मिताई । गोपद सिंधु अनल सितलाई ॥ २ ॥
गरुड़ सुमेरु रेनु सम ताही । राम कृपा करि चितवा जाही ॥ ३ ॥

garala sudhā ripu karahim mitā'ī. gōpada sindhu anala sitalā'ī. 2.
garuṛa sumēru rēnu sama tāhī. rāma kṛpā kari citavā jāhī. 3.

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund, who was narrating this glorious story of Lord Ram's life and deeds that have been chronicled in Ram Charit Manas, to Garud, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former to hear the story being narrated, said—]

'Oh Garud! He upon whom Lord Ram casts his sight of mercy, grace and benevolence, then for this fortunate soul even poison turns into nectar, his enemy becomes his friend, the vast ocean transforms into a shallow body of water no larger than the hollow made on earth by a cow's hoof, the fire becomes cool [2], and the mighty Mt. Sumeru becomes as small and light as a particle of dust or sand [3].' (2-3)

[Note—Kaagbhusund has narrated to Garud the epic story of the Ramayana in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125. This wonderful narration has already been published separately in English by the author of this present Book; it is available on-line on the same platforms as this current Book.

In these two verses, the glory of Lord Ram is being emphasized. In simple words they imply that if the Lord so wishes, then what seems to be impossible can easily become possible; five examples are given in this context.]

अति लघु रूप धरेउ हनुमाना । पैठा नगर सुमिरि भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

मंदिर मंदिर प्रति करि सोधा । देखे जहँ तहँ अगनित जोधा ॥ ५ ॥

ati laghu rūpa dharē'u hanumānā. paīthā nagara sumiri bhagavānā. 4.
mandira mandira prati kari sōdhā. dēkhē jahaṁ tahaṁ aganita jōdhā. 5.

Hanuman resumed his small form¹, and remembering the Lord (Sri Ram)², he entered the city of Lanka³. (4)

He went from one residence to another, looking carefully at each dwelling (to see if he could find any hint of Sita in any of these dwelling places). Everywhere he looked he could only see countless demon warriors. (5)

[Note—¹We have read in Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 4 herein above that when Hanuman started for Lanka from his perch on top of the hill that overlooked the city, he had assumed a miniature form. Once again it is said in this verse that he had taken a miniature form while entering the city. This is because for some time Hanuman had to revert back to his normal form, which was the same as the one he has had while crossing the ocean, i.e. it was huge. {Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

This occasion was when Lankini—who was of a huge size by the virtue of her being a female demon, and also because she was a sentry appointed to guard the gates of Lanka, which means that she must have had a muscular and almost masculine body like that of a demon warrior—had intercepted him. Hanuman had punched her so hard that she vomited blood, swooned and fell down on the ground. Now, to hit a demoness of such a huge proportion so effectively that she would be vanquished by a single blow, Hanuman had to assume a form at least of a size that equaled hers, if not bigger.

Once the job was done he had to resume his small form in order to stealthily enter Lanka and remain undetected while moving inside the city, because if he retained a distinctive form then the instant he set foot within the city an alarm would be raised. He was not here to fight, for his mission was only limited to finding the whereabouts of Sita; so he wished not to make himself conspicuous. {Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

The fascinating and wondrous story of Hanuman's adventures in Lanka, the city of the giant Demon race, where he entered and roamed around for some time in a miniature form as small as a house fly or a mosquito, reminds one of Jonathan Swift's classical tale describing the "Travels of Gulliver", especially Gulliver's second voyage to the 'Land of Brobdingnag' where he was called 'Grildrig', which the English people call 'Mannikin'; or for that matter, if we have no hesitation in taking some liberty with imagination, then, with roles reversed, it is like the 'Adventure of a Lilliput in the Land of Gullivers', for Hanuman was no larger than a gnat or a cockroach or a mice running amok in city inhabited by Giants!

Indeed, Hanuman was like a Lilliputian in this adventurous journey to the Land of the Mammoths. And if we were to cite a metaphor from the Holy Bible, the closest that comes to our mind is the Story of Goliath, the giant, and David, from the Old Testament (1 Samuel, 17).]

²We will note that Hanuman had invoked Lord Ram at every crucial point of his journey. First he had done so when he started on the mission from the shore of the

ocean—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 1.

Then he had invoked Lord Ram once again at the time he left his perch on the hill and started for the fort of Lanka in a miniature form—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.

And he does it again here at the time of actually setting foot within the city of Lanka itself. This invocation and remembrance of Lord Ram ensured that the benevolent, merciful, gracious and all-powerful Lord would keep a strict watch on Hanuman with a vigilant eye to make sure that he is safe and secure, as well as successful in his mission; it was an insurance against any misfortune or evil eye that might show the impertinence to interfere in Hanuman's projects.

By his own example Hanuman shows us the way how we can go about our daily lives, attending to its chores and doing our expected duties diligently with a focused mind, at the same time as worshipping our beloved God. Since, from the practical point of view, the mind can't be expected to be completely focused on two different things simultaneously with the same level of concentration, because that would be distractive for it—i.e. it is not really possible in practice to focus the mind on God and do the work of this mundane world simultaneously with the same sincerity and diligence, then what we ought to do is to let the mind be attentive to the job at hand, do it meticulously with full focus and industry, but every now and then take a deep breath from the hectic schedule to pause for a moment to remember our beloved Lord God and thank him for everything, and once again resume our work.

This is a very effective and practical method both to relax as well as to gain peace and confidence, because we keep reminding ourselves that there is a powerful hand supporting and protecting us from behind, and there is nothing to fear. Even failure would not disturb us to an extreme despair as we know that, first, we had done our best and there was nothing more we could do, second, that no one should expect that every desire or wish of his must be fulfilled because this is not the way the world works, and third, that this development which we classify as 'failure' is actually an indication that our great 'protector and saviour' does not want the thing the way we want it to be.

True devotion and submission to the Lord God surely and without gainsay is to treat one's self as one who serves his Lord and carries out his orders and assignments to the best of one's abilities; and just like a servitor who is dispassionate towards the results of his efforts, as his only concern is to do what is assigned to him with utmost sincerity, honesty and diligence, the true devotee of the Lord God too does not get perturbed or worked up about the results of his efforts. For him, success and failure are the same.

In fact however, a true devotee is one who feels that even if he succeeds in any worldly endeavour, but forgets to remember his Lord God during the course of the proceedings that gave him such success, then that success is no better than total failure.

³We note here that Lankini had kept quiet about Hanuman's arrival and entry into the city. Besides her conviction that the end of the demons was near as it was Brahma's prophesy that cannot be negated, there was one other important reason why she kept quiet about an enemy's spy entering the city. She feared severe punishment, even death and torture, for negligence and letting Hanuman in; she was appointed to guard the gates of the fort after due diligence about her abilities and with the full confidence that she had the ability to defend it from any intruder whosoever he might be. She had

herself asserted this when she first challenged Hanuman, saying that she feeds on thieves and intruders. So she decided to exercise discretion and keep quiet. {Refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4.}

गयउ दसानन मंदिर माहीं । अति बिचित्र कहि जात सो नाही ॥ ६ ॥
 सयन किएँ देखा कपि तेही । मंदिर महुँ न दीखि बैदेही ॥ ७ ॥
 भवन एक पुनि दीख सुहावा । हरि मंदिर तहँ भिन्न बनावा ॥ ८ ॥

gaya'u dasānana mandira māhīm. ati bicitra kahi jāta sō nāhīm. 6.
 sayana ki'eṁ dēkhā kapi tēhī. mandira mahuṁ na dīkhi baidēhī. 7.
 bhavana ēka puni dīkha suhāvā. hari mandira tahaṁ bhinna banāvā. 8.

In due course of time, during the process of examining all the dwellings of Lanka in search of any tangible hint of Sita, Hanuman reached the palace of Ravana. It was so extraordinarily magnificent and grand to behold that it is not possible to describe it in words. (6)

The Kapi (Hanuman) observed that he (Ravana) was asleep inside the palace, but nowhere could he perceive any sign of Vaidehi¹ (Sita). (7)

So he moved ahead, and soon descried a residence which was pleasant to look at, for it was like a virtual temple of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu), and thus different from the rest of the buildings of the city². (8)

[Note—¹The word used here is “baidēhī”—which literally means ‘one without a physical body’. This is an apt epithet used for Sita because what Ravana had brought to Lanka was a mere shadow or an apparition of the real Sita, and not her true and real self. Thus, the ‘Sita’ that was held in Lanka was only an image of her; it was a false Sita; it was an illusion that created an impression that she was there but like an apparition it was merely a ghostly shadow.

As we have already read earlier, Lord Ram had planned everything meticulously in advance so that he can accomplish the mission of eliminating the cruel, sinful and vicious demons without any hitch, and towards this end it was absolutely necessary to induce them to commit some grave impertinence and sinful act of misdemeanour so that a justified excuse could be found to get rid of them. Since for this enterprise to succeed the Lord had to take help of Sita, and she was also willing to cooperate, but at the same time the Lord was very concerned that no evil spot could ever be cast on Sita’s immaculate character, purity and chastity, so it became imperative for him to work out some way that both the ends could be met.

Thus, the Supreme Lord—who is a master of delusions, a maverick actor, and the best magician of this creation who excels in conjuring up fantastic illusions that even surpass the real thing—decided to hide the ‘real Sita’ by placing her in the safe custody of the Fire God, the only God whose integrity and powers cannot be questioned as his very name suggests that he represents the powerful ‘fire element’ of Nature that spares none and burns all that is not pure. So, what remained after this exercise was a reflection, an image, a shadow or an apparition, whatever we may like

to call it, of Sita. This plan was carried out so secretly that even Laxman, Lord Ram's own brother and comrade-in-arm in the forest and throughout the epic War, was not aware of it; even he thought that Ravana had abducted the real Sita! This is explicitly and emphatically stated in all versions of the Ramayana. In the context of our present reading, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

Come to think of this miracle and view it from a broader perspective: When the whole of Lanka was burnt by Hanuman, about which we shall soon be reading in great detail in our Book, Sita remained unscathed. All other demons and demonesses ran helter-skelter to escape the leaping flames, but Sita remained confined to the same place under the tree where she had been sitting since her arrival at Lanka. It should be very clear and evident to an intelligent observer who looks closely and applies his mind to conclude that in this fiery scenario when flames were leaping everywhere, Sita could sit and survive because she had 'no physical body'! Fire can burn only those things that have a physical existence; it does not destroy an apparition or a ghost or an imaginary shadow for they do not actually exist.

The final proof came when the war ended. Lord Ram created a scene of having doubts about the integrity of Sita, and required her to prove her self by 'entering a raging fire'. This was merely a ruse to create a dazzling blaze that would blind everyone standing around so that the original Sita could come out from the place where she was hidden by the Lord himself, i.e. from the custody of the Fire God. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Of course we shall read all about this incident in due course of time when we reach that point in Chapter no. 19 of our Book.

A very pertinent question may arise in the mind of the reader here, and it is this: How was Hanuman sure that none of the ladies he saw in the many dwellings he investigated was Sita? That means he knew how to recognize her when he saw her, is it not so? Yes indeed, it is so. How come? The answer is this: At the time Ravana had been passing over the Mt. Rishyamook in his chariot with Sita, she had seen a group of monkeys sitting down below on the summit of this mountain, and she had then wailed loudly, called out Lord Ram's name, and had dropped down some of her ornament and pieces of clothes torn from her garments so that these monkeys could keep them to show Lord Ram when he passes that way searching for her. When the Lord came that way and chatted with Sugriv, the latter told him all about this incident. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 5.}

Hanuman had personally seen Sita on that occasion, and surely and certainly therefore he would easily recognize her when he saw her again.]

²All the buildings and residential places of Lanka bore universal marks and had characteristic features that identified them with their masters and lords, i.e. the demons who occupied them. But there was one dwelling that was different from the rest; it stood out for signs that indicated that some god-loving person occupies it. We shall soon read in the Doha no. 5 that follows herein below what signs distinguished it from the rest of the structures in Lanka.

The general atmosphere of this particular dwelling was similar to a temple dedicated to Lord Hari; it had a holy aura around it that was soothing for the senses and pleased the eyes of the beholder.

To wit, this residence was like an oasis in the vast desert known as Lanka; since it was different from the other buildings, so it caught the eye of Hanuman.]

दो०. रामायुध अंकित गृह सोभा बरनि न जाइ ।

नव तुलसिका बृंद तहँ देखि हरष कपिराइ ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

rāmāyudha aṅkita gṛha sōbhā barani na jā'i.

nava tulasikā br̥nda tahaṁ dēkhi haraṣa kapirā'i. 5.

That dwelling was singular inasmuch as it had signs of Lord Ram's arms (weapons) marked on it (i.e. on its main entrance gate or doorway). [To wit, the 'bow and arrow', which are the weapons held by Lord Ram in his hands, were marked on this building.]¹

This building was so pleasant and beautiful to look at that its magnificence cannot be described. [Forsooth, the dwelling place looked all the more comforting and pleasing by the sign of the 'bow and arrow' marked on it, as this sign directly invoked the protective shield of Lord Ram, and also indicated that Lord Ram was always present there in a subtle and invisible way that cannot be perceived by the eye.]

Besides this sign, Hanuman, the Lord of the Kapis, also perceived clusters of the sacred Tulsi trees (the Basil plant) that were fresh and green planted in the courtyard; this sight excited him and filled him with a thrill. [To wit, the sign of the 'bow and arrow' as well as the 'presence of the sacred Tulsi tree' clearly meant that the inhabitant of this house was a devotee of Lord Ram. Hanuman was elated as at last he has discovered a true friend in an enemy's land who would surely be of a great help to him.]² (Doha no. 5)

[Note—¹It was a wonder of wonder to find someone openly putting up signs of Lord Ram, i.e. the bow and the arrow, on his home in a city of demons. It was well known that Ravana treated Lord Ram as his arch enemy as he knew that the Lord was the one who would exterminate the entire demon race. No king would ever like that someone in his kingdom would so blatantly exhibit any symbol of his enemy, which is no small offense, and it amounts to treason, sedition, disloyalty, betrayal and sacrilege, whatever one would like to call it.

How and why did Ravana allow this to happen right under his nose? It's a singular and remarkable pointer to Ravana's noble soul! Though he had a body of a demon, though he had been committing serious crimes and was accused of cruelty and viciousness, yet deep down in his heart he yearned for deliverance, emancipation and salvation of his soul. Being born a 'demon' he was constrained to behave like a 'demon', but internally he wanted spiritual peace and beatitude.

This particular house belonged to Ravana's brother Vibhishan. Vibhishan was a devout person who was pious and a devotee of Lord Vishnu who had manifested in the form of Lord Ram. In the very beginning when the three demon brothers, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan, had done severe Tapa (penance) to please Brahma, the creator, and the latter rewarded them with their desired boons, Vibhishan had sought devotion and love for Lord Hari. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 177.}

Ravana was well aware of it; he knew that since Vibhishan had got this boon directly from Brahma who had also granted boons to Ravana himself, so it was beyond his powers to cancel it, especially when Vibhishan was his own brother. If he tried to play fools with Brahma's grants to Vibhishan just because he did not like them, then there were good chances, Ravana feared, that Brahma would become so annoyed with him that he would do something that will neutralize Ravana's own boons.

Besides this, Ravana's tolerance of Vibhishan's open display of devotion for Lord Vishnu also indicates how obliging and accommodating he was as far at least as the members of his own race were concerned. Not only Vibhishan, Ravana had others in his kingdom whom he knew to be god-fearing and devoted to Lord Vishnu; one such was an old demoness by the name of Trijata. Ravana had specially appointed her to take care of Sita so that other cruel demoness do not torment her because he was aware of this fact—that Trijata would respect Sita as she was a pious and god-fearing creature. This fact that Trijata was a devotee of Lord Ram whom she knew to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; we shall encounter Trijata very soon.

His own wife Mandodari had given clear indications of her respect and reverence for Lord Ram when she had made repeated entreaties with Ravana to give Sita back to the Lord, and stop his confrontational attitude towards Lord Ram. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. Doha no. 15; and (iii) once again in Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 37.}

Imagine Ravana tolerating his own wife siding with his enemy and singing the latter's praises on his face; would any husband tolerate this behaviour of his wife? But Ravana did. It is ample proof of his tolerant nature on the one hand, and his internal belief that finally the time of his deliverance has arrived, and that he is so lucky that the Supreme Being himself has come to deliver him by his own hands!

We have another instance of how Ravana had looked the other way when a member of his family praised Lord Ram. His own younger brother Kumbhakaran had sternly reproached him when Ravana disclosed that he had made Lord Ram his enemy. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 63.} We also would be reading this incident in Chapter no. 15 of our Book.

In short, Ravana willingly allowed this small oasis of holiness, piety and devotion for Lord God in the form of the dwelling we refer to in this Doha to thrive in his city of Lanka because he derived some subtle form of spiritual peace, solace and comfort by it. Verily indeed, this particular house was like a patch of greenery in the dry desert represented by Lanka.

There is another reason also why the inhabitant of this house had put up the sign of the 'bow and the arrow' in front of the dwelling. He lived in a perpetual danger of being attacked, if not by Ravana himself then by other demons who hated him. So he had wisely marked the sign of the 'bow and arrow', which are weapons by which one would defend oneself, on his gate and doorway as a sort of magical charm to ward off evil eyes and protect him from some evil spirit that may aim to harm him.

²The 'Tulsi tree' is planted in houses of devotees of Lord Vishnu as this plant is very dear to the Lord. So when Hanuman saw these two signs—one of the bow and arrow,

and the other of the Tulsi plant—in that house, he was convinced that its resident was surely a devotee of Lord Ram as well as Lord Vishnu, because the bow and arrow reminds one of Lord Ram, and Tulsi plant of Lord Vishnu.

He felt thrilled because at last he has found a friend in an alien land. If nothing else, then at least he can take some rest and refresh himself in that house if he introduces himself as a messenger of Lord Ram. He felt sure that the inhabitant would welcome him as soon as he knows who Hanuman was, and there was little to fear.

Still Hanuman was skeptical because it was so odd to see such an auspicious home in the middle of the city of demons. The next verse says exactly this.]

चौ०. लंका निसिचर निकर निवासा । इहाँ कहाँ सज्जन कर बासा ॥ १ ॥
 मन महुँ तरक करैं कपि लागा । तेहीं समय बिभीषनु जागा ॥ २ ॥
 राम राम तेहिं सुमिरन कीन्हा । हृदयँ हरष कपि सज्जन चीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
 एहि सन हठि करिहउँ पहिचानी । साधु ते होइ न कारज हानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

laṅkā nisicara nikara nivāsā. ihāṁ kahāṁ sajjana kara bāsā. 1.
 mana mahum taraka karaiṁ kapi lāgā. tēhīṁ samaya bibhīṣanu jāgā. 2.
 rāma rāma tēhīṁ sumirana kīnhā. hṛdayaṁ haraṣa kapi sajjana cīnhā. 3.
 ēhi sana haṭhi kariha'um pahicānī. sādhu tē hō'i na kāraja hānī. 4.

When Hanuman saw the dwelling marked by the holy signs as alluded to in the previous verses, he wondered, ‘Lanka is teeming with (cruel, evil, sinful and vicious) demons; where is the chance of finding a god-loving person, who is pious and of a pure heart, living in such a vile place as this?’ (1)

Just at the time the Kapi (Hanuman) was thus contemplating in his Mana (mind and heart), Vibhishan woke up (as night was coming to a close, and day-break was near)¹. (2)

As soon as he woke up, he invoked the holy name of Ram and repeated it aloud twice, saying “Ram, Ram”. When the Kapi heard these words pronounced he felt exhilarated in his heart, because he concluded that the speaker was indeed a pious and saintly soul². (3)

So Hanuman thought to himself, ‘I shall surely make an acquaintance with this gentleman, for I am absolutely sure that he, being a saintly person, can not cause any hindrance in my work. [Rather, I am quite certain that he would be of some help to me.]’ (4)

[Note—¹This verse clearly implies that Hanuman had spent the whole night searching for Sita, and investigating each and every home in the city. He had entered the fort at nightfall, and now it was nearing dawn.

It is to be observed here that he moved around so silently, so stealthily and so inconspicuously that no one got a wind that he was on the prowl. The city and its inhabitants were slumbering peacefully, not aware that a huge catastrophe was looming large over their heads. To wit, all the precautions taken by Ravana failed to

prevent the implementation of what Providence had destined for the demon race, for the doom of the demon race had dawned that morning when Hanuman saw the first ray of sunlight over that city.

²The very utterance of Lord Ram's holy name immediately established Vibhishan's credentials to Hanuman. Only a saintly, pious and god-loving soul would invoke the holy name of the Lord God the very first thing in the morning. There is a lesson to be learnt here: we are recognized by the words we speak. If we are of a noble heart and have a pious soul, if we are devoted to God and conscious that he is our ultimate Father, if our upbringing is good and we have had good moral education—then remembering the Lord God, our supreme Benefactor, Protector, Saviour and Father, would be a part of our nature and our true character.

Vibhishan was accustomed and habituated to invoke the holy name of Lord Ram to start his day with; it was his natural habit and routine. He was not aware at this point of time that Hanuman was in Lanka, so he had not uttered the holy words 'Ram, Ram' to attract Hanuman's attention or to impress him in any way.

Another important point to note is that Vibhishan had uttered these holy words, 'Ram, Ram', quite loudly because they were heard by Hanuman who was somewhere at a distance outside his home. It was still dark as dawn was a few hours away; there was stillness and quietude in the city. The holy name of Lord Ram echoed all around Vibhishan's home; it was like the call that holy men would make to the laity to wake up to welcome a new day by first offering their obeisance to the Lord God, and pray to the Lord to seek his blessings for a good start of the day.]

बिप्र रूप धरि बचन सुनाए । सुनत बिभीषन उठि तहँ आए ॥ ५ ॥
 करि प्रनाम पूँछी कुसलाई । बिप्र कहहु निज कथा बुझाई ॥ ६ ॥
 की तुम्ह हरि दासन्ह महँ कोई । मोरें हृदय प्रीति अति होई ॥ ७ ॥
 की तुम्ह रामु दीन अनुरागी । आयहु मोहि करन बड़भागी ॥ ८ ॥

bipra rūpa dhari bacana sunā'ē. sunata bibhīṣana uṭhi tahaṁ ā'ē. 5.
 kari pranāma pūṁchī kusalā'ī. bipra kahahu nija kathā bujhā'ī. 6.
 kī tumha hari dāsanha mahaṁ kō'ī. mōrēm hṛdaya prīti ati hō'ī. 7.
 kī tumha rāmu dīna anurāgī. āyahu mōhi karana baṛabhāgī. 8.

Hanuman approached Vibhishan's home by assuming the form of a Brahmin (bipra rūpa dhari), and called out to him. [To wit, Hanuman pronounced some words by which Vibhishan would immediately recognize that some acquaintance is standing at the door.]¹

As soon as Vibhishan heard these words, he got up and came (rushing) to the door from where he heard the call. (5)

Vibhishan bowed his head reverentially before the visitor and politely asked for his well-being, requesting the latter to introduce himself by telling more about his own self.

Hence, Vibhishan enquired, ‘Oh Brahmin (bipra)! Please enlighten me more about yourself. [Please be kind to tell me who you are, and what the purpose of your visit is.] (6)

Are you one of the devotees of Lord Hari (for you have pronounced the Lord’s name ‘Ram, Ram’ as a calling sign), for as soon as I have seen you a sort of natural affection has sprouted in my heart for you²? (7)

Or is it that you are the merciful and benevolent Lord Ram himself who has come in disguise to bless me and make me fulfilled³?’ (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman was very wise, intelligent and prudent. Just a moment earlier he had heard Vibhishan invoking Lord Ram’s name aloud; it was this name which had, in fact, made Hanuman decide that he must go and meet this person as he is surely to be a pious and god-loving soul who is devoted to Lord Ram, knowing fully well that the Lord is not an ordinary human being but a manifested form of the Supreme Being, for otherwise he wouldn’t have pronounced the Lord’s holy name “Ram” because it was the name of an enemy of the demon race.

So it is very certain that the best way Hanuman thought he should introduce himself to Vibhishan was by calling out the same name ‘Ram’ as the latter had done a while ago, because then Vibhishan would have no doubt that the person who is standing at the door calling out to him is a friend and not a foe.

Hanuman wished to play it safe and ensure that Vibhishan is taken into confidence at once when he decided to approach the latter’s home in the form of a Brahmin, for it was too risky to cause any doubt or alarm in Vibhishan’s mind regarding the identity of the early morning caller, as he could raise an alarm, at which demon guards would come rushing in to arrest the intruder, even before Hanuman would have had time to investigate the city further more closely and clearly during the daylight hours. The sight of a humble Brahmin standing at the door would be highly reassuring for Vibhishan and welcomed by him in a city where only ferocious demons of the most ugly shapes and hideous forms were to be seen everywhere.

We should also note that Hanuman had assumed the form of a Brahmin when he had gone to meet Lord Ram and Laxman at the foot of Mt. Rishyamook, because, as we have seen above, it is the safest form that pre-empts any chance of fear and apprehension. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1.}

²Vibhishan told Hanuman, “Oh Brahmin, it appears to me that there exists a natural bond of affection between our souls, and they appear to resonate with the same frequency. As soon as I saw you it appears to me that I have met someone who is friendly, someone who is on the same plane of spiritual being as my own self. Obviously it is only possible between two brothers who have deep fraternal love for each other. It looks that we have a common father; which means that you too are a devotee of Lord Ram as I am, because the Lord is the Supreme Father to all his devotees. What is it; please tell me as curiosity has risen in my heart.”

Vibhishan loves Lord Ram very dearly; he is devoted to the Lord and worships him even while living in the midst of vicious and sinful demons who are vehemently opposed to the Lord. Anyone who has Lord Ram living in his heart will also love a devotee of the Lord with the same natural bond of affection and fraternal love that exists between brothers who are related to each other through blood, as they

have a common father. The reverse is also true—i.e. if one loves a devotee of Lord Ram then the Lord would reside in his heart. This is clearly affirmed by the learned sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 131.

To wit, a bond of mutual affection and brotherhood sprouted instantly and spontaneously between Hanuman and Vibhishan.

³A remarkable observation indeed! It implies that there is not much of a difference between Lord Ram himself and his true devotee; the devotee is deemed to be an image of the Lord in holiness, piety, bliss and purity of soul; the devotee is a veritable reflection of the glorious virtues that Lord Ram possesses.]

दो०. तब हनुमंत कही सब राम कथा निज नाम ।

सुनत जुगल तन पुलक मन मगन सुमिरि गुन ग्राम ॥ ६ ॥

dōhā.

taba hanumanta kahī saba rāma kathā nija nāma.

sunata jugala tana pulaka mana magana sumiri guna grāma. 6.

When Vibhishan asked Hanuman to tell him more about himself by way of an introduction, the latter disclosed his name and briefly narrated the story related to Lord Ram. [Hanuman told Vibhishan how Sita was abducted by Ravana, and how he has been sent by Lord Ram to meet her and find about her whereabouts, so that the Lord can come and free her.]

This narration of the Lord's story thrilled both the narrator and the listener; both of them became deeply emotional and got lost in a reverie of devotion and affection for the Lord when they remembered him and his glorious virtues¹. (Doha no. 6)

[Note—¹This is special quality of a true devotee of Lord Ram as shown here by Hanuman and Vibhishan, that is “he is thrilled when he hears the holy name of the Lord being pronounced, when he hears the divine story of the Lord being narrated”.

A similar condition prevailed upon the saintly crow Kaagbhusund when he narrated the holy story of Lord Ram to Garud; there are ample instances of it in Ram Charit Manas. Some of them are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68; (iii) Doha no. 69; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124.

We also read in this context that the ‘listener’ of this story narrated by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund, i.e. Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu who had come to him specifically with this purpose in mind, too became highly thrilled so much so that his body became puffed, his feathers stood on their end, and his wings spread wide in emotional excitement. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

चौ०. सुनहु पवनसुत रहनि हमारी । जिमि दसनन्हि महुँ जीभ बिचारी ॥ १ ॥

तात कबहुँ मोहि जानि अनाथा । करिहहि कृपा भानुकुल नाथा ॥ २ ॥

तामस तनु कछु साधन नाही । प्रीति न पद सरोज मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 अब मोहि भा भरोस हनुमंता । बिनु हरिकृपा मिलहिं नहिं संता ॥ ४ ॥
 जौं रघुबीर अनुग्रह कीन्हा । तौ तुम्ह मोहि दरसु हठि दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu pavanasuta rahani hamārī. jimi dasananhi mahuṁ jībha bicārī. 1.
 tāta kabahuṁ mōhi jāni anāthā. karihahiṁ kṛpā bhānukula nāthā. 2.
 tāmasa tanu kachu sādhanā nāhīm. prīti na pada sarōja mana māhīm. 3.
 aba mōhi bhā bharōsa hanumantā. binu harikṛpā milahiṁ nahīm santā. 4.
 jauṁ raghubīra anugraha kīnhā. tau tumha mōhi darasu haṭhi dīnhā. 5.

[Once a good and friendly relationship was established between Vibhishan and Hanuman, the former invited the latter inside his home, and then they chatted amiably for a while. Vibhishan expressed his excess of happiness at meeting Hanuman, and told him about his pitiful existence amongst the cruel demons from whom he was always in danger. Vibhishan also wished to know if Lord Ram ever remembered him as he was one of Lord's loyal devotees, but who unfortunately got trapped in the midst of sinful demons due to the fiat of fate.]

Vibhishan said to Hanuman, 'Listen oh the son of the wind-god. My life (here in Lanka, amongst the demons) is similar to the precarious condition of the poor tongue which has to survive surrounded by sharp teeth, for I am in constant fear of the ten-headed Ravana¹. (1)

Oh my dear (tāta)! Tell me, will the 'Lord of the Solar Race' ("bhānukula nāthā"; Lord Ram who was a descendant of the Solar Race) show his grace, mercy and kindness upon me keeping in view the fact that I am humble and without a protector and guardian with me (except the Lord)²? (2)

For I have an evil body (as I am born in the sinful, evil and despicable demon race), and with this body it has not been possible for me to do any worthwhile good or noble deed that can be called meritorious, and on the strength of which I could have claimed some sort of eligibility to gain spiritual peace and happiness.

Besides this, I have not known, being a demon myself and living amongst demons, what true love and affection for the Lord is, and so I cannot that I have the required level of love and affection for the holy lotus like feet of the Lord (which is expected from a true devotee). (3)

But nevertheless, after having met you, who are a saintly soul, I am now certain and I fully convinced that the Lord is indeed benevolent and favourable towards me, for otherwise it would not have been possible for me to meet a saint like you³. (4)

For sooth and without gainsay, it is certainly true that you have voluntarily met me only because Lord Ram has been benevolent and gracious towards me⁴. [This is because meeting a saint is one of the biggest spiritual blessings that the Lord grants to a creature as it paves the way for the latter's deliverance and emancipation. Meeting a saint gives immense spiritual peace and bliss to the tormented soul as I have now witnessed myself. After meeting you I feel very happy and blissful; I now am certain

that the day of my deliverance from suffering in this den of demons has finally arrived.}]’ (5)

[Note—¹Just like the humble tongue that lives a precarious life in the mouth surrounded by sharp teeth from all sides, which can cut, bite and make it bleed at any moment if it dares to get in their way, Vibhishan also lives in constant danger of life and torture if he peradventure annoys his elder brother Ravana, the ten-headed one (jimi dasananhi mahum̐ jībha bicārī).

As long as the tongue does not get in the way of the teeth, it is allowed to speak and eat, i.e. do whatever it likes, but the moment it steps beyond its threshold it immediately gets bitten off fiercely by the teeth. Similarly, as long as Vibhishan keeps to himself and minds his business, Ravana does not bother or torment him, obviously because they were brothers and both had done severe Tapa together to get boons from the creator Brahma. In fact it must be accepted, and Ravana must be given due credit for it, that he allowed Vibhishan quite a lot of freedom to practice his spiritual beliefs, for it is a truth that Ravana had tolerated his bother putting up the signs of Lord Ram—Ravana’s personal enemy and of the whole of the demon race in general by the virtue of his being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu whom the demons regard as their arch enemy and nemesis—in the front of his home in the middle of Lanka. Say, which king would ever allow anyone in his kingdom to openly display the signs of his enemy, such as the court of arms etc., on his house; would he not be charged with treason, betrayal, treachery and sedition? But Ravana tolerated it! {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Can it be denied therefore that it was indeed and truly an excellent sign of Ravana’s noble heart and its secret piety and holiness, of his tolerant nature, and of his fraternal love for his brother whom he loved especially more because he was the only one in the whole family who was devoted to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and as a result the only one who would carry forward the line of the demon race at the end of the war, who will be the lone torch-bearer of the glorious name of the demon family descended from illustrious sage Pulastya?

Just how apt and true this metaphor of the ‘tongue and the teeth’ vis-à-vis Vibhishan and Ravana is will be proved a little later in our Story when we read that at the time Vibhishan, in goof faith and keeping the welfare of this brother in mind, had advised his brother Ravana to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid a ruinous war, Ravana publicly insulted Vibhishan and kicked him, ordering him to quit his kingdom as he was a traitor praising his enemy. This led Vibhishan to abandon Lanka and take shelter with Lord Ram, joining the Lord in his war efforts. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 41.}

²Vibhishan asked Hanuman most eagerly: “Hanuman, tell me dear, will Lord Ram arrange things and maneuver them in such a favourable way that I am finally extricated from this den of sinful demons, and can live a free and happy life like other devotees of the Lord? Will the Lord accept me inspite of my being a member of the despicable demon race, and a brother of the evil Ravana? I don’t think that I am qualified enough for this honour, but I rely on the merciful and gracious nature of Lord Ram who, I am sure, will forgive me for any misdeeds that I may have done or the lack of good virtues that I ought to have possessed, except that I am devoted completely to the Lord. Lord Ram is renowned as being the Angel Guardian and the benevolent Lord of all those who have no one to protect and save them from

sufferings; it is on this fame of the Lord that I put all my life at stake. So Hanuman, tell me please, will Lord Ram cast a compassionate glance at me for once?”

³Vibhishan says that the very fact that a great devotee of Lord Ram and a soul as pious and saintly as that of Hanuman had voluntarily come visiting him proves that Lord Ram is kindly disposed towards him, because meeting a true saint is only possible by the grace of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 69 where Garud has expressed an exactly similar sentiment towards the saintly crow Kaagbhusund when the latter narrated the divine story of Lord Ram to the former which gave him immense degree of peace and spiritual bliss.}

⁴There are many more instances in Ram Charit Manas where it is reiterated that meeting with a saint is a blessing for the soul, and it implies that Lord Ram is indeed benevolent on a person who is fortunate to meet a saint. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 13, 21 that precede Doha no. 121; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 123, (v) Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 125.]

सुनहु बिभीषन प्रभु कै रीती । करहिं सदा सेवक पर प्रीती ॥ ६ ॥
कहहु कवन मैं परम कुलीना । कपि चंचल सबहीं बिधि हीना ॥ ७ ॥
प्रात लेइ जो नाम हमारा । तेहि दिन ताहि न मिलै अहारा ॥ ८ ॥

sunahu bibhīṣana prabhu kai rītī. karahim sadā sēvaka para prītī. 6.
kahahu kavana mairi parama kulīnā. kapi cañcala sabahim bidhi hīnā. 7.
prāta lē'i jō nāma hamārā. tēhi dina tāhi na milai ahārā. 8.

Hanuman replied, ‘Listen Vibhishan. I shall tell you the principles that the Lord (Sri Ram) always follows: it is that he always and invariably shows his affection and benevolence towards his ‘sevaks’ (i.e. to his devotees, those who serve him, those who follow him), for this is his wont and habit¹. (6)

Look at me. Say, in which noble race or superior clan am I born (that would have entitled me to obtain Lord Ram’s favour and grace, or the honour that the Lord has granted me by picking me as his messenger who would get the unmatched glory of finding Sita and be instrumental in eliminating the demon race in order to help the supreme Lord Vishnu to keep his promise made to the gods and mother earth)?

To wit, I am born in a lowly and humble race that is known by the name of Kapi (literally the monkey race), and by nature we are fickle and frivolous, as well as devoid of any worthwhile virtues. So what claim do I have for getting any honour that I have been granted?

[To wit, I am a living proof of Lord Ram’s graceful and benevolent nature that he has shown so much grace upon a humble and lowly creature like me just because the Lord realized that I am totally and faithfully devoted to him, and have deep and undiluted affection for him.] (7)

Indeed, I am born in such a lowly race that if anyone peradventure pronounces our name in the morning then it is regarded as such a bad omen for him that he would not get anything to eat that day. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 183; and (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 87 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

दो०. अस मैं अधम सखा सुनु मोहू पर रघुबीर ।
कीन्ही कृपा सुमिरि गुन भरे बिलोचन नीर ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

asa mairi adhama sakhā sunu mōhū para raghubīra.
kīnhī kṛpā sumiri guna bharē bilōcana nīra. 7.

My dear friend (sakhā). I am indeed of such a low birth, yet Lord Ram (Raghubir) had been so merciful and gracious upon me (that I can't describe as it is beyond my imagination).'

Saying this, and recalling Lord Ram's gracious nature and glorious virtues, Hanuman's eyes were filled with tears (of gratitude and thankfulness). (Doha no. 7)

चौ०. जानतहूँ अस स्वामि बिसारी । फिरहिं ते काहे न होहिं दुखारी ॥ १ ॥
एहि बिधि कहत राम गुन ग्रामा । पावा अनिर्बाच्य बिश्रामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānatahūṁ asa svāmi bisārī. phirahī tē kāhē na hōhī dukhārī. 1.
ēhi bidhi kahata rāma guna grāmā. pāvā anirbācya biśrāmā. 2.

[Hanuman was so overwhelmed with emotions that he could speak no further for a moment. Then he regained his composure and said—] 'Even after being aware of such an excellent and obliging nature of Lord Ram if a creature still wonders elsewhere seeking protection for himself, if he seeks succour and solace from his sufferings elsewhere, say why will such an unfortunate one not become unhappy and subjected to sufferings and miseries of all kinds?'¹ (1)

In this way, by remembering and reiterating the many virtues of Lord Ram, and singing the Lord's glories, both these blessed and noble souls (Vibhishan and Hanuman) derived immense bliss and peace which was so sublime and profound that it cannot be described in words². (2)

[Note—¹For indeed such a creature is like a fool who has abandoned an eternal spring of happiness right in his own courtyard and goes searching for water in a desert with a bucket in hand!

²The level of ecstasy and beatitude that Vibhishan and Hanuman enjoyed during those moments were of a sublime quality, the intensity, the effulgence and the depth of which was so great that the situation can be understood by us by natural instinct or by experience only, but which is extremely difficult to explain by employing words, as the latter, no matter how best and with skill they are selected from the dictionary, would not do justice to the exalted emotional state that prevailed at that time, for sentiments of such spiritual profundity cannot be butted-and-bounded in any language.]

पुनि सब कथा बिभीषन कही । जेहि बिधि जनकसुता तहँ रही ॥ ३ ॥
तब हनुमंत कहा सुनु भ्राता । देखी चहउँ जानकी माता ॥ ४ ॥
जुगुति बिभीषन सकल सुनाई । चलेउ पवनसुत बिदा कराई ॥ ५ ॥

puni saba kathā bibhīṣana kahī. jēhi bidhi janakasutā tahaṁ rahī. 3.
taba hanumanta kahā sunu bhrātā. dēkhī caha'uṁ jānakī mātā. 4.
juguti bibhīṣana sakala sunā'ī. calē'u pavanasuta bidā karā'ī. 5.

[After some time of silence during which tears rolled down their eyes and they remained submerged in experiencing ecstasy and blissfulness, Vibhishan and Hanuman once again regained their composure and focused their mind to practical affairs of this mundane world, to the work at hand that had to be urgently accomplished.]

So, picking up the thread of conversation with Hanuman, Vibhishan told him everything about where and in what condition Janaksuta (“janakasutā”; literally the daughter of king Janak; i.e. Sita) lived there (in Lanka)¹. (3)

Then Hanuman expressed his desire to meet her, saying to Vibhishan, ‘Listen brother. I wish to see mother Sita. [Prithee, please now tell me how I can go and meet Sita easily; which would be the convenient way for me. It is day-time, so please tell me how I can sneak in undetected; by which path must I enter the place where she is incarcerated without causing an alarm.]’ (4)

Upon this request, Vibhishan disclosed to Hanuman how to manipulate things and maneuver his way through the secret path by which he can sneak in the garden where Sita sits and go close to her².

Armed with this vital piece of information, the son of the wind god took leave of Vibhishan and proceeded ahead with his mission. (5)

[Note—¹Earlier in Doha no. 6, Hanuman had told Vibhishan all about himself and about Lord Ram. Obviously this narration had informed Vibhishan about the reason why Hanuman had come to Lanka. After this initial briefing and introduction, both Vibhishan and Hanuman became close friends, so close indeed that they were like two siblings who loved each other dearly and were meeting after ages of separation. When this emotional storm subsided and they were back in the practical world to face its harsh realities, they realized that there are things to be done on priority basis. So now

Vibhishan disclosed to Hanuman the site of Sita's captivity in Lanka, and the condition in which she lived there.

Another important point to note is of the use of the word “janakasutā” for Sita. King Janak was an ascetic-king, i.e. though he was a king but internally he was an exalted ascetic as he remained detached from all worldly affairs, maintained a distance from all material attractions, practices stellar self-control, and enjoyed meditation even while appearing to attend to the affairs of the world and doing his duties diligently. By employing this epithet of “janakasutā” for Sita Vibhishan meant that like her father king Janak, Sita too lived in Lanka like a true ascetic, remaining engrossed in meditation, practicing strict self-control, be detached to the world that surrounds her, and was able to maintain her calmness and quietude in the midst of the turmoil that characterized a land of demons.

²Vibhishan's advice came handy to Hanuman as he now was equipped with knowledge of the physical topography and plan of the place. With this information it was easy for Hanuman to avoid places where it would be easy to detect an outsider; he could now pass through some secret corridors and entrance chambers known only to a handful of the demons who were either members of the royal family of Lanka like Vibhishan himself was, or to a very few of the royal soldiers who were assigned the duty as body-guards. Vibhishan must have told Hanuman the time when these few body-guards changed their duties, because this was the right time when he could safely enter as these guards would then be distracted.

The fact is that Vibhishan played an extremely crucial and vital role in the entire enterprise of freeing Sita and winning the war of Lanka. Firstly, he helped Hanuman to locate Sita exactly and guided him to her; and secondly, as we shall read in due course, it was Vibhishan's help that enabled Lord Ram to finally kill Ravana, because when all efforts had failed to bring Ravana down Lord Ram looked to Vibhishan to tell him the secret of his invincibility, at which Vibhishan disclosed that Ravana could only be slayed if the Lord shot an arrow directly at his navel to pierce a pitcher that contained the nectar that provides him with eternity, and suck it out. This has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

करि सोइ रूप गयउ पुनि तहवाँ । बन असोक सीता रह जहवाँ ॥ ६ ॥
देखि मनहि महुँ कीन्ह प्रनामा । बैठेहिं बीति जात निसि जामा ॥ ७ ॥
कृस तनु सीस जटा एक बेनी । जपति हृदयँ रघुपति गुन श्रेनी ॥ ८ ॥

kari sō'i rūpa gaya'u puni tahavāṁ. bana asōka sītā raha jahavāṁ. 6.
dēkhi manahi mahuṁ kīnha pranāmā. baiṭhēhiṁ bīti jāta nisi jāmā. 7.
kṛsa tanu sīsa jāṭā ēka bēnī. japati hṛdayaṁ raghupati guna śrēnī. 8.

Hanuman assumed that same form by which he had entered Lanka (i.e. he assumed a very small form which was so tiny that no one would pay attention to him), and went to the garden known as ‘Ashok’¹ where Sita lived (or was held captive)*. (6)

When he saw Sita, Hanuman mentally bowed to her reverentially. He observed that she had been sitting still, deeply lost in thoughts. The impression that he got was that

she had not slept throughout the night, and had been sitting in the same position for quite some time². (7)

[In the following verses and the Doha that follows herein below, the pitiable condition of Sita is being described.]

She was emaciated in her body; on her head there was a thick tuft of matted hairs formed by the plait of hairs that had become dry and luster-less.

Deep down in her anguished heart she was quietly repeating the holy name of Lord Raghupati (Ram), remembering the Lord and recounting the long legend of his glorious virtues. (8)

[Note—¹When Ravana brought Sita to Lanka, he had put her up in this garden which was a royal garden full of beautiful trees. She sat in the shadow of a huge Ashoka tree. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 26 that precedes Doha no. 29.}

This place was so called as it was so pleasant and comforting that anyone who entered it felt relieved of his sorrow, misery and grief. The ‘Ahoka’ tree itself may have two connotations, viz. (i) a tree of the species ‘Jonesia Ahoka’ or ‘Saraca Indica’; and (ii) a huge shade-providing tree with thick foliage and extended branches.

This garden also doubled as an orchard because besides having flowering trees it also was full of fruit bearing trees. This will be soon evident when Hanuman rampaged through it, eating fruits and uprooting trees. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 18.}

* The location of the “Ashok grove or garden” where Sita was held captive by Ravana was at the epicenter of the developments that led to the ultimate downfall of the great demon empire and the slaying of its powerful and invincible king Ravana—because it was here that Sita was placed ever since she was brought by Ravana after abducting her from Lord Ram’s hermitage in Panchavati, it was here that Hanuman met her, it was in this garden that the first battle of the war was fought between Hanuman and the forces of Ravana, and it was here that Sita stayed and did severe Tapa (suffering hardship for some noble cause, to do penances and austerities) till the war finally ended and Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, was able to successfully fulfill his promises made to the gods and mother earth that he would eliminate the scourge of the evil demons so as to free the world of their burden.

This “Ashok grove or garden” is important for another reason too—for its location in Lanka lent its name to the 5th Canto of the epic story of the Ramayana, because this Canto is called “Sundar Kand”. Why is this Chapter called “Sundar Kand”?

The reason is very interesting, and it is this: Lanka was established on a great, undulating mountain range located in the middle of the southern ocean. It had three high summits. This is why the mountain was called ‘Trikoort’—having three summits. The city of Lanka was established on these three summits. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 178 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it ; and (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 28.}

These three summits were not the type of conventional conical tips having sharp, craggy mass of rocks that we usually find on mountain tops, because such summits cannot have a large flourishing city on them. So it is obvious that the three

summits of Trikoot were like three high plateaus. The names of these three plateaus were 'Neel', 'Sundar' and 'Subel'. The first plateau named 'Neel' was the sight of the grand city of Lanka; the second plateau named 'Sundar' was the sight of the Ashok garden, and the third plateau named 'Subel' was the sight of the battle-field where the epic war was fought.

The second summit was the famed counterpart of the 'Sumeru' mountain in the north. The Sumeru was inhabited by the gods who lived in the heaven (i.e. in the northern direction of the compass pointing symbolically to heaven), while the demons lived on 'Trikoot' in the mortal world (i.e. in the southern direction of the compass). The Trikoot was conceptualized and built to rival Sumeru; it was the capital of the demon kingdom of Lanka, and a wonderfully decked-up golden city.

The third summit was called 'Sundar', meaning beautiful and magnificent, because its Ashok garden was exceptionally fascinating and charming, and singular beauty and magnificence had no rival in the world; special care was taken for its upkeep as it was the royal retreat of the kings of Lanka. It is this summit known as 'Sundar' which has been used to name this 5th Canto of the Ramayan for reasons explained herein above.

Out of these three summits, which were flat lands like large plateaus, the one on the northern side of the island of Lanka was called 'Subel'. It is here that Hanuman landed when he went to Lanka in search of Sita (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3), and it is here that Lord Ram landed with his army of monkeys and bears when he went to free her and eliminate the demons (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11).

In both these cases we read that it is from the top of this Mt. Subel that Hanuman and Lord Ram surveyed the city of Lanka and its fort that were in the southern direction. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13.}

Therefore it naturally follows that the third summit known as 'Sundar', where Sita was held captive in its beautiful garden or a forest known as Ashok, was at the further end of Lanka, to the south of the Trikoot mountain.

To wit, Subel was at the northern end, Trikoot at the center, and Sundar at the far or the southern end of Lanka.

Subel was the flat land where the demons used to do physical exercises and practice marital art of warfare; it was from here that they would keep an hawk eye on the ocean lying on the north because the land mass from where there was any possibility of an invasion of Lanka was on this side, a mere 800 miles off the shore of Lanka as compared to its other sides where there was no land for thousands of miles around.

Since the summit called 'Sundar' was at the far end of Lanka, neither Hanuman nor Lord Ram and his ministers could see it and its Ashok grove. From Subel they could only see Trikoot, the capital city of the kingdom of Lanka.

Lanka was initially conceived as a domain city of Kuber, the treasurer of the gods; it was constructed by Vishwakarma, the gods' architect. This being the case, Lanka was an image of the abode of the gods in heaven, the city on Mt. Sumeru. When Ravana snatched it from Kuber, he made Lanka as the capital of the demon race which he headed. Since Lanka rivaled the city of the gods in heaven, its grandeur and magnificence can be well imagined.

We can site other instances in the Ramayan where the name of a particular Canto or Chapter is assigned according to the chief events covered under that Canto, or the name of the place which is the epicenter of main events. For example, the 1st Canto is called 'Baal Kand' because it deals with the birth and the early life of Lord Ram that covers his adolescence. {The word "Baal" means a child or a boy.}

Similarly, the 2nd Canto is called 'Ayodhya Kand' because this chapter deals with all the developments that led to Lord Ram coming to the forest, and what were its consequences for the rest of the kingdom. The 3rd Canto is titled 'Aranya Kand' because it describes the Lord's journey through the wild forest beyond the borders of his kingdom. {The word "Aranya" means dense, wild forest.}

'Kishkindha Kand', the 4th Canto, derives its name from the geographical area where the tribal kingdom of the same name where Lord Ram spent the next phase of his life, meeting Sugriv, Hanuman, Angad etc., and forging new relationships.

The Canto where the epic war was fought is appropriately named 'Lanka Kand'. This is the 6th Canto.

And finally, the last and the concluding Canto, the 7th, is called 'Uttar Kand', symbolizing the end of the narration. {The word "Uttar" refers to the concluding part of a narrative.}

The above note clearly explains why the 5th Canto of the Ramayan is universally called "Sundar Kand".

²It was the early morning hours of the day, just after dawn. As we have read above, Hanuman met Vibhishan at the time he woke up and pronounced Lord Ram's name. Pious and religious people are supposed to rise very early in the morning, much before dawn; the generally accepted time is around 4-5 a.m.

The conversation between Hanuman and Vibhishan must not have lasted long, and immediately after that Hanuman went to the garden.

Therefore, it was the time when the city of Lanka was still half asleep as demons were late risers. It ought to be noted that demons are called 'Nishichara' (nisicara) which literally means 'one who moves during the night', which obviously means 'one who remains active during the night and keeps late hours'. Such creatures usually sleep late during day to compensate for loss of sleep during the night.

To wit, when Hanuman first saw Sita he found her sitting with legs either crossed or bent at the knees, her hands encircling her legs and clasped in front, and her head hung over her bosom as if she was brooding while crouching or squatting. She looked tired and haggard; her hairs were unwashed and tied carelessly into a thick bun on her head; and her clothes were virtually ragged and unkempt. The general atmosphere of sadness, dejection, gloom and despair hung so heavily around her that it was not difficult for Hanuman to get an idea of the gravity of Sita's sufferings instantaneously.]

दो०. निज पद नयन दिँ मन राम पद कमल लीन ।

परम दुखी भा पवनसुत देखि जानकी दीन ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

nija pada nayana di'ēñ mana rāma pada kamala līna.
parama dukhī bhā pavanasuta dēkhi jānakī dīna. 8.

Janki (Sita) sat with her lustreless eyes cast down and fixed at her feet, while her Mana (mind and heart) was fixed on the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram¹.

When the son of the wind god thus saw her pitiable condition of overwhelming misery and despair, he was filled with utter grief and sorrow. (Doha no. 8)

[Note—¹This is a posture usually common with people who have lost their dear ones, and are in a stupefied condition of excess of grief and despair. A person who deeply grieves for someone who is very dear to one's heart would sit quietly and forlorn in a corner, lost in his own thoughts, and looking blankly at no where in particular.

Sita sat with a lowered head; she constantly looked down towards the ground with low-cast eyes transfixed as if in a dazed stupor, so emotionally shocked and anguished she was. She did not sleep in the night, and her constant gaze made her eyes bloodshot. Her mind and heart, meanwhile, were engrossed in remembering Lord Ram; she fixed her attention on the holy feet of the Lord as a means of finding some solace and succour in the face of abject despair and hopelessness.

Happy events, cheerful days and moments of laughter of her past life glided across her mind like fluffy white clouds floating across the firmament during winter. She recollected the playful days of her childhood and happy days spent in dreaming during her youth, she remembered the day of the Bow-breaking ceremony when she had so fervently prayed to all the gods and deities she ever paid her respects to so that Lord Ram would break the bow and marry her, she vividly recollected how she had literally jumped with exhilaration and ecstasy when her prayers were indeed answered and the Lord snapped the bow with a thunderous roar that reverberated throughout the world and deafened one and all, but which sounded like sweet music to her ears, the memory of the moments of her putting the victory garland around the Lord's neck came clear as crystal to her mind, and she drew a deep breath and gasped in agony, she recollected the details of her marriage ceremony in its finest and closest detail, she remembered how lovingly she was welcomed in her in-law's household where she found love in abundance, even surpassing that she was accustomed to at her father's place at Lanka, the joyful days of married life she spent with her beloved husband Lord Ram in Ayodhya and the sudden strike of misfortune that turned the world around her when the Lord was asked to go to the forest for fourteen long years came rushing to her memory like a train of white clouds followed by a menacing bank of dark clouds that obscures the sunlight and turns the sky dark and gloomy, she recalled the moment when she decided to accompany the Lord to the forest, his attempts to dissuade her because the horrors she would face in the wild would be too unbearable for her, and the firmness with which she had said 'no, she won't stay back' and the Lord gave his consent to her to follow him, then she remembered those long days and months of the years they, she and her beloved Lord Ram as well as her son-like brother-in-law Laxman, had spent happily wandering in the forest, enjoying a carefree life like birds freed from a gilded cage do, smiling and wondering at the vast vista of beauty of Mother Nature that spread before her eyes all around, and imbibing the nectar of un-describable happiness and sweetness that was all hers to drink as much as she wished during the days, months and years gone by.

Sita was lost in this pleasant reverie, and during these sweet musings and happy recollections that went past the canvas of her memory like bright charming pictures cast on a screen that mesmerize the spectator so much that he forgets all about himself and his surroundings, Sita was in a state of stupor as she sat dazed and immobile, staring at the ground like a frozen picture cast in a frame, and now and then

she would sigh or gasp in agony, drawing a deep breath and making exerting her remaining strength to hold back the hot tears that wished to roll down her cheeks like lava from a pent-up volcano.

Remember my dear readers, the 'Sita' whom we see here is a 'shadow or an image or an apparition of the real Sita' because she has been put in the safe custody of the Fire God by Lord Ram at the beginning of this unfortunate phase of the Story. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.}

Different shades of thoughts passed over the firmament of Sita's mind. She was at once gloomy and dejected for one moment, feeling that she was rapidly sinking in an abyss, because despairing thoughts of doom and helplessness clouded her brow like banks of thick dark clouds that obscure the light of the sun, then at the next moment this cloud floated past and bright sunshine shone through as she remembered Lord Ram's love for her, his unparallel valour, strength and abilities, and she was sure that sooner or later she would be resurrected by the Lord only if she managed to hold on for some more time.

Buffeted in this way between abject gloom and light of hope she finally decided to follow the maxim of life: that to have faith, to wait, and to hope, are the fundamental pillars of life, for if there is no faith, if there is no hope, and if one doesn't have the patience to wait then life would lose its meaning. So therefore, she took a firm resolution to gather all her courage and wits together, to hope for her redemption, to wait for the arrival of the Lord, to have faith in her love and devotion for him, to give Providence time to regret for its errors, if they be any, and repent by bringing cheer back to her.

During these testing times of misfortune, she also discovered another truth of life: that when one is always enjoying happiness and goodness of life he does not realize how fortunate he has been, and he accuses the Lord God for the slightest feeling of uneasiness if, even for a moment, things do not happen the way he wants them to happen; but when he slips in a deep cavern of grief, sadness and despair where no sunlight enters, only then he begins to realize how merciful and benevolent the Lord God had been towards him when the Lord had been showering him with bountiful blessings pouring down upon him like rainfall, for now he begins to contrast his present situation of misery with the bright days of happiness when even the slightest deviation from the routine of cheer and joy had made him accuse the Lord of being cruel to him or neglecting him. Woe to him, for now he curses himself instead of cursing the merciful Lord. The contrast makes him wisened and pray to the Lord God, saying in supplication, "Oh my dearest Lord; please forgive me for my foolishness and once again show your everlasting grace on me as you had always been showing to me ere I stupidly accused of neglecting or being harsh to me, and I vow to you that I will never ever complain. Nay, not only not complain, but I will spend the rest of my life thanking you myself and telling the world my story so that others who are as stupid as me would learn a lesson before it is too late for them."

These and sundry other like thoughts clouded her brow and filled her agonized mind as she sat there under the shade of the tree in the Ashok garden.]

चौ०. तरु पल्लव महुँ रहा लुकाई । करइ बिचार करौं का भाई ॥ १ ॥
तेहि अवसर रावनु तहुँ आवा । संग नारि बहु किएँ बनावा ॥ २ ॥
बहु बिधि खल सीतहि समुझावा । साम दान भय भेद देखावा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāṭi.

taru pallava mahuṃ rahā lukāṭi. kara'i bicāra karaum kā bhāṭi. 1.
tēhi avasara rāvanu tahaṃ āvā. saṅga nāri bahu ki'eṃ banāvā. 2.
bahu bidhi khala sītahi samujhāvā. sāma dāna bhaya bhēda dēkhāvā. 3.

Hanuman hid himself in the thick foliage of the tree under whose shade Sita sat in a gloomy and melancholic state, contemplating in his mind the next action he should take, and talking to himself, 'Come brother, what should I do next?'¹ (1)

Just at that moment Ravana came to that spot; he was accompanied by a horde of ladies who were gaily adorned in many different ways². (2)

That wicked fellow tried his best to convince Sita (to surrender herself to him), using all the tricks he could think of: such as employing polite persuasion, tempting her with gifts and treasures, using threats and coercive methods, and showing her the difference it would make to her situation if she conceded to his demands on the one hand, and the suffering she would have to endure if she refused his overtures on the other hand³. (3)

[Note—¹What was Hanuman thinking of during those moments; what was the reason of his uncertainty and procrastination? The answer is this: He had seen Sita sitting in a meditative posture, remembering Lord Ram and muttering silently the Lord's holy name. She appeared like a female ascetic deeply immersed in her spiritual practice. It is absolutely wrong to disturb an ascetic during the time he or she is submerged deep in meditation and remembering the Supreme Being; it would be a highly sinful thing to disturb an ascetic during this time. So Hanuman thought that he is obliged to wait, at least till the time Sita got up to attend to some of her routine chores of the day, such as to attend to Nature's call, wash her mouth, eat something in order to survive, and so on.

But he could not be sure when that will be; perhaps she may remain sitting thus for the whole day; or may be she would be taken away to some other place for confinement as a precaution by her captors to avoid her being detected by a spy sent by her husband; or may be some fierce demon guard may come to guard her by the time Hanuman had the opportunity to introduce himself to her.

He also feared that if he suddenly stood before her it would break her stupor, and she would be so shocked that she may die due to it even before Hanuman had the time to speak a word. Supposing she screamed when she saw him; this would surely be catastrophic. He did not wish to create a scene before introducing himself to Sita and conveying Lord Ram's message to her.

Time was precious and it was running out fast. This worried Hanuman as he waited behind the leaves, unable to decide what next to do. But this wait proved to be a blessing in disguise for him, for soon Ravana arrived there with quite a few females in tow. Then Hanuman thanked God for his delay in introducing himself to Sita, for had he done so and was found with her at the time Ravana came there, all hell would have broken loose and Sita would have been put to grave risk.

²It ought to be noted that Ravana did not approach Sita alone; he was accompanied by a number of females. These females may have been demonesses or ladies whom he had brought to Lanka as trophies of his many conquests. Nevertheless, he did not

approach Sita alone as he wished to be sure that no one would ever accuse him of doing any physical wrong to her while she was in seclusion; the presence of not one or two but many females during his interaction with Sita pre-empted and prevented such evil accusations.

Another important point is this: He never allowed male demons to come near Sita; only female demons were allowed to guard her. This was another precaution Ravana took for the physical safety of Sita, and to ensure her privacy, self-respect and dignity. He did not want to take the risk of allowing male demons to in any way defile the purity and chastity of Sita even by their promiscuous glances or lustful thoughts.

³Remember: Ravana had brought Sita and put her in this garden with due respect that he would have given to his mother, and also with the awareness that she may prove to be the source of his deliverance from the sinful body of a demon if he could induce Lord Ram to come and kill him to free Sita. These facts are clearly hinted in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23; (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 30-31; 37; and Canto 7, verse no. 65.

Like Lord Ram who had concealed his true identity of the all-knowing Supreme Lord of the world, who had himself designed the plan of Sita's abduction to make it a pretext of eliminating the scourge of the evil demons but acted and behaved in such a way that he had no inkling of what had happened to her, weeping for her and searching for her like an ordinary human being, Ravana too wanted to act his part of a demon to perfection. This is the only and the one reason why he seemed to behave lustfully towards Sita, pretending to tempt her and even coerce her to surrender herself to his carnal desires and sensual pleasures.

So though Ravana pretended to have lustful designs on Sita, though he threatened her of dire consequences, though he tempted her and teased her—but he never actually harmed her physically or touched her inappropriately. This is remarkable for a demon like Ravana who was famed for his pervert and promiscuous nature.]

कह रावनु सुनु सुमुखि सयानी । मंदोदरी आदि सब रानी ॥ ४ ॥

तव अनुचरीं करउँ पन मोरा । एक बार बिलोकु मम ओरा ॥ ५ ॥

kaha rāvanu sunu sumukhi sayānī. mandōdarī ādi saba rānī. 4.
tava anucarīm kara'um̐ pana mōrā. ēka bāra bilōku mama ōrā. 5.

Ravana said, 'Oh the wise and intelligent one who has a pretty face (sumukhi sayānī); listen to me (sunu). Look, there is Mandodari and many other queens in my palace¹. (4)

I promise to you that I would be your servant if only you would look at me but once.², (5)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana assured Sita that she would be well looked after, and she would have other ladies such as Mandodari and other queens to give her company. She will not feel alone; she would enjoy all the royal privileges that other females did.

²This clearly shows that Sita has not looked at Ravana even once after he had abducted her. In the context of his inner feelings whereby he had brought her with a desire to attain liberation and deliverance from his demon life through her medium, and also with a view that she was like a mother to him, this request of Ravana assumes a different meaning than what it appears to be on the surface.

There is a plea for mercy hidden in the heart of Ravana when he asks Sita to look at his face; he knows that if Sita, whom he treated like a ‘mother’, looked up and saw him, she would immediately feel pity for his demonic body and have mercy for his soul. She would immediately read what was in his mind as any mother would in the case of her child. Sita would see a prayer on Ravana’s quivering lips; she would see a plea for mercy in his eyes welling up with tears; she would observe how he bows his head subtly before her both in reverence and in shame; she would read his face to understand his inner thoughts and what was going on in his thumping heart.

But Sita did not look up. Why? Was she merciless; was she not a mother willing to do everything for her child? No, it is not that. The real reason is different, and this reason saddened Sita’s heart too at the subtle plane. It is this: If she showed any compassion to Ravana and spared him from death, what would be the result? There would be no war, and thus the cruel demons who had unleashed a reign of terror on the world, and for the end of which terror the Supreme Lord had to come personally on the prayers of the gods and mother earth—these demons won’t die, and the scourge would continue as before. In fact the disease symbolised by the demons may even increase manifold because Ravana would be emboldened with the knowledge that the Mother of the world in the person of Sita has become benevolent upon him and has promised her protection to him. This would mean the whole exercise would become null and void.

Sita, being the ‘Mother of the world’, brooded on this point; she concluded that she cannot show grace upon this single child of hers at the cost of allowing the rest of the world suffer at his hands because all the living beings were her off-spring. It was in the thus in the larger interest of this world that Sita refused to look up at Ravana.]

तृण धरि ओट कहति बैदेही । सुमिरि अवधपति परम सनेही ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनु दसमुख खद्योत प्रकासा । कबहुँ कि नलिनी करइ बिकासा ॥ ७ ॥
 अस मन समुझु कहति जानकी । खल सुधि नहिं रघुबीर बान की ॥ ८ ॥
 सठ सूनें हरि आनेहि मोही । अधम निलज्ज लाज नहिं तोही ॥ ९ ॥

tr̥ṇa dhari ōṭa kahati baidēhī. sumiri avadhapati parama sanēhī. 6.
 sunu dasamukha khadyōta prakāsā. kabahuṁ ki nalinī kara’i bikāsā. 7.
 asa mana samujhu kahati jānakī. khala sudhi nahim raghubīra bāna kī. 8.
 saṭha sūnēm hari ānēhi mōhī. adhama nilajja lāja nahim tōhī. 9.

Keeping a blade of grass between herself and Ravana¹, and remembering and invoking the Lord of Ayodhya (Lord Ram) who was very dear to her (sumiri avadhapati parama sanēhī), Vaidehi (Sita; the one who had no physical body as she was only an image or an apparition of her true self) spoke indignantly, rebuffing Ravana sternly, and telling him in unequivocal terms to mind his tongue and behave himself --- (6)

‘Listen, oh you ten-headed monster! Can a lotus flower ever expect to bloom in the feeble light of the fire-fly?’² (7)

Janki (Sita) warned Ravana, ‘Ponder over what I have just said; think over it. You wretched fellow; you are not acquainted with Lord Ram’s arrows.

[To wit, you do not know the fire that spews forth from the arrows shot by the Lord; this fire would burn you and your race to ashes. You do not realize your doom in your haughtiness and arrogance. Be ware!] (8)

You wicked and sinful rogue! You had abducted me when you found me alone in the hermitage. Oh you lowly and fallen one; aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Shame to you and your manhood!

[If you had the guts, why did you not openly challenge Lord Ram and defeat him in battle to bring me like you had done in the case of other women whom you had brought as trophies of your wars? You rascal and pervert creature! It was because you were terrified of Lord Ram and had no stomach to face his arrows. And now you show yourself before a helpless woman. You should bury yourself in the muck of shame and guilt! Woe betide the wretch who stole me like a thief, imagining that he would lay his evil hands on me, forgetting that no one has ever been able to hold a shadow, which, unfortunately for this foolish one, I indeed am. You, in an attempt to use me as a ransom tool, have, on the other hand, dug your own grave.]³ (9)

[Note—¹It is not deemed to be a good etiquette, it is not civil and polite in Indian culture for a married woman to talk to a male stranger directly, especially when her husband is not present. So therefore, Sita looked at a twig or a blade of grass in front of her, and used it as a medium to address Ravana. She appeared to talk with this inanimate twig or grass blade when replying to the demon king.

It also implies that she had not raised her head while replying, but kept her gaze fixed on the ground where the grass was.

There are two other reasons why Sita kept a twig or a blade of grass in front of her while replying to Ravana: One is that she wished to tell him that as far as she was concerned, Ravana was no better than that lifeless and useless piece lying at her feet on the ground, and soon his fate would also be like it as the fierce fire of the impending war would reduce his entire clan to ashes as easily as a fire burns a dry twig or a blade of grass to ashes.

The other reason is very significant—it is well known that Sita was born of Mother Earth, as king Janak had found her in a pitcher while clearing the ground to perform a fire sacrifice. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 59-60.}

Grass is born from earth, and so Sita regarded ‘grass’ as her symbolic brother. Hence, she kept her ‘brother’, the blade of grass, between herself and her tormentor Ravana when talking with the latter, to ensure that her ‘brother’ would stand guard for her safety. Perhaps Ravana understood this subtle message as he did not venture either to use force on her or come even a wee bit nearer to Sita.

²The lotus flower opens its petals during the day when bright sunlight falls on it. It will of course not unfold by and other light, especially one as dim and flickering as that emitted by the fire-fly. Here, Sita compares the glory and magnificence of Ravana to the feeble and flickering light of the fire-fly, and Ravana himself to this

insect. Since Sita uses the metaphor of the lotus flower, it follows that by implication she is referring to Lord Ram who is likened to the splendorous sun because the lotus flower opens its petals in sunlight. She says that Ravana is inconsequential and without any worth when compared to Lord Ram.

³Then she sternly warns him that enough was enough, and henceforth he must stop tormenting her. Is he not aware of the powers and potentials of Lord Ram's arms? If he is a great and mighty warrior who claims to have conquered the heaven and the earth, then why does he not face Lord Ram directly in a duel and subjugate him instead of threatening a helpless and weary woman. Abducting a terrified and weeping woman who is alone at home is a cowardly and despicable act; what then he speaks so boastfully and loudly of his majesty and magnificence, what claim does he have of power and strength, for he is no better than a thief who dares not face the master of the house when he comes crouching through the back door during the darkness of the night, or a jackal or a hyena who steals the meal left over by a lion? Woe to Ravana; shame to him and his race! Why does he not bury himself in an avalanche of shame, dishonour, guilt, remorse and regret; why does the earth not open up in an abyss to devour such a mean and vile creature as he?

In this context, we can recollect a Psalm of the Holy Bible where what is said therein would reflect how Sita would have cursed Ravana who was tormenting her. Now, let us read this Psalm from The Holy Bible, Old Testament, Psalm 52/1-9:-

- 1: Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.
- 2: Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
- 3: Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness.
- 4: Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.
- 5: God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living.
- 6: The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:
- 7: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.
- 8: But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
- 9: I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.

It was truly such a stern rebuke for Ravana, especially in front of the women who had accompanied him, that he must have felt highly insulted and humiliated. He must have squirmed in anger and vowed his vengeance upon Sita, which surely he did as we read in the Doha no. 9 that follows herein below.]

दो०. आपुहि सुनि खद्योत सम रामहि भानु समान ।

परुष बचन सुनि काढ़ि असि बोला अति खिसिआन ॥ ९ ॥

dōhā.

āpuhi suni khadyōta sama rāmahi bhānu samāna.
paruṣa bacana suni kāḍhi asi bōlā ati khisi'āna. 9.

Hearing himself being likened to the fire-fly, and by implication Lord Ram to the sun, and hearing Sita's stern words of rebuke, Ravana lost his cool and became furious. He felt extremely humiliated, and becoming exasperated and peeved, he drew his sword and said angrily --- (Doha no. 9)

चौ०. सीता तैं मम कृत अपमाना । कटिहउँ तव सिर कठिन कृपाना ॥ १ ॥
नाहिं त सपदि मानु मम बानी । सुमुखि होति न त जीवन हानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sītā taiṁ mama kṛta apamānā. kaṭiha'uṁ tava sira kaṭhina kṛpānā. 1.
nāhiṁ ta sapadi mānu mama bānī. sumukhi hōti na ta jīvana hānī. 2.

Ravana was indignant and angry. He said vehemently, 'Sita, you have insulted and humiliated me (in front of the females who accompany me). [Now, this is too much for me to bear.] I shall cut-off your head with me infallible sword which strikes hard. (1)

Or you must soon agree to what I say. Otherwise, oh the sweet faced One (sumukhi)¹, your life would be in danger. [To wit, if you wish to preserve yourself, give consent to my proposal, for otherwise I shall slay you with this sword of mine.]' (2)

[Note—¹By using the term “sumukhi” for Sita, Ravana means that he would have surely killed her right at that moment for insulting him, as slighting a king in his own kingdom invites immediate punishment, especially when the king is directly abused by the offender, which amounts to a grave crime no less than sacrilege, but for the moment he spares her life just because he does not want to kill such a pretty woman.

This interpretation is endorsed in Valmiki's Ramayana, Sundar Kand, Canto 22, verse nos. 4-6.]

स्याम सरोज दाम सम सुंदर । प्रभु भुज करि कर सम दसकंधर ॥ ३ ॥
सो भुज कंठ कि तव असि घोरा । सुनु सठ अस प्रवान पन मोरा ॥ ४ ॥
चंद्रहास हरु मम परितापं । रघुपति बिरह अनल संजातं ॥ ५ ॥
सीतल निसित बहसि बर धारा । कह सीता हरु मम दुख भारा ॥ ६ ॥

syāma sarōja dāma sama sundara. prabhu bhuja kari kara sama
dasakandhara. 3.

sō bhuja kaṇṭha ki tava asi ghōrā. sunu saṭha asa pravāna pana mōrā. 4.
candrahāsa haru mama paritāpaṁ. raghupati biraha anala sañjātaṁ. 5.
sītala nisita bahasi bara dhārā. kaha sītā haru mama dukha bhārā. 6.

[Sita replied—] 'The arms of my dear Lord (Ram) are as lovely as a string of blue lotuses, and they are as shapely, long and muscular as the trunk of an elephant. Oh

you ten-headed One (**dasakandhara**)¹! Listen; can your ugly arms ever be a match for the arms of the Lord? (3)

I make a solemn vow before you, oh wicked fool, that it is either those arms of the Lord (Sri Ram) or your sword that will have my neck.

[To wit, I will never surrender to you, I will never bow before you evil crook, and I will never become a prey of your pervert designs. Woe to you, oh fool. I would prefer death by your sword rather than submitting myself to a foul and mean monster like you.]’ (4)

[Then Sita turned to the gleaming sword of Ravana and addressed it as follows—] ‘Oh **candrahāsa**² (a curved sword that is shaped like a crescent moon)! Please remove the immense suffering and misery that I am being subjected to due to my separation from Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram). [To wit, strike me and kill me so that my sufferings and torments come to an instant end.]³ (5)

You look cool, you have an excellent sharp edge, and you look able to remove my sufferings.’

Sita said to this Sword (of Ravana), ‘Prithee of Sword, I earnestly request you to end my sufferings and torments forthwith as they are so immense and intense that I can’t cope with them any longer.’ (6)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted that the actual word used in the text for Ravana is “**dasakandhara**”, which literally means ‘ten shoulders’. [“**dasa**” = ten; “**kandhara**” = shoulder. This in practical terms means ‘ten heads’ because each shoulder of Ravana supported a neck and a head.]

²The word “**candrahāsa**” literally means ‘that which laughs at the moon and puts it to shame because its shine and curve are better than that of the moon’. This sword of Ravana was very attractive as it had a gleaming surface which glittered in sunlight with a brilliance that was better than that of the disc of the moon; its edge was well curved, sharp and smooth, better than the rough and ragged edge of the crescent moon. This sword was like a war sickle or a scimitar.

Here, the Sword has been personified.

³Ravana has already threatened to kill Sita with this sword. So now Sita asks it to carry out its lord’s orders, and she is ready to oblige it.]

सुनत बचन पुनि मारन धावा । मयतनयाँ कहि नीति बुझावा ॥ ७ ॥
कहेसि सकल निसिचरिन्ह बोलाई । सीतहि बहु बिधि त्रासहु जाई ॥ ८ ॥
मास दिवस महुँ कहा न माना । तौ मैं मारबि काढ़ि कृपाना ॥ ९ ॥

sunata bacana puni mārana dhāvā. mayatanayāñ kahi nīti bujhāvā. 7.
kahēsi sakala nisicarinha bōlāī. sītahi bahu bidhi trāsahu jāī. 8.
māsa divasa mahum kahā na mānā. tau mairm mārabi kāḍhi kṛpānā. 9.

When Ravana heard the words of Sita (that she is willing to die instead of yielding to his pervert overtures), he became excessively exasperated; he drew his sword and dashed forward to kill her¹.

[Sita had addressed the sword. So Ravana unsheathed it and got ready to strike it, as if saying, “Alright, as you wish. Here is your prayer answered. The Sword comes to embrace your neck!”]

At that moment, the daughter of the demon Maye, i.e. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana and the chief queen, stepped forward to stop him. She somehow pacified him with words of good counsel². (7)

Then Ravana summoned all the female demon guards³, and ordered them to go and subject Sita to a lot of torments. (8)

He declared, ‘If she does not agree to what I say within a period of one month, then I shall surely kill her by striking her with this sword.’⁴ (9)

[Note—¹The fact that Ravana rushed or dashed forward towards Sita with a drawn sword proves that he was standing at a reasonable distance from her. He wished to maintain Sita’s dignity and honour by not getting too close to her during the initial phase of conversation. As we have already noted earlier, though he acted in a most pervert and despicable way, threatening her to surrender herself to him, he internally respected her as he knew that she was the Mother of the world, and that she would become an instrument for his soul’s redemption; the way he externally behaved, however, was for public consumption only.

²Mandodari advised her husband to cool down; things done in haste are never good. The world will laugh at him that he got provoked by a distressed woman’s words; the world will scorn at him that he killed an unarmed woman. Besides this, if he had brought Sita with the intention that he would find deliverance when the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram kills his demonic body, then killing Sita would be counter-productive because then the chances are that Lord Ram may return back as no purpose would be served in fighting a bloody war when the objective of freeing Sita was already defeated.

So the best thing was to have patience, and give Sita some time to think and reconsider her position. Perhaps she may give her consent and Ravana’s wishes may be fulfilled. But killing her in a fit of rage is totally uncalled for.

³During the conversation between Ravana and Sita, the demoness guards stood at a distance in deference to their king Ravana, and to maintain decorum and etiquette. So now he calls them near to issue his orders.

⁴This threat was a blessing in disguise for Sita, as it would insure that she would continue to focus her attention on Lord Ram and pray to the Almighty to arrange her meeting with the Lord. When a person is certain of death, he or she loses all interests in this world, and remains focused on the Lord God, praying for the soul’s deliverance, redemption, emancipation and salvation. To wit, this period of one month would give Sita time to do Tapa (austerity and penance) for her purification; it will be the time when she could do Yoga (meditation) and Dhyana (contemplation).]

दो०. भवन गयउ दसकंधर इहाँ पिसाचिनि बृंद ।
सीतहि त्रास देखावहिं धरहिं रूप बहु मंद ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

bhavana gaya'u dasakandhara ihāñ pisācini br̥nda.
sītahi trāsa dēkhāvahiṁ dharahiṁ rūpa bahu manda. 10.

After giving his instructions to the female demon guards (as mentioned in the previous verses), the ten-headed One (Ravana) went back to his palace.

Meanwhile, these fiendish and cruel demonesses (pisācini br̥nda) showed all eagerness and diligence to carry out the orders of their lord by terrifying Sita with the use of harsh threatening words, and assuming all sorts of fearful forms¹. (Doha no. 10)

[Note—¹The word used in the text for these female demon guards deputed to exert pressure on Sita is “pisācini”. It implies that they were cruel, fiendish and wicked to extreme, for they derived great sadistic pleasure in torturing others, at least mentally if not physically. It is to be carefully noted here that no one actually harmed Sita physically; all the torments to which she was subjected were limited either to verbal abuses, threats, intimidations and insinuations or to creating fear in her mind by menacing sights of terrifying forms and horrifying gestures that would send a person cowering for cover, trembling all over and gasping for breath.

But Sita remained calm and unruffled in the face of these provocations. She knew that Ravana has just given her a month's time (Chaupai line no. 9 herein above), and so no harm would come to her within that period. So therefore she still has time to 'hope', for 'hope is life', and 'giving up hope is death'.

One month is not a short period, and ample chances were there that if she 'maintained her faith and continued to hope', i.e. she lived during this testing time, then Lord Ram would come to her rescue and free her. With this conviction Sita decided that she would not oblige these wicked demonesses by responding to them and giving them a chance to have a nice pastime at her expense. The best way to torment her tormentors was to neglect them completely and remain fearless, as this would frustrate them and make them tear out their hairs madly in anger and disgust. The effect would be that instead of making Sita suffer they themselves would suffer horribly at their failure; and the more they failed and threw greater tantrums the more it would give Sita a chance to have a nice pastime seeing their paroxysms of hilarious behaviour that comes with one losing one's senses, or as if they have been suddenly afflicted by chorea wherein they are performing Saint Vitus' dance.

To wit, Sita's confidence, self-restraint, reserve, patience and faith due to which she completely neglected these fiends created a piquant scenario where it was she who enjoyed the mad dance of these rascals rather than giving them an opportunity to derive any pleasure by seeing Sita terrified and weeping for mercy!]

चौ०. त्रिजटा नाम राच्छसी एका । राम चरन रति निपुन बिबेका ॥ १ ॥
सबन्हौ बोलि सुनाएसि सपना । सीतहि सेइ करहु हित अपना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

trijaṭā nāma rācchasi ēkā. rāma carana rati nipuna bibēkā. 1.
sabanhau bōli sunā'ēsi sapanā. sītahi sē'i karahu hita apanā. 2.

Amongst the demoness guards was one old lady named Trijata. She had deep affection for Lord Ram's holy feet (as she was a pious soul with a spiritual bearing), and was very wise and prudent¹. (1)

She called all her companions (the female demon guards) together, and sharing with them a wondrous and fearful dream that she had dreamt, she warned them about its implications as follows, 'Ensure your good and welfare by serving Sita (because if you don't listen to my advice and continue to make her suffer, than mind you, all of you would be doomed; I'll tell you just now why it would be so; listen carefully). (2)

[Note—¹Trijata was probably the demoness in charge of the detachment of guards deputed to keep a watch on Sita. Trijata was the senior most amongst them. It ought to be noted here that only female demons (demonesses) were put on guard duty for Sita; male demons were not allowed in her vicinity.

By appointing Trijata to guard Sita, Ravana wished to make it sure that beyond a limit Sita was not subjected to too harsh a treatment at the hands of other demonesses. Trijata was Sita's constant companion and soul mate during her confinement in Lanka; in due course of time she became Sita's best friend and confidante in whom she used to confide her thoughts and emotions. Trijata helped Sita by comforting her from time to time; she used to keep her hopes high, and at times when Sita was in troughs of depression and overcome by dejection Trijata would cheer her up and motivate her to keep up her faith and keep hoping because she would surely find redemption soon. This was Trijata's singular contribution towards fulfilling the divine mission of the Supreme Being inasmuch as she shielded Sita from any physical harm from any of the cruel demonesses who surrounded her at all times, and give moral support and companionship to Sita in times of despair and desolation.

As we shall read below, she wisely managed to send all the demonesses away from the spot, leaving Sita alone and freed from further harassment; otherwise these fiendish female demon guards would have continued to tease and torture Sita endlessly.]

सपनें बानर लंका जारी । जातुधान सेना सब मारी ॥ ३ ॥
खर आरूढ़ नगन दससीसा । मुंडित सिर खंडित भुज बीसा ॥ ४ ॥
एहि बिधि सो दच्छिन दिसि जाई । लंका मनहुँ बिभीषन पाई ॥ ५ ॥

sapanēm bānara laṅkā jāri. jātudhāna sēnā saba māri. 3.
khara ārūṛha nagana dasasīsā. muṇḍita sira khaṇḍita bhuja bīsā. 4.
ēhi bidhi sō dacchina disi jā'i. laṅkā manahuṁ bibhīṣana pā'i. 5.

In that dream a monkey (bānara) had burnt the whole of Lanka, and had killed the entire demon army (or at least the major part of it). (3)

I also saw that the ten-headed Ravana was naked and riding a donkey; he had his head tonsured and all his twenty arms were severed¹. (4)

In this way he was proceeding towards the south direction (indicative of going to hell, the nether or the lower world), and Vibhishan had got the kingdom of Lanka (i.e. he was crowned as its king)². (5)

[Note—¹Riding a donkey with his head shaved indicated that Ravana had been completely defeated by a powerful adversary who had paraded him naked on a donkey in the city to signal his former subjects that he had been vanquished.

His twenty arms were chopped off as a cruel punishment inflicted upon him in the war.

²Then, he was banished from Lanka and sent to exile as a prisoner of war to some remote island south of the city. It also might mean that he was being chased out of the city to go to hell. After that, his brother Vibhishan was crowned the king of Lanka.

It is believed that Yam, the god of death and guardian of hell, lives in the south. So therefore, 'going in the south direction' means two things—one is death, and the other is hell.]

नगर फिरी रघुबीर दोहाई । तब प्रभु सीता बोलि पठाई ॥ ६ ॥
यह सपना मैं कहउँ पुकारी । होइहि सत्य गएँ दिन चारी ॥ ७ ॥
तासु बचन सुनि ते सब डरीं । जनकसुता के चरनहि परीं ॥ ८ ॥

nagara phirī raghubīra dōhā'ī. taba prabhu sītā bōli paṭhā'ī. 6.
yaha sapanā mair̥m kaha'uṁ pukārī. hō'ihi satya ga'eṁ dina cārī. 7.
tāsu bacana suni tē saba ḍarīm. janakasutā kē carananhi parīm. 8.

The victory of Lord Ram was proclaimed throughout the city (of Lanka) by beating of the drum. Then the Lord summoned Sita and ordered that she be brought to him. (6)

I can affirm without hesitation that this dream would become true before four days have passed (i.e. in a very short period of time)¹. (7)

When the demonesses guarding Sita heard of this terrifying dream, they were all scared out of their wits, and all of them fell down at her feet (begging Sita to forgive them for any trouble they gave her, and spare them punishment and death)². (8)

[Note—¹The phrase 'within four days' is simply a figure of speech in colloquial language to mean 'a very short time'. So Trijata meant that whatever she has said would happen shortly.

²When the demonesses heard this prophesy of doomsday, they became sore affright for their own safety. Thanks to Trijata's wisdom and contrivance, there was immediate relief for Sita as the demonesses, who had been creating nuisance for her, themselves became terrified, and they stopped tormenting her from that instant. Not only that, they pleaded with Sita to show mercy on them and spare them punishment. Realizing that Ravana's future was in doldrums, these selfish demonesses had no regrets in disobeying his commands; they determined that their own good lay in keeping Sita in good humour rather than trying to please Ravana who is to die soon.

This is an important signal—that the demons obeyed and fought for Ravana as they thought he was invincible and had supreme power. The demons were extremely selfish creatures, and were more interested in enjoying the pleasures of life and the spoils of various wars that came to them easily due to Ravana who won on the strength of boons granted to him by the creator Brahma than owing any serious allegiance and loyalty to him *par se*.

During our reading of this Story, when we will read about the Burning of Lanka by Hanuman, and later on during the course of the War itself, as narrated in Kavitawali Ramayan, we shall see how the citizens of Lanka curse Ravana for his stupidity that had brought ruin to the city and caused so much suffering to its inhabitants.

Presently however, when these demonesses returned home they surely must have confided with their partners about what Trijata had told them. But probably it had no or little effect on the male demons as they were too egoist, arrogant and haughty to believe in their defeat and Ravana's subjugation merely on the basis of some wild dream conjured up by an old and stupid demoness whom they thought was perchance out of her head.]

दो०. जहँ तहँ गई सकल तब सीता कर मन सोच ।

मास दिवस बीतें मोहि मारिहि निसिचर पोच ॥ ११ ॥

dōhā.

jaham̐ tahaṁ ga'īm sakala taba sītā kara mana sōca.
māsa divasa bītēṁ mōhi mārihi niscara pōca. 11.

After that, when all the demoness guards dispersed and went away in different directions, Sita found herself alone and began to brood¹.

When one month will be over, the lowly demon would kill me. (Doha no. 11)

[Note—¹Till the time the demonesses were around, they were creating so much noise and nuisance that Sita had no time to think of anything; she was very disturbed. But when these wicked creatures went away, there was silence and peace around her. It was then that Sita got some time to brood and think of her misfortunes once again. She once again sank in despair and despondency, worrying what would happen to her after the expiry of one month.]

चौ०. त्रिजटा सन बोलीं कर जोरी । मातु बिपति संगिनि तैं मोरी ॥ १ ॥

तजौं देह करु बेगि उपाई । दुसह बिरहु अब नहिं सहि जाई ॥ २ ॥

आनि काठ रचु चिता बनाई । मातु अनल पुनि देहि लगाई ॥ ३ ॥

सत्य करहि मम प्रीति सयानी । सुनै को श्रवन सूल सम बानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

trijaṭā sana bōlīm kara jōrī. mātu bipati saṅgini taim̐ mōrī. 1.

tajaur̐ dēha karu bēgi upā'ī. dusaha birahu aba nahim̐ sahi jā'ī. 2.

āni kāṭha racu citā banā'ī. mātu anala puni dēhi lagā'ī. 3.

satya karahi mama prīti sayānī. sunai kō śravana sūla sama bānī. 4.

[Sita felt that Trijata had been a god-sent angel for her in times of misery and gloom, for it was she who had wittily sent the demonesses, who had been tormenting her, away. Sita also realized that Trijata was favourably disposed to her and had devotion for Lord Ram, so therefore Trijata was sincere in her manners. Hence, it was a natural instinct on Sita's part to treat Trijata as her closest friend and companion who was no less than a 'mother' for her in such horrifying times; she felt that in the vicious environment where her fate seemed to have doomed her, and in which her misfortunes had cast her, it was Trijata alone who would, if she could, become her saviour. So therefore Sita called Trijata her 'mother' as she was very caring and loving; Trijata felt empathy for Sita, she sympathized with Sita, and from all signs she would maneuver things in Sita's favour and accord her protection as much as she could.]

Sita pleaded with Trijata with clasped hands (in supplication, to stress upon Trijata her abject despair and the urgency of her entreaty), 'Mother, verily indeed you are my only friend and companion during my days of agony, misery, grief and despair. (1)

So please make some arrangement or contrive some method by which I can discard my body and end my life to get over its miserable existence, for truly I tell you honestly that the agony of separation (from my beloved Lord) has become unbearable for me, and its attendant misery and grief have tormented me so much that they have completely overwhelmed me. (2)

Bring some firewood and make a pyre for me. Then, oh mother, set fire to it. (3)

Oh the wise one with a tender heart! Put to practice your affection for me (by helping me to end my miseries, and find peace). Say, how can I, or for that matter anyone else, cope with the harsh words my ears are being bombarded with (for they appear to be like hot molten oil that is being poured into my ears)¹?

[To wit, if I live for one month, I would be subjected to daily abuse and threats said so menacingly and loudly that my ears would burst. It would be far better for me to put an end to this torture by dying. So please help me as I feel you love me like a mother loves her daughter. Say, will a mother like that her daughter be subjected to interminable horrifying torments by fiends and blood-thirsty vicious rascals, who know no mercy worth the name, right before her eyes? So if you truly love me and have sympathy for me then please bring an end to my sufferings.]' (4)

[Note—¹Sita is alluding to what Ravana had said to her and the way he behaved with her in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 9, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 7-9 that precede Doha no. 10.

Then Sita alludes to the behaviour of the female demon guards who were instructed by Ravana to torment her as mentioned in Doha no. 10.

She therefore pleads with Trijata to bring all this to an end if she actually loved her and empathized with her by helping her to die.

We will remember what observations have been made in the note appended to Doha no. 8 herein above—that Sita decided to wait for Lord Ram to come, that she decided to have faith and hope. So in that context her present pleading to end her life seems contradictory. No, not really. As we have also observed that both Lord Ram and Ravana had been careful to play their respective parts to perfection—Lord Ram

as a human being whose wife has been stolen and who goes out to search for her, and Ravana as the fierce demon who enjoys stealing other people's woman folk and shows no mercy to anyone—Sita too decided that she would play her role to perfection.

To wit, though internally she had made a firm resolve to wait patiently with hope and faith for one month to give Lord Ram time to come and eliminate the demons, and to turn a deaf ear to her tormentors' words as she was sure no actual harm will come to her from any demon as their lord Ravana has granted her a grace period of one full month, yet externally she pretended that to live for one more day was an impossible thing for her.

There was another reason why Sita asked Trijata for this favour; she wanted to test Trijata's honesty and integrity. Was Trijata playing any tricks with her on the behest of Ravana? Sita was absolutely certain that Trijata will not oblige her as she also knew that Ravana had granted immunity from death to Sita for one month. So if Sita died under the watch of Trijata, and after her death burnt firewood was discovered, Trijata would suffer an agonizing torture and death like no one had ever thought of. No, Trijata would not like to suffer horrible torture for herself; no one would. So surely Trijata will not burn Sita to death; it was a foregone conclusion that Sita knew.

With this prayer, to let her die by burning herself, Sita was able to enhance Trijata's personal empathy and sympathy for her; it also would ensure that Trijata would keep close company of Sita and not let her alone for long for the fear that she may harm herself. If that happens, Trijata would have no answer to give to Ravana, and this very thought would keep Trijata alert. This vigilance in turn would ensure that no other unscrupulous demon or demoness would come in secretly to kill her or gravely wound her.]

सुनत बचन पद गहि समुझाएसि । प्रभु प्रताप बल सुजसु सुनाएसि ॥ ५ ॥

निसि न अनल मिल सुनु सुकुमारी । अस कहि सो निज भवन सिधारी ॥ ६ ॥

sunata bacana pada gahi samujhā'ēsi. prabhu pratāpa bala sujasu sunā'ēsi. 5.
nisi na anala mila sunu sukumārī. asa kahi sō nija bhavana sidhārī. 6.

Hearing the agonized plea of Sita, Trijata fell down and clasped Sita's feet, consoling her by reminding her of Lord Ram's glory, valour, strength and fame. (5)

She told Sita, 'Listen oh tender lady (sukumārī)! Fire cannot be found here during the night¹.' Saying this, Trijata went home. (6)

[Note—¹Trijata wanted to find an excuse, so she said that it is not possible to either find firewood at such a short notice or some source from which fire can be lighted at that hour because it was still dark. This clearly implies that it was still dark and night had not yet fully ended. Obviously it was pre-dawn time, a few hours perhaps before the first rays of sunlight lights up the horizon. This time is called 'Brahma-muhurtha', and it is roughly between 4-5 a.m.

It was the time of the onset of winter when the sunrise is late; it would be dark till say 6 a.m. How do we know that it was early winter? We have read earlier that Lord Ram had spent the four months of the rainy season on Mt. Pravarshan. {Refer:

Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 12; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.}

Then some time surely must have passed while spies, heralds and messengers were assembled; then more than one month passed while Hanuman's group had been searching Sita in vain {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26.}.

To wit, one can make a rough guess that approximately two more months may have passed after the rainy season when we are reading of the events concerning Hanuman's meeting with at Lanka. This means winter was close by, and it was the time of the year when days begin to get shorter and nights longer. So while the day-break may be earlier during the summer season, but at the time of which we are talking about the first light of the sun may not be perceivable by, say, 6 a.m. Hence, during the moments of Trijata's conversation with Sita it was surely dark in the sky.

It ought to be noted that Trijata hastily left that place for home. She feared that if she tarried there any longer, Sita would make another absurd request which she would not be able to fulfill, and may be then Sita would start wailing aloud and also scream, for being overcome with misery and grief she seemed to have become desperate and crazy. Should it happen, it would be a catastrophe; all the guards would wake up and find Trijata alone with Sita, as all other demonesses have gone away. This would mean immediate scaffold and death by beheading for both Sita and her friend Trijata.]

कह सीता बिधि भा प्रतिकूला । मिलिहि न पावक मिटिहि न सूला ॥ ७ ॥
देखिअत प्रगट गगन अंगारा । अवनि न आवत एकउ तारा ॥ ८ ॥
पावकमय ससि स्रवत न आगी । मानहुँ मोहि जानि हत भागी ॥ ९ ॥

kaha sītā bidhi bhā pratikūlā. milihi na pāvaka miṭihi na sūlā. 7.
dēkhi'ata pragaṭa gagana aṅgārā. avani na āvata ēka'u tārā. 8.
pāvakamaya sasi sravata na āgī. mānahuṁ mōhi jāni hata bhāgī. 9.

[Sita was feeling very miserable and forlorn as her only companion Trijata too had gone away, leaving her grieving and lamenting on her fate alone. So she began muttering to herself woefully.]

Sita said to herself, 'It appears that the Creator has become opposed to me, for I will not get fire, and without fire my horrifying agonies and interminable torments won't end. (7)

In the sky one can behold many flying sparks (a reference to comets that flew by or fire-flies that were seen everywhere overhead in the garden), but not a single shooting star (flying spark) can be found on the surface of the earth. [To wit, these sparks are flying here and there everywhere over my head, but why don't even one of them land on the ground so I can rush forward to burn myself by its fiery embrace?] (8)

Even the moon seems to be burning hot for me, but woe to me that even it does not shed one single ember of fire because it thinks me unlucky and unworthy of this grace. [To wit, the moonlight has spread all around me, but why is it not hot enough to burn me?]¹ (9)

[Note—¹The moon and its light are cool and soothing, but for someone who is under intense emotional stress the sight of the moon and its soothing cool light is unbearable. It appears that the moon is teasing Sita, the sufferer, instead of acting as a cool balm for her ruffled nerves and tormented being.

In these verses, the poet Tulsidas has described the state of the mind of those who are suffering from grief of separation from their beloved ones.]

सुनहि बिनय मम बिटप असोका । सत्य नाम करु हरु मम सोका ॥ १० ॥
 नूतन किसलय अनल समाना । देहि अग्नि जनि करहि निदाना ॥ ११ ॥
 देखि परम बिरहाकुल सीता । सो छन कपिहि कलप सम बीता ॥ १२ ॥

sunahi binaya mama biṭapa asōkā. satya nāma karu haru mama sōkā. 10.
 nūtana kisalaya anala samānā. dēhi agini jani karahi nidānā. 11.
 dēkhi parama birahākula sītā. sō chana kapihi kalapa sama bītā. 12.

[Then Sita prayed to the Tree under whose shade she was sitting.]

Oh Ashoka Tree! Be true to your name and uphold the sanctity of it by removing my sorrow, grief and misery. [To wit, you are called ‘Ashok’, i.e. one who removes sorrow, grief and misery. So please live up to your reputation and prove that your name ‘Ashok’ is apt by freeing me from the horrors I am being subjected to.] (10)

The fresh leaves and branches that have sprouted on your body, they are like hot firewood I so long to have. Why don’t you shed some so that I can end my body with them? [I long to die by burning myself using these leaves and branches that fall from your stem. So please be graceful and shed some of your weight by letting some leaves and branches fall to the ground.] (11)

The Kapi (Hanuman), who was watching the events from his hiding post in the foliage of the tree, felt very sad and distraught when he saw and heard such lamentations and woeful grieving of Sita who was overcome with grief and immensely distressed due to her separation from Lord Ram.

Forsooth, each of these moments that Hanuman witnessed Sita suffering and lamenting seemed to be like ages for him¹. (12)

[Note—¹The idea is that time seems to fly when one is extremely happy, for one wishes to have more and more of this happiness even as the time seems to be too short for him. On the contrary, sadness and grief seems to stretch the same time eternally, because the sufferer thinks his suffering never seems to come to an end.

Therefore, the time Hanuman spent watching the sufferings of Sita seemed to be like an endless period of time to him, and he only wished that this time would come to an end.]

सो०. कपि करि हृदयँ बिचार दीन्ह मुद्रिका डारि तब ।
 जनु असोक अंगार दीन्ह हरषि उठि कर गहेउ ॥ १२ ॥

sōraṭhā.

kapi kari hr̥dayaṁ bicāra dīnhi mudrikā ḍāri taba.
janu asōka aṅgāra dīnha haraṣi uṭhi kara gahē'u. 12.

Unable to cope with his emotional stress any longer, and hearing that Sita was praying for something to fall from overhead to the ground, Hanuman decided in his heart that it was the opportune time¹, and he then dropped the ring (of Lord Ram that he had brought with him).

When Sita saw the glittering ring fall to the ground in front, she thought that the Ashok tree has answered her prayers; so she rushed forward and gladly picked it up. (Doha no. 12)

[Note—¹Hanuman observed that Sita was very watchful at that moment for anything that fell to the ground. He thought it to be the right moment to drop the ring as it was sure noticed by Sita. Had it been another time there were chances that Sita would not have taken notice for anything falling on the ground, for it was a garden, and dry leaves and twigs, ripe fruits and flowers used to fall from trees to the ground as a routine matter. But this moment was not routine; it was the time when Sita longed to see any thing falling from above her on to the ground before her. So it was certain that the falling of the ring would be noticed by her. And so it indeed was as we shall read in the verses that follow herein below.

Another obvious reason why Hanuman thought that it was the best time to introduce himself to Sita was that it was what is known as the 'grave-yard shift for guards', the time of the night when a person is usually too sleepy to be alert enough to perceive some covert hush-hush conversation taking place in some dark corner of a huge park under the shadow of a large tree such as the one where Sita sat. The cock had yet not crowed, Trijata had gone home, all other demoness guards had already gone away prior to her departure, and since it was yet dark and all the demons were either fast asleep or just rising from their slumber, which meant they would only be half awake and trying to rub-off sleep from their eyes, the deck was clear for Hanuman. If he waited more there were chances that the time for the change of guards may arrive, and the next batch of demons may be more vigilant than their pervious comrades who were slack in their duty so as to let Hanuman sneak in; or may be Ravana himself would come again after some second thought and change of mind.

In a short time the first rays of the sunlight would remove the cover of darkness which had proved to be a boon for Hanuman, and if he loses these precious moments in procrastination and demurring then probably he won't get another chance at all. So he decided to act quickly and dropped the ring that Lord Ram had given him as a token to establish his identity.]

चौ०. तब देखी मुद्रिका मनोहर । राम नाम अंकित अति सुंदर ॥ १ ॥
चकित चितव मुदरी पहिचानी । हरष बिषाद हृदयँ अकुलानी ॥ २ ॥
जीति को सकइ अजय रघुराई । माया तें असि रचि नहिं जाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

taba dēkhī mudrikā manōhara. rāma nāma aṅkita ati sundara. 1.
cakita citava mudarī pahicānī. haraṣa biṣāda hr̥dayaṁ akulānī. 2.

jīti kō saka'i ajaya raghurā'ī. māyā tēm asi raci nahim jā'ī. 3.

When Hanuman dropped the finger-ring of Lord Ram that he had brought with him, Sita's attention was immediately drawn to it. She dashed forward and picked it up¹. When she held it in her hands and beheld a magnificent ring, she was shocked with astonishment as it had Lord Ram's name engraved in it in beautifully carved letters. (1)

As soon as she recognized the ring (as the one that exclusively belonged to her beloved Lord Ram, and since his name was engraved in it in a special manner that cannot be duplicated by anyone, for no one had the requisite skill to craft a similar ring, so there was no doubt it was the Lord's), she was immediately overcome by the contradictory emotions of excess of happiness, cheer and elation on the one hand, and grief, desperation and worry on the other hand which simultaneously buffeted her like two huge waves, causing immense consternation and great agitation in her heart. [Why was she thus agitated? It is answered herein below.] (2)

She was completely confounded and unable to understand the meaning of finding this unique ring. Dazed and astonished, she brooded, 'How amazing! Who can ever vanquish Lord Ram who is invincible and almighty? But at the same time a duplicate ring like his cannot be made by employing any skill or trick whatsoever. [So what does this mean? I am sore alarmed.]²' (3)

[Note: ¹As soon as Sita perceived that something had landed from above her head onto the ground before her, she dashed to pick it up. She thought that at last her prayers have been answered and some hot shining thing has fallen to the ground; now she would pick it up in hands and get burnt. But low and behold, she was for a stunning surprise that she could not even dream in her dreams, for what she held in her hands was not some fiery thing but a magnificent ring of exceptional beauty.

Sita was Dumb with amazement and awe by the unexpected sight of this magnificent ring which she recognized instantly, for it was a ring she was well acquainted with; it was not any ordinary ring but the one that exclusively belonged to Lord Ram.

Why, she wondered in stunned astonishment, is she dreaming or is she awake? What is this that she sees? Is it a mirage, is she hallucinating under stress and delusions, or is it a real miracle? How come this ring of Lord Ram has landed before her in the far away land of demons, which lay across the ocean, far-far away from land from where she was abducted? Who has brought it? Is it some wild dream; is it some nasty trick of the demons? Many such thoughts rushed wildly through her mind during those few moments.

The reader is reminded that a detailed note regarding this "ring" has already been appended to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 23 of Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand in our Book when we were reading about the time when Lord Ram had summoned Hanuman and gave this 'ring' to him prior to the departure of the messengers in search of Sita.

²Sita was totally confounded at the sight of Lord Ram's exclusive ring. It cannot be duplicated, so does it mean that the demons have been able to subjugate him and Ravana had snatched his ring, and then he has played this nasty trick upon her to prove that Lord Ram will no more come to rescue her? But this is an impossible thing,

as Lord Ram is un-conquerable; no power in the world can ever defeat the Lord. So what do these contradictory things mean?

The sight of Lord Ram's ring made Sita immediately jump up with exhilaration and cheer in her heart as now it was certain that the Lord has become aware of her location and has sent someone with this token to indicate to her that he was coming soon. But in the next moment she was overcome with doubts, and grief overtook her, when she thought of other possibilities: is it possible that her captors had managed to subdue the Lord and snatched his ring to prove to her that the Lord was vanquished, and she has no chance of escape, which would imply that if she wished for her good then she must obey Ravana. This notion hit her like a hammer, and no sooner had she smiled with joy than she was sucked in a vortex of grief and misery once again that numbed her senses.

Sita stood motionless in a state of shock; she was paralysed and dumbfounded.]

सीता मन बिचार कर नाना । मधुर बचन बोलेउ हनुमाना ॥ ४ ॥
 रामचंद्र गुन बरनैँ लागा । सुनतहिं सीता कर दुख भागा ॥ ५ ॥
 लागीं सुनैँ श्रवन मन लाई । आदिहु तें सब कथा सुनाई ॥ ६ ॥

sītā mana bicāra kara nānā. madhura bacana bōlē'u hanumānā. 4.
 rāmacandra guna baranaiṁ lāgā. sunatahiṁ sītā kara dukha bhāgā. 5.
 lāgīṁ sunaiṁ śravana mana lāī. ādihu tēṁ saba kathā sunāī. 6.

In this way, contradictory thoughts eliciting elation and depression one after another flooded Sita as she stood motionless and stunned¹. At that moment, Hanuman began speaking some soft and sweet words of consolation from his concealed place behind the cover of foliage of the tree. [What was Hanuman saying? It is answered in the following verse.] (4)

He began reciting the glories of Lord Ramchandra and the legend of his virtues. When Sita heard them, all her sorrows and grief were chased away. [To wit, when Sita heard Lord Ram's glories and virtues being recited in a sweet voice, she was smoothened in her mind and heart; the pleasant words of Hanuman acted as a balm over her frayed nerves to calm her down.]² (5)

She became engrossed in listening to them; she listened to the narration attentively, with her mind, heart and ears fixed on the recitation of Lord Ram's divine story from the beginning³. (6)

[Note—¹What thoughts passed across her mind? Refer to Chaupai line no. 3 and the note appended to Chaupai no. 1 herein above.

²To wit, herein lies a great spiritual secret, a formula that can be used by one and all during testing times in life to find solace and succour from abject misery: so therefore, if one is overburdened with grief that seem to crush him under its weight, when dark clouds of doom and despair loom menacingly on the horizon ready to flood and drown everything, when all seems lost and even hope appears to be far-cry that makes its object too elusive to be ever attainable, when the sun sets and the fear of the ghosts

of the night begin to roost—at that time, during those moments of complete gloom and utter bitterness, remembering Lord Ram’s holy name, recalling the Lord’s merciful nature, invoking his benevolence, grace and kindness towards his devotees, would act as a soothing balm and rejuvenates a sinking spirit, for in all sooth and without gainsay, hearing of the Lord’s glories and virtues act as a buoy for the sinking creature, and his soul immediately finds peace and beatitude.

³Hanuman narrated in brief the whole story of Lord Ram, particularly the events directly concerning Sita, like her marriage, the forest exile, the days Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman passed during their journey through the wilds, the events at Panchavati from where she was abducted, Lord Ram’s efforts to search for her, and his meeting Jatau and Sabari, and then the Lord’s onwards journey to Kishikindha where he met and befriended Sugriv, and then finally sending him with the ring to meet Sita.

As soon as Hanuman began to narrate Lord Ram’s story, Sita became attentive; she noticed that the narrative was very exact and truthful, and therefore she was convinced that the narrator was surely close to the Lord. As a result, hope once again re-ignited in her heart, and she became eager to meet the person whose voice she heard.]

श्रवनामृत जेहिं कथा सुहाई । कही सो प्रगट होति किन भाई ॥ ७ ॥

तब हनुमंत निकट चलि गयऊ । फिरि बैठीं मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

śravanāmṛta jēhīm kathā suhā'ī. kahī sō pragaṭa hōti kina bhā'ī. 7.
taba hanumanta nikaṭa cali gaya'ū. phiri baiṭhīm mana bisamaya bhaya'ū. 8.

Sita said earnestly, ‘He who has been narrating this legendary divine story of Lord Ram’s grace and mercy, which is like a nectar for the ear (and which has provided me unbound succour and solace), why doesn’t that person make himself visible; why does he remain hidden instead of revealing himself?’ (7)

At this request, Hanuman came down from his perch on the tree, and went near her. But as soon as Sita saw him she once again became uncertain of the truth, and so she turned her back to Hanuman and looked the other way¹. (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman’s form perhaps petrified Sita with fear. It is like the case of someone already scared stiff mentally, on emotional and psychological edge, and completely out of his wits, fearing physical harm from an enemy at every passing moment, suddenly seeing an unexpected sight, such as a squirrel or a mice or a mongoose standing in front—surely that person would get the shock of his life for he is not prepared for it.

This is what happened with Sita; when she saw Hanuman for the first time she was so shocked and flabbergasted with disbelief that she thought for a moment that this was not Lord Ram’s messenger as she had thought him to be, but some horrifying creature sent by Ravana to tease and torture her after she had refused his immoral offers.]

राम दूत मैं मातु जानकी । सत्य सपथ करुनानिधान की ॥ ९ ॥
 यह मुद्रिका मातु मैं आनी । दीन्हि राम तुम्ह कहँ सहिदानी ॥ १० ॥
 नर बानरहि संग कहु कैसें । कही कथा भइ संगति जैसें ॥ ११ ॥

rāma dūta mair̥m mātu jānakī. satya sapatha karunānidhāna kī. 9.
 yaha mudrikā mātu mair̥m ānī. dīnhi rāma tumha kahañ sahidānī. 10.
 nara bānarahi saṅga kahu kaisēñ. kahī kathā bha'i saṅgati jaisēñ. 11.

Hanuman realized what was going on in Sita's mind, so he was quick to introduce himself when he said, 'Mother Sita, I am a messenger of Lord Ram. I say this to you under oath by invoking Lord Ram that it is the Truth (and I am not lying to you). (9)

Mother, I have brought this finger-ring which Lord Ram gave me to give you as a token for my identification.¹ (10)

Then Sita asked Hanuman, 'Say, tell me how it happened that a human being and monkeys came in contact with each other and became friends?'

So Hanuman narrated to her all the events that led to establishment of friendship between Lord Ram (representing the 'human being') and Sugriv (representing the 'monkey race')². (11)

[Note—¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 23 where we have read about Lord Ram giving this ring to Hanuman.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 5.

Sita heard this narrative very attentively. She was particularly amazed when she heard how Lord Ram and Sugriv became friends, though she was convinced the line of narrative was truthful as she had herself witnessed Jatau's valiant effort to free her and his ultimate sacrifice when his wings were cut by Ravana, and how she had seen the monkeys on the top of a hill when she had dropped her clothes from the air. These events have been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-25 that precede Doha no. 29.

But inspite of all this, Sita wished to be certain that this was not some kind of trick to trap her. So she thought it fit to enquire deeply as to how Lord Ram and Sugriv became friends, for this would help her to descry some loophole, if there were any.]

दो०. कपि के बचन सप्रेम सुनि उपजा मन बिस्वास ।
 जाना मन क्रम बचन यह कृपासिंधु कर दास ॥ १३ ॥
 dōhā.

kapi kē bacana saprēma suni upajā mana bisvāsa.
 jānā mana krama bacana yaha krpāsindhu kara dāsa. 13.

Affectionately hearing the sweets words of the Kapi (i.e. hearing the answer which Hanuman gave her in response to her query), Sita realised and was convinced in her heart and mind that he indeed was a devoted and sincere servant of the Lord (Ram) who is an ocean of mercy, kindness, grace and benevolence, a servant who is truly committed to serving his Lord by his heart and mind (i.e. at the emotion level as well as the intellectual level), by his actions and deeds (i.e. in whatever he does), and by his words (i.e. in whatever he says). (Doha no. 13)

चौ०. हरिजन जानि प्रीति अति गाढ़ी । सजल नयन पुलकावलि बाढ़ी ॥ १ ॥

बूझत बिरह जलधि हनुमाना । भयहु तात मो कहूँ जलजाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

harijana jāni prīti ati gāṛhī. sajala nayana pulakāvali bāṛhī. 1.

būṛata biraha jaladhi hanumānā. bhayahu tāta mō kahūṁ jalajānā. 2.

Realising that Hanuman was truly a devotee and follower of Lord Hari (“harijana”; Lord Ram’s devotee), Sita developed an intense sense of love and affection for him. She became highly sentimental and so overwhelmed with emotion that tears welled up in her eyes, the body became thrilled, and she had goose-bumps all over. (1)

[After a moment she gathered her wits together and said to Hanuman), ‘My dear son Hanuman (hanumānā, tāta)¹! For me, who was desolate and desparate, almost drowning in the vast ocean of grief, sorrow and misery (that separation from my beloved Lord Ram has brought to me), you, I verily indeed declare, proved to be the proverbial ship that comes providentially to the rescue of a drowning person.

[To wit, had you not come in time then very soon I would have died due to the weight of the burden of grief, sorrow and pain that has overwhelmed me.] (2)

[Note—¹How did Sita know that the messenger’s name was ‘Hanuman’? Well, we have just read that Hanuman narrated the story of Lord Ram and all the events related to her in brief, ending with him bringing the ring given to him by Lord Ram as a token of identification when he met Sita. Obviously he must have also mentioned his own name during the narration. This is how Sita came to learn that he was called Hanuman.

And since he was a faithful and committed devotee and follower of Lord Ram, who is doing his best to serve the Lord, Sita treated him affectionately as her son (tāta).]

अब कहु कुसल जाउँ बलिहारी । अनुज सहित सुख भवन खरारी ॥ ३ ॥

कोमलचित कृपाल रघुराई । कपि केहि हेतु धरी निठुराई ॥ ४ ॥

aba kahu kusala jā'uṁ balihārī. anuja sahita sukha bhavana kharārī. 3.

kōmalacita kṛpāla raghurāī. kapi kēhi hētu dharī niṭhurāī. 4.

Now tell me, I beseech you, about the welfare of the younger brother (Laxman) of the Lord (Sri Ram) who is an abode of happiness and bliss, the Lord who had slayed the demon Khar¹; how are they both²? (3)

Oh Kapi (Hanuman)! Lord Ram is the great king of the Raghu dynasty (of Ayodhya) who is renowned for his soft heart and merciful nature. Say then, why has the Lord become so stern-hearted now (that he has yet not come to free me)³? (4)

[Note—¹This episode of Lord Ram slaying the demon Khar, along with his companions Dushan and Trishira, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20. We have already read it earlier in connection with the deformation of the demoness Supernakha, the event that set in motion other events that culminated in Sita's abduction by Ravana and her incarnation in Lanka.

²Sita had named Laxman first, and then Lord Ram, when enquiring about their welfare. [anuja = Laxman; sahita = along or together with; sukha bhavana kharāri = Lord Ram.] She was especially very worried about Laxman and sorry that she had forced him to abandon her at the time when Lord Ram had gone pursuing the golden deer at her own behest. She was worried that Lord Ram would have been very angry at his younger brother to have defied his instructions not to leave Sita alone when he saw Laxman coming towards him whilst he was returning back to the hermitage after killing the deer, and his anger would have multiplied manifold when he found that Sita had been abducted because of Laxman's negligence. So Sita feared that Lord Ram may have severely punished Laxman, though the Lord loved him exceedingly like his own son, and this possibility, however remote, filled her with the greatest of worry and remorse, because Laxman was not at all at fault as it was she who had forced him to abandon her.

Since Sita too loved Laxman like her own son, she was extremely anxious of his welfare and safety. She was worried about Lord Ram also, but not to the extent of Laxman—because she knew that Lord Ram was invincible, able and almighty, and therefore capable of taking care of himself. A mother's tender heart is always more worried about her son as compared to her husband; she always treats her son gingerly, has a soft corner for him, regarding him with the greatest of care and tenderness, thinking that he is easily susceptible to harm and injury no matter how strong, valiant and powerful he might be, even if he surpasses his father in these qualities. So that is why Sita asked for Laxman's welfare first.

It is to be noted that she has 'linked' the two, Laxman and Lord Ram, with the use of the conjunction 'sahita'—when she says 'how is the younger brother "along with" the kind Lord who had slayed Khar'. This shows that she was equally worried about them both; she loved them equally. Like a woman who is also a mother, Sita remembered her dear husband Lord Ram as much as she remembered Laxman whom she treated as her son!

This is why Sita took care not to ask about their welfare as independent persons, but as inseparable companions; if one were to think of Lord Ram, then Laxman would automatically come to mind. Remarkable indeed! It's a great tribute to Laxman's sacrifices that he had made for his brother Ram—right from his decision to forgo the comforts of a great kingdom of Ayodhya when he decided to accompany Lord Ram and Sita to the forest, through the travails of the journey in the wilds and the difficulties and sufferings that it entailed, supporting Lord Ram and standing with

him shoulder-to-shoulder like a true friend, son and companion. Laxman had played a crucial role in helping Lord Ram overcome the pangs of grief that had all but drowned him at the time when Sita was stolen, and thereafter he was the Lord's moral support and comrade-in-arm through the testing times during which the fierce War of Lanka was fought, even suffering grievously and almost embracing death during its course.

³Sita is suffering from intense agony of separation from her beloved Lord; and like someone who is suffering gravely from the pang of grief that accompanies such separation, she sort of holds him responsible for abandoning her for so long.]

सहज बानि सेवक सुख दायक । कबहुँक सुरति करत रघुनायक ॥ ५ ॥
 कबहुँ नयन मम सीतल ताता । होइहहिं निरखि स्याम मृदु गाता ॥ ६ ॥
 बचनु न आव नयन भरे बारी । अहह नाथ हौं निपट बिसारी ॥ ७ ॥

sahaja bāni sēvaka sukha dāyaka. kabahuṁka surati karata raghunāyaka. 5.
 kabahuṁ nayana mama sītala tātā. hō'ihahiṁ nirakhi syāma mṛdu gātā. 6.
 bacanu na āva nayana bharē bārī. ahaha nātha hauṁ nipaṭa bisārī. 7.

The Lord has a natural habit of providing happiness and joy to his devotees, followers and those who serve him; he is always cordial towards them, and ensures that his words invariably show his affection for them. Tell me, does such a benevolent and kind-hearted Lord ever remembers me (and speaks about me in affectionate terms)? (5)

Tell me, oh dear son (tātā), when my eyes would find their comfort and cool by seeing the Lord's tender, dark-complexioned form? [To wit, tell me, when will I be able to see Lord Ram again?]' (6)

Sita was overcome with grief and sorrow as she remembered Lord Ram so much so that for some moments she could speak no more even as her eyes got filled with tears. Then she regained some semblance of courage and self-restraint, and exclaimed in excess of anguish, 'Alack oh Lord; it seems that I have been completely forgotten (by you).¹' (7)

[Note—¹As we know, Lord Ram has not forgotten Sita at all. The very fact that Hanuman was there proves it. But Sita was suffering highly from emotional turmoil; she had lost all hopes of freedom and meeting Lord Ram again. We have read that she asked Trijata to arrange some firewood so she could die by burning herself, so desolate and hopeless she was feeling. But whilst earlier she used to keep her grief and memory of Lord Ram confined to herself, her pent-up emotions burst forth like an erupting volcano when she met Hanuman. It happens in excess of grief that a person feels so emotionally paralysed that he becomes numb and dumb; he seems to be like a lifeless statue. But as soon as some ray of hope, solace and succour shine through this foreboding darkness of despair and desolation, life in his grief-stricken heart is suddenly stirred up to express itself in the form of an exclamation that, though sounding like abject gloom, misery and helplessness, yet it also signals revival of hope and faith in his inner-being.

Sita felt her throat choked with emotions for a moment when hot tears filled her eyes and sorrows welled up in her heart like a rising storm; this storm of grief struck her hard and she was numbed for some time. Like a person who loses his footing and falls in the water when huge waves of the ocean strike him, but who soon recovers and gasps for breath to cling to dear life, calling out to his companions and exclaiming desperately, “save me, save me”, Sita too muttered in a hoarse voice “why has Lord Ram neglected me; why is he taking so long to come to my rescue”.

The intensity of suffering, the depth of agony and the intolerable pain of Sita’s heart were only exacerbated when she met Hanuman, as his presence reminded her of the happier days she had spent in the company of Lord Ram. The soulful way she lamented, and the earnestness with which she prayed to Lord Ram to come to her rescue and provide her salvation and emancipation find a resonance in a number of verses of the Psalms in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. These verses reflect the sadness of her heart, the desperation of her soul, the poignancy of her heart, and how she must have hoped that her doleful prayers would be heard and answered soon by Lord Ram.

We shall now spend some moments to read some of the soul stirring and heart touching wonderful verses from the Psalms, as their reading would add beauty to our own narration, and lend depth and gravity to Sita’s sense of grief and misery, as well as her desire for liberation.

Psalm, 3/1-7:-

- 1: LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.
- 2: Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.
- 3: But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
- 4: I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.
- 5: I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.
- 6: I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.
- 7: Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God.

Psalm, 4/1:-

- 1: Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

Psalm, 6/1-10:-

- 1: O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
- 2: Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
- 3: My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?
- 4: Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.
- 5: For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?
- 6: I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

7: Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
 8: Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
 9: The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.
 10: Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

Psalm, 7/1-2:-

1: O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:
 2: Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

Psalm, 13/1-6:-

1: How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
 2: How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
 3: Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
 4: Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
 5: But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
 6: I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm, 17/6-13:-

6: I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.
 7: Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.
 8: Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
 9: From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.
 10: They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.
 11: They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
 12: Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
 13: Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword.

Psalm, 18/4-6:-

4: The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
 5: The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.
 6: In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice

out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Psalm, 22/1-2, 12-13, 16-21:-

- 1: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
- 2: O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.
- 12: Many bulls (read "deomons") have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan (read 'Ravana') have beset me round.
- 13: They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.
- 16: For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.
- 17: I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
- 18: They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
- 19: But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
- 20: Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
- 21: Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Psalm, 25/6-7, 16-21:-

- 6: Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old.
- 7: Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.
- 16: Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.
- 17: The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.
- 18: Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.
- 19: Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.
- 20: O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.
- 21: Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Psalm, 35/1-8, 22-26:-

- 1: Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.
- 2: Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.
- 3: Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.
- 4: Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.
- 5: Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them.
- 6: Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.
- 7: For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.
- 8: Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.
- 22: This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

23: Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

24: Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

25: Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

26: Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.

Psalm, 40/11-15, 17:-

10: I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

11: Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12: For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

13: Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

14: Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15: Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

17: But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Psalm, 43/5:-

5: Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Psalm, 56/1-7:-

1: Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

2: Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.

3: What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

4: In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

5: Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.

6: They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

7: Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

Psalm, 57/1, 4-6:-

1: Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

4: My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.
 5: Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.
 6: They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.

Psalm, 64/1-8:-

1: Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
 2: Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
 3: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words:
 4: That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
 5: They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?
 6: They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.
 7: But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.
 8: So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

Psalm, 69/1-5, 16-18, 22-30:-

1: Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.
 2: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
 3: I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
 4: They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.
 5: O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.
 16: Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.
 17: And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.
 18: Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.
 22: Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.
 23: Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.
 24: Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
 25: Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.
 26: For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.
 27: Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.
 28: Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the

righteous.

29: But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30: I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

Psalm, 70/1-3:-

1: Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

2: Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

3: Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

Psalm, 130/1-6:-

1: Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

2: Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

3: If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

4: But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

5: I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

6: My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Psalm, 142/1-7:-

1: I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2: I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

3: When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4: I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

5: I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

6: Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

7: Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.]

देखि परम बिरहाकुल सीता । बोला कपि मृदु बचन बिनीता ॥ ८ ॥

मातु कुसल प्रभु अनुज समेता । तव दुख दुखी सुकृपा निकेता ॥ ९ ॥

जनि जननी मानहु जियँ ऊना । तुम्ह ते प्रेमु राम कें दूना ॥ १० ॥

dēkhi parama birahākula sītā. bōlā kapi mṛdu bacana binītā. 8.

mātu kusala prabhu anuja samētā. tava dukha dukhī sukrpā nikētā. 9.

jani janani mānahu jiyam ūnā. tumha tē prēmu rāma kēm dūnā. 10.

When the Kapi (Hanuman) perceived that Sita was overwhelmed with excess of grief, sorrow and remorse, he replied to her using sweet and polite words, --- (8)

‘Mother (mātu), the Lord and his younger brother are both doing well. The Lord, who is an abode of extreme grace, mercy and kindness, is sad and grieving for you. [Mother, don’t think that Lord Ram has forgotten you; banish this unwarranted thought. The truth is that the Lord remembers you as much as you remember him, and is very worried for you.]¹ (9)

Oh Mother (jananī)! Don’t allow wrong ideas, false notions and baseless misgivings find any place in your heart, for the fact is that Lord Ram loves you twice as much as you love him. [Please banish such evil thoughts that have expressed themselves from your mouth when you exclaimed why Lord Ram has abandoned you. There is no truth in it.]² (10)

[Note—¹This is in answer to Sita’s query whether the Lord remembers her, in verse no. 5 herein above.

²This is in reply to Sita’s query as to why the Lord has forgotten her, in verse no. 7 herein above.]

दो०. रघुपति कर संदेसु अब सुनु जननी धरि धीर ।
अस कहि कपि गदगद भयउ भरे बिलोचन नीर ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

raghupati kara sandēsu aba sunu jananī dhari dhīra.
asa kahi kapi gadagada bhaya'u bharē bilōcana nīra. 14.

Oh Mother (jananī)! Now have patience and listen to Lord Raghupati’s¹ message.’

Saying this, Hanuman was himself so overcome with emotions surging in his heart that he could not speak for some moments, and tears welled up in his eyes². (Doha no. 14)

[Note—¹In verse no. 5 Sita has referred to Lord Ram as ‘Raghunayak’, which means the same as the word ‘Raghupati’, i.e. the ‘Lord of the Raghu’s line of kings of the kingdom of Ayodhya’.

So being wise, Hanuman decided to use a similar word as the one used by Sita so that there would be no confusion in her mind that was already clouded by grief and worry regarding the Lord whose message Hanuman was about to convey her.

²Hanuman felt that he was so lucky and fortunate that he was chosen to become the spokesman for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being incarnate. He was overwhelmed with gratitude towards the Lord for providing him with this rare privilege and honour, for it will make him immortal in the annals of history as the one who carried Lord Ram’s message for Sita!

Remember: Sita has addressed Hanuman as her ‘son’—refer Chaupai line nos. 2 and 6 herein above. So Hanuman found his ‘mother’ who was there in a dire state;

this filled him with grief, and tears welled up in his eyes and his throat became choked.]

चौ०. कहेउ राम बियोग तव सीता । मो कहूँ सकल भए बिपरीता ॥ १ ॥

नव तरु किसलय मनहुँ कृसानू । काल निसा सम निसि ससि भानू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'u rāma biyōga tava sītā. mō kahūṁ sakala bha'ē biparītā. 1.

nava taru kisalaya manahuṁ kṛsānū. kāla nisā sama nisi sasi bhānū. 2.

Hanuman conveyed Lord Ram's grief and sorrows to Sita in the following words: 'Lord Ram has given a message for you. He had said, "Sita, ever since I have been separated from you, all the things and situations (even ordinary ones that I had been taking for granted, and which never made me raise an eyebrow) have turned against me.

[To wit, everything appears to be inimical towards me; the whole world seems to be upside down for me; for my nerves are wrecked, my heart seems to sink in an abyss of despondency and grief, and my mind is befuddled like a man who is so intoxicated that he begins to hallucinate and sees things that actually don't exist. I have been on an emotional roller-coaster ride that plunges me in deep chasms of dejection and misery for one moment, and then lifts me up in the arms of faith to heights of hope at the next moment. Friends appear like enemies; water becomes fire; day looks dark as night; food is poison; and my breath seems to burn my inner organs instead of infusing life into the body. Verily indeed, my condition is no better than yours; rather it's far worse.] (1)

For instance, new and tender leaves on trees appear like tongues of fire to me¹, ordinary nights look like the dreadful night of the doomsday², and the moon (that is famed for its coolness) resembles the fiery, scorching ball of the sun³. (2)

[Note—¹Sita too thinks similarly, that the soft green leaves of the tree can provide her with fire, as we have already read in Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 12 herein above.

²When a person is suffering intensely with grief, and every moment of his life becomes a burden, the whole world around him becomes horrifyingly gloomy and dark and scary like the night of doomsday. This condition also prevailed in the magnificent city of Ayodhya, a city that was the envy of heaven, at the time Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman left it for the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83.

³Lord Ram says that when he lies down with his eyes shut, but perchance if he opens them and sees the moon in the sky, it reminds him of Sita's pretty face, and this memory once again ignites the fire of sorrow in his heart and burns it; so he immediately closes his eyes like someone who sees the sun by mistake and instantly shuts the eye involuntarily. The moon, instead of cooling his nerves, only scorches him.]

कुबलय बिपिन कुंत बन सरिसा । बारिद तपत तेल जनु बरिसा ॥ ३ ॥
जे हित रहे करत तेइ पीरा । उरग स्वास सम त्रिबिध समीरा ॥ ४ ॥

kubalaya bipina kunta bana sarisā. bārīda tapata tēla janu barisā. 3.
jē hita rahē karata tē'i pīrā. uraga svāsa sama tribidha samīrā. 4.

A cluster of lotus flowers look like so many spears planted on the ground; and the clouds appear to pour down hot oil (instead of the cooling rain-water). (3)

It is such an irony that those elements which were earlier friendly and well-wishers inasmuch as they invariably gave peace and happiness to me have now become my tormentors and have turned hostile towards me. Even the three types of airs¹ have transformed themselves into the fiery breath spouting out of a dragon's mouth. (4)

[Note—¹The three types of airs alluded to here are the three qualities of the wind, such as a soft breeze, a cool wind, and a fragrant air. It also may mean the following: (i) the soft, fragrant and cool breeze that wafts slowly and caresses a person with its feather-like touch; (ii) the life-giving air that one breathes; and (iii) the air of the atmosphere.

Lord Ram means that life has become very suffocating and unbearable for him in the absence of Sita. All the primary elements of life—such as the air (the present verse no. 4), the sky (represented by the night, the moon and the sun in verse no. 2), the water (represented by the cloud in verse no. 3), the fire (represented by the leaves that look like tongues of fire as in verse no. 2), and the earth (represented by the lotus flower that seem to be spears planted on the ground as in verse no. 3)—have become his tormentors.]

कहेहू तें कछु दुख घटि होई । काहि कहौं यह जान न कोई ॥ ५ ॥
तत्व प्रेम कर मम अरु तोरा । जानत प्रिया एकु मनु मोरा ॥ ६ ॥
सो मनु सदा रहत तोहि पाहीं । जानु प्रीति रसु एतनेहि माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

kahēhū tēm kachu dukha ghaṭi hō'ī. kāhi kahaur̥ṁ yaha jāna na kō'ī. 5.
tatva prēma kara mama aru tōrā. jānata priyā ēku manu mōrā. 6.
sō manu sadā rahata tōhi pāhīm̐. jānu prīti rasu ētanēhi māhīm̐. 7.

It is believed that if one speaks about one's grief and agony to someone who empathizes with him and is friendly inclined, then the intensity of sorrow decreases to some extent. But to whom should I speak to share my misery; for I have no one with whom I can confide, and no one would understand it even if I did speak. So I have to suffer silently within, and no one knows how much I suffer. (5)

Oh my dear (priyā)! The secret of the affection that exist between you and me, the bond of love that binds you and me, is known only to me; for my Mana (i.e. my heart and mind) alone is aware of its depth and purity. (6)

And that ‘Mana’ of mine dwells where you are. Regard these as indicators of my love and affection for you.

[To wit, though physical distance separates us, my soul still is with you. I always remember you; my heart has no place for any other entity except you; and my mind is occupied with your thoughts and memory. I pass my days in abject agony; my breath is fiery hot and it burns me; my friends look like enemies and I can’t share my grief with anyone to lessen the burden of my heart. So don’t think I have forgotten you.]’¹ (7)

[Note—¹This statement is in answer to Sita’s query in verse no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14 where she asks Hanuman if Lord Ram ever remembered her.

The ornate and flowery language, with its liberal usage of similes and metaphors, that Hanuman employs to assuage Sita’s agitated state and to infuse hope in her was surely his own. When a leader sends someone as an emissary, whom he selects with due care for his wisdom, intelligence, prudence, and skill at negotiation, he only gives a brief to his representative, leaving the details of what is to be said, and how the situation is to be handled on the ground, to the emissary himself, for how the things would turn out can’t be predicted in advance, and hence tutoring the messenger is impossible.

Lord Ram had just briefly told Hanuman what he was expected to do: “just go and meet Sita, introduce yourself and give this ring of mine for identification, reassure her in different ways as you deem fit, remind her about my strength and powers, tell her to have patience and wait as I will soon go to free her from the clutches of her captors, and then come back hastily”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23.

Remember: Hundreds of monkey and bear warriors were present at that time, and they had their eyes and ears fixed on Lord Ram. So it would have been impractical, imprudent, indecent and immodest for the Lord to speak in such intimate language, as Hanuman now uses, in the presence of that assembly; giving the ring quietly and saying a few confidential words briefly to Hanuman is a different thing from showing emotions and making sentimental utterances.

Hence, like an intelligent and wise emissary, Hanuman used his own discretion for the way he reassured Sita. He had seen her miserable condition; he had heard what she said to Trijata and the Tree; and he had heard what she had said directly to him. So, he adapted his message to suit her mental state.]

प्रभु संदेसु सुनत बैदेही । मगन प्रेम तन सुधि नहिं तेही ॥ ८ ॥
कह कपि हृदयँ धीर धरु माता । सुमिरु राम सेवक सुखदाता ॥ ९ ॥
उर आनहु रघुपति प्रभुताई । सुनि मम बचन तजहु कदराई ॥ १० ॥

prabhu sandēsu sunata baidēhī. magana prēma tana sudhi nahim tēhī. 8.
kaha kapi hṛdayaṁ dhīra dharu mātā. sumiru rāma sēvaka sukhadātā. 9.
ura ānahu raghupati prabhutāī. suni mama bacana tajahu kadarāī. 10.

When Vaidehi (Sita) heard the message of the Lord (Sri Ram), she became so much overwhelmed with love and affection that she lost awareness of her own body.

[For a moment she forgot all about her sufferings and miseries; she forgot that she was weak and hadn't slept for days. She no longer yearned for death, for new hope sprung forth in her heart like a well-spring of life.] (8)

Hanuman said, 'Mother, have patience, resilience and courage in your heart. Keep remembering Lord Ram who grants happiness, joy and bliss to his devotees and followers who serve him (sēvaka sukhadātā). (9)

Invoke the glories and majesty of Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) in your heart. Pay heed to my advice, and abandon all your misgivings, banish all ill-thoughts, and free your mind from gloomy forebodings.¹

[¹Mother; I advise you to stop regretting for the past as you cannot change it; be confident in your present as the future rests upon it; and have hope for the future as there is always a sunrise after the darkness of the night. Don't be disheartened and forlorn; have faith as it is the basis of hope, and hope is the basis of life. If you live, you will meet Lord Ram again; but if you despair and lose life then you will drag the Lord along with you. Would you like that to happen? Then listen to me: have patience and courage.] (10)

दो०. निसिचर निकर पतंग सम रघुपति बान कृसानु ।

जननी हृदयँ धीर धरु जरे निसाचर जानु ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

nisicara nikara pataṅga sama raghupati bāna kṛsānu.

jananī hṛdayaṁ dhīra dharu jarē nisācara jānu. 15.

The demon hordes are like a swarm of insects, whilst the arrows of Lord Ram are like a blazing fire. Oh Mother (jananī)! Be resilient, have patience and courage in your heart, and consider these demons as good as burnt out insects¹. (Doha no. 15)

[Note—¹Just as insects are lured towards the flame and get burnt consequentially, so will all the demons die when hit by Lord Ram's powerful fiery arrows. Oh Mother, there is no doubt about it.]

चौ०. जौं रघुबीर होति सुधि पाई । करते नहिं बिलंबु रघुराई ॥ १ ॥

राम बान रबि उएँ जानकी । तम बरूथ कहँ जातुधान की ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ raghubīra hōti sudhi pāī. karatē nahim bilambu raghurāī. 1.

rāma bāna rabi u'ēṁ jānakī. tama barūtha kahaṁ jātudhāna kī. 2.

Had Lord Ram, the Great Lord of king Raghu's line (raghurāī), been aware of your whereabouts, then forsooth and without gainsay he would not have delayed even for a moment¹. (1)

Oh Daughter of Janak (“jānakī”; Sita)! When the dazzling sun symbolized by Lord Ram’s splendid arrows rises in the sky over the horizon, say then where will the darkness represented by the demon remain?² (2)

[Note—¹This assurance is in reply to Sita’s question as to why Lord Ram has become so stone-hearted that he has not come yet to free her, in Chaupai no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14 herein above.

²The imagery is excellent. The sun rises in the horizon, traverses through the sky, and then sets in the opposite horizon. When Lord Ram would shoot his shining arrows, they will rise from the ground, follow their trajectory across the sky, and then descend upon the demons to kill them before hitting the ground on the opposite side of the battle-field. The war and its many battles would be fought during the day time, and so the sunlight would make the arrows gleam brilliantly, like shafts of lightening darting across the firmament.

Here, the gleaming arrows of Lord Ram are likened to the rays of the sun, and the dark-complexioned demons, whose inner-selves too are dark due to sin and evil they stand for, are likened to the darkness of the night.]

अबहिं मातु मैं जाउँ लवाई । प्रभु आयसु नहिं राम दोहाई ॥ ३ ॥
कछुक दिवस जननी धरु धीरा । कपिन्ह सहित अइहहिं रघुबीरा ॥ ४ ॥
निसिचर मारि तोहि लै जैहहिं । तिहुँ पुर नारदादि जसु गैहहिं ॥ ५ ॥

abahiṃ mātu maim jā'uṃ lavā'i. prabhu āyasu nahim rāma dōhā'i. 3.
kachuka divasa janani dharu dhīrā. kapinha sahita a'ihahim raghubīrā. 4.
niscara māri tōhi lai jaiyahim. tihūṃ pura nāradādi jasu gaihahim. 5.

Mother (mātu), I can take you back this instant itself, but I don’t have this mandate from the Lord, I say this truthfully to you on oath of Lord Ram.

[Please mother, understand my predicament. It’s not that I can’t free you right now, but I don’t have the permission to do so, neither from Lord Ram nor from Angad, our prince, or from Jamvant, our elderly advisor and the one who had inspired me to rise up to the occasion and come here. So therefore, I am constrained to exercise great restraint on my natural instinct, which wants me to take you back immediately.¹] (3)

Mother (jananī)! Have patience for some more days², for Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghu dynasty (raghubīrā), would come soon with a formidable army of Kapis (monkeys and bears). (4)

He will slay the demons and take you back to freedom with all honour. It would be a glorious and grand event, so magnificent, so majestic and so singular that celestial sages like Narad and other minstrels would glorify it and make it immortal through their songs and ballads for all times to come.

[So therefore, don’t despond mother; have courage and patience and hope, for these are forsooth the virtues of life. I’ll go back and soon bring Lord Ram here; the Lord would come with a formidable army of monkeys and bears, and upon my honour

I say to you to have faith in me, to trust me and the words of a gentleman, that all these demons who have caused you so much trouble and torment would be defeated and slayed in the war that would ensue to free you. Be certain mother that you will indeed be freed, of which there is no gainsay.]" (5)

[Note—¹Lord Ram as well as Jamvant had given clear instructions to Hanuman to just go and find about Sita, and come back with her news. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 23; and Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 30 respectively.

²Hanuman had heard already that Ravana had given a one-month grace period to Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10 herein above.} So there was a lot of time in hand; Ravana would definitely not harm Sita during this grace period as, though he was a demon, he was a great king, and kings are known by their words, for if a king loses his word he loses his honour, and the right to be called a 'king'; so this was the guarantee.

And, come to think of it, it was also the reason why Ravana did no harm to Sita even his cherished golden city of Lanka was burnt to cinders by Hanuman, about which we shall read shortly, and later on as the ferocious bloody war raged all around, when Lord Ram actually came with his army, even as one after another of all the great demon warriors bit the dust, so much so that his own son Meghnad, as well as his brother Kumbhakaran, too died. Truly indeed, such is the importance that great kings gave to their word of honour. This principle is explicitly declared in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 28 where king Dasrath himself declares "It is a established doctrine and a matter of honour for the kings of the Raghu's line that it is better to die than to break one's word".]

हैं सुत कपि सब तुम्हहि समाना । जातुधान अति भट बलवाना ॥ ६ ॥
 मोरें हृदय परम संदेहा । सुनि कपि प्रगट कीन्हि निज देहा ॥ ७ ॥
 कनक भूधराकार सरीरा । समर भयंकर अतिबल बीरा ॥ ८ ॥
 सीता मन भरोस तब भयऊ । पुनि लघु रूप पवनसुत लयऊ ॥ ९ ॥

hairṁ suta kapi saba tumhahi samānā. jātudhāna ati bhaṭa balavānā. 6.
 mōrēm hr̥daya parama sandēhā. suni kapi pragaṭa kīnhi nija dēhā. 7.
 kanaka bhūdharākāra sarīrā. samara bhayaṅkara atibala bīrā. 8.
 sītā mana bharōsa taba bhaya'ū. puni laghu rūpa pavanasuta laya'ū. 9.

[Upon this assertion of Hanuman—one, that he could have taken her back if he had the permission of Lord Ram, and two, that Lord Ram would come with an army of Kapis to kill the demons and free her—Sita expressed her reservations. The demons were cruel giants; they had huge forms and fierce demeanours; their teeth and nails were like long spears and sharp swords, with which they could tear apart anything no matter how strong and thick it was; their blows put to shame the force of the sledgehammer; eating live creatures raw, and drinking their blood in draughts as if it were wine, was their repast; knowing no mercy and ever ready to shed blood at the slightest provocation, and often even without it, they had trampled underfoot and crushed even

the mightiest of warriors, not even sparing the gods of heaven who trembled by the mere mention of their names.

To wit, Sita had her doubts; she wondered if Hanuman's assurances were nothing more than airy bluster; merely a loud talk and pretentious boastfulness with no pith in it. He had a small frame, which was like that of a pygmy, no comparison of course to his adversary, the demons, who were awe-inspiringly colossal in their mere size.

So, unable to repress her anxiety, and so much the better for it because it was far wiser to be sure of something so serious and of grave consequence as that which was proposed, than to rely upon imaginary virtues of chivalry, valiance and bravery only to be ridiculed and dishonoured in the end, Sita said to Hanuman—]

‘My dear son (suta)! All the Kapis (monkeys and bears) must be like you are in their forms (diminutive and like pygmies in size), whereas the demon warriors are giants who not only have colossal frames but are also very powerful and strong (befitting their huge frames). (6)

This has caused a lot of doubt in my mind (if what you say is actually feasible).’

Hearing these words of Sita, Hanuman revealed his true form. (7)

This form was like a golden-coloured mountain, for it was huge and colossal. [To wit, it was the form that Hanuman had revealed to Jamvant and others prior to his departure for Lanka¹.]

This formidable form inspired awe and instilled fear in the mind and heart of the enemy in a battle, for it was most terrifying and fearful, one that was evidently full of strength, courage and valour. (7)

When Sita saw this form of Hanuman, she became reassured; her mind and heart now had faith on the truthfulness of what he had said to her. She no more had any trace of doubts lingering in her.

Soon after that, the son of the wind-god (“pavanasuta”; Hanuman) reverted back to his diminutive form². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 30.

²Hanuman showed his colossal form for a few minutes, just enough to satisfy Sita. He quickly became small in size, because he wished not to be detected before he would so wish. But this momentary sight reassured Sita that the monkeys and bears were indeed good matches for the demons; rather they surpassed their adversaries by many notches.

The use of the epithet ‘son of the wind-god’ is significant here: the air or the wind is so subtle and invisible that it can enter the smallest crevice easily, even without anyone noticing it. Even light can do so, but there is a big difference between the two. Light would travel only in a straight line, and if the cavern makes a bend, the path of the light would be blocked. But it is not so with the air, or the wind; it would enter at one end of the long corridor, flow through its bends and curves, highs and lows, and make its presence felt at the other end which is at a complete different angle or plane from the point of its entrance. To wit, air has maneuverability and flexibility that other elements of Nature lack, for neither the earth, nor the fire or the water can

have it; as the ‘earth’ is fettered by its weight and gravity, the ‘fire’ would lose its heat with distance, and ‘water’ would dry up and evaporate if it has to flow long distances.

Besides this, only the ‘air’ can move about in an invisible form; earth, fire and water can’t remain hidden from sight for long.

To wit, Hanuman, being the ‘son of the wind-god’, had certain singular qualities that no one else possessed, and one such quality was his ability to get in and out without being visibly noticed, and the other was to expand to any size he wished, for his ‘parent’, the wind, can expand to fill the whole space of the sky or limit itself to a small balloon, not to mention of course the powerful force that the ‘wind’ inherently possesses, a force that can cause trees to topple, huge waves to rise in the ocean, and raise dust storms in a desert that obscure the sun.]

दो०. सुनु माता साखामृग नहिं बल बुद्धि बिसाल ।

प्रभु प्रताप तें गरुड़हि खाइ परम लघु ब्याल ॥ १६ ॥

dōhā.

sunu mātā sākhāmṛga nahim bala bud'dhi bisāla.

prabhu pratāpa tēm garuṛahi khā'i parama laghu byāla. 16.

Hanuman said to Sita, ‘Listen mother! Those who dwell on the branches of trees (“sākhāmṛga”; here referring to the Kapis, the monkeys) do not have any commendable strength or wisdom of their own, but it doesn’t really matters for even a small snake can devour Garud (who is Lord Vishnu’s mount and famed as the eater of serpents, for whom serpents are like fodder) by the grace of the Lord (Sri Ram)¹.

[To wit, impossible things become possible if the Lord God so wishes. So don’t you worry; for even if the Kapis are weaker in strength and power than the demons, yet if Lord Ram would so wish then the same Kapis would trounce the demons without hesitation, without doubt. So, have faith.] (Doha no. 16)

[Note—¹In this verse, Hanuman shows his humility and devotion for his Lord, Sri Ram. He credits all achievements, of his present efforts as well as all the future successes of his compatriots in the war that is shortly to commence, on the glory and grace of Lord Ram.

He also addresses Sita’s reservations expressed by her in verse nos. 6-7 herein above. Sita need not worry at all; even if what she says were to be true, that the Kapis are no match for the demons, yet she has forgotten about one factor—about the divinity, the glory and the majestic powers that Lord Ram possesses.

If the king is powerful and strong, and his army committed and devoted to him, and this is aided by the fact that the cause and objective for which the war is fought is righteous, noble and honourable, then the victory will surely be theirs; there is no doubt about it.]

चौ०. मन संतोष सुनत कपि बानी । भगति प्रताप तेज बल सानी ॥ १ ॥

आसिष दीन्हि रामप्रिय जाना । होहु तात बल सील निधाना ॥ २ ॥

अजर अमर गुननिधि सुत होहू । करहुँ बहुत रघुनायक छोहू ॥ ३ ॥

करहुँ कृपा प्रभु अस सुनि काना । निर्भर प्रेम मगन हनुमाना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

mana santōṣa sunata kapi bānī. bhagati pratāpa tēja bala sānī. 1.
āṣiṣa dīnhi rāmapriya jānā. hōhu tāta bala sīla nidhānā. 2.
ajara amara gunanidhi suta hōhū. karahuṁ bahuta raghunāyaka chōhū. 3
karahuṁ krpā prabhu asa suni kānā. nirbhara prēma magana hanumānā. 4.

When Sita heard Kapi's (Hanuman's) words imbued with the glorious virtues of devotion, valour, dynamism, self-confidence, courage and strength, she was extremely glad and felt very contented in her heart and mind ("mana santōṣa")¹. (1)

Sita's heart overflowed with gratitude and love for him as she realized that Hanuman was very dear to Lord Ram, and his favourite. Blessing him profusely from the innermost recesses of her heart, she said, 'My dear son (tāta)! May you become an abode of strength, courage and valour; may you be a repository of all the glorious and excellent virtues there are (bala sīla nidhānā)! (2)

My son (suta)! May you ever remain immune to the decay that the body suffers from due to the aging process; may you become immortal; may you be a treasury of all the excellent virtues and the best of qualities that exist in this world! And to crown these blessings, may Lord Ram (raghunāyaka) always be exceptionally gracious and most kind upon you.' (3)

When Hanuman heard with his ears the last blessing of Sita, viz. "may Lord Ram always be gracious and kind upon you", he was so overwhelmed with gratitude, with emotions of love and affection surging in his heart, that for some time he lost awareness of his own self². (4)

[Note—¹Hanuman's words were a moment of epiphany for Sita; she realized that he was truly devoted to Lord Ram, was totally committed to him, and was determined to serve the Lord most diligently, faithfully and sincerely, to the best of his ability.

We have read in previous verses how Hanuman had assured Sita that her sufferings would soon end, that Lord Ram remembers her, grieves for her, and loves her twice as much as she loves him. He had also reminded her of the Lord's majesty, exceptional glories, astounding strength and dynamic powers, reassuring her that her tormentors, the evil demons, would be reduced to ashes by the fire-spewing arrows of Lord Ram which would burn them just like flies are burnt when they swarm around the flames of a raging fire; it would be such a fantastic feat that would be remembered and sung by sages, minstrels and bards for generations after generations to come. Hanuman had also told Sita that he was a devoted servant of Lord Ram, and though he was capable to take her back immediately yet he desists from doing so as it would violate the orders of the Lord, as he had told him just to go and find about her. All these things hint at the virtues listed here for Hanuman—devotion, glory, valour, self-confidence, strength and courage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16.}

²We have read earlier that when Sita heard that Lord Ram remembers her and loves her much, she too was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, and had become so

emotional that for some moments she had lost awareness of her own body like the way Hanuman felt when Sita blessed him that he would eternally be in the gracious looks of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.}]

बार बार नाएसि पद सीसा । बोला बचन जोरि कर कीसा ॥ ५ ॥
अब कृतकृत्य भयउँ मैं माता । आसिष तव अमोघ बिख्याता ॥ ६ ॥

bāra bāra nā'ēsi pada sīsā. bōlā bacana jōri kara kīsā. 5.
aba kṛtakṛtya bhaya'uṁ mairi mātā. āsiṣa tava amōgha bikhyātā. 6.

The Kapi ("kīsā"; Hanuman) bowed his head repeatedly at the feet of Sita, and clasping his hands in supplication and humility, he said --- (5)

‘Oh mother (mātā)! I am fully contented and fulfilled; I have accomplished all that is to be accomplished; I am exceptionally grateful and obliged to you (kṛtakṛtya)—for in all sooth and without gainsay, it is known throughout the world that your blessings are infallible and inviolable. [Indeed, I am so fortunate; I am lucky as no one has ever been.] (6)

सुनु मातु मोहि अतिसय भूखा । लागि देखि सुंदर फल रूखा ॥ ७ ॥
सुनु सुत करहिं बिपिन रखवारी । परम सुभट रजनीचर भारी ॥ ८ ॥
तिन्ह कर भय माता मोहि नाहीं । जौं तुम्ह सुख मानहु मन माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

sunahu mātu mōhi atisaya bhūkhā. lāgi dēkhi sundara phala rūkhā. 7.
sunu suta karahim bipina rakhavārī. parama subhaṭa rajanīcara bhārī. 8.
tinha kara bhaya mātā mōhi nāhīm. jauṁ tumha sukha mānahu mana māhīm. 9.

Listen mother, I am feeling very hungry, and my hunger is particularly stoked by the sight of beautiful raw-and-ripe fruits (sundara phala rūkhā) that I perceive on the trees that are in abundance in this garden.

[To wit, had there been no fruit-trees around this place, perhaps my hunger would have remained forgotten by me as I have a lot of work to do. But I can't help; the sight and the smell of this ripe succulent fruits have ignited my appetite which is now gnawing at my stomach, which seems to be empty; I am starving, and can't wait any longer to eat. So mother, if I have your permission, can I eat?]¹ (7)

Sita replied, ‘Listen son. This garden is being protected by exceptionally strong and bold demon guards. [So it is fraught with grave danger to openly eat fruits from the trees here. I don't want to put you to any unwarranted risks; so I am not sure whether I should agree with your request.]’ (8)

[When Sita expressed her reservations, Hanuman assured her that if she is pleased by his eating fruits from the trees, then she should not worry about anything else because he is competent to tackle all other matters.]

Hanuman said, 'Mother, if you are pleased and feel happy in your heart by allowing me to eat fruits from these trees, then be rest assured that I have no fear from these demon warriors who guard the garden. [To hell with them; I don't bother a dime about these demon guards as long as you have no objection to my eating these fruits.]' (9)

[Note—¹It is a common observation that when a person has to do some important work he loses his appetite till the time that work is not finished, but as soon as the work is completed he suddenly feels very hungry. So was also the case with Hanuman—his mission was successful, for he had found Sita, had talked with her, had given Lord Ram's ring to her, and had also assured her that soon the Lord would come to free her. He was now set to return home when he saw the beautiful fruit trees. This suddenly made him feel hungry, and so he sought Sita's permission to eat.]

दो०. देखि बुद्धि बल निपुन कपि कहेउ जानकीं जाहु ।
रघुपति चरन हृदयँ धरि तात मधुर फल खाहु ॥ १७ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi bud'dhi bala nipuna kapi kahē'u jānakīṁ jāhu.
raghupati carana hr̥dayaṁ dhari tāta madhura phala khāhu. 17.

Perceiving that the Kapi (Hanuman) was very wise, intelligent, prudent and adroit, as well as able, strong and valiant, Janki (Sita) gave him her assent, granting him permission to eat fruits to satisfy his hunger. She said, 'Go my son; after invoking the holy feet of Lord Ram and enshrining them in your heart, eat as many sweet and succulent fruits as is your desire. (Doha no. 17)

[Note—Sita has put only one condition for Hanuman—which is to remember Lord Ram and fix his attention on the holy feet of the Lord while he eats as many fruits as he wants. This means that as long as Hanuman remembers the holy feet of the Lord, as long as he keeps in mind that the Lord is his guardian and protector, no harm can ever come to him; it is a veritable shield that would protect him.

A devotee should take a hint from this advice of Sita—that if he remembers Lord Ram, and always keeps in his mind that the Lord is his greatest protector and a benevolent guardian, then he would be rest assured that no harm whatever can come to him.

Earlier, in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 17 herein above, we come across a similar idea concerning the excellent qualities of Hanuman.]

चौ०. चलेउ नाइ सिरु पैठेउ बागा । फल खाएसि तरु तोरैं लागा ॥ १ ॥
रहे तहाँ बहु भट रखवारे । कछु मारेसि कछु जाइ पुकारे ॥ २ ॥
नाथ एक आवा कपि भारी । तेहिं असोक बाटिका उजारी ॥ ३ ॥

खाएसि फल अरु बिटप उपारे । रच्छक मर्दि मर्दि महि डारे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

calē'u nā'i siru paiṭhē'u bāgā. phala khā'ēsi taru tōrainṁ lāgā. 1.
rahē tahāṁ bahu bhaṭa rakhavārē. kachu mārēsi kachu jā'i pukārē. 2.
nātha ēka āvā kapi bhārī. tēhiṁ asōka bāṭikā ujārī. 3.
khā'ēsi phala aru biṭapa upārē. racchaka mardī mardī mahi ḍārē. 4.

After receiving Sita's permission, Hanuman bowed his head at her feet and proceeded quietly towards the part of the garden which was rich with fruit trees. Once there, he started eating fruits at random, nibbling a little of one and biting a piece of another, all the while breaking trees and their branches (by violently shaking them). (1)

There were numerous guards to protect the garden; some of them were thrashed by Hanuman, others were killed by him, and some who managed to escape took to flight, running to inform their king Ravana about the violent intruder and havoc that he had unleashed in the royal garden¹. (2)

They cried out, 'Oh Lord, a huge monkey has come from somewhere, and he has laid the Ahoka grove to waste. (3)

He is eating fruits (and throwing them all over), uprooting trees, and breaking their branches. As for the guards, he has thrashed all of them mercilessly; some are lying wounded and some dead on the ground.

[The situation the Ashok garden is extremely explosive, and never ever in our lives have we experienced anything of this sort. The garden is ruined, its guards dead or wounded, and the intruder is running amok in it, without anyone being able to stop him. There is complete mayhem and havoc in the garden; virtually all our guards have been massacred; we somehow managed to flee with our lives to inform you, otherwise we were also as good as dead.]' (4)

[Note—¹As soon as Hanuman went on the rampage in the orchard full of ripe and succulent trees, a place that was well planned and laid out as it was Ravana's private garden-of-pleasure, the demon soldiers guarding it panicked as they were caught totally unawares by the unexpected and sudden assault; they were on the back-foot right from the start even as Hanuman mercilessly beat them, resulting in some suffering from severe wounds, and some dying in the mayhem that followed. Feeling out-manoeuvred and overrun by him, they ran helter-skelter in complete disarray like a defeated army retreating in great haste to escape the wrath of the victorious enemy in hot pursuit, or like dry leaves scattering during a severe storm.

Why did Hanuman ruin Ravana's precious garden? One reason is that he was seething with anger from the time he first saw Sita in a sorry state, and then when he heard Ravana threatening her with dire consequences, even warning to kill her at the end of one month, the fire of his anger was fuelled further. So therefore he wanted to teach Ravana a bitter lesson. The other reason is that he wanted to see how the demon army worked, how prepared it was, what its weapons were, and get an idea of the morale of its soldiers. The third reason is that he wanted to have a personal interview with Ravana so as to judge him, to see him from close quarters, and try to understand his mind and intentions; this would also give him an opportunity to become

acquainted with his chief courtiers, so that he can recognize them by face later on. The fourth reason was that he wished to see the city of Lanka as well as the royal court of Ravana by the day light in order see the details of the place's general lay out and topography, and to get an idea of the position of its defenses and population. And the fifth and the most important reason was to break the morale and the courage of the demons, to instill fear in their hearts and terror in their minds, by single-handedly crushing the demon warriors who protected the royal garden, beating and killing them ruthlessly, and devastating the garden itself.

Not only this, more insult and humiliation of the demons were waiting for them, for soon we shall read that Hanuman set the city of Lanka on fire, a raging fire that ravaged the whole city and reduced it to cinders so much so that the famed 'gilded city of Lanka', that was once the envy of heaven, was turned into an eerie and ghostly place of smouldering, blackened and burnt out structures. If any residual pride and esteem was still left in Ravana after the destruction of his favourite garden, then surely it was reduced to dust when his cherished golden city of Lanka was burnt down right before his nose, without his being able to either stop or capture the perpetrator of this large scale devastation.]

सुनि रावन पठए भट नाना । तिन्हहि देखि गर्जेउ हनुमाना ॥ ५ ॥
 सब रजनीचर कपि संघारे । गए पुकारत कछु अधमारे ॥ ६ ॥
 पुनि पठयउ तेहिं अछकुमारा । चला संग लै सुभट अपारा ॥ ७ ॥
 आवत देखि बिटप गहि तर्जा । ताहि निपाति महाधुनि गर्जा ॥ ८ ॥

sunī rāvana paṭha'e bhaṭa nānā. tinhahi dēkhi garjē'u hanumānā. 5.
 saba rajanīcara kapi saṅghārē. ga'e pukārata kachu adhamārē. 6.
 puni paṭhaya'u tēhiṁ acchakumārā. calā saṅga lai subhaṭa apārā. 7.
 āvata dēkhi biṭapa gahi tarjā. tāhi nipāti mahādhuni garjā. 8.

When Ravana heard of the devastation caused by Hanuman, as reported by the guards, he immediately dispatched innumerable demon warriors to the site (to restore order and capture the intruder). However, when Hanuman saw them, he roared aloud (as if to challenge them, and show his utter contempt towards them). (5)

The Kapi (Hanuman) slayed almost all of the demons; the few who somehow managed to escape death, though they were thrashed viciously black-and-blue, ran back with their lives, yelling and pleading in terror.

[To wit, the demons were beaten so ferociously by Hanuman that they were left more dead than alive. The few demon warriors who survived the slaughter ran back in panic to the court of Ravana, limping and staggering, some dumb out of fear and others howling in horror, to report to him of the complete rout of the army.] (6)

Then he (Ravana) sent (his son) Akshayakumar. He proceeded to the site of the confrontation (i.e. the Ashok garden) with a detachment of his crack troops. (7)

As soon as he (Hanuman) saw him (Akshayakumar) approach, he uprooted a huge tree and held it in his hands to threaten him; he then hit the latter (Akshayakumar) so

hard with this tree that he fell down dead (with a single blow). Then Hanuman yelled and roared thunderously¹. (8)

[Note—¹After killing Akshayakumar with the blow of the tree, Hanuaman roared in victory. It ought to be noted that Akshayakumar was the first member of the Ravana's family who has died. Obviously his death not only alarmed Ravana but also made him seethe with anger, determined to take revenge.]

दो०. कछु मारेसि कछु मर्देसि कछु मिलएसि धरि धूरि ।
कछु पुनि जाइ पुकारे प्रभु मर्कट बल भूरि ॥ १८ ॥

dōhā.

kachu mārēsi kachu mardēsi kachu mila'ēsi dhari dhūri.
kachu puni jā'i pukārē prabhu markṭa bala bhūri. 18.

Out of the demon warriors who had come with Akshayakumar, some were killed, some crushed and smothered, some were caught and stomped underfoot in dust, and some who survived this mayhem and slaughter ran back in panic to plead urgently with Ravana, 'Alack oh Lord, this intruding monkey is terror personified; he seems to be too strong and invincible for us.'¹ (Doha no. 18)

[Note--¹The demon warriors told Ravana that Hanuman had unleashed complete havoc and created utter chaos all over in the royal garden. When Ravana observed the severely wounded demons who were trembling in horror and had fear writ all over their faces, all drenched in blood and somehow just able to breathe and stand on their feet as they were more dead than alive, so when they made no mention of Akshayakumar, Ravana had a hunch that his son was dead, though of course none of the demons had the courage to mention this bad tidings in explicit terms as they feared inviting Ravana's fiery anger and instant punishment, most certainly which would be death.]

चौ०. सुनि सुत बध लंकेस रिसाना । पठएसि मेघनाद बलवाना ॥ १ ॥
मारसि जनि सुत बाँधेसु ताही । देखिअ कपिहि कहाँ कर आही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī suta badha laṅkēsa risānā. paṭha'ēsi mēghanāda balavānā. 1.
māraṣi jani suta bāṁdhēsu tāhī. dēkhi'a kapihi kahāṁ kara āhī. 2.

When the king of Lanka ("laṅkēsa"; Ravana) heard of the death of his son (Akshayakumar)¹, he got furious; he then sent Meghanad² (his other son), who was extremely strong and powerful (to take revenge). (1)

Ravana instructed him—'Son, don't kill the intruder; just tie him up and bring him here. Let us see who this Kapi (monkey) is, and from whither has he come.' (2)

[Note—¹The demon warriors who came to report to Ravana had only told him that “the monkey is extremely powerful”: refer Doha no. 18 herein above. But they did not have the guts to clearly tell him that Akshayakumar was also dead as they feared that the demon who would dare to utter this bad news would be singled out to become the object of Ravana’s severe wrath. But Ravana was an intelligent king, and so he could easily guess that his son was no longer alive; for had he been alive these reporters would have told Ravana that his son was safe and has sent such and such urgent message from the battle front, for instance seeking reinforcements. From their terrified countenance and panicky demeanours Ravana could easily deduce that things had gone real nasty on the ground, and that his son Akshayakumar was no more.

²Meghnad was so-called because he could roar as loud as the clap of thunder. “Megha” = cloud, especially rain-bearing clouds that produce lightening and thunder; “Naad” = a loud reverberating noise.

He is also called ‘Indrajeet’ or the one who had conquered Indra, the king of Gods. This relates to the event when he had defeated Indra in a battle to free his father Ravana from his captivity. This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan (of Valmiki), Saar Kand (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 78-82.

Why did Ravana decide to take the risk of putting his other son Meghnad to danger even after learning of the ferocity of Hanuman? It was because he was convinced of Meghnad’s strength, powers and abilities. It was Meghnad who had freed him from the captivity of Indra, the king of Gods, which was surely not an easy task. In Valmiki Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 48, verse no. 6, Ravana praises Meghnad as follows: “Oh son. You are like me in the powers derived by Tapa (doing penances and austerities), in the physical strength of the body, in valour and courage, in skill with weapons and force of arms, and in the art of warfare. When I feel myself in danger in the battle-field, then at that time as soon as I remember you I feel encouraged and reassured of victory; all my worries and distresses vanish.’

Ravana was absolutely convinced that Meghnad could capture anyone he wishes, even the mighty gods are no match against him: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

Another interesting thing is that amongst all the demon warriors, it was only Meghnad who could roar loudly and deafeningly like the clap of thunder. The soldiers who had come back to report of the devastation caused by Hanuman and about his powers must have also reported that the latter roars thunderously like a giant. So therefore, Ravana thought he should send someone who can also roar equally thunderously and was equally powerful and strong so as to show the intruder that he has his match in Lanka. And the only one demon warrior Ravana could think of who could challenge Hanuman was Meghnad.

Why did Ravana ordered Meghnad not to kill the intruder but only tie him up and bring him to the court? Obviously it is because Ravana wished to learn more about the lord or the master on whose orders Hanuman had come to Lanka; if he was killed then no further information would be available about the principle enemy. If the intruder is caught alive then certainly a lot of information can be extracted from him about the enemy, and consequently defenses can be fine tuned and offensive strategy can be formulated in case there is an actual confrontation.]

चला इंद्रजित अतुलित जोधा । बंधु निधन सुनि उपजा क्रोधा ॥ ३ ॥

कपि देखा दारुन भट आवा । कटकटाइ गर्जा अरु धावा ॥ ४ ॥

calā indrajita atulita jōdhā. bandhu nidhana suni upajā krōdhā. 3.
kapi dēkhā dārūna bhaṭa āvā. kaṭakaṭā'i garjā aru dhāvā. 4.

The great warrior (Meghanad) who was peerless in strength and valour, and who once had even vanquished Indra, the king of the gods, proceeded very angrily to face Hanuman when he learnt that his brother (Akshayakumar) had been killed. (3)

When the Kapi (Hanuman) observed that a mighty warrior is approaching him menacingly, he too became angry, and he dashed forward immediately¹, gnashing his teeth violently and roaring thunderously. (4)

[Note—¹This shows that Hanuman did not hesitate even for a moment when he saw Meghnad coming to confront him. It proves that Hanuman was bold and fearless; he was very confident of his own abilities, and was sure that no harm could ever come to him due to the grace of Lord Ram.]

अति बिसाल तरु एक उपारा । बिरथ कीन्ह लंकेस कुमारा ॥ ५ ॥
रहे महाभट ताके संग । गहि गहि कपि मर्दइ निज अंगा ॥ ६ ॥
तिन्हि निपाति ताहि सन बाजा । भिरे जुगल मानहुँ गजराजा ॥ ७ ॥
मुठिका मारि चढ़ा तरु जाई । ताहि एक छन मुरुछा आई ॥ ८ ॥
उठि बहोरि कीन्हिसि बहु माया । जीति न जाइ प्रभंजन जाया ॥ ९ ॥

ati bisāla taru ēka upārā. biratha kīnha laṅkēsa kumārā. 5.
rahē mahābhaṭa tākē saṅgā. gahi gahi kapi marda'i nija aṅgā. 6.
tinahi nipāti tāhi sana bājā. bhirē jugala mānahuṁ gajarājā. 7.
muṭhikā māri caṛhā taru jā'ī. tāhi ēka chana muruchā ā'ī. 8.
uṭhi bahōri kīnhisi bahu māyā. jīti na jā'i prabhañjana jāyā. 9.

He (Hanuman) uprooted a huge tree and slammed the Prince of Lanka (Meghnad) with it, as a result of which the latter fell down from his chariot. (5)

All the great demon warriors who had accompanied the prince were seized by Hanuman one by one, who thrashed them ferociously and then squashed them against his body, reducing them to a pulp. (6)

After decimating the demon warriors, he (Hanuman) engaged the prince (Meghnad) in a duel—the sight of the two mighty warriors engaged in close hand-to-hand combat gave the impression of two great elephants angrily entangled with each other. (7)

Then Hanuman hit Meghnad fiercely with his fist, and then jumped onto a tree; this punch left the latter reeling, and he fainted for a moment. (8)

When he (Meghnad) regained his consciousness, he employed many tricks of delusive nature (i.e. many magical charms in which he was an expert)¹, but no matter how hard

he tried the son of the wind god (“prabhañjana jāyā”; Hanuman) could not be subdued by him. (9)

[Note—¹The fistful that Meghnad suffered from Hanuman was too much for him. He was so rattled by it that he decided that he should best avoid a direct confrontation with his enemy, and so he engaged in an indirect attack on Hanuman by employing certain magical tricks in which he was an expert. Yet, inspite of all his maneuverings and deceptions, Meghnad could not overcome Hanuman who always outwitted him.]

दो०. ब्रह्म अज तेहिं साँधा कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
जौं न ब्रह्मसर मानउँ महिमा मिटइ अपार ॥ १९ ॥

dōhā.

brahma astra tēhiṁ sām̐dhā kapi mana kīnha bicāra.
jauṁ na brahmasara māna'uṁ mahimā miṭa'i apāra. 19.

Frustrated and peeved, Meghnad at last aimed the infallible weapon known as ‘Brahma Astra’¹ at the Kapi (Hanuman).

At this, Hanuman thought within himself, ‘If I do not yield to this weapon then it would undermine the authority and the glory of the creator Brahma as this weapon is sanctified and empowered by invoking Brahma’s name.

[To wit therefore, I must submit myself to it, though if I wish I can easily defy it. But if I nullify this weapon of Brahma like I have been neutralizing all other weapons used by Meghnad, it will set a bad precedent, and it would be tantamount to insulting the authority and the powers of the Creator, which I must not do at all. Hence, it is proper for me to submit voluntarily before this weapon to show respect to Brahma. Besides, this will give me an opportunity to come face to face with Ravana in his court; it will help me to see many other things, such as the way he and his court function. It will also help me to get a direct idea of his army, its strengths and weapons, as it is sure that I will have to ultimately face them when I decide to free myself from this snare. So actually this Brahma’s weapon is a god-sent opportunity for me to make more investigations about the demon army and its preparedness.]’ (Doha no. 19)

[Note—¹Brahma-Astra is like an arrow or a missile. It is literally a weapon that cannot fail as it is used by invoking the powers of the creator Brahma.]

चौ०. ब्रह्मबान कपि कहूँ तेहिं मारा । परतिहुँ बार कटकु संघारा ॥ १ ॥
तेहिं देखा कपि मुरुछित भयऊ । नागपास बाँधेसि लै गयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

brahmabāna kapi kahuṁ tēhiṁ mārā. paratihuṁ bāra kaṭaku saṅghārā. 1.
tēhiṁ dēkhā kapi muruchita bhaya'ū. nāgapāsa bāṁdhēsi lai gaya'ū. 2.

He (Meghnad) finally shot the Kapi (Hanuman) with Brahma's arrow (or the arrow empowered by invoking Brahma's powers; "brahmabāna"). Even as he fell, Hanuman slayed as many demon warriors as he could lay his hands on. (1)

When he (Meghnad) saw that the Kapi was unconscious, he (gathered courage to go near him and)¹ tied the latter in a snare consisting of snakes (nāgapāsa)² and then took him as a captive (to the court of Ravana). (2)

[Note—¹Meghnad was so terrified of Hanuman that he could not gather courage to approach him till he was certain that the latter was unconscious.

Once when Meghnad had taken Indra as a captive, the creator Brahma had gone to plead for his freedom, and at that time he had given his own weapon, known as 'Brahma Astra', to Meghnad in return of Indra's freedom.

The 'Naag-pash' or the serpent-snare was given to Meghnad by Varun, the god of water.]

जासु नाम जपि सुनहु भवानी । भव बंधन काटहिं नर ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥

तासु दूत कि बंध तरु आवा । प्रभु कारज लागि कपिहिं बंधावा ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu nāma japi sunahu bhavānī. bhava bandhana kāṭahim nara gyānī. 3.
tāsu dūta ki bandha taru āvā. prabhu kāraja lagi kapihim baṁdhāvā. 4.

Expressing his amazement at this singular event, as well as to explain it, Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this magnificent story, told his consort Parvati, who is also known as Bhavani, 'Listen Bhavani. The Lord (i.e. Sri Ram), by repeating whose holy name wise men are able to cut through the formidable snare represented by the cycle of transmigration, and thereby attain freedom from all misery [3]—is it ever possible that the messenger of the same Lord can be captured by any kind of worldly snare? No, it is impossible; it is only for the purpose of serving the Lord's cause that the Kapi (Hanuman) had voluntarily allowed himself to be caught in this 'serpent-snare' [4]'. (3-4)

[Note—As we have already read in Doha no. 19 herein above, Hanuman decided to surrender himself before Brahma's weapon voluntarily so as to maintain its sanctity.

But what about the 'Naag-pash'? We shall read soon that Hanuman freed himself easily from this serpent-snare at the right moment when he decided to do so; he simply reduced the size of his body, which helped to loosen the grip of the snare from which he set himself free by slithering out of it—refer: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25.

But till that time arrived he decided to remain ensnared. It helped him to go to Ravana's court unopposed; it helped him to have sneak view of the city as he was being taken to the court through its streets, as well as the entrances to the royal palaces of Ravana while he passed through them; it helped him see the general populace of Lanka and judge its mood; it helped him to see the ministers and the commanders of the demon army who gathered in the court to attend the spectacle of his interview with Ravana. All this would go to serve the interest of the Lord's army when the assault will finally be launched, and help the Lord and his commanders to plan their war strategy.

Hanuman had received a number of boons from different Gods during his early childhood; these are enumerated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto 36. Amongst these boons were two that are relevant here—the one granted by the creator Brahma, and the other by Varun, the god of water.

Brahma had blessed Hanuman that none of his weapons, called the Brahma Astra, would ever be able to kill him (refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto 36, verse no. 21); and Varun had blessed him that he would be immune to his snare, known as the Naag Pash, as well as any harm that may come from the water element (refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto 36, verse no. 15).

This is the reason why Hanuman had no fear of the mighty ocean while crossing it, and neither was he even worried when Meghnad shot the Brahma-Astra at him nor when he was tied by the Naag-Pash—because he knew that he was immune to their harmful effects.

So it means that when Meghnad hit Hanuman with the Brahma-Astra, the latter only feigned fainting as a gesture of surrender to the might of Brahma's weapon and to show honour and respect to the Creator. Similar was the case with the Naag-Pash; Hanuman simply wanted to show respect to Varun, the god of water, by pretending to be tied with this snare. As we have observed earlier, it was a strategic move by him so that he can find more details about Lanka, about Ravana and his ministers, and about the demon army and its commanders.

Now therefore, we come to another interesting conclusion here that would answer the question 'how did Meghnad carry Hanuman to Ravana's court? After Meghnad succeeded in subduing Hanuman with the Brahma-Astra and then tying him up with the Naag-Pash, he did not have to carry Hanuman to Ravana's court on a stretcher or a hammock or by any other means that are usually employed to carry unconscious persons, for Hanuman was fully conscious and could easily walk along on his two legs like a captive tied in ropes and being led to the king. As he and his captors wound their way through the streets of Lanka, a huge crowd of excited and curious demon burghers collected and followed them, as it was a spectacle never witnessed earlier. Hanuman was teased and jeered at; he was pushed and shoved; but he kept his cool for the time being, deciding that he would punish his tormentors when the right time came. And so it was that he decided to burn Lanka later on as a severe punishment for its rude, impolite and irreverent inhabitants.

The terror that Hanuman had struck in the psyche of the demons was so severe indeed that later on when Angad, whom we would recognize as being the prince of the monkeys and the commander of the little group to which Hanuman belonged and was sent in the south direction in search of Sita, was sent by Lord Ram as his emissary to the court of Ravana before the war commenced in an attempt to make truce and avoid a bloody war, there was panic in the city as soon as Angad reached there. He was shown respect by the demon citizens; every demon whom he met was too willing to oblige him by showing him the way to Ravana's palace; no one dared to joke at him or report to the demon army about his arrival. We shall read about it in due course. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19.}]

कपि बंधन सुनि निसिचर धाए । कौतुक लागि सभाँ सब आए ॥ ५ ॥

दसमुख सभा दीखि कपि जाई । कहि न जाइ कछु अति प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥

कर जोरें सुर दिसिप बिनीता । भृकुटि बिलोकत सकल सभाता ॥ ७ ॥

देखि प्रताप न कपि मन संका । जिमि अहिगन महुँ गरुड़ असंका ॥ ८ ॥

kapi bandhana suni nisicara dhā'ē. kautuka lāgi sabhāṃ saba ā'ē. 5.
dasamukha sabhā dīkhi kapi jā'ī. kahi na jā'i kachu ati prabhutā'ī. 6.
kara jōrēm sura disipa binītā. bhr̥kuṭi bilōkata sakala sabhītā. 7.
dēkhi pratāpa na kapi mana saṅkā. jimi ahigana mahuṃ garuṇa asaṅkā. 8.

When the demons heard that the ferocious Kapi (Hanuman) had been subdued and tied¹, everyone dashed forward with great curiosity to watch the spectacle, and a huge crowd collected in the royal court of Ravana. (5)

The Kapi saw the royal court of the ten-headed Ravana; he was amazed at its magnificence and glory, for it was so great and fascinating that it cannot be described in words. [To wit, Hanuman was exceedingly charmed by the sight of Ravana's majesty and opulence; he had never seen such a sight earlier, so he was lost for words.] (6)

[And what did he behold?] He observed that the great gods and the many custodians of the different directions (sura disipa) were all politely standing in attention and in a submissive way with clasped hands before Ravana; they were anxiously watching his eyebrows (or face) in order to perceive his subtle emotions, to judge whether Ravana is favourable towards them or not. (7)

In spite of witnessing such a show of majesty, power and authority on the part of Ravana, there was no trace of disturbance, fear or apprehension in the Kapi (Hanuman); it was like the case of Garud (the king of birds) remaining fearless in the midst of serpents². [To wit, just like Garud has no fear from serpents because the former can easily gobble up the latter, Hanuman too remain unmoved by the sight of so many ferocious demons around him. The presence of Ravana had instilled fear in the hearts of gods and demi-gods, but Hanuman was unbothered.] (8)

[Note—¹The demons had been so terrified that they had remained hidden while Hanuman had gone on the rampage in the Ashok garden, killing and wounding a large number of demon soldiers. The terror became more marked after the killing of Akshayakumar; and it was further aggravated when Hanuman had fiercely beaten Meghnad, and made him faint and fall from his chariot. Now when this ferocious intruder was captured and tied, the demon citizens came out of hiding and rushed to the site to watch the drama unfold.

²Garud, the king of birds, is the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu; he is said to be an eternal enemy of the serpents upon whom he feeds. So Garud is not at all afraid of the serpents; the serpents on the contrary are terrified of him.

Similarly, Hanuman was not at all afraid of either Ravana or any other demon warriors; rather it were the demons who were sore affright of him.]

दो०. कपिहि बिलोकि दसानन बिहसा कहि दुर्बाद ।

सुत बध सुरति कीन्हि पुनि उपजा हृदयँ बिषाद ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

kapihi bilōki dasānana bihasā kahi durbāda.
suta badha surati kīnhi puni upajā hṛdayaṁ biṣāda. 20.

When the ten-headed Ravana saw the Kapi (Hanuman), he laughed aloud and said many insulting things. But soon he became sober and his heart turned gloomy when he remembered the death of his son (Akshayakumar). (Doha no. 20)

[Note—In the beginning Ravana made a lot of fun of Hanuman; but he soon realised that it was the same Hanuman who had killed his own son Akshayakumar. As we have read, a huge crowd had gathered in the court to observe the proceedings. So Ravana immediately realised his folly—he was joking at the strength and ability of the captive now that the latter was tied up in the Naag-Pash, forgetting that this same captive had a little while ago killed Akshayakumar, the prince of Lanka. It made Ravana look ridiculous in the eyes of his subjects. He was laughing and cracking nasty jokes instead of showing anger at the killer of his son.

Hence, Ravana immediately changed tack and corrected himself; instead of laughing and joking at Hanuman he developed a somber and serious mood.]

चौ०. कह लंकेस कवन तैं कीसा । केहि कें बल घालेहि बन खीसा ॥ १ ॥
की धौं श्रवन सुनेहि नहिं मोही । देखउँ अति असंक सठ तोही ॥ २ ॥
मारे निसिचर केहिं अपराधा । कहु सठ तोहि न प्रान कइ बाधा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kaha laṅkēsa kavana taim kīsā. kēhi kēm bala ghālēhi bana khīsā. 1.
kī dhaum śravana sunēhi nahim mōhī. dēkha'um ati asaṅka saṭha tōhī. 2.
mārē niscara kēhim aparādhā. kahu saṭha tōhi na prāna ka'i bādhā. 3.

The king of Lanka (Ravana) asked Hanuman angrily, 'Say Kapi, who art thou, and on whose strength have thee laid the garden to ruin? [To wit, from whence have thee come, and on whose instructions have thou destroyed my magnificent grove; tell me who art thou.]¹ (1)

Oh thy wicked fellow! Have thou never heard of my name? I observe thee to be exceptionally bold and fearless. [To wit, my name is sufficient to send shivers down the spine of the bravest of warriors, and the boldest of creatures tremble in their knees when they hear of mine name. But I find that thou art haughtily standing before me; how is it ever possible?] (2)

For what crime have thee killed the demons², thou wretch? Aren't thou afraid of thy life?' (3)

[Note—¹This question clearly proves that Lankini, the female demon guard who first encountered Hanuman at the gate of the fort when he was trying to get into the city at night, and who had suffered severely when Hanuman hit her hard with his closed fist, making her bleed in the nose, had decided to keep mum, and had not reported the intrusion to her seniors. The reason she gave at the time was her premonition of the impending elimination of the demon race led by Ravana as it was prophesized by the

creator Brahma that when she is hit so hard by someone that she virtually faints then she must realize that the end of the demons was near. So Lankini had blessed Hanuman with success instead of reporting about him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5.}

Besides her conviction that the end of the demons was near as it was Brahma's prophesy that cannot be negated, there was one other important reason why she kept quiet about an enemy's spy entering the city. She feared severe punishment for negligence and letting Hanuman in; she was appointed to guard the gates of the fort after due diligence about her abilities and with the full confidence that she had the ability to defend it from any intruder whosoever he might be. She had herself asserted this when she first challenged Hanuman, saying that she feeds on thieves and intruders. {Refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4.}

To wit, till this point Ravana and his military commanders were totally in the dark about Hanuman's entry into the city. They were caught unawares and were so preoccupied about the turmoil created by Hanuman's presence that none of them thought of interrogating Lankini. By the grace of the Lord she escaped scrutiny and perhaps death, and it was because she had served the cause of the Lord.

²Ravana was a great diplomat and politician. He did not ask why Hanuman had killed his son Akshayakumar, but he showed anger about the death of the demon warriors in general. This was primarily meant for the huge crowd of spectators who had assembled to watch the spectacle: Ravana wished to gain their loyalty and praise by showing that he was more concerned about the death of his soldiers than the loss of his own son.]

सुनु रावन ब्रह्मांड निकाया । पाइ जासु बल बिरचति माया ॥ ४ ॥
 जाके बल बिरचि हरि ईसा । पालत सृजत हरत दससीसा ॥ ५ ॥
 जा बल सीस धरत सहसानन । अंडकोस समेत गिरि कानन ॥ ६ ॥
 धरइ जो बिबिध देह सुरत्राता । तुम्ह से सठन्ह सिखावनु दाता ॥ ७ ॥
 हर कोदंड कठिन जेहिं भंजा । तेहि समेत नृप दल मद गंजा ॥ ८ ॥
 खर दूषन त्रिसिरा अरु बाली । बधे सकल अतुलित बलसाली ॥ ९ ॥

sunu rāvana brahmāṇḍa nikāyā. pā'i jāsū bala biracati māyā. 4.
 jākēṁ bala birañci hari īsā. pālata sṛjata harata dasasīsā. 5.
 jā bala sīsa dharata sahasānana. aṇḍakōsa samēta giri kānana. 6.
 dhara'i jō bibidha dēha suratrātā. tumha sē saṭhanha sikhāvanu dātā. 7.
 hara kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina jēhiṁ bhañjā. tēhi samēta nrpa dala mada gañjā. 8.
 khara dūṣana trisirā aru bālī. badhē sakala atulita balasālī. 9.

{In the following verses, Hanuman lists the glories of Lord Ram as an answer to Ravana's first query "who are you and on whose orders have you come here". Hanuman tells Ravana that he is a servant of the Lord whose glories he is enumerating; this is his credential, and the Lord referred to here is his strength and authority.}

[Hanuman replied—] ‘Listen Ravana. He (i.e. the Supreme Being) on whose strength and authority countless universes are created by Maya (the delusion creating powers of the Supreme Being that combine with the creative powers of Mother Nature to create a kaleidoscope of diverse universes) (4), ---

Oh the ten-headed one (Ravana)! He on whose strength and authority the Trinity Gods known as Brahma, Hari and Isha (Shiva) are able to create, nourish and sustain, and bring to an end this creation (5), ---

He on whose strength and authority the thousand-hooded celestial Serpent (known as Seshnath) is able to hold on his hood the entire egg-like creation that consists of huge mountains and forests (6), ---

It is the same Lord (the Supreme Being) who assumes different forms (bodies) to protect the interests of the Gods, and to teach a lesson to those who are stupid and wicked like you. (7)

It is the same Lord (in the form of Lord Ram) who had broken the formidable Bow of Lord Shiva, and had thereby vanquished the pride and ego of haughty kings, including yourself¹. (8)

It is he who had slayed the mighty warriors such as Khar, Dushan, Trishira² and Baali³, all of whom were matchless in strength and valour. (9)

[Note—¹This refers to Lord Ram breaking Lord Shiva’s Bow at Janakpur to marry Sita. All the great kings and princes of the time had assembled there to try their luck, but none of them had been able to even move the Bow an inch. Even Ravana was there, but fearing certain humiliation he had quietly left the place. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 252; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.}]

²Khar, Dushan and Trishira were slayed by Lord Ram when they and their army of demons had attacked him at the behest of Supernakha. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.}

³Baali was the elder brother of Sugriv, the prince of the monkey kingdom. Lord Ram was instrumental in his death as the Lord felt that Baali had done grave injustice to his younger brother Sugriv, and needed punishment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.}]

दो०. जाके बल लवलेस तें जितेहु चराचर झारि।

तासु दूत मैं जा करि हरि आनेहु प्रिय नारि ॥ २१ ॥

dōhā.

jākē bala lavalēsa tēm jitēhu carācara jhāri.
tāsu dūta mair̥m jā kari hari ānēhu priya nāri. 21.

By the miniscule fraction of whose strength you were able to conquer the entire creation consisting of animate and inanimate things, and whose beloved wife you had stolen, know me to be a messenger of that Lord!¹ (Doha no. 21)

[Note—¹Till this point Hanuman had referred to the Supreme Being as the glories he has enumerated belong to that Supreme Being. But finally he disclosed that the Supreme Lord he is referring to is none other but Lord Ram—because it was his wife Sita whom Ravana had abducted.]

चौ०. जानउँ मैं तुम्हारि प्रभुताई । सहसबाहु सन परी लराई ॥ १ ॥

समर बालि सन करि जसु पावा । सुनि कपि बचन बिहसि बिहरावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāna'uṁ maim tumhāri prabhutāī. sahasabāhu sana parī larāī. 1.

samara bāli sana kari jasu pāvā. suni kapi bacana bihasi biharāvā. 2.

{Now, Hanuman answers the second query of Ravana: “Does Hanuman not know who Ravana was that he fails to show any deference to him; has he not heard of Ravana’s name that he seems not to tremble in fear in the latter’s presence?” Hanuman’s answer is in the form of an insult to Ravana’s self-respect and honour; it is an insinuation that invokes certain unfortunate incidents that show Ravana in a very poor light. Remember: There is a large gathering of courtiers and demon burghers who are watching the proceedings attentively. This stern public rebuke by Hanuman might have shuddered the faint-hearted, but made others smile in sarcasm as every demon was aware of these circumstances, though no one actually spoke of them out of fear of his life.}

[Hanuman continued—] ‘Oh yes, as to your majesty, strength and abilities of which you are so proud, I am indeed aware of them, for I am in the know of your duel with Sahastrabahu!¹ [Hanuman has taunted Ravana by citing this incident because he was defeated and captured by Sahastrabahu in a battle over a trifle matter as narrated in a note below. Sahastrabahu kept Ravana as an ordinary prisoner-of-war till sage Pulastya went and freed him.] (1)

And of course, you have achieved great glory by having a duel with Baali (the king of the monkey race and the ruler of the kingdom of Kishkindha)²! [This was another incident where Ravana was subjected to great humiliation as narrated in a note below. He was captured and tucked under armpit by Baali, where Ravana remained stuck for quite a long time before Baali realized that someone was there. Ravana fell to the ground when Baali raised his arms.]’

When Ravana heard these taunting words of the Kapi (Hanuman), he tried to hide his severe embarrassment and deflect attention that was now focused on his weaknesses by laughing the matter away, pretending that it was of no consequence to him whatsoever. (2)

[Note—¹Sahastrabahu, literally means ‘one with a thousand arms’; he was also known as ‘Sahararjun’, i.e. Arjun with a thousand arms.

The story of Sahastrabahu and how Ravana was humiliated by him is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahastrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in forging a friendship between the two. {This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.}

The version according to Anand Ramayan and Adhyatma Ramayan has already been narrated in our Book earlier.

A word or two about Sahastrabahu would make this story more interesting. So let us read a little more about him as follows:

There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as 'Sahastraarjun' or 'Arjun with a thousand hands'. He was the son of king Kritvirya whose kingdom was known as Anup; its capital city was known as Mahishmati and it was situated on the southern bank of river Narmada.

In his early life he was a very righteous and conscientious person, a man of upright thoughts and noble conduct. After the death of his father when the court ministers wished to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom, he refused, saying: 'Kingdom leads a king to hell if he cannot live upto the expectations of his subjects and rule according to the principles of Dharma (righteousness and probity). The main source of income of a king is 'tax collected from his subjects', but if this tax is collected in an improper way, and if it is not utilized for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma which say that the main use of state revenue is to ensure that traders are given all facilities and protection for carrying out legitimate trade, are not looted by thieves, the subjects of the kingdom are given due protection and their interests are always kept ahead of everything else, and so on and so forth. So unless I acquire such powers and abilities by doing Tapa (penance), I will not accept the throne.'

When Sahastrabahu said this, the great sage Garg advised him that if he indeed wishes to do Tapa and acquire mythical powers to rule the vast kingdom in accordance to Dharma then he should go and serve Lord Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Dattatreya lived in a cave of Mt. SahyaParvat and did Tapa there (Markandeya Puran, Canto 18). So, Sahastrabahu went to Lord Dattatreya and began serving him diligently for a long period of ten thousand years.

According to Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12, when Dattatreya was pleased with his service and austerities, he granted him four boons: (i) First, the king asked for one thousand arms. (ii) Second, he wished that no one in his kingdom would even dare to think in an unrighteous and sinful way. (iii) Third, he wanted to conquer the whole earth and rule over it. (iv) Fourth, that if he has to die then it must be in the battle-field at the hands of a warrior who is superior to him in every way.

According to Markandey Puran, Canto 18, verse nos. 14-18, the king was granted ten boons as follows: (i) The powers and authority to rule over his subjects without acquiring sins. (ii) The ability to know the thoughts of others. (iii) No one should be able to face in the battle-field (i.e. he should become invincible). (iv) During a war he should have a thousand arms so as to fight his opponent with all of them at once. [This is also mentioned in Harivansha Puran, Canto 33, verse no. 14.] (v) He should have unhindered access to all places in the sky, water, earth, mountains and the nether world. (vi) If he has to die then it should be at the hands of someone stronger than him. (vii) If by chance he goes astray and falls on the wrong path, then he must have a chance to get good advice and company of saintly persons (i.e. he must be given an opportunity to mend his ways). (viii) He must have illustrious persons as his guests so that he can serve them and get their blessings. (ix) His wealth should never diminish even after liberal charities and giving of alms regularly; there should be no shortage of wealth in his kingdom. (x) The virtue of Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God) should be firm and perpetual in him.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 115, verse no. 12, it is said that by the grace of Dattatreya the king acquired an air-plane made of gold; that he ruled over the entire earth; and that no one could stop his chariot. He was a great Emperor who conquered the whole world and made liberal charities. He is also regarded as a great scholar of Tantra Shastra.

He was so powerful and mighty that when he bathed in the ocean and thrashed it with his thousand arms, he could turn the tide backwards. He would splash the water so heavily that marine creatures were tossed into the air like ninepins. [Brahm-Vaivarta Puran, Ganesh Khand, Canto 23-27.]

But the Laws of Creation are such that every good thing has to come to an end one day; nothing is eternal and permanent in this mortal gross world. This also applied to Sahastrabahu. As time passed, he became extremely haughty and cruel. He started subjugating even the Gods so as to remove all challenges to his authority and power. It is said that he ruled for eighty-five thousand years before he was killed by sage Parashuram.

Once he was asked by the Fire God for alms, and the noble king could not refuse. The Fire God used this grant to burn everything and cause havoc everywhere, because he was certain that Sahastrabahu would not stop him. During this burning spree, the Fire destroyed the hermitage of sage Aapava (who was later on known as sage Vasistha according to Brahm Puran during its description of the race of Yayaati). The sage cursed king Sahastrabahu that his arms, relying upon whose strength the Fire God had destroyed his hermitage and was wreaking havoc on earth, would be cut by

sage Parashuram. [Refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 49, verse nos. 35-45; and Padma Puran, Srusti Khand, Canto 12.]

One day, he was wandering along the shore of the ocean and out of his pride and haughtiness he covered it with thousands of arrows. The Ocean assumed a form and appeared before him to plead that he stop showering arrows into the water as all the marine creatures that live in the water would die. Sahastrabahu accepted the prayer but asked the Ocean to tell him about someone who could face him in battle, as he was itching for a face-off with anyone who could claim to be stronger than him as he wished to conquer the opponent and become an unchallenged warrior in this world. The Ocean told him to go sage Jamdagni whose son Parashuram would be fit opponent for him and would welcome him in battle. [Refer: Mahabharat, Ashwamegh Parva, Canto 29.]

Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. [This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Ashwamegha Parva, Canto 29.]

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

²The story of Baali, the king of the Kishkindha and of the monkey race, and how Ravana suffered humiliation at his hand is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto no. 34; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.

The story in brief is this: Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Baali, had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. Mandodari refers to that incident when Ravana had tried his best to escape from Baali but could not do so, and remained clamped and squeezed under his armpit for a long time.]

खायउँ फल प्रभु लागी भूँखा । कपि सुभाव तें तोरेउँ रूखा ॥ ३ ॥
 सब कें देह परम प्रिय स्वामी । मारहिं मोहि कुमारग गामी ॥ ४ ॥
 जिन्ह मोहि मारा ते मैं मारे । तेहि पर बाँधेउँ तनयँ तुम्हारे ॥ ५ ॥
 मोहि न कछु बाँधे कइ लाजा । कीन्ह चहउँ निज प्रभु कर काजा ॥ ६ ॥

khāya'uṁ phala prabhu lāgī bhūṁkhā. kapi subhāva tēm tōrē'uṁ rūkhā. 3.
 saba kēm dēha parama priya svāmī. mārahim mōhi kumāraga gāmī. 4.
 jinha mōhi mārā tē mairm mārē. tēhi para bāṁdhē'uṁ tanayaṁ tumhārē. 5.
 mōhi na kachu bāṁdhē ka'i lājā. kīnha caha'uṁ nija prabhu kara kājā. 6.

{Hanuman now answers the third query of Ravana: “Why did he slay so many demon soldiers; what was their fault?”}

Lord¹, I was hungry and so partook of fruits, and as is the habit of our race of monkeys I broke the branches and fell the raw fruits. (3)

Oh Lord, everyone loves his body and no one wants any harm to come to it. But these sinful fellows who follow the wrong path (kumāraga gāmī) began attacking and hitting me (for such a trifling issue, not realizing that I was hungry and was breaking the trees and felling the fruits not out of any bad intentions but because it is my wont as a monkey to do so). (4)

I hit back only those who attacked me (and I did not hit anyone who desisted from hitting me). In spite of this, your son (Meghnad) has tied me (as if I was a criminal). (5)

But I am not ashamed of being captured or tied; my only aim is that I wish to do my Lord's work, and do it with diligence and honesty². (6)

[Note—¹Hanuman shows his diplomatic acumen here. He has already shown to Ravana as well as the rest of the demons how bold and brave he was, so now he plays the diplomatic card of politeness and respect that a messenger from a great king ought to show to another great king to whose court his lord has sent him with a commission. This single word “lord” shot down in one stroke the accusation of being haughty, arrogant and irreverent that Ravana had made on Hanuman.

²Hanuman did not divulge what his ‘Lord's work’ was. He left it to the common sense of Ravana and his ministers. He has already hinted to Ravana that he is a messenger of Lord Ram whose wife Sita has been abducted by him (Ravana). So if Ravana had even a rudimentary intelligence he would know what Hanuman's objective was in coming to Lanka, and what the work was that his Lord had assigned to him.

In spite of these hints and warnings, Ravana could not mend his ways as he was overcome with delusions that usually overcome someone who is on the threshold of death as he fails to see the truth, and voluntarily falls in the trap.]

बिनती करउँ जोरि कर रावन । सुनहु मान तजि मोर सिखावन ॥ ७ ॥
 देखहु तुम्ह निज कुलहि बिचारी । भ्रम तजि भजहु भगत भय हारी ॥ ८ ॥
 जाकें डर अति काल डेराई । जो सुर असुर चराचर खाई ॥ ९ ॥
 तासों बयरु कबहुँ नहिं कीजै । मोरे कहें जानकी दीजै ॥ १० ॥

binatī kara'um̐ jōri kara rāvana. sunahu māna taji mōra sikhāvana. 7.
 dēkhahu tumha nija kulahi bicārī. bhrama taji bhajahu bhagata bhaya hārī. 8.
 jākēm ḍara ati kāla ḍērā'ī. jō sura asura carācara khā'ī. 9.
 tāsōm bayaru kabahuṁ nahim̐ kijai. mōrē kahēm jānakī dījai. 10.

Oh Ravana, I pray to you with joined hands and beg you to pay heed to my advice. (7)

Look at your own exalted family (that traces its lineage to the great and illustrious sage Pulastya), and think over the matter in that perspective¹. You will do good to yourself by overcoming delusions, and instead of falling prey to haughtiness and false sense of pride and grandeur, you should worship the Lord who removes all fears of his devotees. (8)

He from whom even the Kaal—the god of death who devours the mighty gods, the demons as well as the rest of the creation consisting of animate creatures and inanimate things—is afraid [9], it is not at all wise to ever antagonize such a great and almighty Lord.

So therefore, pay heed to my words and listen to my advice by giving Janki (Sita) back to the Lord (Sri Ram). [By doing this you will safeguard yourself from all danger and forestall all chances of ruin and destruction that otherwise stare you in your face if you defy my advice. So be wise and prudent in this matter while there is still time, and avoid being rash as it will be to your own peril.] [9] (8-9)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23 herein below where the same idea is reiterated by Hanuman.]

दो०. प्रनतपाल रघुनायक करुना सिंधु खरारि ।
 गाँ सरन प्रभु राखिहैं तव अपराध बिसारि ॥ २२ ॥
 dōhā.

pranatapāla raghunāyaka karunā sindhu kharāri.
 ga'eṁ sarana prabhu rākhihaiṁ tava aparādha bisāri. 22.

The Lord of the Raghus (“raghunāyaka”; Lord Ram), who though had slayed the demon Khar (kharāri), is nevertheless like an ocean of compassion, mercy and kindness (karunā sindhu), for he protects and sustains all those who come with humility to submit themselves before him (pranatapāla)¹.

If you go to seek shelter in his feet and submit yourself before him, then the Lord will certainly oblige you, and forgive all your mistakes and offences². (Doha no. 22)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had slayed the demon Khar because he came to fight with him; had he come to seek the Lord's mercy and blessings it sure that his wishes would have been granted. But killing of Khar does not mean that the Lord is merciless and cruel; the fact is that he is like an 'ocean' of mercy, grace, compassion, benevolence and kindness. To wit, just like an ocean has no dearth of water, Lord Ram too does not lack in these great virtues.

Here, Hanuman has subtly warned Ravana what fate he faces if he chooses to confront Lord Ram by reminding him of Khar. Khar, Dushan and Trishira were killed in the battle with Lord Ram, and this event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

²Similar advice was given to Ravana on many occasions, but as 'death' had already cast its dark long shadow on him, he paid no attention to these pleadings.

First it was his wife Mandodari who tried her best to make Ravana see reason on different occasions—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (d) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Then it was his brother Vibhishan who also tried to advice Ravana to return Sita and avoid a confrontation with Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 39; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 40.

The third instance is when Malyawanta, an old demon who was very wise and was Ravana's minister, endorsed Vibhishan's view, but he was sternly rebuked by Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49.

Once again, in the fourth instance, Kumbhakaran, Ravana's other brother, also told him that he had committed a grave error by picking up a fight with Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 63.]

चौ०. राम चरन पंकज उर धरहू । लंका अचल राजु तुम्ह करहू ॥ १ ॥

रिषि पुलस्ति जसु बिमल मयंका । तेहि ससि महुँ जनि होहु कलंका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma carana paṅkaja ura dharahū. laṅkā acala rāju tumha karahū. 1.

riṣi pulasti jasu bimala mayaṅkā. tēhi sasi mahūṁ jani hōhu kalaṅkā. 2.

[Hanuman tried to convince Ravana to abandon animosity with Lord Ram and act wisely. He used many arguments in order to persuade Ravana to become sensible and mend his way while still there was time. So Hanuman advised Ravana as follows—]

Enshrine the holy feet of Lord Ram in your heart¹ and rule over the kingdom of Lanka without any obstacle for eternity.

[To wit, by submitting yourself before Lord Ram you will obtain his grace and protection, and once that is done, you will have no fear from any quarter. No one, whoever he may be or how mighty and powerful he might be, no one will ever dare to disturb you henceforth when it is known that you are being protected by Lord Ram, as the Lord is the Supreme Lord and Protector of this creation, and everyone, from the smallest to the mightiest, from the humblest of creatures to the greatest of gods, is under his jurisdiction. So once you are blessed by the almighty Lord, the only Supreme Emperor and Authority in this creation, no other authority or power will ever disturb you and try to snatch the kingdom from you. You would therefore rule over Lanka perpetually without worry and disturbance.] (1)

The fame and reputation of the illustrious sage Pulastya² is like a moon shining brilliantly with all its glorious radiance. Do not become a dark spot on the surface of this moon!

[Remember that you are a descendant of the great sage Pulastya. You must not do anything that would put to shame this exalted sage. You have a noble lineage and a great heritage to keep; so be mindful of it. Don't act rashly and irresponsibly for things that would surely lead to your ruin and cast a shadow of ignominy and ill-fame on your family.] (2)

[Note—¹Hanuman has already told Ravana that Lord Ram is none but the Supreme Being himself in a human form—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 21 herein above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 32 herein above where the same idea is expressed by Hanuman.]

राम नाम बिनु गिरा न सोहा । देखु बिचारि त्यागि मद मोहा ॥ ३ ॥
बसन हीन नहिं सोह सुरारी । सब भूषन भूषित बर नारी ॥ ४ ॥
राम बिमुख संपति प्रभुताई । जाइ रही पाई बिनु पाई ॥ ५ ॥

rāma nāma binu girā na sōhā. dēkhu bicāri tyāgi mada mōhā. 3.
basana hīna nahir̥ sōha surārī. saba bhūṣana bhūṣita bara nārī. 4.
rāma bimukha sampati prabhutā'ī. jā'i rahī pā'ī binu pā'ī. 5.

Without the holy name of 'Ram', one's speech and voice is never purified¹. Abandon ego and arrogance, and get rid of all delusions so that you can think properly, wisely and intelligently. (3)

Oh the enemy of gods (surārī; i.e. Ravana)! Even if a woman is richly adorned by all the wonderful ornaments one can think of, but if she does not wear her essential clothes and remains naked, then she does not deserve any praise; she looks dishonourable and unworthy of the ornaments. (4)

Similarly, for a person who is opposed to Lord Ram, all the wealth, prosperity, fame and good virtues that he possesses or would possess in future, are as good as his not having them at all². (5)

[Note—¹The name of the Lord, i.e. the word ‘rāma’, is regarded as a great ‘Tarak Mantra’, a special spiritual formula that grants liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of the creature. This Mantra grants eternal beatitude, felicity and bliss to the creature. Its glory, importance and significance are expounded in the Upanishads, such as the Ram Tapini Upanishad and the Ram Rahasya Upanishad. No other Mantra other than the holy and the divine name of Lord Ram is honoured by the singular title of being a ‘Tarak Mantra’.

Hanuman means that if a creature does not pronounce the name of Lord Ram, i.e. “rāma”, then he will not be able to purify his tongue no matter which other Mantra he pronounces. To wit, the divine name of Lord Ram is so holy and exalted that is it like an Emperor of all Mantras. The faculty of speech and its manifested form as the voice of a creature acquires its glory and importance only when one pronounces the holy name of Lord Ram at least once with his tongue. Otherwise, one’s tongue is merely a mass of muscles; one’s voice is nothing better than the barking of a mad dog; and the faculty of speech feels dishonoured and insulted and disabled if the holy and purifying name of Lord Ram is not a part of its lexicon.

²Just like the case of a woman who does not get any respect by merely decorating herself by the choicest of jewelry and the costliest of ornaments if she does not wear proper clothes, for remaining naked is a vile thing for a self-respecting, dignified, honourable and chaste woman, being opposed to Lord Ram does not make a person honourable and worthy of respect even though he may have or is entitled to great fortunes, qualities and titles.]

सजल मूल जिन्ह सरितन्ह नाहीं । बरषि गएँ पुनि तबहिं सुखाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनु दसकंठ कहउँ पन रोपी । बिमुख राम त्राता नहिं कोपी ॥ ७ ॥
 संकर सहस बिष्नु अज तोही । सकहिं न राखि राम कर द्रोही ॥ ८ ॥

sajala mūla jinha saritanha nāhīm. baraṣi ga'eṁ puni tabahīm sukhāhīm. 6.
 sunu dasakaṇṭha kaha'uṁ pana rōpī. bimukha rāma trātā nahīm kōpī. 7.
 saṅkara sahasa biṣṇu aja tōhī. sakahīm na rākhi rāma kara drōhī. 8.

Rivers that do not have a perennial source of water (such as a glacier) flow only while it rains, but they soon dry up when the rainy season passes away¹. (6)

Listen Ravana, the one with ten necks (“dasakaṇṭha”, and therefore ‘the one with ten heads’)! I tell you firmly under oath that no one can ever save anyone or give protection to him who is opposed to Lord Ram. [So be ware!] (7)

Even Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma in their thousands would not be able to protect you or afford to give shelter to you (if you are against Lord Ram).² (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman tells Ravana that all his powers, glory and majesty would remain temporary and transient, as they all depend upon the good effects of the severe Tapa

(penance and austerity) that he had done, and are therefore liable to wear off by time, which would necessitate his doing fresh Tapa to retain them. But if he takes shelter of Lord Ram and gets the Lord's blessings, these virtues would become permanent with him; he will no longer have to fear their loss, and neither would he have to appease Brahma, the creator, or Shiva, the concluder of this creation, in order to retain his authority and eminence.

It ought to be remembered here that Ravana had done severe Tapa in his early life in order to please Brahma and Shiva, and all the powers and strength and eminence that he had acquired were due to their granting of boons to him. This is what Hanuman alludes to here; he says that by the single act of pleasing Lord Ram, Ravana can achieve all that he desires without having to undertake the trouble associated with Tapa etc., and such achievements would be permanent too.

²To wit, thousands of Lord Shivas, Vishnus and Brahmas, i.e. anyone in creation, no matter how powerful and authoritative he may be, cannot protect him who is inimical to Lord Ram. Lord Ram protects his Bhakta (i.e. the Lord's sincere and true devotee) so diligently that no harm would ever come to him. Not even thousands of the creators known as Lord Brahma or the concluder of creation known as Lord Shiva can either harm Lord Ram's devotee or give support to anyone who is opposed to such a devotee. This warning has been given by Hanuman to the demon king Ravana.]

दो०. मोहमूल बहु सूल प्रद त्यागहु तम अभिमान ।

भजहु राम रघुनायक कृपा सिंधु भगवान ॥ २३ ॥

dōhā.

mōhamūla bahu sūla prada tyāgahu tama abhimāna.

bhajahu rāma raghunāyaka kṛpā sindhu bhagavāna. 23.

Abandon 'abhimāna' (false pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness) as it is a dark and evil trait that is the root cause of all delusions and mischief that dog a creature, and it ruins his wisdom and rationale thinking.

Instead of harbouring 'Abhiman', you will do good to your own self by worshipping Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus, and having devotion for him, as he is the all-merciful Lord, and an ocean of compassion, kindness, grace and benevolence.¹ (Doha no. 23)

[Note—¹Hanuman hints to Ravana that if he could offer his worship to Lords Brahma and Shiva by subjecting himself to extreme hardship as part of the Tapa that he did to please them, why can't he attain the same, and even a better objective by worshipping Lord Ram as this needs no great effort or any strenuous exercise. Simple devotion and surrender to the Lord is all that is required.]

चौ०. जदपि कही कपि अति हित बानी । भगति बिबेक बिरति नय सानी ॥ १ ॥

बोला बिहसि महा अभिमानी । मिला हमहि कपि गुर बड़ ग्यानी ॥ २ ॥

मृत्यु निकट आई खल तोही । लागेसि अधम सिखावन मोही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jadapi kahī kapi ati hita bānī. bhagati bibēka birati naya sānī. 1.
 bōlā bihasi mahā abhimānī. milā hamahi kapi gura barā gyānī. 2.
 mṛtyu nikāṭa āī khala tōhī. lāgēsī adhama sikhāvana mōhī. 3.

Although the Kapi (Hanuman) had said words that were highly beneficial for Ravana and were meant for his own good and welfare of the demon race, as they were imbued with the virtues of devotion, wisdom, dispassion, probity and propriety [1], ---

--- Yet Ravana, who was haughty and arrogant, would not listen to them. He laughed haughtily, derisively, and retorted sarcastically, ‘Ah, we have met a Kapi who is a very wise teacher, and he seems to be an expert in all sorts of knowledge [2]! (1-2)

[Then turning towards Hanuman, Ravana strongly rebuked him, saying angrily—] Oh you wicked and mischievous fellow (khala)! It seems that ‘death’ has come near you. Though you are fallen creature (adhama), still you have the temerity to preach me.

[To wit, you are merely a little monkey of no consequence, a humble messenger of a prince and tied up in ropes, but you have a big mouth and speak of wisdom and propriety as if you were a wise man, a great and learned professor! You are loud-mouthed and pretentiously upright, trying to behave as if you were my best of friends, teaching me what is good for me, as if I was unaware of my own well-being. Woe to you; mind your tongue, you fool!]’ (3)

उलटा होइहि कह हनुमाना । मतिभ्रम तोर प्रगट मैं जाना ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनि कपि बचन बहुत खिसिआना । बेगि न हरहु मूढ़ कर प्राना ॥ ५ ॥

ulatā hō'ihī kaha hanumānā. matibhrama tōra pragaṭa mair̥ jānā. 4.
 suni kapi bacana bahuta khisi'ānā. bēgi na harahu mūṛha kara prānā. 5.

Hanuman shot back, saying, ‘It will be the other way round. [To wit, it is you who is near ‘death’, instead of me.] It is now clear that your wisdom is clouded by delusions (so much so that you have forfeited any chance of redemption and recovery).

[Well then, so be it. Henceforth you alone are to be blamed for whatever misfortune befalls you and your clan in particular, and the demon race in general. When one is in the throes of death he is so overcome with delusions that no power in this world is able to pull him out of the dark pit into which he is sliding irrecoverably.]’ (4)

Hearing the words of the Kapi (Hanuman), Ravana was extremely peeved; he was miffed and exasperated by Hanuman’s retort, becoming excessively angry. He scowled and immediately ordered his demons, ‘Why don’t anyone of you sniff away the life out of this monkey this instant? [What are you waiting for? Why can’t anyone of you settle the score and teach this wretch the lesson regarding death that he so vociferously preaches me?]’ (5)

सुनत निसाचर मारन धाए । सचिवन्ह सहित बिभीषनु आए ॥ ६ ॥
 नाइ सीस करि बिनय बहूता । नीति बिरोध न मारिअ दूता ॥ ७ ॥

आन दंड कछु करिअ गोसाँई । सबहीं कहा मंत्र भल भाई ॥ ८ ॥
 सुनत बिहसि बोला दसकंधर । अंग भंग करि पठइअ बंदर ॥ ९ ॥

sunata nisācara mārana dhā'ē. sacivanha sahita bibhīṣanu ā'ē. 6.
 nā'i sīsa kari binaya bahūtā. nīti birōdha na māri'a dūtā. 7.
 āna daṇḍa kachu kari'a gōsā'ī. sabahīm kahā mantra bhala bhā'ī. 8.
 sunata bihasi bōlā dasakandhara. aṅga bhaṅga kari paṭha'i'a bandara. 9.

Hearing the commands of Ravana, the assembled demons rushed to kill Hanuman. At that moment Vibhishan (Ravana's younger brother whom Hanuman had first met when he entered Lanka) arrived with ministers¹. (6)

He (Vibhishan) bowed his head most respectfully before Ravana, and politely pleaded with him, 'Oh Lord, please do not kill a messenger as it is against established traditions and violates the norms regarding how a messenger of someone should be treated.

[To wit, if you allow this messenger to be killed, especially when it is done upon your express orders, it would put you and our family to great shame, and it would cause an irreparable damage to your great reputation. You are a great king, and great kings ought to act like one; they should be very mindful of their glorious name and their reputation, and never behave like street ruffians who cut throats for trifles of things. Oh lord, a messenger is merely an agent for the master who has sent him; he is protected by the law of immunity from personal harm that is granted to all messengers. If you have some score to be settled, then it should be settled with his master, and not him who is merely doing his duty faithfully and loyally. As a great king, even you send messengers, and I am sure you expect your messenger to be treated with similar immunity from personal harm; if the person to whom your messenger carries your words does not agree with you, you have the full right to go and defeat him in a battle. This line of action is sure to give you great name and fame. I am your beloved brother, and so I deem it my duty to advise you.] (7)

So, instead of killing him it is advisable to give him some other kind of punishment.²

Hearing this advice (of Vibhishan), all those who were present there expressed their unanimous approval of it. Everyone said: 'Yes brothers, this is a good advice.'³ (8)

When Ravana heard of this unanimous decision, he smiled and said, 'Well, if you all are of this opinion, then let some part of this monkey's body be mutilated and he be sent back (to his master).'⁴ (9)

[Note—¹It is clear here that some of the ministers of the royal court of Ravana were on the side of Vibhishan. When the news of Hanuman's arrival and his destruction of the royal garden, the killing of the demon warriors led by Akshayakumar, which was followed by another round of bloody fray with Meghnad in which another detachment of demon troops were slayed, and his subsequent capture and parading through the streets of Lanka as he was being taken to the court of Ravana, had spread like wild-fire in the city, some of the wiser ministers had realized the gravity of the situation even as they had a premonition of the impending catastrophe; so they rushed to

Vibhishan to have an urgent conference with him to find out a way to diffuse the situation.

In the meanwhile there was an acrimonious exchange of sharp words between Ravana and Hanuman as we have read herein above. But just at the moment when the demons were instigated by their angry king, Ravana, to take revenge upon Hanuman, and they dashed forward to pounce upon him all at once, Vibhishan and his accompanying ministers made an entry.

²It ought to be noted here that Vibhishan did not waste any time in observing court formalities, such as to being seated first as is the norm for members of the royal family, and then seeking permission from the king to speak before saying what he wished to say, and neither did any of the ministers who accompanied him follow this routine. To wit, all remained standing, and Vibhishan made his submission as soon as he entered the royal court. This is because time was precious, as at the moment Vibhishan entered the hall he observed that a troop of excited demons were already on their way to kill Hanuman.

It is also to be noted here that when Vibhishan began to speak, the demons who had lunged to attack Hanuman halted on their paths, for no matter that they had dashed forward to please their king Ravana when he challenged any one of them to step forward and kill Hanuman, and thereby gain his favour, and hoping to have some reward for showing obedience, they nevertheless wished that some excuse be found by which they are spared the fearful prospect of direct confrontation with Hanuman, for the way he had mercilessly beaten and squashed the demon soldiers to pulp in the Ashok garden was well known by now, and the terror that this had struck in the hearts of the demons was so profound that internally no one wanted to face the same fate!

³Hence, when that much sought-after chance came by way of Vibhishan's advice, everyone seized it instantly, and there was a chorus of approval.

⁴Ravana was not a fool; he had quietly observed how all the demons had kept a safe distance from Hanuman. And when he had challenged them to come forward and kill Hanuman, there was some reluctance and demurring initially in the rank and file of his soldiery, but some of them finally stepped forward when they saw the fire of anger spewing from Ravana's eyes at their cowardice. They feared that Ravana, being of a capricious mind, may suddenly decide to kill all the coward demons because they seemed to be scared to come forward to hit Hanuman. This fear, along with a desire to please Ravana with the hope of some reward and title, motivated the few demons who actually gathered courage to rush at Hanuman.

Ravana had observed all this. So when the assembly unanimously endorsed Vibhishan's advice not to kill Hanuman, Ravana smiled as he concluded that this endorsement was not out of some great propriety which the demons wished to observe, but a way out of their predicament. It was a face-saving formula for everyone.

Ravana was not so easily to be check-mated; he was not accustomed to hearing lectures; so therefore he became excessively wrathful internally as this was the first time in his life that someone (i.e. Hanuman and Vibhishan) had given him such a lecture. But since he faced the entire court, and a multitude of excited burghers and soldiers who had collected there to witness the spectacle, he decided to act more prudently and observe restraint on his emotions. This is the reason why he "smiled", though of course sarcastically.

He had ordered that Hanuman be mutilated, which means that those who thought themselves to be lucky they were spared the prospect of going near Hanuman to kill him would now have to do so in order to inflict some injury to his body! Kings are ruthless when it comes to carrying out their orders; so Ravana devised another device to push his soldiers to confront and punish Hanuman for the disrespect the latter had shown to him.

He also wished to enforce his orders of 'killing Hanuman', which was interrupted by Vibhishan's coming. This would be clear in the following Doha no. 24, which also explains why he "smiled".]

दो०. कपि कें ममता पूँछ पर सबहि कहउँ समुझाइ ।
तेल बोरि पट बाँधि पुनि पावक देहु लगाइ ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

kapi kēm mamatā pūñcha para sabahi kaha'um samujhā'i.
tēla bōri paṭa bāñdhi puni pāvaka dēhu lagā'i. 24.

[Ravana continued—] Let me tell you all; a monkey loves his tail very much. So you must dip cloth in oil, wrap it around his tail, and set it on fire.¹ (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹Ravana had ordered the demons to mutilate Hanuman; a while ago he had ordered that they should kill him. So he thought of a wise plan which would bridge the gap between his first order of slaying Hanuman, and his second one that said he should be mutilated.

How will this mutilation be carried out? Those who have any experience of attending courts of kings, especially autocrat kings, they will know that it is the king who orders, and it is he who decides how this order is to be executed. Ministers and others more often than not prefer to wait for the king's decision rather than endeavouring to take any initiative on how the order of the king is to be implemented in practice unless and until the king expressly asks them for their advice.

Taking advantage of his privileged position, Ravana decided how his order of mutilation ought to be carried out; he ordered that Hanuman's tail should be wrapped in cloth dipped in oil, and then set on fire! Well, if any part of a captive person is wrapped in cloth soaked in oil and alighted, will he not be roasted alive?

This device seemed to satisfy Ravana's wish to kill Hanuman: if he cannot be directly beheaded then let him be roasted alive!!

There is however another reason also why Ravana gave this ridiculous order. We have already read that Hanuman had told him that his wisdom and common-sense have come under the cloud of delusions as death has cast its long shadow on him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

Thus, Ravana forgot for a moment that by putting Hanuman's tail on fire he would be burnt alive, roasted alive—this is clear in the next verse herein below wherein he says "let this stupid monkey go back to his master without his tail, and then bring him here". {Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 24.}

This means that Ravana thought that Hanuman's tail alone would be burnt, and he would live to go back to Lord Ram! It is such an incredulous proposition from

the practical point of view that it clearly proves that Ravana was truly deluded, and driven by Providence, was under the shadow of an impending disaster.

And as we shall soon read below that the dumb demons were only too eager to please Ravana; either they were so utterly foolish that they did not realize that by setting Hanuman's tail afire he would be burnt to death, or they were so terrified of incurring Ravana's wrath if they questioned his wisdom of doing so, that they all agreed cheerfully to do it. And what was the consequence? The magnificent city of Lanka, gilded and decked up like paradise, was burnt and reduced to a dark smouldering hulk.]

चौ०. पूँछहीन बानर तहँ जाइहि । तब सठ निज नाथहि लइ आइहि ॥ १ ॥

जिन्ह कै कीन्हिसि बहुत बड़ाई । देखउँ मैं तिन्ह कै प्रभुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pūm̐chahīna bānara tahaṁ jā'ihī. taba saṭha nija nāthahi la'i ā'ihī. 1.
jinha kai kīnhisi bahuta baṛā'ī. dēkha'um̐ mair̐m tinha kai prabhutā'ī. 2.

[Ravana was highly sarcastic when he observed in a taunting voice—] Let this stupid monkey go back without his tail, and then let him bring his Lord here! (1)

Let me see how great and powerful His Majesty the Lord is of whom he has sung great laurels and upon whom he has heaped so many praises.^{'1} (2)

[Note—¹In his haughtiness and a false sense of invincibility, Ravana shot down any chance of reconciliation. By sending back the messenger of a king with a part of his body mutilated is a clear sign of rebuke of that king, because the messenger, though being merely a humble emissary, is nevertheless a representative of the majesty of the king who had sent him, and any insult to this messenger is an insult of the person of that king, and hence it is an open challenge for war.

Had Ravana not gone to such an extreme limit of rashness, and had acted with a little more prudence, had he not provoked the demons to set Hanuman's tail on fire by the method he himself devised, it is quite certain that the doomed fate of Lanka, its burning, would have been avoided. But when the God of Death and Providence itself decide otherwise, and join hands to bring about the downfall of a creature, then his wisdom, rational thinking and discretion go on a tailspin, nose-diving him to his own destruction and end.]

बचन सुनत कपि मन मुसुकाना । भइ सहाय सारद मैं जाना ॥ ३ ॥

जातुधान सुनि रावन बचना । लागे रचैं मूढ़ सोइ रचना ॥ ४ ॥

रहा न नगर बसन घृत तेला । बाढ़ी पूँछ कीन्ह कपि खेला ॥ ५ ॥

bacana sunata kapi mana musukānā. bha'i sahāya sārada mair̐m jānā. 3.
jātudhāna suni rāvana bacanā. lāgē racair̐m mūr̐ha sō'i racanā. 4.
rahā na nagara basana ghr̐ta tēlā. bār̐hī pūm̐cha kīnha kapi khēlā. 5.

When the Kapi (Hanuman) heard these words (of Ravana), he smiled and said to himself, ‘There, I am certain that the deity of speech, known as Saraswati (*sārada*), is helping me (to fulfill my wishes).¹’ (3)

On hearing the commands of Ravana, the dumb-witted demons did as he had ordered them to do (without thinking of its consequence)². (4)

All the cloth, clarified butter and oil that were available in Lanka were brought in even as the Kapi (Hanuman) continued to elongate his tail so that it always exceeded the length of cloth wrapped around it, and which was then soaked in oil and butter.

A time came when no more cloth, oil or butter was left in the city as all the stock available in its homes and shops was exhausted in this enterprise because the Kapi had played a trick upon these demons by continuing to lengthen his tail so much so that it always exceeded the supply of clothes used to cover it, and the combustible material poured over this wrapping.³ (5)

[Note—¹Hanuman had, from the very beginning, but specially after he saw how Sita was being treated in Lanka, wanted to avenge and exact a severe retribution from the demons. Had Ravana acted like a noble king ought to have acted and treated the messenger of his adversary king, and in the way Vibhishan expected him to behave, Hanuman would not have had a chance to vent his suppressed anger on the demons, for then he would be obliged to adhere to diplomatic courtesies and follow norms of behaviour that have been traditionally ordained for messengers of great kings; he would have had to be mindful of the reputation of his own Lord Ram so as not to do anything that was rash and improper.

But the ground situation had drastically changed; Ravana had ordered that his tail be set alight by wrapping it with cloth soaked in oil. So Hanuman thanked Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and speech, for maneuvering things to his favour, because she had prevailed upon Ravana’s mind and tweaked it such that he said things that gave Hanuman an excuse to fulfill his own wishes—to severely punish the demons in such a way that they will remember it for countless generations. We shall shortly read what havoc Hanuman unleashed on Lanka.

Hanuman was neither intimidated nor felt threatened by this absolutely absurd and madly incredulous order of Ravana. On the one hand Ravana had decided to spare Hanuman’s life when he stopped his soldiers from attacking him on the request of Vibhishan, and then he orders his soldiers to burn Hanuman’s tail! Didn’t Ravana understand that if any part of a person’s body is wrapped in cloth and soaked in oil and then set on fire, it is impossible that he would survive the blaze; he would be roasted alive instead. Even a mad man would know it; so had Ravana taken complete leave of all his senses, or was it that the Lord God was helping Hanuman to carry out his mission to its natural end by creating circumstances that would make it easy for him to wreak vengeance upon the demon race?

Hanuman decided that surely it was the latter case: goddess Saraswati, the deity of speech and wisdom, has tweaked Ravana’s mind and intellect in such a way that he has begun to hallucinate, seeing things that don’t exist, and not seeing things that do exist; for Ravana did not see the impending disaster and the doom knocking at his door, but saw only the pleasure and enjoyment that would come to him in the grand spectacle of Hanuman’s tail burning, and the latter yelling and jumping and running helter-skelter in terror!

²The demons followed Ravana's instructions blindly, either because they were too scared of him to question the rationale of his orders and warn him of its severe consequences, or because they were utterly stupid as not to realize that they are about to light a fuse attached to the keg of gunpowder, or perhaps they were like a child who is more interested in watching and participating in a dangerous spectacle than of thinking of how it would adversely impact him.

Whatever be the reason, but one thing is clear: that the outcome of this dangerous enterprise—of first making a thick wick of clothes by wrapping reams after reams of cloth around the tail of Hanuman, soaking it in combustible oil, then taking him around the city streets so that every household enthusiastically added and wrapped more cloth to the already thick and elongated wick, pour more oil to it so that the already drenched thick coil of cloth could soak no more and from which oil was liberally dripping and spreading all around the ground, and then setting fire to this prodigiously long fuse soaked with inflammable liquid was no less than lighting the fuse of a peg attached to a huge keg of gunpowder—was beyond the ken of both the demon citizens as well as their king, Ravana. They did not foresee that the fire that would ensue would be a huge inferno like the kind of which no one had seen before, and which was bound to engulf the entire city in a very short span of time because all its streets and ground were soaked in oil which would catch fire instantaneously.

This is because these demons, led by their king Ravana, seemed to have been gripped by the God of Death in his vicious embrace, and by Providence that was ill-humoured towards them, as a result of which their wisdom, simple common sense and judgment were obscured in a thick cloud of delusions that made them arrogant, haughty, and develop a false sense of invincibility that made them rash and imprudent.

³The demons brought all cloth available in the city, in its homes and shops, to wrap Hanuman's tail, but how hard they tried the cloth always fell short in length vis-à-vis the tail. It was obviously something very unusual, but the blockheaded demons, who were in the throes of death and destruction, could not understand what it meant. They went on wrapping the tail of Hanuman with reams and reams of cloth, and then emptying cans and drums of combustible liquid such as oil and butter over these wrappings. As the tail elongated, more and more cloth was needed to cover it, and therefore more and more gallons of oil and butter were requisitioned to soak this cloth.

So a time came when there was no cloth or oil left in the city.]

कौतुक कहँ आए पुरबासी । मारहिं चरन करहिं बहु हाँसी ॥ ६ ॥
बाजहिं ढोल देहिं सब तारी । नगर फेरि पुनि पूँछ प्रजारी ॥ ७ ॥

kautuka kahaṁ ā'e purabāsī. mārahiṁ carana karahiṁ bahu hāṁsī. 6.
bājahim ḍhōla dēhim saba tāri. nagara phēri puni pūṁcha prajāri. 7.

The burghers of Lanka, both males and females, came in large hordes to witness the spectacle. They kicked Hanuman and laughed derisively. (6)

*As if some great carnival was taking place, they beat drums and clapped their hands. They took Hanuman on a round of the city, and then set fire to his tail.¹

[*This stanza can be interpreted in another way also as follows: “The jovial demons beat drums and clapped their hands even as Hanuman’s tail crept through the city streets like a slithering snake, and ultimately encircled the whole city. Then these doomed demons lit its end with a spark of fire.”] (7)

[Note—¹To wit, the demon burghers had a good time at having fun of their lives. They made a procession as done during carnivals and festivities, beating drums and clapping their hands in merriment as they followed Hanuman round the city, pushing and kicking him jokingly all the way.

Of course the long hose made of reams and reams of oil-soaked cloth used to wrap Hanuman’s tail was dragged behind him; and this also proved fatal for Lanka as the dripping oil from the cloth wetted the whole place, and as soon as the end of the cloth was set on fire, the whole place burst out in flames instantly.

It is not difficult to visualize what actually must have happened at that time. After initially wrapping Hanuman’s tail with some length of cloth that was brought in hastily to the court of Ravana and then soaked in oil, or was first wrapped around the tail and then oil was poured over it, Hanuman was ordered to be paraded on the streets of Lanka. A grand procession set forth from Ravana’s palace to go around the main avenues and neighbourhoods of the city; it was accompanied by musicians playing drums and other musical instruments; jesters and fun-seekers joined on the way, and the milling crowd thickened as the procession wound its way ahead. The scene was that of a street carnival. The demon householders ran out of their homes to join the fun, bringing with them their own contribution of cloth and oil which they enthusiastically added to the ever thickening and elongating coil of cloth dragging behind Hanuman. When it became too heavy and thick, some enterprising demons lifted it to carry it on forward, inviting others to add more cloth and oil as well as to help them lift and pull the thick wick forward. Of course there was no dearth of volunteers as everyone thought that more thicker and longer was the coil of cloth and the more properly soaked it became in oil, the grander would be spectacle and the fireworks that would follow when it was finally lit!

That was not all. The cheering crowd teased and jested at Hanuman; some pinched him, some poked at him, some pulled his hairs and arms, and some merely made faces at him. All the while Hanuman kept quiet, though he was seething with anger internally. He clenched his fists and grinded his teeth silently, muttering vehemently under his breath, “Wait a little longer you jesters; wait for some more time you rascals, for then it would be me who will have the last laugh. And don’t worry about the much-expected spectacle that you all are so eager to witness, for on my honour and faith I promise you the grandest of spectacles that this world has ever witnessed! Let me first finish my round of the city; let me first see how beautiful your city of glided buildings and fragrant gardens is; for once the fireworks start, I will no longer have the chance to see its bounty of beauty again, for it would be reduced to a dark smouldering hulk of burnt buildings and smoked out gardens ere I leave it to go back to join my companions on the other shore of the ocean.”

So this is how ‘all the cloth and oil in the city was exhausted’, for every home brought out its own stock of cloth and oil to add to Hanuman’s tail as he was paraded through the streets on the instructions of Ravana.

And this is also how the whole city was set ablaze so quickly, for as soon as the fire was lit, the oil that was spilled all over the city caught fire instantaneously and leapt up in an inferno. A strong breeze started, and this fanned the flames further.

Soon, the whole of the grand city of Lanka, that had put to shame the majesty of paradise, was like a gigantic fire-place, with leaping flames, hot wind howling, crackling timber, collapsing buildings, and dazzling sparks of fire flying everywhere—a sight straight out of doomsday. Whatever cloth and oil that still remained in the homes and shops caught fire in the intense heat, by the flying sparks and the burning debris falling on them, aiding in the blaze spreading. By-and-by, Lanka was completely burnt down to ashes.]

पावक जरत देखि हनुमंता । भयउ परम लघुरूप तुरंता ॥ ८ ॥

निबुकि चढ़ेउ कपि कनक अटारीं । भई सभित निसाचर नारीं ॥ ९ ॥

pāvaka jarata dēkhi hanumantā. bhaya'u parama laghurūpa turantā. 8.
nibuki caṛhē'u kapi kanaka aṭārīṁ. bha'īṁ sabhīta nisācara nārīṁ. 9.

As soon as Hanuman saw that the fire has been ignited, he immediately assumed a miniature form (like the one he had when he entered Lanka)¹. (8)

Slipping out of his bondage, he immediately sprang on the terraces and the attics of the gilded palaces (jumping from one terrace or attic to another in rapid succession).

This action of his created a flutter amongst the demon ladies who became sore affright². (9)

[Note—¹At the time of being captured by Meghand and being brought as a captive to the court of Ravana, Hanuman was in his normal form, but when he had entered Lanka he had assumed a very small form to avoid detection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.

So he assumed that small form once again to slip out easily from the clothes that had been tied to his tail when it was long and thick. The grip of the bondage became loose as soon as Hanuman reduced his physical size. The demons had not thought of this trick, and they were caught unawares.

The thick reams of oil-drenched cloth that spread through the streets of Lanka after Hanuman slipped out of it caught fire and set the whole city alight.

It ought to be noted that he had this magical ability to change the size of his body, for besides assuming a miniature form he had once also assumed a colossal form, like that of a huge mountain, before embarking on the mission—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 30. He does this again after freeing himself from the bondage as we shall read in Doha no. 25 herein below.

²While the male demons joined the revelry on the streets as Hanuman was paraded through Lanka, their ladies watched the spectacle from the terraces and attics of their gilded homes. So as soon as Hanuman freed himself from the wrappings of clothes, that had begun to send tongues of flames leaping high through the streets by now, and started jumping from one house to another, dragging burning cloth behind him, the demonesses watching the scene got terrified out of their wits. They screamed in horror and scrambled madly for cover, for this new terror had come so suddenly and unexpectedly to these poor ladies that they had no time to think.]

दो०. हरि प्रेरित तेहि अवसर चले मरुत उनचास ।
अट्टहास करि गर्जा कपि बढि लाग अकास ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

hari prērita tēhi avasara calē maruta unacāsa.
aṭṭahāsa kari garjā kapi baḍhi lāga akāsa. 25.

Driven (inspired and motivated) by the will of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; or by Providence), just at that time all the forty-nine forms of the wind¹ began blowing simultaneously².

The Kapi (Hanuman) laughed aloud contemptuously in a resounding tone even as he enlarged his body once again so much so that it seemed to touch the sky². (Doha no. 25)

[Note—¹According to the scriptures there are forty-nine types of wind, and each type is presided over by a god who is called ‘Marut’.

The 49 Maruts—They are the Wind-Gods mentioned in Rig Veda, 1/37-39 and 1/165/3, 5, 7, 9. They are regarded variously as — (i) sons of Indra and Vrishni (Rig Veda, 2/34/2), (ii) Sons of Rudra (Rig Veda, 2/33/1), (iii) similar to the Fire-God (Rig Veda, 6/66/2), and (vi) Indra God (Rig Veda, 1/165, 171). The Purans call them sons of sage Kashyap and Diti.

The *Atharva-shikha* Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that the Maruts were created along with the Moon God, the Mantras of the Atharva Veda, the Viraat Chanda and the Samvartak Agni. It is the fourth leg or Paad of Brahm and corresponds to the Ardha Matra of the half a syllable that follows the the third letter ‘M’ of the ethereal word OM representing Brahm.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2 dealing with the concept of OM says that the fourty nine 49 Maruts are the Ganas or attendants of the fourth syllable which is the Ardha Matra of OM.

(b) Wind God (Vayu or Anil)—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/2/1-3; 1/134. The ‘vital air or wind element’ was created from the Pran or the vital life-sustaining vitality of the creator Prajapati Brahma (Rig Veda, 10/90/13). He is regarded as the Atma of all the Gods (Shathpath Brahman, 9/1/2/38). He bestows immortality to the Gods and other exalted souls who are able to please and control him (Rig Veda, 10/186/3). He has the fastest speed amongst the Gods (Taiteriyā Sanhita, 3/8/7/1). He moves in an oblique line (and not straight) (Jaimini Brahman, 3/3/10).

²To wit, a severe storm arose, and it fanned the flames. In this context we must remember that Hanuman was the “son of the wind god”, and one of his many names is ‘Maruti’, i.e. the son of Marut. All the forty-nine Maruts are the same Wind God in different forms and playing different roles.

So when the Wind God’s own son was in action, it is very natural that his exalted and powerful father would help him in the enterprise, especially when this enterprise is in the service of the Gods themselves, in the service of Lord Ram who was none other than the Supreme Being in his form, and for the good of the entire creation in general because the demons had been tormenting all the creatures.

It is common observance that when a huge fire is lit, a strong breeze begins to blow. It is because hot air rises up, and the surrounding cooler air rushes in, or is sucked in by the vacuum thus created, to fill in the space; it is a scientific phenomenon.

So therefore, when the blaze started, and the stronger it grew, a strong breeze swept through the city of Lanka. This wind further fanned the flames, and the fire spread to even those areas where the oil-soaked cloth was not present.

The homes and palaces had wood as their basic framework on which gold was plated; the doors, windows, roofs and walls had wood all over them. So there was no problem for the blaze to spread, and the strong wind aided its progress. Even in modern times when wood is rarely used in buildings, a fire destroys huge buildings and may even spread to the surrounding neighbourhood if not controlled in time.]

चौ०. देह बिसाल परम हरुआई । मंदिर तें मंदिर चढ़ धाई ॥ १ ॥

जरड़ नगर भा लोग बिहाला । झपट लपट बहु कोटि कराला ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

dēha bisāla parama haru'ā'ī. mandira tēm mandira caṛha dhā'ī. 1.
jara'i nagara bhā lōga bihālā. jhapaṭa lapaṭa bahu kōṭi karālā. 2.

Hanuman assumed a huge form that was light and nimble (instead of being heavy and bulky as it would have impeded his movements) even as he jumped quickly and easily from one building to another. (1)

The whole city was burning; its citizens were exceedingly panicky and at their wit's end. Fierce tongues of flame were leaping ferociously in all the directions, everywhere, even as terrified citizens ran helter-skelter screaming in horror.¹ (2)

[Note—¹The scene of the 'Burning of Lanka' has been very vividly and wonderfully described in Tulsidas' book "Kavitawali". Refer: Kavitawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 3-25.]

तात मातु हा सुनिअ पुकारा । एहिं अवसर को हमहि उबारा ॥ ३ ॥

हम जो कहा यह कपि नहिं होई । बानर रूप धरें सुर कोई ॥ ४ ॥

साधु अवग्या कर फलु ऐसा । जरड़ नगर अनाथ कर जैसा ॥ ५ ॥

tāta mātu hā suni'a pukārā. ēhim avasara kō hamahi ubārā. 3.
hama jō kahā yaha kapi nahim hō'ī. bānara rūpa dharēm sura kō'ī. 4.
sādhu avagyā kara phalu aisā. jara'i nagara anātha kara jaisā. 5.

There was a mighty commotion in Lanka; the only sound that was heard everywhere was the frantic call of the panicky citizens who lamented and wailed, 'Oh my dear, oh my mother, who will save us now! (3)

What we had guessed that this fellow cannot be, and is not an ordinary monkey, turns out to be true, for verily he must be some great God in his form (who has come here to take revenge upon us)¹. (4)

Surely indeed, it is the result of insulting and disobeying pious people (sādhū avagyā), and a curse obtained thereby, that the city is burning like this².’ (5)

[Note—¹We have already read earlier that there were some demon warriors who had witnessed the mayhem in the Ashok garden when Hanuman killed large number of troops of demon soldiers and Ravana’s son Akshayakumar, and had even beaten back the mighty Meghnad before being captured, but who managed to escape death somehow to report the death and destruction to Ravana—it were these demons who had privately concluded that Hanuman was definitely no ordinary creature though they were afraid of punishment if they said this to Ravana or any of the senior demons. But nevertheless, they must have shared their feelings with their family members, albeit on condition of secrecy. So when the city was up in flames, they vented their feelings and shared their premonition publicly. But it was too late by now; the city was already ablaze.

²The citizens were referring to Vibhishan’s advice to Ravana to let-off Hanuman with a slight punishment because it is wrong to harm messengers. Vibhishan was amongst the few demons who were pious and devoted to Lord God; defying him has resulted in the burning of Lanka.

It would be clear shortly that Vibhishan’s home was spared from the inferno, and so was the garden where Sita stayed and was attended by Trijata, one other female demon who was god-fearing. These two places were spared because holy and pious souls abided in them.]

जारा नगरु निमिष एक माहीं । एक बिभीषन कर गृह नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
ता कर दूत अनल जेहिं सिरिजा । जरा न सो तेहि कारन गिरिजा ॥ ७ ॥
उलटि पलटि लंका सब जारी । कूदि परा पुनि सिंधु मझारी ॥ ८ ॥

jārā nagaru nimiṣa ēka māhīm. ēka bibhīṣana kara gr̥ha nāhīm. 6.
tā kara dūta anala jēhīm sirijā. jarā na sō tēhi kārana girijā. 7.
ulaṭi palaṭi laṅkā saba jāri. kūdi parā puni sindhu majhārī. 8.

The city (of Lanka) was burnt in a short time, in the twinkling of an eye. One home that was spared from the inferno was that of Vibhishan. (6)

And, oh Girija (Parvati; the consort of Lord Shiva)¹, Hanuman was the messenger of the Lord who had produced the ‘fire element’ itself (at the time of creation), and this is why he escaped from being burnt². (7)

He burnt the whole of Lanka, from one end to the other. After that, he jumped into the middle of the ocean (to douse the lingering fire that still smouldered on the remnant of cloth that stuck to his tail, as well as to cool and refresh himself). (8)

[Note—¹It ought to be remembered that this wonderful story is being narrated by Lord Shiva to his consort goddess Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 20 also.

²Lord Ram, who is the Supreme Being himself who created this world and its primary elements, such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth, ensured that Hanuman was given immunity from the harm that fire causes. Remember: When king Dasrath performed a fire sacrifice to beget sons, the Fire God had manifested himself and had given a sweet pudding to the king, asking him to let it be shared by his queens, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. Lord Ram was born of Kaushalya as a reward of her sharing a portion of this blessed pudding. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 189 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

To wit, Lord Ram had his own roots in the sacred Fire. So he knew the secrets of the fire element; he could harness the fire's dynamic powers. In effect, Lord Ram was privy to some mystical ways by which he could exercise control over the fire element and its presiding deity, the Fire God, who incidentally was favourably inclined to the Lord's wishes for three reasons: one is that the Lord was the fruit of the blessing of the Fire God himself as is evident in the way he was born; the second is that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is the Father of the Fire God himself; and the third is that Lord Ram is on a mission to fulfill the wishes of the Gods themselves who had prayed to Lord Vishnu to help them get rid of the menace of Ravana and the evil demons.

Lord Ram had employed his special relations with the Fire God by placing Sita in the latter's safe custody before Ravana abducted her shadow which she left behind. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 24.}

So here, Lord Ram asked the Fire God to afford his protection to Hanuman and spare him from being burnt in the fire that raged through Lanka.

There is one other obvious reason why Hanuman escaped being scorched. He ran ahead of the spreading blaze, jumping and skipping over buildings as the fire spread rapidly; he had already freed himself from the thick wick of cloth and oil that gave direction to the fire. Besides this, there was another fortunate coincidence: the wind blew in a direction that was opposite of the area of the city where the house of Vibhishan and the Ashok garden were located, so these two also escaped being burnt!]

दो०. पूँछ बुझाइ खोइ श्रम धरि लघु रूप बहोरि।
जनकसुता केँ आगेँ ठाढ़ भयउ कर जोरि ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

pūṁcha bujhā'i khō'i śrama dhari laghu rūpa bahōri.
janakasutā kēṁ āgēṁ ṭhāṛha bhaya'u kara jōri. 26.

After extinguishing the remnants of fire of his tail and refreshing himself (by dipping in the water of the ocean), Hanuman once again resumed his diminutive form and came to stand submissively with joined hands before Sita.¹ (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹It was time for departure, so Hanuman decided to meet Sita once again—to see how she had fared during the blaze, to say a final word of assurance to her, to ask her if she has any message for Lord Ram, and take her permission to go back.]

चौ०. मातु मोहि दीजे कछु चीन्हा । जैसैं रघुनायक मोहि दीन्हा ॥ १ ॥

चूड़ामनि उतारि तब दयऊ । हरष समेत पवनसुत लयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mātu mōhi dījē kachu cīnhā. jaisēm raghunāyaka mōhi dīnhā. 1.
cūrāmani utāri taba daya'ū. haraṣa samēta pavanasuta laya'ū. 2.

[Hanuman said to Sita—] ‘Mother, please be kind to give me some token such as the one which Lord Ram had given me when I had come here¹ (so that when I go back the Lord would be convinced that I have indeed met you).’ (1)

Sita immediately took off the ornament that she wore on her head, the diadem (cūrāmani)², and gave it to the son of the wind god (Hanuman), which the latter most gratefully accepted with immense joy. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had given his finger ring to Hanuman as a token to prove to Sita that he (Hanuman) was indeed the Lord’s messenger, and not an imposter. It was this ring that convinced Sita that Hanuman was truly a messenger who had been sent by the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 23; and Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 13.

²Though Sita had discarded all her royal ornaments at the time of accompanying Lord Ram to the forest as she was expected to be attired in a fashion that would be suitable for life in as a hermitress as she was to live in the forest with her hermit husband, Lord Ram, but nevertheless there were certain ornaments that she could rightly wear, and would not be required to discard, as she was a married woman who was accompanying her husband on his journey. One such ornament was the “Chudamani”, a jewel that is worn in the hair on the head by all married women.

Just as the ‘finger ring’ is a single most important jewel that honourable men wear, the ‘Chudamani’ is the single most important jewel for all honourable women. When a person is separated from someone whom he loves most dearly in life and a chance fortunately comes when he is able to send a token of his affection and love to that lost individual, he would definitely send a thing that is most valuable for him, such as the finger ring that Lord Ram had sent to Sita to express his deep emotion and remembrance of her. So Sita wished to reciprocate the same emotion by sending her Chudamani to Lord Ram as a gift or a token, because this jewel was the single most important piece of her basic attire as a married woman.

This exchange of gifts, the finger ring by Lord Ram and the chudamani by Sita, had an immense symbolic meaning: when a man gifts a finger ring to a woman he expresses his love for her and his commitment to be ever loyal to her; when the lady gives the jewel of her hair to a man she expresses her deep attachment to him and a desire to submit herself to him without any questions asked.

To wit, when Sita sent the jewel of her head to Lord Ram it was a strong and clear message to him that she has surrendered herself to the Lord, and it is his responsibility to take full care of her. Similarly, when Lord Ram sent his finger ring to Sita it was a clear and incontrovertible message to her that the Lord is fully committed to her and loves no other woman but her.

This exchange of token gifts, Lord Ram's finger ring and Sita's jewel, was a mutual pledge of loyalty between the two, a reiteration of trust and an expression of faith in each other.]

कहेहु तात अस मोर प्रनामा । सब प्रकार प्रभु पूरनकामा ॥ ३ ॥
 दीन दयाल बिरिदु संभारी । हरहु नाथ मम संकट भारी ॥ ४ ॥
 तात सक्रसुत कथा सुनाएहु । बान प्रताप प्रभुहि समुझाएहु ॥ ५ ॥
 मास दिवस महुँ नाथु न आवा । तौ पुनि मोहि जिअत नहिँ पावा ॥ ६ ॥

kahēhu tāta asa mōra pranāmā. saba prakāra prabhu pūranakāmā. 3.
 dīna dayāla biridu sambhārī. harahu nātha mama saṅkaṭa bhārī. 4.
 tāta sakrasuta kathā sunā'ēhu. bāna pratāpa prabhuhi samujhā'ēhu. 5.
 māsa divasa mahum̐ nāthu na āvā. tau puni mōhi ji'ata nahiṁ pāvā. 6.

[After giving her diadem to Hanuman, Sita told him the message she wished to be conveyed to Lord Ram. She said—] 'My dear son (tāta)! First convey my deep obeisance and tell that I bow my head, and then prey to the Lord on my behalf, saying "Oh Lord, you are the one who fulfills all wishes (of everyone)." (3)

Oh the merciful and gracious Lord! Remembering your reputation as someone who removes all distress and agony of those who suffer but have surrendered themselves to you, please be kind to exterminate my sorrows and miseries which are immense and have become intolerable for me." (4)

My dear son (tāta)! Then recounting the story related to the son of Indra (sakrasuta) to him (Lord Ram), remind him of the power and the glory of his arrows¹. (5)

If the Lord does not come within one month, then surely he will not find me alive². (6)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

To wit, Sita asks Hanuman to tell Lord Ram that he must recall how he had picked up a humble blade of grass and used it as an arrow to shoot at Jayant, the wicked son of Indra, who had disguised himself as a crow to prick her. When blood had oozed out from the wound, Lord Ram decided to punish him. Jayant had flown round the entire universe in order to find a place to hide, but the arrow pursued it everywhere relentlessly. No god or deity was ready to offer him refuge against Lord Ram's arrow. At last, sage Narad had advised him to go and surrender before the Lord, begging for forgiveness and mercy, for then the Lord will surely excuse him. So Jayant came and fell down before the Lord, and the Lord forgave him and spared his life. But since the Lord's arrow was infallible and could not go in vain, it was

obligatory that something must be hit with it. Hence, the arrow hit Jayant's eye and blinded it. For all times to come, Jayant became 'one-eyed', and since he had disguised himself as a crow, it is believed that all the crows were henceforth cursed to become 'crooked-eyed' or 'cock-eyed'.

Sita wished that this story be narrated to Lord Ram to remind him about his astounding potentials and stupendous abilities to motivate and inspire him, to instill confidence in him, and to lift his fighting spirit to its original form. In case he has become too depressed and has lost his willingness to fight Ravana, this story would remind him of his grand reputation and the mystical powers that he possessed that not even the gods of the universe could dare to offer protection to someone, in this case Jayant, who had offended the Lord. If the Lord did not spare even the son of Indra who is the 'king of gods', then what do Ravana count as he is merely a 'evil demon' who ought to be punished nevertheless for his sins and cruel nature, even if he had not abducted her.

²This is because Ravana had threatened to kill Sita after the expiry of one month—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

कहु कपि केहि बिधि राखौं प्राणा । तुम्हहू तात कहत अब जाना ॥ ७ ॥
तोहि देखि सीतलि भइ छाती । पुनि मो कहूँ सोइ दिनु सो राती ॥ ८ ॥

kahu kapi kēhi bidhi rākhaum prānā. tumhahū tāta kahata aba jānā. 7.
tōhi dēkhi sītali bha'i chātī. puni mō kahum sō'i dinu sō rātī. 8.

[Expressing her sense of loneliness and gloom, Sita said to Hanuman—] 'Tell me oh Kapi, how and by what means can I hold to my life for now you too say that you are going away. (7)

Since I first saw you my heart has found solace and comfort, and it feels cool after suffering from the intense heat of suffering. But how unlucky and unfortunate I am that I will have to face once again the same sort of day and night that I was compelled to face till your arrival.¹ (8)

[¹Once you go back, I will find myself all alone. While you were here I had felt very safe as I had a protector to protect me; but when you go away I will be left to my ill-fate, and things would be worse for me as these cruel demons will surely vent their anger at me. Till the time you were here I found some peace as these rascals desisted from tormenting me out of your fear; but with your going away they will turn the heat on me, and make life hell for me. Yes truly it was hell even before you came, but I had got some respite while you were here, and so this hell would be felt all the more striking by me when my suffering resume after you go away, even if by some remote good chance the demons decide to leave me alone for fear of severe retribution and backlash later on when you come back again and learn that they had tormented me. This thought fills me with gloom and dismay. But what can be done. I realize that you must be allowed to go, for otherwise how will the Lord get news of my sufferings, and how will the Lord come to free me. So I will bear with my sufferings for some more time.]

दो०. जनकसुतहि समुझाइ करि बहु बिधि धीरजु दीन्ह ।
चरन कमल सिरु नाइ कपि गवनु राम पहि कीन्ह ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

janakasutahi samujhā'i kari bahu bidhi dhīraju dīnha.
carana kamala siru nā'i kapi gavanu rāma pahim kīnha. 27.

Hanuman explained the situation to the daughter of Janak ("janakasutahi"; Sita)¹ and reassured her in various ways, asking her to have courage and patience.

Then he bowed his head before her lotus-like (holy) feet, and took leave of her to start on his journey back to Lord Ram. (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹Hanuman understood the mental state of Sita. He explained to her that it was crucial for him to go back to Lord Ram to inform him about her, and then soon come back with an army to free her from the clutches of her captors and punish them. Being emotional and getting upset would not serve any purpose, for if he stayed back to please her then the Lord would not know what has happened, and the precious time of one month would pass without any tangible action on the ground. She must understand its gravity and let him go, for it is better to suffer for some short time now than to regret later on.

And as far as the demons are concerned, she must feel secured as they won't feel inclined nor dare to worry her any longer, for they are by now so terrified by what he (Hanuman) had done to them that, first of all they would be busy nursing their wounds and taking stock of the destruction of Lanka, and secondly they would be so occupied with the fearful thoughts of the impending invasion by a formidable army consisting of countless soldiers who are the likes of Hanuman that they won't have any thought left for anything else!

So Hanuman most humbly said to Sita, "Mother, let me say adieu to thee for now. I shall be back in a short time, but at that time I will come to thee as a victor to boldly take thou back to Lord Ram, who will, by then, have exterminated all thine tormentors. A month's time is not a long time, and it will pass away soon. Meanwhile, have courage and faith, and trust me that thy sufferings are nearing their end. Don't lose thy coolness and patience that has been thine wonderful quality that has supported thee in thy moments of suffering. Mother, I repeat, for which I should please be excused, don't forsake hope, trust, equanimity, coolness and patience as they will stand thee in good stead. Adieu for now; I shall be back soon with Lord Ram!"

चौ०. चलत महाधुनि गर्जेसि भारी । गर्भ स्त्रवहिं सुनि निसिचर नारी ॥ १ ॥
नाघि सिंधु एहि पारहि आवा । सबद किलिकिला कपिन्ह सुनावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calata mahādhuni garjēsi bhārī. garbha sravahim suni nisicara nārī. 1.
nāghi sindhu ēhi pārahi āvā. sabada kilikilā kapinha sunāvā. 2.

At the time of his departure from Lanka, Hanuman roared thunderously, as a result of which the pregnant demon females had miscarriage.¹ (1)

He leapt across the ocean and landed jubilantly on this side of the shore, while making a shrill cry of joy and exhilaration (to indicate to his companions, who were eagerly waiting for his arrival, that he had good news for them).² (2)

[Note—¹Hanuman's thunderous roar was so chilling and ear-shattering that it made the female demons abort instantly out of shock. Meanwhile, the male demons were overcome with such terror and were so horrified by the prospects of a deadly war which was sure to exact a heavy toll on them that they forgot all about conjugal pleasures, as their attention was diverted to devising means to survive the war that was looming on the horizon. This effectively meant that one generation of demons was done away with in a jiffy!

Let us pause a while here and reflect on this subject of Hanuman crossing the ocean, or rather 'flying over it'. First of all the question is: can a creature, other than birds and insects and those who have wings, can actually fly in the sky, like the way Hanuman has said to have done? Well, to answer this vexed question, let us take another example. A man can swim in the water like a fish or any other aquatic animal only if he has acquired the necessary skill and have the knowledge of how to do it; not everyone can swim. Similarly, it is also possible to leave the earth and become air-borne if one has the necessary knowledge and skill. We have air planes and both manned and unmanned drones in modern times that do exactly this, and that too with a heavy load of passengers and luggage. So therefore there is no surprise at all that Hanuman could lift himself from the ground and be air-borne because he had this specialized knowledge and skill which enabled him to do so.

And in the entire kingdom of Kishkindha, Hanuman was the only one who had this special ability, most surely because he was the son of the wind god, and Hanuman's father must have taught and trained his son how to 'fly like the wind'. A father would naturally want that his son should acquire skills that are special to his family, and therefore it is quite natural that the wind god taught his son Hanuman the skills required to fly in the air. No other member of the kingdom of Kishkindha had this unique ability. It is for this reason that Lord Ram had selected him to carry his finger-ring and the message for Sita at the time the group of messengers were getting ready for departure from Kishkindha, for the Lord clearly was aware that one would have to cross the barrier of the ocean if he was to find Sita at all as he had already known that she was taken away by Ravana who lived in the island of Lanka in the middle of the ocean, and that Hanuman alone could do so.

This ability of Hanuman to 'fly in the air' came in handy during the war itself; when Laxman was wounded in the battle-field and the need arose to bring some medicine man who would advise some herbs that could revive Laxman, Hanuman was assigned these twin jobs—first to bring a doctor, and then go and bring the herb prescribed by him. When the medicine man prescribed the necessary herbs that could only be found in the Himalayan Mountains in the north of mainland India, it was Hanuman once again who was selected for this job, as he alone could fly swiftly to cover this huge distance and bring the herb within the prescribed time. We shall read about it in due course when we read the details of the epic war and this episode. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

When Hanuman had entered Lanka he came in quietly, but when he left it he roared thunderously like a victor whose mission was a resounding success. He roared to warn the demons that he is challenging them to stop him if they can, and to be wary of ever disturbing Sita because if he got any wind that they had mistreated her then all hell would break loose upon them, and he would roast them alive.

But what does his entering Lanka ‘silently’ but departing with a ‘thunderous roar’ indicate? Well, when he was on his way to Lanka he had done so as a modern-day drone or a glider does, or the way a kite, a hawk or a vulture would dive or swoop down from the sky on the intended target—they do so silently, almost imperceptibly. Hanuman did not want that his arrival should be a matter of public display in Lanka as it would ruin his prospects of success, and force him to encounter severe resistance from the first instance, which any spy on a reconnoitering mission would obviously like to avoid at all costs. So he glided and landed silently on the soil of Lanka.

However, the departure time was another thing—he was leaving as a triumphant victor who had vanquished his enemy and brought the latter to his heel; he had lain to ruin the magnificent city of Lanka and left its inhabitants reeling with shock. Hence, there was no reason to leave quietly like a thief or a defeated person who goes away gloomily in shame. He was positively proud and upbeat about his achievements, and so he ‘thundered away in jubilation to celebrate the occasion’. A more obvious reason is this: like an air plane using its jet engines to take off from a flat runway, and everyone knows that jet engines make an ear-splitting noise while doing so, Hanuman had made a roar like the thunderclap at the time of leaving Lanka.

These two methods used by Hanuman to arrive and leave Lanka, silently and with a roar respectively, lead us to make another interesting observation: At the time of launching himself from the northern shores of the ocean he had the benefit of using a chain of tall hills upon which he jumped swiftly and ran rapidly across to gain the required momentum and lift to become air borne. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 1.} So therefore, he could rise high up in the sky and silently glide over the water to land quietly at the designated place in the dark of the night.

But this facility was not available to him on the shores of Lanka, and neither was he very particular about keeping himself unknown like he had done while entering Lanka by being silent. So therefore, he launched himself proudly much like an air plane using its jet engines—i.e. with a lot of thunderous noise!

Even if his launch from the northern shore of the ocean from where he took off on his journey for Lanka did make a roaring sound like that of a jet plane taking off, as it surely must have been the case, it didn’t matter much to Hanuman as it was on this side of the ocean which was a long distance of approximately 800 miles off the coast of Lanka. What was crucial for the success of his plan was to enter the demon island of Lanka silently, without making a fuss and alerting anyone, so that the secrecy of the mission can be maintained. This he achieved by setting foot on Lanka’s soil quietly, without making any noise, just like a drone or a glider would do, or like a kite, a hawk or a vulture would also do.

²Ever since Hanuman had gone on his mission to Lanka, all the monkeys and bears sat on the shore of the ocean silently in a very somber mood; some spent time alone and others huddled together in small groups contemplating about the future and praying to God to help them. The overall mood was that of anxiety, worry, uncertainty and gloom. Every now and then they would look up into the sky for any sign of Hanuman returning; they would gaze endlessly into the horizon in the direction they had seen

Hanuman go; any sound from that direction would make them prick their ears to hear it and guess what it meant. Each passing hour seemed an era; time virtually stopped; the sun seemed to burn them and the moon aroused ghosts and phantoms.

In the midst of such distressful time of gloom and uncertainty when these poor monkeys and bears were holding on to dear life by a thin thread of hope and faith, they saw a streak of light in the blue sky coming towards them, and heard a thunderous roar. Woken up from their numbed existence rudely by this sight and sound, they were initially shocked and worried for the worst. But soon as Hanuman's form became clearer as he drew near, and upon hearing his jubilant cry that comes naturally from someone who has achieved exemplary success in a difficult mission and is returning home with some great good news to convey to his dear companions, these monkeys and bears sprang upon their feet with a loud cry of joy even as they stretched their hands upwards to welcome Hanuman. From the cheerful countenance of Hanuman and his excited bodily gestures as he waved at them joyfully from the sky they could easily perceive that he has been mighty successful in his mission, and has some excellent news to convey.]

हरषे सब बिलोकि हनुमाना । नूतन जन्म कपिन्ह तब जाना ॥ ३ ॥

मुख प्रसन्न तन तेज बिराजा । कीन्हेसि रामचंद्र कर काजा ॥ ४ ॥

मिले सकल अति भए सुखारी । तलफत मीन पाव जिमि बारी ॥ ५ ॥

haraṣē saba bilōki hanumānā. nūtana janma kapinha taba jānā. 3.
mukha prasanna tana tēja birājā. kīnhēsi rāmacandra kara kājā. 4.
milē sakala ati bha'ē sukhārī. talaphata mīna pāva jimi bārī. 5.

All of them (i.e. all the messengers who were eagerly awaiting his arrival on this side of the ocean) were tremendously exhilarated on seeing Hanuman back; they felt so relieved as if they have got a new lease of life, as if they have been born again¹. (3)

He (Hanuman) had a very cheerful face, and his body was thrilled with pulsating energy; this signaled to his companions that he has indeed accomplished success in doing Lord Ram's work (i.e. in finding out the whereabouts of Sita). (4)

All the members of the expecting group met him cordially and most enthusiastically, for all of them were overcome with great emotional excitement. The whole group felt extremely exuberant and exhilarated just like a fish that is made to intensely suffer from want of water, suddenly finds it². (5)

[Note—¹This is because if Hanuman had failed in his mission they would all have to suffer the wrath of their king Sugriv who, as we must remember, had threatened to kill them if they returned empty-handed, without any information of Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 22.}

And this fear of death was explicitly expressed by Angad and silently by others when the group had reached the shore of the ocean but saw no sign of success till then. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 26; and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 27.}

Therefore, when it was clear that Hanuman had met Sita and has brought back positive news about her, all the messengers felt that they have got a new life.

²The comparison is highly apt here. The fish will surely die if water is not made available to it; and when it does find water it gets a fresh lease of life. Similarly, these monkeys and bears felt rejuvenated and energized as soon as they saw and heard that Hanuman has come back successfully from the mission, that he has indeed met Sita and is now equipped with all the necessary information about her. This news would be most welcome by Sugriv as well as by Lord Ram.]

चले हरषि रघुनायक पासा । पूँछत कहत नवल इतिहासा ॥ ६ ॥
तब मधुबन भीतर सब आए । अंगद संमत मधु फल खाए ॥ ७ ॥
रखवारे जब बरजन लागे । मुष्टि प्रहार हनत सब भागे ॥ ८ ॥

calē haraṣi raghunāyaka pāsā. pūṁchata kahata navala itihāsā. 6.
taba madhubana bhītara saba ā'ē. aṅgada sammata madhu phala khā'ē. 7.
rakhavārē jaba barajana lāgē. muṣṭi prahāra hanata saba bhāgē. 8.

Now presently this jubilant group set off on its way back to where Lord Ram was. On the way back the monkeys and the bears chatted merrily amongst themselves, asking Hanuman more details about his journey and the experiences that he has had in that alien land, which he shared with them gleefully. (6)

By-and-by they reached the forest that had a large number of fruit trees laden with honeycombs, hence called the 'Madhuvan'. There, upon being granted permission by Angad, the whole group enjoyed eating sweet fruits and drinking honey to their heart's content. (7)

When the forest guards tried to prevent them (from rampaging in the well-tended forest), they (the monkeys and bears) hit the guards with their fists, as a result of which the latter fled from the sight.¹ (8)

[Note—¹This 'Madhuvan' was the royal forest of the king of Kishkindha, i.e. of Sugriv, hence it was out of bounds for ordinary subjects of the kingdom. Our group of messengers of Lord Ram and Sugriv, led by Hanuman, the hero, Angad, the leader of the team and the crown prince, and Jamvant, the elderly bear who was their emotional support and advisor, was very excited and exceptionally happy at this point of time as they had done a marvelous job assigned to them, having achieved a singular success which was likely to please their king Sugriv as well as their Lord Sri Ram immensely.

They were so happy and confident rendered by their success that they were convinced that Sugriv would never get angry at them or punish them for this little mischief of eating and drinking in the royal garden; they would explain to him that they were very hungry and thirsty, and being their king's favourite subjects they thought that they had the right to eat and drink in the royal forest to refresh themselves after the arduous and tiring journey that they had undertaken, and the difficulties that they had encountered while searching for Sita. They were sure that Sugriv would excuse them. This view is endorsed in Doha no. 28 that follows herein below.

Besides that confidence, they had the permission of Angad, who was the crown prince and their leader, and therefore he had the right to enter and seek pleasure in the royal forest much like the king, Sugriv, had himself. So there was no problem.

Of course these monkeys and bears could have been more disciplined, but they were so excited and happy that they threw all caution to the wind, and behaving like jubilant children let loose in a garden full of fruit trees and honeycombs, they ran amok through the forest. And like these excited children, they hit back at the guards when they objected.]

दो०. जाइ पुकारे ते सब बन उजार जुबराज ।
सुनि सुग्रीव हरष कपि करि आए प्रभु काज ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

jā'i pukārē tē saba bana ujāra jubarāja.
sunī sugrīva haraṣa kapi kari ā'ē prabhu kāja. 28.

The guards ran to the capital to report the developments to their king Sugriv. They were almost out of their breath as they burst out, 'Oh Lord, the crown prince (Angad) has led the group that has ruined the forest.'

Hearing this good tidings, Sugriv felt very happy as he deduced that this development clearly, and without a trace of doubt, meant that the Kapis have indeed been successfully in doing Lord Ram's work (for otherwise they would not have had the temerity to destroy his favourite forest). (Doha no. 28)

चौ०. जौं न होति सीता सुधि पाई । मधुबन के फल सकहिं कि खाई ॥ १ ॥
एहि बिधि मन बिचार कर राजा । आइ गए कपि सहित समाजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauri na hōti sītā sudhi pā'ī. madhubana kē phala sakahī ki khā'ī. 1.
ēhi bidhi mana bicāra kara rājā. ā'i ga'ē kapi sahita samājā. 2.

Sugriv said to himself, 'Had they not known about the whereabouts of Sita, would they have dared to eat the fruits of the Madhuvan?

[To wit, it is sure that they have found Sita, for otherwise it is not at all reasonable to think that they would ever dare to eat fruits and drink honey by raiding my forest. Quite the contrary, for in case they had failed to locate her they would either not have come here at all, or would have been far too scared for fear of their lives to have the mind to enjoy eating fruits. So therefore, certainly they have attained success in their mission. Excellent; I will definitely forgive them for ruining the forest at least, if I can't reward them with anything else.]' (1)

In this way, while the king (Sugriv) was thus contemplating, the Kapis (i.e. Hanuman as well as Angad) arrived there; they were accompanied by all the other members of the group¹. (2)

[Note—¹Surely a large number of other monkeys and bears, the citizens of Kishkindha, must have joined this jubilant group as it headed towards the royal court of Sugriv to report. The news of their arrival must have spread like wildfire when the forest guards came in shouting and exclaiming about the affair of the ruining of the forest by Angad-led troops. Every single individual who was left in the capital was expecting news about this team, and when this news came it came with such a bang that it created quite a flutter in the city.]

By-and-by when the exuberant team headed by Hanuman, the ‘hero’, with Angad and Jamvant behind him and followed by other members of the group, reached the place where Sugriv waited for them, a huge milling crowd had gathered. There was a cry of congratulation and a spontaneous outburst of applause that reverberated everywhere in and around the capital.]

आइ सबन्हि नावा पद सीसा । मिलेउ सबन्हि अति प्रेम कपीसा ॥ ३ ॥

पूँछी कुसल कुसल पद देखी । राम कृपाँ भा काजु बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

नाथ काजु कीन्हेउ हनुमाना । राखे सकल कपिन्ह के प्राना ॥ ५ ॥

सुनि सुग्रीव बहुरि तेहि मिलेऊ । कपिन्ह सहित रघुपति पहिं चलेऊ ॥ ६ ॥

ā'i sabanhi nāvā pada sīsā. milē'u sabanhi ati prēma kapīsā. 3.

pūm̐chī kusala kusala pada dēkhī. rāma krpāṁ bhā kāju bisēṣī. 4.

nātha kāju kīnhē'u hanumānā. rākhē sakala kapinha kē prānā. 5.

sunī sugrīva bahuri tēhi milē'ū. kapinha sahita raghupati pahim̐ calē'ū. 6.

All of them (i.e. all the members of the team) came and bowed their heads before Sugriv, and the king of the monkey race (kapīsā; Sugriv) welcomed them most cordially, meeting them all affectionately. (3)

Then Sugriv asked about their welfare, at which they replied, ‘We are indeed fortunate to have come back to see you and pay our respects at your feet. By the grace of Lord Ram, the special work (kāju bisēṣī) that had been assigned to us has been done successfully¹. (4)

Oh Lord, Hanuman has done this work remarkably well, and by doing so he has been able to save the life of all us Kapis².’ (5)

When Sugriv heard of this news, he met Hanuman once again affectionately to congratulate him. Then all of them proceeded to the place where Lord Ram dwelt³. (6)

[Note—¹When a large number of monkey and bear troops had assembled at Mt. Prabarshan, a general order was given to them—to form teams or groups and go in every direction to search for Sita. One such group consisted of Angad, Jamvant and Hanuman amongst others. This was the privileged team who was ordered to proceed in the south direction. Out of its members, Hanuman was singled out by Lord Ram, who called him aside and gave him his finger-ring as well as the confidential message that he was to convey to Sita.]

Hence, this particular team had been given a special status, and one of its members, i.e. Hanuman, was given a special mandate by Lord Ram himself. That is why they call success in this mission as something ‘very special’.

²Though it is not specifically mentioned here who spoke on behalf of the group, but in all probability it was Angad, as he was the leader of this team. This fact, that he was the leader of this team, is clearly mentioned by Jamvant in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 30.

He was alluding to Sugriv’s threat that he would kill them if they failed to find Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 22.

³Lord Ram was living on Mt. Pravarshan all the while—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it. So the merry team, led by Sugriv, went to meet the Lord atop Mt. Pravarshan.]

राम कपिन्ह जब आवत देखा । किँ काजु मन हरष बिसेषा ॥ ७ ॥
फटिक सिला बैठे द्वौ भाई । परे सकल कपि चरनन्ह जाई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma kapinha jaba āvata dēkhā. ki'ēñ kāju mana haraṣa bisēṣā. 7.
phaṭika silā baiṭhē dvau bhā'ī. parē sakala kapi carananhī jā'ī. 8.

When Lord Ram observed that all the Kapis were coming to meet him, and perceived that they were joyous and effused confidence, he concluded that they had successfully done the assigned work. This made the Lord feel happy in his heart. (7)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) were sitting on a rock of crystal. All the Kapis came and fell down at their feet to pay their respect to them. (8)

दो०. प्रीति सहित सब भेटे रघुपति करुना पुंज ।
पूँछी कुसल नाथ अब कुसल देखि पद कंज ॥ २९ ॥
dōhā.

prīti sahita saba bhēṭē raghupati karunā puñja.
pūñchī kusala nātha aba kusala dēkhi pada kañja. 29.

Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram), who is a fount of compassion, mercy and grace (raghupati karunā puñja), met all of them very affectionately.

He asked them about their well-being, to which they all replied, ‘Oh Lord, everything is good and fortunate for us now that we have come back to see your lotus-like (holy) feet.’ (Doha no. 29)

चौ०. जामवंत कह सुनु रघुराया । जा पर नाथ करहु तुम्ह दाया ॥ १ ॥

ताहि सदा सुभ कुसल निरंतर । सुर नर मुनि प्रसन्न ता ऊपर ॥ २ ॥
 सोइ बिजई बिनई गुन सागर । तासु सुजसु त्रैलोक उजागर ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jāmavanta kaha sunu raghurāyā. jā para nātha karahu tumha dāyā. 1.
 tāhi sadā subha kusala nirantara. sura nara muni prasanna tā ūpara. 2.
 sō'i bijaī binaī guna sāgara. tāsu sujasu trailōka ujāgara. 3.

Jamvant (the eldest and the wisest member of this fortunate team and the king of the bear community) came forward to report to Lord Ram. He said, 'Listen oh Lord of the Raghus ("raghurāyā"; Lord Ram, the illustrious descendant of great king Raghu of Ayodhya). Oh Lord, he upon whom you show your grace and benevolence [1] ---

--- Such a fortunate person as he is constantly and always, without exception, assured of good fortunes and well-being at all times; there is no doubt about it. Verily indeed, in all sooth and without any gainsay, all the gods and all the human beings, whether they are ordinary men or exalted sages, are favourably inclined towards him, and are happy with such a person [2]. (1-2)

Indeed, such a fortunate person is truly blessed with victory and success; he is deemed to be well mannered and cultured, as well as a treasure of all the excellent virtues one ought to possess. Verily, the fame and glory of this fortunate person shines throughout the world, in all its three divisions (such as the heaven, the earth and the nether world).¹ (3)

[Note—¹Wise and erudite, and acquainted with court etiquette as well as good manners as he was, Jamvant knew well how to address great kings and be courteous in their presence. So here he shows his finesse of manners and good behaviour by conducting this discourse in an excellent way by first honouring Lord Ram himself before proceeding to narrate the developments and give the news of Sita. If, instead, he had gone straight away to describe the stellar achievement of Hanuman in finding Sita, and the miraculous way he had burnt Lanka to avenge for Sita's abduction, then to some extent it would have seemed a bit un-courteous and a sort of bragging on behalf of Lord Ram's hosts, king Sugriv and his monkey-and-bear race in general.

Good culture and good manners entail that the guest himself is shown honour first before anything is said of the host; the host always says that he feels honoured to have the concerned person as his guest; it's his privilege to be able to serve his guest.]

प्रभु कीं कृपा भयउ सबु काजू । जन्म हमार सुफल भा आजू ॥ ४ ॥
 नाथ पवनसुत कीन्हि जो करनी । सहसहुँ मुख न जाइ सो बरनी ॥ ५ ॥

prabhu kīṁ kṛpā bhaya'u sabu kājū. janma hamāra suphala bhā ājū. 4.
 nātha pavanasuta kīnhi jō karani. sahasahuṁ mukha na jā'i sō barani. 5.

By the grace of the Lord, all the work has been successfully done, and in having done it we all feel that our lives have been fruitful and duly rewarded. (4)

Oh Lord, it is the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) who deserves all the credit, for what he has done is so gallant, so astounding, so stupendous, so marvelous and so magnificent that it cannot be described in its totality even if one were to attempt to do so with a thousand mouths¹.

[To wit, Hanuman has brought immense laurels to the entire Kapi community; he has shown exceptional skill, strength, valour and courage in fulfillment of this mission, which I am glad to say, has made us all proud and happy. We are here because of him, for otherwise we would have been so ashamed of ourselves at our failure that we would have rather died than come here to show our faces to you. Whatever amount of praise is given to Hanuman would be little in the view of what he has achieved. Indeed, we are all very grateful to him.]’ (5)

[Note—¹This is a figure of speech to stress the importance and the magnitude of the achievement of Hanuman. Surely it was not a joke to cross the mighty ocean and land on an island 800 miles away from the shore. It was not an ordinary island, but one that was firmly secured and teeming with ferocious demons; its king was Ravana who was so mighty and powerful that even the gods trembled by his mere name. Going to this invincible fort alone, entering it and successfully finding Sita against all odds and overcoming all sorts of dangers, battering the demon army and virtually decimating it, killing Ravana’s son Akshayakumar, fearlessly facing Ravana himself and humiliating him in front of his full court crowded with armed demon soldiers, and then burning the city of Lanka and returning unscathed—was definitely not a child’s play by any stretch of imagination. It was indeed a stupendous deed and an astounding achievement that deserved all the praise that one can assign to it, for no one had ever imagined that it can actually be done even in one’s wildest of dreams. In one single sortie, and that too alone, Hanuman had brought the mighty enemy to heel.]

पवनतनय के चरित सुहाए । जामवंत रघुपतिहि सुनाए ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनत कृपानिधि मन अति भाए । पुनि हनुमान हरषि हियँ लाए ॥ ७ ॥
 कहहु तात केहि भाँति जानकी । रहति करति रच्छा स्वप्न की ॥ ८ ॥

pavanatanaya kē carita suhā'ē. jāmavanta raghupatihi sunā'ē. 6.
 sunata kṛpānidhi mana ati bhā'ē. puni hanumāna haraṣi hiyaṁ lā'ē. 7.
 kahahu tāta kēhi bhāṁti jānakī. rahati karati racchā svaprāna kī. 8.

After this courteous introduction, Jamvant narrated to Lord Ram all the wonderful things that Hanuman had done. (6)

When Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, grace and compassion (kṛpānidhi), heard the details, he was very pleased in his heart. Then he called Hanuman near and embraced him most affectionately. (7)

The Lord said, ‘Tell me my dear (tāta), how is Janki (Sita), and how she manages to sustain her life in hostile conditions.’¹ (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram well knew that Sita lived at a place teeming with blood-thirsty ferocious demons, and these demons derived sadistic pleasure in torture and cruelty. So the environment in which she lived was certainly ‘hostile’. The Lord wondered how she managed to survive in this situation. In the next set of verses we shall read how Hanuman answers this question.]

दो०. नाम पाहरू दिवस निसि ध्यान तुम्हार कपाट ।
लोचन निज पद जंत्रित जाहिं प्रान केहिं बाट ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

nāma pāharū divasa nisi dhyāna tumhāra kapāṭa.
lōcana nija pada jantrita jāhiṁ prāna kēhiṁ bāṭa. 30.

[Hanuman replied poignantly—] ‘Oh Lord, your name is like the guard who keeps vigil day and night, and your thought is the door at which this guard stands on duty.

Her eyes are downcast and looking fixedly at her feet. Say then, by which path her Pran (life forces) can leave her body?

[To wit, Sita sits like a hermitress immersed in deep meditation and engrossed in profound contemplation. She has enshrined the image of her beloved Lord Ram in her heart, which image she uses as a deity to whom an ascetic offers all his worship and efforts of spiritual practices; she employs the holy name of the Lord, the word “Ram”, as a Mantra, a divine formula, which the ascetic employs for his meditation; she thinks of the Lord like the way the ascetic does contemplation; and like the ascetic who sits for long hours with half-open eyes with his sight and mind focused on something very subtle and sublime and ethereal, something that is far removed from this gross, mundane and physical world, living in this world dispassionately and detached from all its affairs but appearing to do its routine affairs like a puppet, Sita too remains focused in the thoughts of Lord Ram to keep herself sane and retain life inside her emaciated body, while her half-opened and tired eyes are fixed on her feet because the fairy of sleep evades her.] (Doha no. 30)

[Note—Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29 (b), and Sundar Kand, Doha no. 7 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it. In these verses we have read that Sita spent her days remembering the image of Lord Ram that she had last observed, of the Lord running behind the golden deer, an image that she had sacredly enshrined in her heart, and was muttering the Lord’s holy name “Ram” constantly; she was emaciated, forlorn and despondent; and she remained seated with her eyes fixed on her feet, almost like a statue.

In this Doha, Hanuman describes succinctly how Sita spends her time in captivity in Lanka—she sits sitting quietly, full of despair and despondency; she looks fixedly at her feet; her mind is always fixed in the thoughts of Lord Ram as she remembers him at all the moments of her existence; and she continuously repeats the Lord’s name “Ram, Ram” as no other thought enters her mind.

Hanuman paints this sad, poignant and pitiful portrait of Sita for Lord Ram to impress upon him how she constantly remembers him during the days of her captivity. He wished to convey to the Lord that she was in a very sorry state; she brooded and was lost in thoughts as she sat motionless like a statue—this is how she passed her days and nights. How is a ‘statue’ expected to lose its life, for it shows no sign of life

in the first place? Sita's breathing has become very short and shallow; her eyes don't seem to blink as they are fixed on her feet or the ground before her; her body shows no signs of activity as her mind is lost in deep meditation. So is she not virtually like a 'statue'? But she is not actually an ordinary 'statue' made of stone, for she is a 'living statue' in as much as she does have life in her body; she actually breathes, thinks and sees. She, in fact, is a 'consecrated statue'—as Lord Ram is enshrined inside her heart and mind; her whole being is shrouded by the Holy Spirit of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. चलत मोहि चूड़ामनि दीन्ही । रघुपति हृदयँ लाइ सोइ लीन्ही ॥ १ ॥

नाथ जुगल लोचन भरि बारी । बचन कहे कछु जनककुमारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calata mōhi cūrāmani dīnhī. raghupati hṛdayaṁ lā'i sō'i līnhī. 1.
nātha jugala lōcana bhari bārī. bacana kahē kachu janakakumārī. 2.

At the time of my departure she gave me the jewel she wore on her head, the jewel called 'Chudamani'.

[Then Hanuman showed Lord Ram this token which he had brought with him. The Lord immediately recognized it as the one that belonged to Sita, and this made him profoundly nostalgic even as he was overcome with grief accentuated by sweet memories of her.]

Lord Ram instantly took the Chudamani from Hanuman most affectionately, and held it close to his heart. (1)

Hanuman continued with his report of Sita as follows: 'Lord, the daughter of Janak ("janakakumārī"; Sita)¹ filled her eyes with tears when she said a few words by way of a message for you. (2)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram met Hanuman on his return from Lanka, he had also asked about Sita using this same alias for her; the Lord had asked how "Janki" was. The word 'Janki' also means 'the daughter of king Janak'. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30.

So therefore, Hanuman thought it wise to use a similar term for Sita because the Lord preferred to hear about her in that way.]

अनुज समेत गहेहु प्रभु चरना । दीन बंधु प्रनतारति हरना ॥ ३ ॥

मन क्रम बचन चरन अनुरागी । केहिं अपराध नाथ हौं त्यागी ॥ ४ ॥

अवगुन एक मोर मैं माना । बिछुरत प्रान न कीन्ह पयाना ॥ ५ ॥

नाथ सो नयनन्हि को अपराधा । निसरत प्रान करहिं हठि बाधा ॥ ६ ॥

बिरह अगिनि तनु तूल समीरा । स्वास जरइ छन माहिं सरीरा ॥ ७ ॥

नयन स्रवहिं जलु निज हित लागी । जैँ न पाव देह बिरहागी ॥ ८ ॥

anuja samēta gahēhu prabhu caranā. dīna bandhu pranatārati haranā. 3.
mana krama bacana carana anurāgī. kēhiṁ aparādha nātha hauṁ tyāgī. 4.

avaguna ēka mōra mairṁ mānā. bichurata prāna na kīnha payānā. 5.
 nātha sō nayanānhi kō aparādhā. nisarata prāna karahimṁ haṭhi bādhā. 6.
 biraha agini tanu tūla samīrā. svāsa jara'i chana māhimṁ sarīrā. 7.
 nayana sravahimṁ jalu nija hita lāgī. jarahimṁ na pāva dēha birahāgī. 8.

[After describing her pitiful condition, Hanuman now conveys Sita's sorrowful message in these poignant words—] She said to me, 'Hold the feet of the Lord as well as his younger brother (Laxman)¹ on my behalf, and plead, "Oh Lord, you are a friend of those who are distressed and ill-fortuned (dīna bandhu); you are the one who removes fear and sorrows of those who surrender themselves before you and take shelter at your feet (pranatārati haranā). (3)

{Then, turning to Lord Ram, say this to him on my behalf—} Oh Lord, I am your faithful maid by my Mana (mind and heart), by my deeds, and by my words, so why then have you abandoned me, for what crime or error have you forsaken me? Why is it that you have been so indifferent towards my sufferings, even though you are renowned as being a Lord who extends instant protection to those who are devoted to you, who love you, and who are totally dependent upon you for everything? (4)

Of course I agree that there has been one fault on my part—and that single fault is that my Pran (life forces) did not leave me as soon as I was separated from you. [To wit, I agree that I did commit a mistake by not dying the instant I was separated from you. But I have an explanation for it.] (5)

Lord, it is the fault of my eyes that they stubbornly resist whenever my Pran (life) wishes to leave my body. (6)

{Now she explains how her eyes prevent her from dying in the following two verses.}

The grief of separation is like a raging fire, the body is like the cotton, and the breath is like the air that can fan the fire and help it to erupt and consume my body by burning it to ash. (7)

But the eyes constantly shower water (in the form of my tears) on this fire, out of its own wants, thereby dousing it every time the flame leaps up. This is why, and how, my body is not able to burn itself in the raging fire of separation (from you).

[And what does the eye 'want'? It hopes that one day it will be able to see your divine form once again! This wish, this longing, this hope and desire, keeps the eye wide awake even as it stubbornly prevents my life from leaving my body by constantly dripping tears to cool the fire of grief and agony. To wit my Lord, I weep day and night, and my tears cool my body; as for my breath it is so shallow and lacking in sufficient force that my life can't leave my body via that route too. What can I do if my mind keeps hoping to meet you again, and it instructs my eyes to pour tear on the fire of grief and agony to keep it under control to prevent it from ruining the prospects of my meeting you again?]" ' (8)

[Note—¹Why did Sita wished Hanuman to hold Laxman's feet also to plead on her behalf? It is because she asked Laxman to forgive her for not obeying his advice not to force him to leave her alone at the time Lord Ram had gone behind the deer and a loud cry was heard mimicking Lord Ram's voice calling out Laxman's name. At that

time Sita had forced Laxman to go and help the Lord inspite of his telling her that it was a trick as no harm can ever befall the Lord, and inspite of the Lord himself instructing Laxman not to leave Sita alone as the forest is teeming with demons. Yet when Sita persisted, Laxman was forced to go away, and this resulted in her being abducted by Ravana. These incidents are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 27; (b) Chaupai Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-16 that precede it.

So therefore, by asking Hanuman to hold Laxman's and Lord Ram's feet on her behalf, Sita wishes to ask for forgiveness from them both.]

सीता कै अति बिपति बिसाला । बिनहिं कहें भलि दीनदयाला ॥ ९ ॥

sītā kai ati bipati bisālā. binahim kahēm bhali dīnadayālā. 9.

[After telling Lord Ram what Sita had conveyed, Hanuman summarizes her trauma and pitiful condition by making this poignant observation—] ‘Oh merciful and compassionate Lord (dīnadayālā)! Sita's troubles are so immense, so intense and so uncountable that it is well they are not told in detail. (9)

दो०. निमिष निमिष करुनानिधि जाहिं कलप सम बीति ।

बेगि चलिअ प्रभु आनिअ भुज बल खल दल जीति ॥ ३१ ॥

dōhā.

nimiṣa nimiṣa karunānidhi jāhim kalapa sama bīti.

bēgi cali'a prabhu āni'a bhuja bala khala dala jīti. 31.

Oh graceful Lord who is like an ocean of compassion and mercy (karunānidhi)! Each moment that passes is equivalent to a Kalpa for her. [The Kalpa is a very long period of time, and it covers one cycle of creation and destruction.]

So therefore, make haste and start quickly to go and bring her back by vanquishing the wicked hordes of enemy by the formidable might of your arms.’ (Doha no. 31)

[Note—In this concluding statement, Hanuman earnestly pleads on behalf of Sita by giving this advice to Lord Ram: No time ought to be lost by Lord Ram in launching a campaign to free Sita from the captivity of the demons by conquering them using force. By addressing Lord Ram as the one “who is an ocean of mercy and compassion”, Hanuman intends to tell him that he should be mindful of his own reputation on this count and show grace upon Sita even if she had made some mistakes, for he ought to forgive her as she has pleaded for forgiveness herself. Besides this, the Lord is a friend of the distressed and of those who surrender themselves at his feet, asking for his protection. So there is no reason why the Lord should delay in starting the rescue operation forthwith.]

चौ०. सुनि सीता दुख प्रभु सुख अयना । भरि आए जल राजिव नयना ॥ १ ॥

बचन कायँ मन मम गति जाही । सपनेहुँ बूझिअ बिपति कि ताही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī sītā dukha prabhu sukha ayanā. bhari ā'ē jala rājiva nayanā. 1.
bacana kāyaṁ mana mama gati jāhī. sapanēhuṁ būjhi'a bipati ki tāhī. 2.

When the Lord who is ever blissful himself and a granter of bliss to others (prabhu sukha ayanā) heard of the miseries and grief of Sita, tears welled up in his eyes. (1)

He exclaimed, 'How can troubles, adversities and miseries ever come to someone who has surrendered oneself to me by one's Vachan (words), Karma (deeds) and Mana (mind and heart; thoughts and emotions)?¹' (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was responding to Hanuman's narrative about Sita's miserable state of affairs. Hanuman had given a very pitiful portrait of Sita to Lord Ram and made it clear to the Lord how Sita is completely loyal and devoted to him; how she constantly remembers him, how she mutters the Lord's name every moment of her life and sheds tears in his remembrance, how she expressed her emotions and paid her obeisance to the Lord at the time of his departure, and also explained to the Lord why she does not die in grief of separation—apropos of Doha no. 30—to Doha no. 31 herein above.

This brief narration was so touching that it overwhelmed Lord Ram. It was obvious that Sita was suffering immensely inspite of her surrender to the Lord as well as her unquestioned loyalty and devotion for him. This was too much for the Lord to bear, for this goes against his own glorious reputation—which says that anyone who has surrendered himself to Lord Ram and is completely devoted to him by his words, deeds, mind and heart can be sure of the Lord's protection under all conditions.

So, Lord Ram was unable to restrain himself as he felt that his honour and good name was at stake, and he made the remark as quoted in this particular verse. In effect it was a hint to all who were listening that no further time should be wasted, for the Lord is ready for action at that very instant, and hence the mission to free Sita should start forthwith. Hanuman picked up this clue immediately; he understood that the Lord is giving a signal to launch the campaign without the loss of any time. This will be evident in the next set of verses—where he assures the Lord that the real trouble for the creature is when he forgets the Lord and does not have devotion for him, but the situation here is quite the contrary for Sita is totally devoted to the Lord and remembers him every moment of her life. In her case it is a simple matter of going and freeing her by vanquishing her captors; it is no great deal, and neither does it merit such despondency and worry as Lord Ram seems to have.]

कह हनुमंत बिपति प्रभु सोई । जब तव सुमिरन भजन न होई ॥ ३ ॥

केतिक बात प्रभु जातुधान की । रिपुहि जीति आनिबी जानकी ॥ ४ ॥

kaha hanumanta bipati prabhu sō'ī. jaba tava sumirana bhajana na hō'ī. 3.
kētika bāta prabhu jātudhāna kī. ripuhi jīti ānibī jānakī. 4.

Hanuman assuaged Lord Ram's feelings of sorrow at Sita's sufferings by saying these comforting words, 'Oh Lord, the real trouble, the real misfortune, the real source of grief and misery for a creature is when one does not remember you (or when one forgets you), and when one does not worship you, adore you, and have devotion for you. (3)

Oh Lord! What is the great deal with respect to the demons; how do they matter to you? I enjoin you that now it is but a simple matter of vanquishing them and bringing Sita back.

[Oh Lord, there is nothing simpler than this. Till now, of course, there was some cause of worry as we did not know where Sita was, but now that everything is known, the rest is all easy. So why do you worry and express so much dismay?] (4)

सुनु कपि तोहि समान उपकारी । नहिं कोउ सुर नर मुनि तनुधारी ॥ ५ ॥
 प्रति उपकार करौं का तोरा । सनमुख होइ न सकत मन मोरा ॥ ६ ॥
 सुनु सुत तोहि उरिन मैं नाहीं । देखेउँ करि बिचार मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 पुनि पुनि कपिहि चितव सुरत्राता । लोचन नीर पुलक अति गाता ॥ ८ ॥

sunu kapi tōhi samāna upakārī. nahim kō'u sura nara muni tanudhārī. 5.
 prati upakāra karaurm kā tōrā. sanamukha hō'i na sakata mana mōrā. 6.
 sunu suta tōhi urina mairm nāhīm. dēkhē'uṁ kari bicāra mana māhīm. 7.
 puni puni kapihi citava suratrātā. lōcana nīra pulaka ati gātā. 8.

[Lord Ram felt very glad at hearing Hanuman's words of reassurance and courage. The Lord felt very obliged to him, and he expressed his deep sense of gratitude and thanks to him in the following words—]

'Listen Kapi (Hanuman)! There is no one amongst the gods, humans, sages, or any other living being to whom I feel so grateful and thankful today; I am indeed obliged of you. (5)

I don't know how I shall be able to recompense you in full for what you have done for me. Truly, my mind and heart (Mana) fail to advice me on this account. (6)

Listen my dear son (sunu suta)! The more I think of it the more I am convinced that I shall never be able to repay your debts, and I shall ever remain indebted to you!' (7)

The Lord, who is the protector of the gods (suratrātā), glanced repeatedly at Hanuman with a lot of affection in his eyes even as tears (of joy and gratefulness) welled up in them, and his body was so thrilled that hairs stood on their ends.*

[*This verse can be read in another way also as follows: "The Lord, who is the protector of the gods, glanced repeatedly at Hanuman with a lot of affection in his eyes, even as tears (of joy and gratefulness) welled up in the eyes of Hanuman and his body was so thrilled that hairs stood on their ends."]¹ (8)

[Note—¹In these verses, Lord Ram has expressed his deep sense of gratitude to Hanuman. Indeed Hanuman was so fortunate that both Lord Ram and Sita have

shown great affection for him, called him their ‘son’ (suta), and liberally blessed him. We have read here presently how Lord Ram articulated his great appreciation of Hanuman and showed favour to him, and earlier we have read how Sita had also liberally blessed him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 17.

We can remark here that there is a special bond between the Lord God and his ardent devotees. Both feel exhilarated in each other’s presence; the sentiment of affection and love is mutual between them. So therefore, it is natural that both Lord Ram and his devotee Hanuman should become highly emotional so much so that tears well up in the eyes of both, and both their bodies become thrilled in each other’s presence.

It is a sort of mutual respect for each other—the Lord God shows his appreciation for his devotee who sacrifices all and everything in this world for his beloved Lord, and the devotee shows his appreciation for the Lord who inspite of being the ‘Almighty Supreme Emperor of this creation’ goes out of his way to show affection for a humble devotee, protect him against all odds, and treats him most favourably inspite of his numerous shortcomings.]

दो०. सुनि प्रभु बचन बिलोकि मुख गात हरषि हनुमंत ।
चरन परेउ प्रेमाकुल त्राहि त्राहि भगवंत ॥ ३२ ॥

dōhā.

sunī prabhu bacana bilōki mukha gāta haraṣi hanumanta.
carana parē'u prēmākula trāhi trāhi bhagavanta. 32.

Hearing the (affectionate and polite) words of Lord Ram and observing that his countenance revealed that the Lord was favourable to him, Hanuman’s body was thrilled with joy.

Feeling overwhelmed by a surge of love and affection for the Lord, Hanuman fell down at his feet and exclaimed repeatedly, ‘Oh my revered Lord (bhagavanta), give protection to me (from feeling proud and having ego).’ (Doha no. 32)

[Note—There was a huge crowd of monkeys and bears who were watching the proceedings. Earlier it was Jamvant and now it is Lord Ram who has singled out Hanuman for such glorious praise. So he feels humbled by this honour, and in his modesty he fell down at the Lord’s feet to pray that the vice of ego and pride may not touch him.]

चौ०. बार बार प्रभु चहइ उठावा । प्रेम मगन तेहि उठब न भावा ॥ १ ॥
प्रभु कर पंकज कपि केँ सीसा । सुमिरि सो दसा मगन गौरीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bāra bāra prabhu caha'i uṭhāvā. prēma magana tēhi uṭhaba na bhāvā. 1.
prabhu kara pañkaja kapi kēṁ sīsā. sumiri sō dasā magana gaurīsā. 2.

The Lord tried repeatedly to lift Hanuman from his prostrate position, but the latter was so emotionally overwhelmed that he resisted all the attempts of the Lord to lift him, as he did not wish to let go of the Lord's holy feet (which he had clasped with his hands). (1)

Remembering this sublime scene of Lord Ram's lotus-like hands resting on the head of the Kapi (Hanuman), Lord Shiva ("gaurīsā"; the Lord of goddess Gauri) became so overwhelmed with emotions that for some moments he was lost in a reverie of ecstasy, losing awareness of everything else.¹ (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted that Lord Shiva is the chief and the primary narrator of the story of 'Ram Charit Manas' which we are reading here. He was the one who had first visualized and conceived this divine story of Lord Ram's deeds in his Mana (heart and mind) while meditating, and this is why this story got the name "Ram Charit Manas". He then narrated it to his divine consort who has many names, one of which is "Gauri", and the other more popular ones are Uma and Parvati. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30.}]

Shiva is known to be a great devotee of Lord Ram. So whenever an episode is being narrated where the close relationship between Lord Ram and his devotee, such as the case of Hanuman here, is the subject matter of the discourse, one which highlights their mutual sense of affection and love for each other as well as the intensity of devotion that the devotee has for the Lord and his adoration of the Lord, Lord Shiva becomes highly emotional and ecstatic himself.]

सावधान मन करि पुनि संकर । लागे कहन कथा अति सुंदर ॥ ३ ॥

कपि उठाइ प्रभु हृदयँ लगावा । कर गहि परम निकट बैठावा ॥ ४ ॥

sāvadhāna mana kari puni saṅkara. lāgē kahana kathā ati sundara. 3.
kapi uṭhā'i prabhu hṛdayaṁ lagāvā. kara gahi parama nikaṭa baiṭhāvā. 4.

Lord Shiva recovered his composure and controlled his mind to resume the narrative which was very beautiful and pleasant (to hear and to narrate, as it gave pleasure to the listener as well as the narrator)¹. (3)

Finally (after great effort), the Lord lifted Kapi (Hanuman) and embraced him, holding him close to his bosom. Then the Lord held his hand and made him sit very close to him (like a true and a dear friend). (4)

[Note—¹Just how glorious, divine, spiritually fulfilling and fascinating this narrative of "Ram Charit Manas" is have been enumerated in its Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 33; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 39.]

कहु कपि रावन पालित लंका । केहि बिधि दहेउ दुर्ग अति बंका ॥ ५ ॥

प्रभु प्रसन्न जाना हनुमाना । बोला बचन बिगत अभिमाना ॥ ६ ॥

kahu kapi rāvana pālita laṅkā. kēhi bidhi dahē'u durga ati baṅkā. 5.
prabhu prasanna jānā hanumānā. bōlā bacana bigata abhimānā. 6.

[Now, Lord Ram enquired about Lanka and how Hanuman managed to burn its formidable fort.]

Lord Ram asked Hanuman, 'Tell me Kapi about Lanka, which is ruled and protected by its king Ravana. Tell me how you managed to burn its fort which is reputed to be very formidable and extremely impregnable.

[Since Lanka and its fort are so strong and inaccessible, I am really amazed how you achieved this rare feat of not only penetrating it to enter and meet Sita, but also burning it, which is all the more stunning as you have done all this single-handedly, without any help, and without getting hurt. It's astonishing and incredible really. So please tell me more of it.]' (5)

Perceiving that Lord Ram was very pleased by his actions¹, Hanuman replied without even a trace of pride or haughtiness in his voice or manners. (6)

[Note—¹Initially Hanuman was afraid that his action of burning Lanka without the express permission of Lord Ram, Sugriv or Jamvant may not be liked by either of them, but on finding that all had welcomed him enthusiastically and shown great appreciation for his actions, he felt relieved. Especially when he found that Lord Ram has shown so much happiness at his actions, and the way Jamvant had eulogized him, he regained his confidence.

But it goes to Hanuman's credit that this unequivocal and universal praise for him did not go into his head and make him puffed-up; he remained humble and modest. Haughtiness, egoism, pride and arrogance did not touch his mind and heart.]

साखामृग कै बड़ि मनुसाई । साखा तें साखा पर जाई ॥ ७ ॥
नाघि सिंधु हाटकपुर जारा । निसिचर गन बधि बिपिन उजारा ॥ ८ ॥
सो सब तव प्रताप रघुराई । नाथ न कछू मोरि प्रभुताई ॥ ९ ॥

sākhāmṛga kai baḍi manusā'ī. sākhā tēm sākhā para jā'ī. 7.
nāghi sindhu hāṭakapura jārā. nīsicara gana badhi bipina ujārā. 8.
sō saba tava pratāpa raghurā'ī. nātha na kachū mōri prabhutā'ī. 9.

[Showing extreme sense of humbleness and modesty, Hanuman said—] 'It is a common thing for those who dwell on the trees like a monkey does (sākhāmṛga) to jump from one branch of a tree to another; it is their natural habit, even if one prefers to call this simple act of theirs as something great or rare. (7)

It is out of this natural habit that I managed to cross the ocean by leaping across it, burn the golden city of Lanka (by jumping across its buildings), kill the demon warriors and destroy the (Ashok) garden. [To wit, I do not deserve much praise for these deeds, for I did them in a natural way, for such actions are like a sport for Kapis, or tree dwelling monkeys, like me.] (8)

And even if it is said that doing such stupendous deeds as enumerated above are something special, something great and very rare to do, then let it be known that all of them were successfully done due to your grace and blessings, and truly oh Lord, I have no claim to glory and honour for achieving success in doing any of them. All the credit should go to you and your grace, for I have indeed done nothing relying on my own strength and power.¹ (9)

[Note—¹This is an excellent example of modesty, and how a true devotee credits his Lord God for all the success that he gets in any enterprise in his life. This is how true devotion should be—that the devotee feels that all his achievements are the result of his Lord God’s grace and blessings, and that he deserves nothing on his own merit.]

दो०. ता कहूँ प्रभु कछु अगम नहिं जा पर तुम्ह अनुकूल ।
तव प्रभावं बड़वानलहि जारि सकइ खलु तूल ॥ ३३ ॥

dōhā.

tā kahūṁ prabhu kachu agama nahim jā para tumha anukūla.
tava prabhāvaṁ baṛavānalahi jāri saka'i khalu tūla. 33.

Oh Lord, nothing is impossible or unattainable for him on whom you are gracious and favourable.

To wit, by your grace and blessing even a humble thing as piece of cotton can be sufficiently empowered to overcome the might of the great subterranean fire known as ‘Barwanal’ so much so that the cotton would burn the latter instead of the other way round!¹ (Doha no. 33)

[Note—¹The ‘baṛavānala’ is the great underground fire that keeps the depths of the ocean warm, and often times it reveal itself in underground volcanoes that spew huge columns of hot steam from the surface of the ocean, or keep the water of hot-water springs boiling perpetually. This fire is so strong that the ‘water’ of the spring or the ocean is unable to douse it. But if the almighty Supreme Being so wishes, then the impossible can happen—which is that a humble shred of cotton can remain unscathed if it is thrown into this ferocious fire, or may be this cotton can even cover the fire to extinguish it, or it can also happen that instead of the fire burning the cotton, the cotton would burn the fire!

Hence, Hanuman says that even if it is assumed that it was he who had penetrated the otherwise impenetrable fort of Lanka, then destroyed the Ashok garden and killed so many fierce demon warriors, and then burnt the city of Lanka—there is nothing remarkable in all these deeds that are attributed to him, as he was able to do them by the grace and blessing of Lord Ram.

So we observe that Hanuman is essentially an embodiment of the grand virtues of devotion, modesty and humility; he attributes all his successes and spectacular feats to the grace of the Lord. Hanuman by his example teaches us how we should ourselves relate to our chosen deity; how we should be humble and modest during all our achievements in life, how we should credit everything in life to the grace of the Lord God, how we ought to surrender ourselves completely to our Lord God and have faith

in him with respect to our welfare and well-being, for then it becomes the Lord's own responsibility to take care of us.

This attitude helps us to overcome ego, haughtiness and arrogance; it removes a huge burden of worries that we carry on our shoulders because once we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord God, it is henceforth 'he' who now has to worry for us; and it pre-empts jealousy and malice that may arise in the heart of our adversaries who may not like our successes, because now we openly declare that we do not merit any praise nor do we claim any honour or reward for any of our achievements—for it is the Lord who is actually the one who has made it happen the way it happened, and therefore it is 'he' who ought to be honoured and praised!]

चौ०. नाथ भगति अति सुखदायनी । देहु कृपा करि अनपायनी ॥ १ ॥
 सुनि प्रभु परम सरल कपि बानी । एवमस्तु तब कहेउ भवानी ॥ २ ॥
 उमा राम सुभाउ जेहि जाना । ताहि भजनु तजि भाव न आना ॥ ३ ॥
 यह संबाद जासु उर आवा । रघुपति चरन भगति सोइ पावा ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनि प्रभु बचन कहहि कपिबृन्दा । जय जय जय कृपाल सुखकंदा ॥ ५ ॥
 caupāī.

nātha bhagati ati sukhadāyanī. dēhu kṛpā kari anapāyanī. 1.
 suni prabhu parama sarala kapi bānī. ēvamastu taba kahē'u bhavānī. 2.
 umā rāma subhā'u jēhim jānā. tāhi bhajanu taji bhāva na ānā. 3.
 yaha sambāda jāsu ura āvā. raghupati carana bhagati sō'i pāvā. 4.
 suni prabhu bacana kahahim kapibṛndā. jaya jaya jaya kṛpāla sukhakandā. 5.

[Hanuman concluded his submission by saying—] 'Oh Lord! Please be kind and gracious to grant me your eternal devotion, a devotion that does not diminish with time or is affected by circumstances, as it is the one singular blessing that bestows immense joy, happiness and bliss to a creature.'

[Lord Shiva said to Bhavani, his consort to whom he was narrating the wonderful story—] 'Oh Bhavani! When the Lord (Sri Ram) heard the words of prayerful supplication spoken by Hanuman, humble words that were sincere and heart-felt, he obliged Hanuman by saying "So shall it be (ēvamastu)". (2)

Oh Uma (another name of Lord Shiva's consort)! He who knows the inherent nature of Lord Ram and has no doubt about it, he who is well acquainted with the Lord's temperament and habit (of being exceptionally merciful, kind, gracious, loving, benevolent, munificent, forgiving and tolerant towards his devotees and those who have unconditionally surrendered themselves before the Lord, pleading to the Lord for his help, solace and succour)—such a person will not feel inclined to have any other emotion or sentiment except to worship the Lord, to adore him, and to have devotion for him in its purest and undiluted form. (3)

Verily, in all sooth and without gainsay, anyone who remembers this conversation (between Lord Ram and Hanuman) shall surely be inspired to have similar a devotion for Lord Ram and a desire to worship the Lord's holy feet.¹ (4)

When the assembled Kapis (i.e. all the monkeys and bears who had accompanied Hanuman to Lord Ram when he had come to report about his adventures in Lanka and the success in finding Sita) heard the conversation, and especially the words of the Lord (whereby he blessed Hanuman and expressed his indebtedness to him), all of them lauded the Lord and cheered him repeatedly, exclaiming in unison, ‘Glory to Lord Ram; Glory to Lord Ram who is most kind and gracious; Glory to Lord Ram who is a fountainhead of happiness, joy, bliss and beatitude (jaya jaya jaya kṛpāla sukhakandā).²

[Note—¹When one recalls the emotional moments of Hanuman’s meeting with Lord Ram and how they bonded with each other, and at the same time the person remembers the stellar virtues of Lord Ram as the Lord who loves his devotees most dearly, the Lord who is peerless as far as showing mercy, grace, kindness, benevolence and munificence are concerned, the Lord who goes out of his way to accommodate one and all, and to forgive everyone who begs for forgiveness—then surely one will feel inclined to declare one’s total allegiance and full devotion to such a Lord as Lord Ram is. Forsooth, where else would one find such a dear Lord as Lord Ram; in who else would one find a dear and selfless a friend as one would find in Lord Ram?

²The exceptionally warm and cordial manner in which Lord Ram received Hanuman and showered praises upon him send a wave of joy and excitement through the rank and file of the assembled crowd. All the monkeys and bears were exhilarated; all of them felt that they were blessed to have found such a munificent, benevolent, kind, graceful, affectionate Lord who endeared everyone who came into contact with him. This nature, habit and attitude of the Lord touched their hearts so much so that they spontaneously vowed to repose their complete loyalty and full allegiance to him. Loud cheers and enthusiastic applause rendered the air in every direction; all the Kapis celebrated this occasion with cries of jubilation and expression of solidarity with their beloved Lord.]

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Section 7.2:

Adhyatma Ramayan

{Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto nos. 1-5}

Now, after having read these wonderful tidings from ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Tulsidas, let us read how Veda Vyas’ ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ describes them. When we read about an event from different sources, we get a better, more colourful and varied description of the event, and this helps us to get a closer view of it and understand its nuances from different perspective.

Hence, for the purpose of narrating our Story with a focus on the subject matter of this Chapter—which is Hanuman's meeting with Sita, the burning of Lanka by Hanuman, and his return to give the good news of Sita's discovery to Lord Ram—we shall read from Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto nos. 1-5 as follows:-

7.2.1: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1:

Hanuman crosses the ocean and enters Lanka:-

॥ प्रथमः सर्गः ॥
 श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।
 शतयोजनविस्तीर्णं समुद्रं मकरालयम् ।
 लिलङ्घयिषुरानन्दसन्दोहो मारुतात्मजः ॥ १॥
 ध्यात्वा रामं परात्मानमिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।
 पश्यन्तु वानराः सर्वे गच्छन्तं मां विहायसा ॥ २॥
 अमोघं रामनिर्मुक्तं महाबाणमिवाखिलाः ।
 पश्याम्यद्यैव रामस्य पत्नीं जनकनन्दिनीम् ॥ ३॥

॥ prathamah sargah ॥
 śrīmahādeva uvāca ।
 śatayojanavistīrṇaṃ samudraṃ makarālayam ।
 lilaṅghayiṣurānandasandoho mārutātmajaḥ ॥ 1॥
 dhyātvā rāmaṃ parātmānamidaṃ vacanamabravīt ।
 paśyantu vānarāḥ sarve gacchantam māṃ vihāyasā ॥ 2॥
 amoghaṃ rāmanirmuktaṃ mahābāṇamivākhlāḥ ।
 paśyāmyadyaiva rāmasya patnīm janakanandinīm ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! The son of the wind-god, who is an embodiment of happiness and bliss, got ready to leap across the 100 Yojan wide ocean which was full of alligators and other fierce marine creatures (1).

He remembered Lord Ram, and invoking his grace he said his companions, 'Oh monkeys! All of you look here. I am going through the path of the sky (2) like the infallible, invincible, irrevocable and formidable arrow shot by Lord Sri Ram. I shall see the Lord's wife, the daughter of Janak (Janak Nandani i.e., Sita), today itself (3).

कृतार्थोऽहं कृतार्थोऽहं पुनः पश्यामि राघवम् ।
 प्राणप्राणसमये यस्य नाम सकृत्स्मरन् ॥ ४॥
 नरस्तीर्त्वा भवाम्भोधिमपारं याति तत्पदम् ।
 किं पुनस्तस्य दूतोऽहं तदङ्गाङ्गुलिमुद्रिकः ॥ ५॥

kr̥tārtho'haṃ kr̥tārtho'haṃ punaḥ paśyāmi rāghavam ।
 prāṇaprayāṇasamaye yasya nāma sakṛtsmaran ॥ 4॥

narastīrtvā bhavāmbhodhimapāraṃ yāti tatpadam ।
kiṃ punastasya dūto'haṃ tadaṅgāṅgulimudrikaḥ ॥ 5॥

4-5. I am greatly privileged (at being selected to do the great work of Lord Ram), and am certain to accomplish the task successfully before having Darshan (divine viewing and meeting) of Lord Sri Ram again. At the time when the soul leaves this body and departs from this mortal world, the mere auspicious remembrance of his holy and divine name (4) can enable a person to cross the measureless and fathomless ocean-like mundane world and go to the exalted supreme abode of the Lord (i.e. attain heaven. I am a messenger of the same holy Lord, and am carrying his finger-ring on his behalf as a token for Sita.¹ (5)

[Note—¹To wit, just imagine how lucky I am. Further, what worry do I have, for if the Lord's name is so powerful and strong that it can take the creature across an ocean symbolised by this mundane world of transmigration, an ocean which is most formidable and intractable, then what does this simple ocean count? Surely I would easily go and come back across it by remembering the Lord's holy name. There is no doubt in it.]

तमेव हृदये ध्यात्वा लङ्घयाम्यल्पवारिधिम् ।
इत्युक्त्वा हनुमान् बाहू प्रसार्यायतवालाधिः ॥ ६॥
ऋजुग्रीवोर्ध्वदृष्टिः सन्नाकुञ्चितपदद्वयः ।
दक्षिणाभिमुखस्तूर्णं पुप्लुवेऽनिलविक्रमः ॥ ७॥

tameva hr̥daye dhyātvā laṅghayāmyalpavāridhim ।
ityuktvā hanumān bāhū prasāryāyatavāladhiḥ ॥ 6॥
r̥jugrīvordhvadr̥ṣṭiḥ sannākuñcitapadadvayaḥ ।
dakṣiṇābhimukhastūrṇaṃ pupluve'nilavikramaḥ ॥ 7॥

6-7. Say, what is the wonder if I cross this ordinary ocean, which is but miniscule as compared to the huge 'Bhavasagar' which the soul crosses at the time of death, by remembering him (Lord Sri Ram) in my heart.

[To wit, if a creature can cross the endless and most formidable ocean symbolized by the ever-turning cycle of transmigration, an ocean called 'Bhavasagar', by remembering Lord Ram's holy name, then why should I worry for this simple hollow-in-earth that is filled with water, which we like to call an 'ocean', that is nothing more than a small groove made by a cow's hoof on earth and filled with salty water as compared to that huge ocean which is called Bhavasagar? So therefore I am at ease, and truly, crossing this ocean is no matter of concern to me as I shall be empowered and enabled to cross it very easily by the holy name of Lord Ram that will not only see me through across this trough of salty water, but also ensure my success once I land in Lanka, and then ensure my safe return here to meet you all once again. Don't you worry for me; I'll be alright. Adieu for now!]

Saying this, Hanuman spread his arms, lengthened and stiffened his tail (6), straightened his neck and looked upwards, folded both his legs inwards from the knee, and facing south, he launched himself in the air and flew with the speed of wind (7).

[Note—A reading of these two verse nos. 6-7 show that Hanuman resembled a jet plane when he took to the skies—extended arms, lifted tail, head thrust forward, legs drawn in etc.]

आकशात्त्वरितं देवैर्वीक्ष्यमाणो जगाम सः ।
दृष्ट्वानिलसुतं देवा गच्छन्तं वायुवेगतः ॥ ८॥
परीक्षणार्थं सत्त्वस्य वानरस्येदमब्रुवन् ।
गच्छत्येष महासत्त्वो वानरो वायुविक्रमः ॥ ९॥

ākaśāttvaritaṁ devairvīkṣyamāṇo jagāma saḥ ।
dr̥ṣṭvānilasutaṁ devā gacchantaṁ vāyuvegataḥ ॥ 8॥
parīkṣaṇārthaṁ sattvasya vānarasyedamabruvan ।
gacchatyeṣa mahāsattvo vānaro vāyuvikramaḥ ॥ 9॥

8-9. At that moment he was cruising through the sky with great speed and swiftness, while all the Gods (who had assembled in the sky to watch this amazing spectacle) watched him in awe and wonder as he sailed through the sky like a cruise missile. When they saw the son of the wind-god going with the speed of wind (8), they wanted to test his ability, intelligence, wit and prowess. So they talked amongst themselves, 'Really, this monkey (vānaro), who is extremely strong, powerful and valiant, is going with the great speed of wind (9).

तङ्कां प्रवेष्टुं शक्नो वा न वा जानीमहे बलम् ।
एवं विचार्य नागानां मातरं सुरसाभिधाम् ॥ १०॥
अब्रवीद्देवतावृन्दः कौतूहलसमन्वितः ।
गच्छ त्वं वानरेन्द्रस्य किञ्चिद्विघ्नं समाचर ॥ ११॥
ज्ञात्वा तस्य बलं बुद्धिं पुनरेहि त्वरान्विता ।
इत्युक्ता सा ययौ शिघ्रं हनुमद्विघ्नकारणात् ॥ १२॥

laṅkāṁ praveṣṭuṁ śakto vā na vā jānīmahe balaṁ ।
evaṁ vicārya nāgānāṁ mātaraṁ surasābhidhām ॥ 10॥
abravīddevatāvṛndaḥ kautūhalasamanvitaḥ ।
gaccha tvaṁ vānarendrasya kiñcidvighnaṁ samācara ॥ 11॥
jñātvā tasya balaṁ buddhiṁ punarehi tvarānvitā ।
ityuktā sā yayau śighraṁ hanumadvighnakāraṇāt ॥ 12॥

10-12. But we doubt whether he shall be able to enter Lanka successfully. Therefore, let us test his courage, strength and valour (so that in case he needs our help, we shall be ready for it)'.
Having discussed this matter amongst themselves, and to satisfy their curiosity, they requested Sursa, the mother of Serpents, 'Oh Sursa! (10) You should go immediately and create some kind of hurdle in the path of this most excellent monkey who is like a king in his race (11). Test his strength and intelligence, and come back soon'.

When the Gods had said so, she immediately went to create an obstacle in the path of Hanuman (12).

आवृत्य मार्गं पुरतः स्थित्वा वानरमब्रवीत् ।
एहि मे वदनं शीघ्रं प्रविशस्व महामते ॥ १३॥
देवैस्त्वं कल्पितो भक्ष्यः क्षुधासम्पीडितात्मनः ।
तामाह हनुमान् मातरहं रामस्य शासनात् ॥ १४॥
गच्छामि जानकीं द्रष्टुं पुनरागम्य सत्वरः ।
रामाय कुशलं तस्याः कथयित्वा त्वदाननम् ॥ १५॥

āvṛtya mārgaṃ purataḥ sthitvā vānaramabravīt ।
ehi me vadanam śīghraṃ praviśasva mahāmate ॥ 13॥
devaistvaṃ kalpito bhakṣyaḥ kṣudhāsampīḍitātmanaḥ ।
tāmāha hanumān mātaraḥ rāmasya śāsanāt ॥ 14॥
gacchāmi jānakīm draṣṭuṃ punarāgamy satvaraḥ ।
rāmāya kuśalaṃ tasyāḥ kathayitvā tvadānanam ॥ 15॥

13-15. She stood in front of Hanuman, blocking his path, and said, 'Oh you wise one! Come, enter my body (enter my mouth) immediately (13). I was very agitated and tormented with hunger, and so the benevolent Gods took mercy on me and have sent you as my prey (so that I can satisfy my hunger)'.

Then Hanuman said to her very politely, 'Oh mother! On the orders of Lord Sri Ram (14), I am going to see (meet) Janki (Sita). I shall soon come back from there, tell the Lord about her welfare, and then I shall come and enter your mouth willingly. [Mother, I am on a mission for Lord Ram, which I must complete before I can offer myself to you as a sacrifice to satisfy your ravenous hunger. But excuse me, it is not possible to oblige you before that at all.] (15).

निवेक्ष्ये देहि मे मार्गं सुरसायै नमोऽस्तु ते ।
इत्युक्ता पुनरेवाह सुरसा क्षुधितास्म्यहम् ॥ १६॥
प्रविश्य गच्छ मे वक्त्रं नो चेत्त्वां भक्षयाम्यहम् ।
इत्युक्तो हनुमानाह मुखं शीघ्रं विदारय ॥ १७॥
प्रविश्य वदनं तेऽद्य गच्छामि त्वरयान्वितः ।
इत्युक्त्वा योजनायामदेहो भूत्वा पुरः स्थितः ॥ १८॥

nivekṣye dehi me mārgaṃ surasāyai namo'stu te ।
ityuktā punarevāha surasā kṣudhitāsmyaham ॥ 16॥
praviśya gaccha me vaktraṃ no cettvāṃ bhakṣayāmyaham ।
ityukto hanumānāha mukhaṃ śīghraṃ vidāraya ॥ 17॥
praviśya vadanam te'dya gacchāmi tvarayānviṭaḥ ।
ityuktvā yojanāyāmadeho bhūtvā puraḥ sthitaḥ ॥ 18॥

16-18. Oh Sursa! I bow before you and request you to leave my path'.

At this request of Hanuman, Sursa replied, 'I am very hungry (16). So, enter my mouth at least once, and then you can come out to proceed further on your journey. Otherwise, I shall eat you up entirely.

[To wit, let us adopt a middle path. First fulfill my wish by entering my mouth, and then I shall oblige you by letting you fulfill your part of the bargain—by letting you escape for the time being so that you can continue with your journey. If you don't do this, then be sure I shall devour you entirely, and once you are in my stomach, surely you would be dead.]'

Then Hanuman said, 'Alright. If that is the case, then open your mouth quickly (17). I shall enter your body, and then proceed to Lanka once I come out of it'. Saying so, Hanuman spread his body for 1 Yojan (8 miles), and stood before her (18).

[Note—Sursa was sent by the Gods to test Hanuman's intelligence and wit. So he agreed with Sursa's proposal, but then started expanding his body step-by-step in a progressive manner, always one size larger than her open mouth, so that it would become impossible for her to be able to put him inside the it's cavity as will be evident in the verses that follow herein below.

Sursa was not to be easily defeated in this war-of-wits. So she also started enlarging the size of her open mouth, which resembled a wide entrance of a huge cave. The more Sursa enlarged and widened her mouth, the more Hanuman expanded his own body, till a time came when their sizes, the colossal body of Hanuman as he stood like a gigantic statue before the grand and bottomless abyss represented by the wide open mouth of Sursa, surprised even the Gods.

When Sursa's mouth reached its widest and highest point, her forehead touched the sky, her eyes resembled a giant planet observed at fearfully close range, and her lower lips and the cheeks resembled a grand canyon dug deep into the earth with its protruding cliff! Hanuman, on his part, always outwitted her by assuming a size that was consistently larger, wider and higher than her fully open mouth.]

दृष्ट्वा हनूमतो रूपं सुरसा पञ्चयोजनम् ।
मुखं चकार हनुमान् द्विगुणं रूपमादधत् ॥ १९॥
ततश्चकार सुरसा योजनानां च विंशतिम् ।
वक्त्रं चकार हनुमांस्त्रिंशद्योजनसम्मितम् ॥ २०॥

dr̥ṣṭvā hanūmato rūpaṃ surasā pañcayojanam ।
mukhaṃ cakāra hanumān dviguṇaṃ rūpamādadhat ॥ 19॥
tataścakāra surasā yojanānāṃ ca viṃśatim ।
vaktraṃ cakāra hanumāṃstrīṣadyojanasammitam ॥ 20॥

19-20. Seeing this huge form of Hanuman, Sursa expanded her mouth to 5 Yojans (40 miles). Then Hanuman doubled the size of his body (19). Thereafter, Sursa widened her body to 20 Yojans (160 miles), and Hanuman to 30 Yojans (240 miles) (20).

ततश्चकार सुरसा पञ्चाशद्योजनायतम् ।
वक्त्रं तदा हनुमांस्तु बभूवाङ्गुष्ठसन्निभः ॥ २१॥
प्रविश्य वदनं तस्याः पुनरेत्य पुरः स्थितः ।

प्रविष्टो निर्गतोऽहं ते वदनं देवि ते नमः ॥ २२॥

tataścakāra surasā pañcāśadyo janāyatam ।
vaktraṃ tadā hanūmāṃstu babhūvāṅguṣṭhasannibhaḥ ॥ 21॥
praviśya vadanam tasyāḥ punaretya puraḥ sthitaḥ ।
praviṣṭo nirgato'haṃ te vadanam devi te namaḥ ॥ 22॥

21-22. Finally when Sursa had spread and widened her mouth for 50 Yojans (approximately 400 miles), Hanuman suddenly reduced his size to become as small as a thumb (21), entered her mouth, and immediately coming out it he stood before her politely. He respectfully said to her, 'Oh goddess (devi)! I have entered your body (i.e. your mouth) and have come out as you had desired. Now I bid farewell to you by bowing respectfully before you (22).

[Note—The yawning gap of 50 Yojans or $50 \times 8 = 400$ miles between the lower and the upper lips of Sursa is not a joke. One can well visualise the proportionate size of Sursa's eyes, tongue, nose, chin etc. with such a colossus mouth. Then suddenly Hanuman reduced himself to the size of a thumb, i.e. a few centimeters. For all practical purposes, it was like trying to see a fly with naked eyes from a distance of roughly 400 miles or so! Hanuman slipped in and came out easily, and un-noticed, from the vast gaping hole of the cavernous mouth of Sursa, who seemed to by yawning, to keep her words. Sursa realised then that Hanuman was far cleverer than what she had expected, as is evident in the next verse.]

एवं वदन्तं दृष्ट्वा सा हनूमन्तमथाब्रवीत् ।
गच्छ साधय रामस्य कार्यं बुद्धिमतां वर ॥ २३॥
देवैः सम्प्रेषिताहं ते बलं जिज्ञासुभिः कपे ।
दृष्ट्वा सीतां पुनर्गत्वा रामं द्रक्ष्यसि गच्छ भोः ॥ २४॥

evaṃ vadantaṃ drṣṭvā sā hanūmantamathābravīt ।
gaccha sādahaya rāmasya kāryaṃ buddhimatāṃ vara ॥ 23॥
devaiḥ sampreṣitāhaṃ te balaṃ jijñāsubhiḥ kape ।
drṣṭvā sītāṃ punargatvā rāmaṃ drakṣyasi gaccha bhoḥ ॥ 24॥

23-24. Hearing Hanuman say so, Sursa replied, 'Oh the best amongst the intelligent and wise ones! Go and successfully complete Lord Sri Ram's work (23). Oh Kapi (literally a monkey; word used for Hanuman as he belonged to this race)! The Gods wished to know about your intelligence, wit, strength, courage, prowess and valour. So it is they who have sent me to you. I am now convinced that you shall see Sita, and come back to meet Lord Sri Ram very soon. You can go now (as you have my permission and blessings)!

[To wit, I am satisfied that you have the skill and the intelligence to be successful in this hazardous enterprise; you will always outwit your opponent, it's sure. Now I shall go and make my report to the Gods.]' (24).

इत्युक्त्वा सा ययौ देवलोकं वायुसुतः पुनः ।
जगाम वायुमार्गेण गरुत्मानिव पक्षिराट् ॥ २५॥
समुद्रोऽप्याह मैनाकं मणिकाञ्चनपर्वतम् ।
गच्छत्येष महासत्त्वो हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः ॥ २६॥
रामस्य कार्यसिद्ध्यर्थं तस्य त्वं सचिवो भव ।
सगरैर्वर्द्धितो यस्मात्पुराहं सागरोऽभवम् ॥ २७॥

ityuktvā sā yayau devalokaṃ vāyusutaḥ punaḥ ।
jagāma vāyumārgeṇa garutmāniva pakṣirāṭ ॥ 25॥
samudro'pyāha mainākaṃ maṇikāñcanaparvatam ।
gacchatyeṣa mahāsattvo hanūmānmārutātmajaḥ ॥ 26॥
rāmasya kāryasiddhyartham tasya tvaṃ sacivo bhava ।
sagarairvarddhito yasmātpurāhaṃ sāgaro'bhavam ॥ 27॥

25-27. Saying so, Sursa went back to the abode of Gods, and Hanuman resumed his flight across the path of the sky, literally ‘the path taken by the wind’, a path that is also the one by which Garud, the king of the birds (and the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu), flies (25).

At about this time, the ocean said to Mt. Mainak, a mountain that was liberally endowed with precious metals such as gold and priceless stones known as gems, 'Hanuman, who is exceptionally strong and a valiant son of the wind god (26), who is also a messenger of Lord Sri Ram, is on his way to do his work. You must help him. In some previous time, the sons of the great legendary king Sagar had created me¹, and I am called ‘Sagar’ (meaning an ‘ocean’) after him.

[Hence, king ‘Sagar’ is my ancestor, and he is also an ancestor of Lord Ram. So we two are related. Since Hanuman is on a mission of Lord Ram, I am obliged to help him. You, Mt. Mainak, live in my realm; so I request you to stand up and welcome Hanuman; afford him some time to rest and refresh himself before proceeding ahead on his mission.] (27).

[Note—¹The ocean is called “Saagar” in Sanskrit, and this name is derived from the name of a great king of the line to which Lord Ram belongs. This king was named ‘Sagar’, and his sons had dug up the earth in search of the sacrificial horse of their father that was hidden by Indra, the king of gods. The hollow thus created was filled with water, creating what is now known as the ‘ocean’.

Mt. Mainak was a huge volcanic mountain on the bed of the ocean, but its peak remained under the surface of water. It was like the many small islands we see dotting the ocean, some inhabited and others barren. So essentially, the ocean here asks Mainak to rise to the surface of the water so that Hanuman, if he so wishes, could take some rest. Remember: Lanka was about 100 Yojans, or 800 miles roughly, from the shore of the ocean from where Hanuman launched himself; there was nothing but an endless stretch of water everywhere, as far as the eye could see. So, an island would be a welcome sight for Hanuman to take some rest and re-energise before proceeding ahead.

Briefly, the story of how the ocean derived its name from king Sagar is as follows: King Sagar had done a great horse sacrifice known as ‘Ashwamedh Yagya’. This sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of Gods who was renowned for his

mischievous and jealous nature, in the guise of a demon. The reason was that king Sagar had already done 99 such sacrifices, and if he successfully completed this 100th sacrifice, he would have become eligible for the stature of Indra. This Indra could not tolerate.

Now, king Sagar ordered his sixty thousand sons to go and find the horse. They dug up the entire earth in search of the horse, pursuing Indra relentlessly. During the process all the creatures who lived on the earth suffered immensely because their homes were demolished and they were uprooted from their natural habitats. This was what Indra wanted—to instigate Sagar to commit some sort of blunder that would invite the wrath of the creatures and the Brahmins, thereby inviting his own ruin. The Gods rushed to their patriarch Brahma, complaining about the developments. Brahma comforted them that they should not worry because Lord Vishnu who is responsible for the welfare of the creation would certainly do something to rectify the damage and punish the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, even after searching the earth the sons could not find the sacrificial horse. When they reported this to their father, king Sagar, he strongly rebuked them and ordered them to go back and search once again. This time around, they dug up the subterranean world. Ultimately, they reached the hermitage of sage Kapil on the shore of the eastern ocean. The mischievous Indra had hidden the horse there, but sage Kapil had no idea that it was a stolen sacrificial horse. So, when Sagar's sons saw the horse there, they concluded that it was stolen by the sage, and they haughtily challenged him. The sage was very angry, and he cursed them, reducing them to ashes.

When these sixty thousand sons did not return even after a long time, king Sagar ordered his grandson Anshumaan to go and find out what had happened. Anshumaan followed the path taken by his uncles, and finally reached the place where he saw their ashes in a huge mound. Lamenting and grieving, he wanted to perform their last rites. He also found the horse grazing nearby. For doing the last rites he needed water. Just at that time, Lord Garuda (the mount of Lord Vishnu), who was the maternal uncle of his own uncles, came there and told Anshumaan that ordinary water won't liberate his uncles because they were reduced to ashes by the curse of a great sage named Kapil. For this, the water of the holy river Ganges is needed. So he must go and make an effort to bring Ganges to earth so that its water can flow over the ashes and provide your uncles deliverance. Meanwhile, he should take the sacrificial horse and go home to his grandfather.

King Sagar completed his sacrifice and returned to his capital. He did not know how to bring the celestial river of Gods to earth, and he died without accomplishing the task. After his death, Anshumaan ascended the throne. His son was king Dilip. Anshumaan abdicated the throne in favour of his son and went to the Himalayas to do severe Tapa, and died there.

King Dilip had a son named Bhagirath. Dilip did many sacrifices in order to bring river Ganges to earth so that his ancestor's souls could find deliverance, but failed. Worried and frustrated he fell sick and died.

Meanwhile, Bhagirath had no sons, but he still was determined to bring Ganges to earth and fulfill the long cherished desire of his father, grandfather and great grandfather. So he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his wise ministers and went to do the severest form of Tapa one can imagine of. His determination and noble resolve pleased Brahma, the creator, who revealed himself before him and asked him to request for a boon. Bhagirath replied that if Brahma really wants to grant him something then he should bless him that he be able to bring Ganges to earth and

wash his ancestors with its holy water so that they can find deliverance. Brahma advised him that he must please Lord Shiva and request him to accept the river on his head prior to its reaching the surface of the earth—because if the river fell directly upon the earth it would split the latter into two with its tremendous force.

So, Bhagirath prayed to Shiva who was more than willing to accept Ganges on his head because the Lord knew that the river had its origin in the foot of Lord Vishnu. As soon as Shiva gave his consent to bear the river on his head, Brahma let his Kamandalu tilt and thus the mighty river Ganges came cascading down with a thunderous force to land upon the matted hairs of Lord Shiva. Ganges was very proud of its own origin and powers, so it thought that it will push Shiva to the under-world by its sheer force. Shiva wanted to teach Ganges a lesson not to be haughty, so the Lord contained the might of the swirling waters of the haughty Ganges in the lock of hairs on his head so much so that the river almost got lost amidst its huge crevices.

Bhagirath was confounded: after all the efforts made by him, the river still failed to reach the ground. So he did Tapa again to please Lord Shiva and ask him to allow Ganges to fall down to earth. Pleased with his sincerity and devotion, Lord Shiva allowed a thin stream of Ganges to escape from his head and fall in the 'Bindu-sarovar (lake)'. Immediately upon reaching this lake, Ganges branched off into seven streams. The seventh stream followed king Bhagirath who lead its path on a chariot to the spot where the ashes of his ancestors lay. As soon as the holy water of the Ganges touched the ashes, the souls of the sixty thousand sons of king Sagar found liberation and deliverance.

At that time, Brahma appeared and blessed Bhagirath that henceforth Ganges would be deemed to be his daughter and bear his name. It would be known by three names—viz. 'Tripatha-gaa', 'Dibya' and 'Bhagirathi'. Hence, the holy river Ganges also came to be known as 'Bhagirathi', the daughter of Bhagirath. Since it flows in the whole of the three worlds, the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world, it is known as 'Tripatha-gaa'—that which flows on three paths. And since it is a holy and divine river, it is known as 'Dibya'—the divine and holy one.]

तस्यान्वये बभूवासौ रामो दाशरथिः प्रभुः ।
तस्य कार्यार्थसिद्ध्यर्थं गच्छत्येष महाकपिः ॥ २८॥
त्वमुत्तिष्ठ जलात्तूर्णं त्वयि विश्रम्य गच्छतु ।
स तथेति प्रादुरभूज्जलमध्यान्महोन्नतः ॥ २९॥

tasyānvaye babhūvāsau rāmo dāśarathiḥ prabhuḥ ।
tasya kāryārthasiddhyartham gacchatyeṣa mahākapiḥ ॥ 28॥
tvamuttiṣṭha jalāttūrṇam tvayi viśramya gacchatu ।
sa tatheti prādurabhūjjalamadhyānmahonnataḥ ॥ 29॥

28-29. Lord Ram, the son of Dasrath, has been born in that illustrious family to which king Sagar belonged, and this great monkey (Hanuman) is going with the purpose of accomplishing his task (28).

So I request you (Mt. Mainak) to rise above the water so that he can have some rest upon you before proceeding further'.

Saying 'alright', the mountain raised itself high above the surface of water in the centre of the ocean (29).

नानामणिमयैः शृङ्गैस्तस्योपरि नराकृतिः ।
 पूह यान्तं हनूमन्तं मैनाकोऽहं महाकपे ॥ ३०॥
 समुद्रेण समादिष्टस्त्वद्विश्रमाय मारुते ।
 आगच्छामृतकल्पानि जग्ध्वा पक्वफलानि मे ॥ ३१॥

nānāmaṇimayaiḥ śṛṅgaistasyopari narākṛtiḥ ।
 prāha yāntaṁ hanūmantaṁ maināko'haṁ mahākape ॥ 30॥
 samudreṇa samādiṣṭastvadviśrāmāya mārute ।
 āgacchāmṛtakalpāni jagdhvā pakvaphalāni me ॥ 31॥

30-31. It was a fantastic mountain that was fabulously endowed with numerous gem-studded peaks. It assumed a human form (narākṛtiḥ), and stood atop one of the peaks.

He said to Hanuman, 'Oh the great monkey; oh Hanuman (mahākape; hanūmantaṁ)! I am Mainak (maināko'haṁ). The ocean has ordered me to give you some rest. Come; please partake of some of my offerings; come and taste some of my fruits that are ripe, sweet and succulent (31).

विश्रम्यात् क्षणं पश्चादमिष्यसि यथासुखम् ।
 एवमुक्तोऽथ तं पूह हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः ॥ ३२॥
 गच्छतो रामकार्यार्थं भक्षणं मे कथं भवेत् ।
 विश्रामो वा कथं मे स्याद्वन्तव्यं त्वरितं मया ॥ ३३॥

viśramyātra kṣaṇaṁ paścādgamiṣyasi yathāsukham ।
 evamukto'tha taṁ prāha hanūmānmārutātmajaḥ ॥ 32॥
 gacchato rāmakāryārthaṁ bhakṣaṇaṁ me kathaṁ bhavet ।
 viśrāmo vā kathaṁ me syādgantavyaṁ tvaritaṁ mayā ॥ 33॥

32-33. Rest here for a while, and then you can cheerfully proceed ahead'.

When Mainak had said so, the son of the wind-god, Hanuman, replied, 'How can I rest or eat anything while on my way to do Lord Ram's work. (I don't want to waste even a single moment.) I have to go in haste, so where is the time for leisure and taking rest?' (33)

इत्युक्त्वा स्पृष्टशिखरः कराग्रेण ययौ कपिः ।
 किञ्चिद्दूरं गतस्यास्य छायां छायाग्रहोऽग्रहीत् ॥ ३४॥
 सिंहिका नाम सा घोरा जलमध्ये स्थिता सदा ।
 आकाशगामिनां छायामाकूच्याकृष्य भक्षयेत् ॥ ३५॥

ityuktvā sprṣṭaśikharaḥ karāgreṇa yayau kapiḥ ।
 kiñciddūraṁ gatasyaśya chāyāṁ chāyāgraho'grahīt ॥ 34॥
 siṁhikā nāma sā ghorā jalamadhye sthitā sadā ।

ākāśagāmināṃ chāyāmākramyākṛṣya bhakṣayet ॥ 35॥

34-35. Saying this, and in order to honour Mainak's request, Hanuman simply touched its peak with his fingers and proceeded ahead.

He had gone but a little distance only when a 'Chhaya Grahi' caught hold of his shadow falling on the water. [The "Chhaya Grahi" is a creature who possesses a magical power that enables it to catch hold of a shadow of those flying overhead. The flier cannot move ahead, and is pulled down.]¹ (34).

She was a very formidable and ferocious female demon by the name of "Singhika", who stayed in the water and caught hold of the shadow of all creatures flying in the sky above the ocean; then she pulled them down and devoured them (35).

[Note—¹It could have been some sort of a 'radar' or some other powerful instrument that was installed by Ravana in the ocean to protect Lanka against intrusion by any flying object coming in from the mainland lying to the north of Lanka. We can say that this 'radar' was called "Singhika" as it was manned by a demoness of the same name. We will see a similar example a little later, when Hanuman faces another obstacle known as "Lankini". She was the chief female demon gate-keeper of the fort of Lanka, and hence got her name "Lankini" from the city of Lanka that she protected.

So, it is quite probable that this demoness Singhika was actually a high-powered military device like a radar that was installed in the ocean by Ravana to help guard the frontiers of Lanka from as far afield as the middle of the ocean.

Singhika constantly scanned the skies for flying objects, and prevented all spies and other intruders from entering Lanka. If the flying object was friendly, she would let it pass; if she suspected foul play, she simply held its shadow by some means and pulled it down. This phenomenon of 'holding the shadow of a flying object' could be a technically advanced instrument that could hold objects in the sky by interfering in their flying path by shooting some kind of strong electromagnetic rays, or by some other means of using magnetic field and electronic waves for interference.]

तया गृहीतो हनुमांश्चिन्तयामास वीर्यवान् ।
केनेदं मे कृतं वेगरोधनं विघ्नकारिणा ॥ ३६॥
दृश्यते नैव कोऽप्यत्र विस्मयो मे प्रजायते ।
एवं विचिन्त्य हनुमानधो दृष्टिं प्रसारयत् ॥ ३७॥
तत्र दृष्ट्वा महाकायां सिंहिकां घोररूपिणीम् ।
पपात सलिले तूर्णं पद्भ्यामेवाहनद्रुषा ॥ ३८॥

tayā grhīto hanumāṃścintayāmāsa vīryavān ।
kenedaṃ me kṛtaṃ vegarodhanaṃ vighnakāriṇā ॥ 36॥
drśyate naiva ko'pyatra vismayo me prajāyate ।
evaṃ vicintya hanumānadho drṣṭiṃ prasārayat ॥ 37॥
tatra drṣṭvā mahākāyāṃ siṃhikāṃ ghorarūpiṇīm ।
papāta salile tūrṇaṃ padbhyāmevāhanadruṣā ॥ 38॥

36-38. On being caught by her, the brave and courageous Hanuman thought, 'What is this mysterious obstacle that is dragging me down during my flight, as it has put a break on my speed?' (36). There is nothing visible here on the surface. This is a great mystery for me.'

While wondering thus he looked downwards (37). When he saw Singhika, who had a most frightful countenance, ferocious manners, and a huge body, he immediately jumped in the water and killed her with his kicks (38).

पुनरुत्प्लुत्य हनूमान् दक्षिणाभिमुखो ययौ ।
ततो दक्षिणमासाद्य कूलं नानाफलद्रुमम् ॥ ३९॥
नानापक्षिमृगाकीर्णं नानापुष्पलतावृतम् ।
ततो ददर्श नगरं त्रिकूटाचलमूर्धनि ॥ ४०॥
प्राकारैर्बहुभिर्युक्तं परिखाभिश्च सर्वतः ।
प्रवेक्ष्यामि कथं लङ्कामिति चिन्तापरोऽभवत् ॥ ४१॥

punarutplutya hanūmān dakṣiṇābhimukho yayau ।
tato dakṣiṇamāsādyā kūlaṃ nānāphaladrūmaṃ ॥ 39॥
nānāpakṣimṛgākīrṇaṃ nānāpuṣpalatāvṛtaṃ ।
tato dadarśa nagaraṃ trikūṭācalamūrdhani ॥ 40॥
prākārairbahubhīryuktaṃ parikhābhiśca sarvataḥ ।
pravekṣyāmi kathaṃ laṅkāmiti cintāparo'bhavat ॥ 41॥

39-41. After that, Hanuman leapt up and rapidly moved southwards to finally reach the southern shore of the ocean¹. [To wit, Hanuman had finally reached Lanka and landed on its soil.]

After setting foot on this alien land, he observed that it was a verdant green land. There were various types of fruit trees (39); the land was full of different types of birds and animals, and it was covered by numerous flowering creepers.

From a vantage point, Hanuman observed the city of Lanka which was established atop a magnificent mountain called 'Trikoote' (i.e. a mountain with three wonderful summits) (40).

It (Lanka) was surrounded on all the sides by many rings of walls and moats. Beholding this awe-inspiring sight, Hanuman started wondering about the plan he ought to adopt to find an entrance inside the city² (41).

[Note—¹The “south shore” of the ocean is so-named as it lay on the southern edge of the ocean. Lanka was a big island, not a small isle or islet. So from the perspective of the viewer who flew in from the northern direction across the ocean to land on the shores of Lanka, it was like “landing on the southern shore of the ocean”.

This being the case, from the perspective of the same flier who has already landed in Lanka, the shore of the ocean on the other side from where he started on his journey for Lanka would be the “northern shore of the ocean”. By this same token, the shore which lied at the southern tip of the mainland, and from where the ocean stretched down, would be the “southern shore” for him when he wishes to name it after travelling down to it from up north across the mainland.

²Lanka was a very strong fort, well planned and well protected with many concentric rings of walls and ramparts that were encircled by moats. Hanuman began to plan how to penetrate this virtually impregnable citadel of the demon race.]

रात्रौ वेक्ष्यामि सूक्ष्मोऽहं लङ्कां रावणपालिताम् ।
 एवं विचिन्त्य तत्रैव स्थित्वा लङ्कां जगाम सः ॥ ४२॥
 धृत्वा सूक्ष्मं वपुर्द्वारं प्रविवेश प्रतापवान् ।
 तत्र लङ्कापुरी साक्षाद्राक्षसीवेषधारिणी ॥ ४३॥

rātrau vekṣyāmi sūkṣmo'haṃ laṅkāṃ rāvaṇapālītām ।
 evaṃ vicintya tatraiva sthitvā laṅkāṃ jagāma saḥ ॥ 42॥
 dhṛtvā sūkṣmaṃ vapurdvāraṃ praviveśa pratāpavān ।
 tatra laṅkāpurī sākṣādrākṣasīveṣadhāriṇī ॥ 43॥

42-43. Then he finally decided that he shall enter the city, which was looked after (i.e. ruled; administered) by Ravana, the king of the demon race, during the night by assuming a very small body (so that he can quietly sneak in without being noticed and unnecessarily creating a fuss).

So he waited there near the sea shore, and at nightfall he started for the city (42). At the time, when the valiant and strong Hanuman entered the city in a miniature form, the patron deity of the city of Lanka had personified itself in the form of a demoness (called Lankini), and stood at the entrance to guard it¹ (43).

[Note—¹All the walls of the great fort of Lanka were impregnable; they were high, well guarded, and had no holes through which an entry could be managed. To enter Lanka therefore, there was only one entrance, and this entry point was guarded by a ferocious female demon named Lankini. She was believed to be the patron deity of Lanka; and hence very powerful and able. It was her duty to guard the city from intruders. Hanuman's first encounter after landing was with her.]

प्रविशन्तं हनूमन्तं दृष्ट्वा लङ्का व्यतर्जयत् ।
 कस्त्वं वानररूपेण मामनादृत्य लङ्किकीम् ॥ ४४॥
 प्रविश्य चोखद्रात्रौ किं भवान् कर्तुमिच्छति ।
 इत्युक्त्वा रोषताम्राक्षी पादेनाभिजघान तम् ॥ ४५॥

praviśantaṃ hanūmantaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā laṅkā vyatarjayat ।
 kastvaṃ vānararūpeṇa māmanādr̥tya laṅkinīm ॥ 44॥
 praviśya coravadrātrau kiṃ bhavān kartumicchati ।
 ityuktvā roṣatāmrākṣī pādenābhijaghāna tam ॥ 45॥

44-45. When she saw Hanuman entering the city, she challenged him and asked, 'Who are you in the form of a monkey who has the temerity to insult (or undermine) my authority, who am called the Lankini? (44). Why are you entering the city like a thief? What do you want to do here?'

Saying this, she made her eyes red with anger and indignation, and kicked him fiercely in contempt (45).

हनुमानपि तां वाममुष्टिनावज्ञयाहन्त् ।
तदैव पतिता भूमौ रक्तमुद्रमती भृशम् ॥ ४६॥
उत्थाय प्राह सा लङ्का हनूमन्तं महाबलम् ।
हनूमन् गच्छ भद्रं ते जिता लङ्का त्वयानघ ॥ ४७॥

hanumānapi tāṃ vāmamuṣṭināvajñāyāhanat ।
tadaiva patitā bhūmau raktamudvamatiḥ bhṛśam ॥ 46॥
utthāya prāha sā laṅkā hanūmantam mahābalaṃ ।
hanūman gaccha bhadraṃ te jitā laṅkā tvayānagha ॥ 47॥

46-47. Ignoring her questions, Hanuman punched her hard with his left hand, at which she spitted (vomited) a lot of blood and fell down on the ground, swooning and completely vexed (46).

After sometime she recovered herself and got up. She said to him, 'Oh Hanuman! Go, you be blessed! Oh Anagh (one who is pure, sinless and faultless; one who is honourable and respectable), you have already won over the city of Lanka in a symbolic way¹ (47).

[Note—¹You have defeated me, the one who is the patron deity of this place. This means that you have symbolically won Lanka, as I am supposed to protect it. My defeat is a symbolic defeat of Lanka; in the same vein, your victory over me is your symbolic victory of Lanka. So go in now, I bless you.]

पुराहं ब्रह्मणा प्रोक्ता ह्यष्टाविंशतिपर्यये ।
त्रैतायुगे दाशरथी रामो नारायणोऽव्ययः ॥ ४८॥
जनिष्यते योगमाया सीता जनकवेश्मनि ।
भूभारहरणार्थाय प्रार्थितोऽयं मया क्वचित् ॥ ४९॥

purāhaṃ brahmaṇā proktā hyaṣṭāvīṃśatiparyaye ।
tretāyuge dāśarathī rāmo nārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ ॥ 48॥
janiṣyate yogamāyā sītā janakaveśmani ।
bhūbhāraharaṇārthāya prārthito'yaṃ mayā kvacit ॥ 49॥

48-49. In an ancient time, Lord Brahma (the Creator) had told me that during the Treta Yuga of the 28th four-Yuga cycle, the imperishable and eternal Lord Narayan shall manifest himself in the form of Lord Ram, as the son of king Dasrath (of Ayodhya). His Yogmaya (literally, the infinite cosmic energy and dynamism that drives everything in this creation, and which has its origin in the meditative and contemplative state of the Supreme Being who is also known as Brahm) shall manifest its self in the household of king Janak as Sita, his daughter. The Creator had told me all this because in some earlier time I had prayed to him to somehow devise a

mean to remove the burden of the earth (in the form of the horrors and torments unleashed on earth by the demons who were evil and cruel to the extreme)¹ (48-49).

[Note—¹It must be noted here that Ravana's own defenses, which he thought were impregnable, were actually very fragile and infested by traitors and selfish elements who had no real loyalty to him, who were dissatisfied by his rule, and wished quietly for his downfall even though they may have not been vocal on this emotion for fear of death and torture.

As we can clearly see in the case of Lankini, those who were supposed to guard and protect the city of Lanka and their ruler Ravana with their lives, and till the last breath in their bodies, were internally inclined towards his destruction.

Notwithstanding the spiritual outlook of these individuals, and that they were concerned and offended by the singular evil nature of their king Ravana, such disloyal elements in his kingdom as represented by Lankini in the present case, proved to be his undoing; they were the ones who hammered the last nail in the coffin of Ravana's destiny; they were the fatal chinks in his so-called invincible and impregnable armour, and the betrayals by such individuals on whom he had reposed full faith and trust led to the downfall of this otherwise invincible demon ruler. See also verse nos. 54-56 below in this context.

By-and-by we shall come across other instances when Ravana's own kin went against him, and one outstanding example is his own brother Vibhishan who was instrumental in his death; and another example is that of Ravana's wife Mandodari who had no compunctions in praising her husband's enemy, Lord Ram, in lavish terms, while making it look as if her husband Ravana was an utter fool and arrogant creature because he did not agree to her entreaty to capitulate before Lord Ram.

To be frank and to do justice to Ravana, which self-respecting king would agree to surrender before his enemy without an honourable fight, even though that king may principally be at fault as Ravana indeed was in this case as he was the one who had taken the first wrong step by kidnapping Lord Ram's wife Sita, an act that can never be justified and can never be called right and honourable by any account whatsoever.]

सभार्यो राघवो भ्रात्रा गमिष्यति महावनम् ।
तत्र सीतां महामायां रावणोऽपहरिष्यति ॥ ५०॥
पश्चादरामेण साचिव्यं सुग्रीवस्य भविष्यति ।
सुग्रीवो जानकीं द्रष्टुं वानरान् प्रेषयिष्यति ॥ ५१॥

sabhāryo rāghavo bhrātrā gamiṣyati mahāvanam ।
tatra sītāṃ mahāmāyāṃ rāvaṇo'pahariṣyati ॥ 50॥
paścādarāmeṇa sācivyam sugrīvasya bhaviṣyati ।
sugrīvo jānakīṃ draṣṭuṃ vānarān preṣayiṣyati ॥ 51॥

50-51. [Brahma told me that—] Raghav (Lord Sri Ram), accompanied by his wife (Sita) and brother (Laxman), would go to the great forest. There, Ravana would abduct Sita who represents the Lord's great delusion creating powers known as 'Maha-maya' (50).

After that, he (Lord Ram) will have Sugriv as his chief advisor and minister (sācivyaṃ sugrīvasya), and the latter would dispatch monkeys in search of Janki (Sita) (51).

तत्रैको वानरो रात्रावागमिष्यति तेऽन्तिकम् ।
त्वया च भर्त्सितः सोऽपि त्वां हनिष्यति मुष्टिना ॥ ५२॥
तेनाहता त्वं व्यथिता भविष्यसि यदानग्रे ।
तदैव रावणस्यान्तो भविष्यति न संशयः ॥ ५३॥

tatraiko vānaro rātrāvāgamiṣyati te'ntikam ।
tvayā ca bhartsitaḥ so'pi tvāṃ haniṣyati muṣṭinā ॥ 52॥
tenāhatā tvam vyathitā bhaviṣyasi yadānaghe ।
tadaiva rāvaṇasyānto bhaviṣyati na saṃśayaḥ ॥ 53॥

52-53. Out of them, one monkey will come to you during the night. When you would challenge and reproach him, he will punch you with his clenched fists (52).

Oh Anagh¹! At the time when you get injured when he hits you hard, making you stunned and perplexed, you can then be sure that Ravana's end is near at hand. There is no doubt about it' (53).

[Note—¹The word “Anagh” means one who is honourable and respectable; one who is sinless, faultless and immaculate. Use of this epithet for Lankini by Brahma was meant to imply that though she would serve the sinful Ravana and live amongst evil demons yet she would be internally pure and not touched by the vices that dominate the character of the demon race in general.]

तस्मात् त्वया जिता लङ्का जितं सर्वं त्वयानग ।
रावणान्तःपुरवरे क्रीडाकाननमुत्तमम् ॥ ५४॥
तन्मध्येऽशोकवनिका दिव्यपादपसङ्कुला ।
अस्ति तस्यां महावृक्षः शिंशपा नाम मध्यगः ॥ ५५॥
तत्रास्ते जानकी घोरराक्षसीभिः सुरक्षिता ।
दृष्ट्वैव गच्छ त्वरितं राघवाय निवेदय ॥ ५६॥

tasmāt tvayā jitā laṅkā jitaṃ sarvaṃ tvayānagha ।
rāvaṇāntaḥpuravare krīḍākānanamuttamam ॥ 54॥
tanmadhye'sokavanikā divyapādapasaṅkulā ।
asti tasyāṃ mahāvṛkṣaḥ śiṃśapā nāma madhyagaḥ ॥ 55॥
tatrāste jānakī ghorarākṣasībhiḥ surakṣitā ।
dr̥ṣṭvaiva gaccha tvaritaṃ rāghavāya nivedaya ॥ 56॥

54-56. [Lankini told Hanuman—] Hence, oh the sinless one (tvayānagha), since you have vanquished me who represents Lanka, you have deemed to vanquish all, both the city of Lanka as well as those who live in it! [To wit, if you can conquer me, the Lankini who is the personification of the patron goddess of Lanka with the mandate to

protect the city, you have literally won everything and everyone associated with Lanka. This is Brahma's prophesy, and hence it is the truth.]

So now, listen to me carefully. Within the precincts of the royal palace of Ravana, there is a beautiful and most excellent garden for the purpose of enjoyment, amusement and pleasure (54). In it is a grove of trees called 'Ashok Van' which has beautiful trees that are magnificent in all respects. In the centre of this superb garden there is large tree called 'Shinshupa' ("mahāvṛkṣaḥ śiṃśapā nāma"; the Indian rose wood tree—*Delbergia Sisu*)¹ (55). Janki (Sita) stays there (i.e. sits there) under the constant vigil and care of ferocious demoness (who are deputed to guard her every moment of the day).

So now go, have her Darshan (sacred sight), and inform Lord Ram about her as soon as possible² (56).

[Note—¹According to Ram Charit Manas and other texts of Tulsidas, the tree under which Sita sat was called the Ashok tree, instead of the Shinshupa tree as said here.

²What a betrayal, what a disloyalty and treason! Had it not been for the likes of Lankini, Vibhishan and Mandodari etc. in Ravana's camp, he would have been truly unconquerable. They openly betrayed him and sided with Lord Ram. Taking into account how certain individuals in Ravana's camp acted, if one were to take a neutral view, would their behaviour and attitude against their own king, and in favour of his enemy, not amount to disloyalty, betrayal and treason?]

धन्याहमप्यद्य चिराय राघवस्मृतिर्ममासीद्भवपाशमोचिनी ।

तद्भक्तसङ्गोऽप्यतिदुर्लभो मम प्रसीदतां दाशरथिः सदा हृदि ॥ ५७॥

dhanyāhamapyadya cirāya rāghavasmr̥tirmamāsīdbhavapāśamocinī ।

tadbhaktasaṅgo'pyatidurlabho mama prasīdatāṃ dāśarathiḥ sadā hr̥di ॥ 57॥

57. Today, after a long time, I have been able to remember Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) who can destroy all the fetters that shackle a living being to this gross, mundane world marked by delusions and artificiality, a world that traps the creature in an endless cycle of transmigration.

I have also had the privilege of having contact and communion with the Lord's devotee (here, referring to Hanuman), which is very rare.

Hence, I can say with certainty that I feel very blessed; I am indeed lucky and most privileged. I pray that the son of Dasrath (i.e. Lord Ram), who always resides in my heart, be also pleased with me¹ (57).

[Note—¹Lankini has expressed her total allegiance to Lord Ram and loyalty to his interests. She has told Hanuman where Sita was, and then clearly hinted that she will not hinder his journey back home when she told him to go and inform Lord Ram about Sita as soon as he can—refer: verse nos. 55-56.

The assurance of Lankini, that since Hanuman has overcome her he can take it for granted that he has symbolically subdued everyone in Lanka (verse no. 54), helped to build Hanuman's confidence. So when he finally entered the city he was doubly sure of success.]

उत्ताङ्घ्रितेऽब्धौ पवनात्मजेन धरासुतायाश्च दशाननस्य ।
पुष्फोर वामाक्षि भुजश्च तीव्रं रामस्य दक्षाङ्गमतीन्द्रियस्य ॥ ५८॥

ullaṅghite'bdhau pavanātmajena dharāsutāyāśca daśānanasya ।
pusphora vāmākṣi bhujaśca tīvraṃ rāmasya dakṣāṅgamatīndriyasya ॥ 58॥

58. As soon as the son of the wind-god (Hanuman) had crossed the ocean, omens began to occur—the left arms of the daughter of the earth (i.e. Sita)¹ and Ravana, the 10-headed one (i.e. the demon king of Lanka), began to flutter violently, while the same sort of fluttering occurred in the right arm of Lord Sri Ram² (58).

[Note—¹Sita has been called the “daughter of the earth” (dharāsutā) because, as per legend, she was found in a pitcher while king Janak was ploughing the land to clear it for the purpose of doing some fire sacrifice. See Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 59-60 of Adhyatma Ramayan.

²The palpitation, fluttering or quivering of muscles on the left side of the body of a female is considered an auspicious omen; it's a good sign for her. But in the case of males, just the opposite is true—i.e. if the muscles of the left side of his body flutter it is regarded as an evil omen that does not portend good for him, but if the muscles of the right side flutter then it is a good omen for him.

Hence, the omen for Sita and Lord Ram was good as their left and right sides fluttered. But for Ravana the omen was bad as his left side fluttered.]

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे सुन्दरकाण्डे
प्रथमः सर्गः ॥ १॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde sundarakāṇḍe
prathamah sargaḥ ॥ 1॥

Thus ends Canto 1 of Sundar Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and his divine consort Uma.

7.2.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 2:

Hanuman goes to the Ashok garden where Sita was held captive; Ravana threatens Sita:-

॥ द्वितीयः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

ततो जगाम हनुमान् लङ्कां परमशोभनाम् ।

रात्रौ सूक्ष्मतनुर्भूत्वा बभ्राम परितः पुरीम् ॥ १॥
 सीतान्वेषणकार्यार्थी प्रविवेश नृपालयम् ।
 तत्र सर्वप्रदेशेषु विविच्य हनुमान् कपिः ॥ २॥
 नापश्यज्जानकीं स्मृत्वा ततो लङ्काभिभाषितम् ।
 जगाम हनुमान् शीघ्रमशोकवनिकां शुभाम् ॥ ३॥

॥ dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥
 śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

tato jagāma hanumān laṅkāṃ paramaśobhanām ।
 rātrau sūkṣmatanurbhūtvā babhrāma paritaḥ purīm ॥ 1॥
 sītānveṣaṇakāryārthī praviveśa nṛpālayam ।
 tatra sarvapradeśeṣu vivicya hanumān kapiḥ ॥ 2॥
 nāpaśyajjānakīm smṛtvā tato laṅkābhibhāṣitam ।
 jagāma hanumān śīghramaśokavanikāṃ śubhām ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! After that, Hanuman assumed a very miniature form, and entered the most majestic and magnificent city of Lanka during the night. He spent the night roaming around (in order to get an idea of the layout of the city as well as to reconnoiter) (1).

To find out about Sita, he entered the chief palace of Ravana. After a futile search, when he could not find Sita anywhere, he remembered the words of Lankini (see Canto 1, verse no. 55), and immediately went to the 'Ashok Van', a most charming and auspicious royal garden¹ within the precincts of Ravana's palace (2-3).

[Note—¹Ashok Van is described as being auspicious because Sita was sitting in it.]

सुरपादपसम्बाधां रत्नसोपानवापिकाम् ।
 नानापक्षिमृगाकीर्णां स्वर्णप्रासादशोभिताम् ॥ ४॥
 फलैरानमूशाखाग्रपादपैः परिवारिताम् ।
 विचिन्वन् जानकीं तत्र प्रतिवृक्षं मरुत्सुतः ॥ ५॥
 ददर्शाभ्रंलिहं तत्र चैत्यप्रासादमुत्तमम् ।
 दृष्ट्वा विस्मयमापन्नो मणिस्तम्भशतान्वितम् ॥ ६॥

surapādapasambādhāṃ ratnasopānavāpikām ।
 nānāpakṣimṛgākīrṇāṃ svarṇaprāsādaśobhitām ॥ 4॥
 phalairānamraśākhāgrapādapaiḥ parivāritām ।
 vicinva jānakīm tatra prativr̥kṣaṃ marutsutaḥ ॥ 5॥
 dadarśābhraṃlihaṃ tatra caityaprāsādamuttamam ।
 dr̥ṣṭvā vismayamāpanno maṇistambhaśatānvitam ॥ 6॥

4-6. That magnificent 'forest' ("van"; a grove or garden) was full of (i.e. richly endowed with) wonderful evergreen trees like the 'Kalpa Tree'¹. The steps leading to its ponds were studded with priceless gems; numerous varieties of birds and animals

were roaming in it with merriment; while its golden pavilions and cottages had such magnificent beauty that they had no parallel (4).

That fantastically charming grove or garden was surrounded by trees which were so heavily laden with fruits that their branches were bent under their weight.

Hanuman, the son of the wind god, searched for Sita under each tree (5), and finally saw a beautiful shrine-like structure. It was so high (i.e. its steeple was so high) that it touched the clouds, and even seemed to touch the sky itself!

Hanuman was in thrall of this wonderful sight; he was amazed and began to ponder—in wonderment at the sight of that magnificent building just described, and which had hundreds of pillars studded with gems—if there was something special to it as it attracted his attention² (6).

[Note—¹The ‘Kalpa Tree’ is an evergreen tree of heaven. In poetry and classical compositions, whenever an idea of a tree that is exceptionally magnificent and grand is to be conveyed, it is compared to the Kalpa Tree.

²Verse nos. 4-6 describe the beauty of the ‘Ashok Van’ in brief. It was the royal garden of Ravana, the king of Lanka, and thus was well tended and protected; it was used for his personal pleasure and entertainment.]

समतीत्य पुनर्गत्वा किञ्चिद्दूरं स मारुतिः ।
ददर्श शिंशपावृक्षमत्यन्तनिबिडच्छदम् ॥ ७॥
अदृष्टातपमाकीर्णं स्वर्णवर्णविहङ्गमम् ।
तन्मूले राक्षसीमध्ये स्थितां जनकनन्दिनीम् ॥ ८॥
ददर्श हनुमान् वीरो देवतामिव भूतले ।
एकवेणीं कृशां दीनां मलिनाम्बरधारिणीम् ॥ ९॥

samatītya punargatvā kiñciddūraṃ sa mārutiḥ ।
dadarśa śiṃśapāvṛkṣamatyantanibidacchadam ॥ 7॥
adrṣṭātapamākīrṇaṃ svarṇavarṇavihaṅgamam ।
tanmūle rākṣasīmadhye sthitāṃ janakanandinīm ॥ 8॥
dadarśa hanumān vīro devatāmiva bhūtale ।
ekaveṇīm kṛśāṃ dīnāṃ malināambaradhāriṇīm ॥ 9॥

7-9 When he moved a little ahead inside it, he saw a Shinshupa (Indian red wood) tree with a thick cover of foliage (7).

The sun’s light never penetrated this thick cover of leaves, and so it never reached the ground; the tree was full of birds that looked like being moulded from gold. At the bottom of this wondrous tree, there was the daughter of Janak (Sita), sitting there, surrounded by demonesses (8).

The brave and courageous Hanuman saw that even while sitting on the ground in a despondent and forlorn mood, Sita resembled none but a goddess. Her hairs had stuck together in a thick plait; she was very emaciated, weak and miserable; and she wore clothes that had become dirty and worn-out (9).

[Note—According to Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Hanuman had not met Vibhishan prior to his meeting with Sita, as is the case narrated in Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, and about which we have already read in section 7.1.

Here, it was not Vibhishan who guided Hanuman to where Sita was to be found, but it was Lankini—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 54-56.

This one instance proves why we have decided to read this classical “Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka” from different ancient classical texts, as there are many variations in the details of the way the main Story has been described by ancient authors, and by citing different texts and reading the relevant topics at one place we do certainly gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of the Story as a whole, as told from different angles and with different perspectives.]

भूमौ शयानां शोचन्तीं रामरामेति भाषिणीम् ।
 त्रातारं नाधिगच्छन्तीमुपवासकृशां शुभाम् ॥ १०॥
 शाखान्तच्छदमध्यस्थो ददर्श कपिकुञ्जरः ।
 कृतार्थोऽहं कृतार्थोऽहं दृष्ट्वा जनकनन्दिनीम् ॥ ११॥
 मयैव साधितं कार्यं रामस्य परमात्मनः ।
 ततः किलकिलाशब्दो बभूवान्तःपुराद्बहिः ॥ १२॥

bhumau śayānāṃ śocantīm rāmarāmeti bhāṣiṇīm ।
 trātāraṃ nādhigacchantīmupavāsakṛśāṃ śubhām ॥ 10॥
 śākhāntacchadamadhyastho dadarśa kapikuñjaraḥ ।
 kṛtārtho'haṃ kṛtārtho'haṃ dr̥ṣṭvā janakanandinīm ॥ 11॥
 mayaiva sādhitam kāryam rāmasya paramātmanah ।
 tataḥ kilakilāśabdo babhūvāntaḥpurādbahiḥ ॥ 12॥

10-12. Sita was lying on the ground in this miserable condition; she was most distressed, anguished, worried and remorseful; she constantly repeated the name of her beloved Lord, muttering silently “Ram, Ram”. She was very despondent and utterly hopeless, as she did not see any chance of help, succour and redemption from her torments coming her way. She had become very emaciated and weak due to fasting (as she had willingly abstained from taking food) (10).

Meanwhile, Hanuman, who was the best amongst his race of Kapis (or monkeys; “kapikuñjaraḥ”), hid himself in the leaves on the branches of the tree, and quietly observed her. He said to himself that he was most fortunate, lucky and privileged to have had the opportunity to see the divine form of goddess Janak-Nandani (Sita) today (11).

He felt blessed and thought to himself thus: 'I am so fortunate and the chosen one (or the lucky one) that the work of Lord Sri Ram, who is the Parmatma (the supreme Soul, the Lord God) himself personified, has been entrusted to me, and I have been able to do it successfully'.

Just about this time, a loud sound of boisterous women, chuckling and giggling in abundant merriment, came from inside the royal palace (of Ravana) (12).

किमेतदिति सँल्लीनो वृक्षपतेषु मारुतिः ।
 आयातं रावणं तत्र स्त्रीजनैः परिवारितम् ॥ १३॥
 दशास्यं विंशतिभुजं नीलाञ्जनचयोपमम् ।
 दृष्ट्वा विस्मयमापन्नः पत्रखण्डेष्वलीयत ॥ १४॥

kimetaditi saṁllīno vṛkṣapatreṣu mārutiḥ ।
 āyāntaṁ rāvaṇaṁ tatra strījanaiḥ parivāritam ॥ 13॥
 daśāśyaṁ viṁśatibhujam nīlāñjanacayopamam ।
 dr̥ṣṭvā vismayamāpannaḥ patrakhaṇḍeṣvalīyata ॥ 14॥

13-14. Maruti (“māruti”; Hanuman)¹ wondered what that sound meant, and saw through the thick foliage that Ravana was coming there, accompanied by many women (13).

Seeing Ravana’s 10 heads (daśāśyaṁ), 20 arms (viṁśatibhujam), and an enormously huge black body which was like a gigantic mountain of ‘Kajjal’ (“nīlāñjanacayopamam”; literally, ‘black as soot’; thick soot that is mixed with oil and applied to the eyelids as an ointment), Hanuman was extremely amazed. He was astonished and full of wonder at Ravana’s awe-inspiring and most unconventional form that was colossal in size and fearsome in appearance². So he immediately retracted himself, and took care to properly conceal himself among the leaves (14).

[Note—¹Hanuman is called ‘Māruti’ because he is the son of the wind god, the “Marut”.

²Hanuman had never before seen such a creature—colossus, ugly, horrifying, an ogre-like fiend who was repulsive by all accounts. So the first sight of Ravana not only filled him with awe and amazement, but it also created a sort of fearful wonder in his heart—as it was this fiendish creature, by-the-bye, with whom he would have to deal by-and-by. This was, by and large, not too welcome a proposition!]

रावणो राघवेणाशु मरणं मे कथं भवेत् ।
 सितार्थमपि नायाति रामः किं कारणं भवेत् ॥ १५॥
 इत्येवं चिन्तयन्नित्यं राममेव सदा हृदि ।
 तस्मिन् दिनेऽपररात्रौ रावणो राक्षसाधिपः ॥ १६॥
 स्वप्ने रामेण सन्दिष्टः कश्चिदागत्य वानरः ।
 कामरूपधरः सूक्ष्मो वृक्षग्रस्थोऽनुपश्यति ॥ १७॥

rāvaṇo rāghaveṇāśu maraṇaṁ me kathaṁ bhavet ।
 sītārthamapi nāyāti rāmaḥ kiṁ kāraṇaṁ bhavet ॥ 15॥
 ityevaṁ cintayannityaṁ rāmameva sadā hṛdi ।
 tasmin dine'pararātrau rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ॥ 16॥
 svapne rāmeṇa sandiṣṭaḥ kaścidaḡatya vānaraḥ ।
 kāmarūpadharaḥ sūkṣmo vṛkṣagrastho'nupaśyati ॥ 17॥

15-17. Ravana was constantly wondering, internally, in his heart, as to when he would die at the hands of Raghav (Lord Sri Ram), and wondered why he (Lord Ram) has not yet come even for the sake of Sita!¹ (15).

In this manner, since he was constantly thinking of Lord Sri Ram in his heart, the king of demons, Ravana, had a dream late that night—that some monkey, who could assume any form that he wished, had brought a message from Lord Ram, and having assumed a miniature form, he was sitting on the branch of a tree and observing all the things that were going on around him (16-17).

[Note—¹Ravana had all along known, or had guessed rather very accurately, that Lord Sri Ram and Sita were no ordinary humans. His inner voice, the true voice of his consciousness, the voice of his 'Atma', kept telling him that his only chance of ever finding liberation from the evil body of a demon, and of finding deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself, was now at hand; for if he missed this chance he would lose the golden opportunity forever—refer: *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61.

This was the primary driving force that motivated Ravana to bring Sita, who was a personified form of the Mother Goddess, to Lanka, to ensure that Lord Ram, who himself was a personified form of the Supreme Being, would be constrained to come and kill him to free Sita. This 'killing' would free the soul, the 'spirit', of Ravana that was unfortunately trapped in the gross and evil body of a demon.

Ravana, privately and in the deep recesses of his heart, prayed earnestly and actually yearned for this liberation—because of late he was feeling that his soul was trapped and extremely tormented; he felt internally suffocated by the stranglehold that the sins and misdeeds that he had committed over the course of his eventful life had cast on his soul. His Atma, his 'true self', was virtually ensnared and tied in fetters from which it seems difficult for it to break free. This shackle could be broken and his Atma could be liberated only if Ravana's evil body could be ruptured so as to create a means that would allow his soul to escape from its prison.

But this meant, in practical terms, that his gross body had to be 'punctured' somehow by arrows shot by Lord Ram, as the Lord was the only one who was empowered to achieve this singularly difficult feat because Ravana had acquired so many powerful boons that had shielded his body to such an extent that a powerful force strong enough to rupture this virtually impregnable shield would alone be able to create a 'split' through which his Atma could escape to freedom, almost like 'air escaping from a punctured tyre or a punctured balloon'.

That is why, as we see here, Ravana was so eager to face Lord Sri Ram as soon as possible, to precipitate a stand-off with him in connection with his stealing Sita and refusing to give her back to the Lord, which was sure to lead a confrontation and his killing at the hands of the Lord.

So we observe that this verse, as many others, clearly show that Ravana had kidnapped Sita not with the intention to satisfy his lust or passion, or that he had any amorous designs on her, but because he saw in this plan a medium, an excuse, by which he would be able to get rid of his evil body and free himself from the fetters that tied his soul to it.

In this context, the reader can also refer to *Adhyatma Ramayan's* (i) Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61; Canto 6, verse 30-35; Canto 7, verse 65; (ii) Lanka Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 44-47; Canto 10, verse 55-61 and (iii) Uttar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 31-42.

To wit, though universally condemned and decried as a devilish creature, a ‘demon’, Ravana’s ‘true self’—which was his Atma, his pure consciousness, his soul—was actually very pure and holy. Ravana, in reality, was an unfortunate creature whose soul became trapped inside an evil body.

So, it was Ravana’s gross physical body that was ‘devilish or demonic’, but not his ‘true self’. Unfortunately, since the world recognizes an individual only by his physical body rather than by his ‘real self’ in the form of his Atma, which is pure, holy and untainted ‘consciousness’—simply because the physical body of a creature is visible, whilst his ‘true self’, that is pure consciousness and known as the Atma, is invisible—Ravana was always derided and treated with contempt by one and all as a vile and sinful being.]

इति दृष्ट्वाद्भुतं स्वप्नं स्वात्मन्येवानुचिन्त्य सः ।

स्वप्नः कदाचित्सत्यः स्यादेवं तत्र करोम्यहम् ॥ १८॥

जानकीं वाक्शरैर्विद्ध्वा दुःखितां नितरामहम् ।

करोमि दृष्ट्वा रामाय निवेदयतु वानरः ॥ १९॥

iti dr̥ṣṭvādbhutam svapnam svātmanyevānucintya saḥ ।

svapnaḥ kadācitsatyah syādevaṁ tatra karomyaham ॥ 18॥

jānakīm vākśarairviddhvā duḥkhitāṁ nitarāmaham ।

karomi dr̥ṣṭvā rāmāya nivedayatu vānarah ॥ 19॥

18-19. When he (Ravana) saw this strange and mysterious dream, he thought to himself, 'May be this dream is true. So, if that is the case, I must do one thing (18). I must reproach and verbally torment Sita in harsh words so that she becomes extremely distressed, agitated and miserable. As a result, that monkey (who must be hiding somewhere nearby, as per the dream, in the tree) would hear all that, and he would go back and tell Lord Sri Ram all about it¹ (19).

[Note—¹These verses explain, in certain terms, why Ravana became so threatening towards Sita. He wished to bring this episode to an end as quickly as possible. He thought that when the messenger of Lord Ram would see him bullying Sita fiercely, he is sure to go and report it to the Lord, most probably by adding something on his own to make the report more dramatic, and this would force Lord Ram to hurry to her rescue, which in turn would mean that his own soul would be freed at the earliest, as definitely Lord Ram’s coming to Lanka would lead to a war, and in this war the Lord would kill him.

So we see that Ravana’s aggressive attitude towards Sita was only for show; his angry behaviour towards her was meant for Hanuman’s eyes and ears only, for when the latter observes this and makes his report to Lord Ram upon his return, it would fit in perfectly with Ravana’s plan for seeking liberation and deliverance of his soul by being killed by Lord Ram!

To wit, the harsh words that he used to threaten Sita with were not actually what he meant to do, nor were they intended to torment her in any way, but they were part of his well thought out strategy for the redemption of his own tormented soul.]

इत्येवं चिन्तयन् सीतासमीपमगमद्भुतम् ।
 नूपुराणां किङ्किणीनां श्रुत्वा शिञ्जितमङ्गना ॥ २०॥
 सीता भीता लीयमाना स्वात्मन्येव सुमध्यमा ।
 अधोमुख्यशूनयना स्थिता रामार्पितान्तरा ॥ २१॥

ityevaṃ cintayan sītāsamīpamagamaddrutam ।
 nūpurāṇāṃ kiṅkiṇīnāṃ śrutvā śiñjitamaṅganā ॥ 20॥
 sītā bhītā liyamānā svātmanyeva sumadhyamā ।
 adhomukhyaśrunayanā sthitā rāmārpitāntarā ॥ 21॥

20-21. Deciding thus, he immediately hastened to where Sita was. Hearing the sound of the anklets and bracelets (worn by Ravana's women), the auspicious Sita (20) became scared. She shrunk herself as much as she physically and practically could, and with legs drawn in, she sat there with a lowered face (and her sight fixed on the ground before her). Her eyes were filled with tears even as she focused her heart on the thoughts of Lord Sri Ram (21).

रावणोऽपि तदा सीतामालोक्याह सुमध्यमे ।
 मां दृष्ट्वा किं वृथा सुभ्रु स्वात्मन्येव विलीयसे ॥ २२॥
 रामो वनचराणां हि मध्ये तिष्ठति सानुजः ।
 कदाचिद्दृश्यते कैश्चित्कदाचिन्नैव दृश्यते ॥ २३॥
 मया तु बहुधा लोकाः प्रेषितास्तस्य दर्शने ।
 न पश्यन्ति प्रयत्नेन वीक्षमाणाः समन्ततः ॥ २४॥

rāvaṇo'pi tadā sītāmālokyāha sumadhyame ।
 māṃ dr̥ṣtvā kiṃ vṛthā subhru svātmanyeva viliyase ॥ 22॥
 rāmo vanacarāṇāṃ hi madhye tiṣṭhati sānujaḥ ।
 kadācidr̥śyate kaiścitkadācinnaiva dr̥śyate ॥ 23॥
 mayā tu bahudhā lokāḥ preṣitāstasya darśane ।
 na paśyanti prayatnena vīkṣamāṇāḥ samantataḥ ॥ 24॥

22-24. Seeing Sita, Ravana said, 'Oh the one with an attractive waist (sumadhyame) and beautiful eye brows (subhru)¹! Why do you unnecessarily shrivel (shrink, shirk) so much on seeing me? (22).

Lord Ram stays with his brother among the forest dwellers. He is visible to some and invisible to others². (23)*

I had sent so many messengers to see where he is (and bring information about him) but inspite of looking around carefully everywhere, they could not see (find) him³. (24)

[Note—¹Sita was already in a very miserable and emaciated condition. See verse nos. 8-10. So, by no means can she appear attractive and handsome as this verse implies. Hence, these lascivious words used by Ravana to describe her in verse no. 22 are just to tease her.

*Further, verse nos. 23-28 which we shall read now have a double meaning. On the face of it, Ravana appears to criticize, deride, pour scorn at and ridicule Lord Ram so as to tease and mentally torment Sita further, but read in the context of verse nos. 15-19 herein above, all these verses assume a completely different connotation.

So we shall read these verses, nos. 23-28, from two perspectives: one would be a literal meaning, a more mundane interpretation of what Ravana wishes to tell Sita, and the other would be an interpretation of his words from a spiritual angle to convey what he actually meant, and what his real intent was.

²Verse no. 23 = “Lord Ram lives among hermits, sages and ascetics. Some can see him in his true, supreme form as the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma while meditating upon him, while others can't see this sublime form, and are therefore contented by seeing the Lord's physical form known as ‘Ram’, the prince of Ayodhya and the husband of Sita.”

³Verse no. 24 = “I had tried to fix or divert my sense organs as well as my mind, intellect and heart towards him whom I know to be the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, but was never even once successful. I couldn't fix myself on his true form; I could not meditate and concentrate my mind and intellect on the Lord. So unfortunately, I could not attain enlightenment, emancipation and salvation.”]

किं करिष्यसि रामेण निःस्पृहेण सदा त्वयि ।
त्वया सदातिङ्गितोऽपि समीपस्थोऽपि सर्वदा ॥ २५॥
हृदयेऽस्य न च स्नेहस्त्वयि रामस्य जायते ।
त्वत्कृतान् सर्वभोगांश्च त्वद्गुणानपि राघवः ॥ २६॥

kiṃ kariṣyasi rāmeṇa niḥsprheṇa sadā tvayi ।
tvayā sadāliṅgito'pi samīpastho'pi sarvadā ॥ 25॥
hr̥daye'sya na ca snehastvayi rāmasya jāyate ।
tvatkṛtān sarvabhogāṃśca tvadguṇānapi rāghavaḥ ॥ 26॥

25-26. What have you got to do with Sri Ram now? He always remains indifferent and apathetic towards you, inspite of the fact that he always lived with you, and was embraced by you. (25)

So it is obvious that he cannot (or does not) have affection for you because he hasn't bothered about you till now, and seems to have forgotten you completely, though he had had a lot of comfort when he was in your company, and surely he must have enjoyed it, especially when you are endowed with so many excellent qualities (that should have been enough for a man to go mad once he lost a wife like you). (26)

[Note—As we have observed in the note of verse nos. 23-24 herein above, Ravana's words can be interpreted in two ways. One is the ordinary literal way, and the other is from a spiritual perspective.

The first interpretation of verse nos. 25-26 is that Ravana tries to convince Sita that Lord Ram, for whom she longs so much and to whom she is so devoted, seems not to reciprocate a similar emotion for her, because so many days have passed and he seems indifferent for her loss. Lord Ram remains hidden somewhere out of fear from

her abductors, lest they should find him and get rid of him; so he has not ventured out to make efforts to find her. Therefore, why is she wasting her time on her husband who is not bothered about her in the least? It makes no sense.

To wit, in this way, Ravana was trying to distract Sita's attention and sway her away from Lord Ram.

The other interpretation of Ravana's words has a metaphysical import. He wonders that though the 'Maha-Maya', i.e. the great cosmic powers of the Lord that magically creates delusions, and which is represented by Sita, always stays in close proximity of the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm', how has it now become possible that they are separated? No, it's not possible, and the true reason is something else. What then is it? True meaning of this separation of Lord Ram and Sita is that though the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram had lived in close proximity with Maya or delusions of worldly relations and attachments represented by Sita, his wife, yet he remained immune to all gross worldly influences, attachments to material comforts, and attractions of the sense objects in this world. The Lord remained detached and dispassionate even though he seemed to show great affection to his wife; he is a true ascetic who has renounced everything related to this mundane world. But as he is the supreme Lord of the world, he is surely aware of his responsibilities, which means that sooner or later he will come to free Sita who is his great devotee, as she constantly remembers the Lord inspite of the greatest difficulties she faces and the greatest adversities she finds herself in.]

भुञ्जानोऽपि न जानाति कृताघ्नो निर्गुणोऽधमः ।
त्वमानीता मया साध्वी दुःखशोकसमाकुला ॥ २७॥
इदानीमपि नायाति भक्तिहीनः कथं व्रजेत् ।
निःसत्त्वो निर्ममो मानी मूढः पण्डितमानवान् ॥ २८॥

bhuñjāno'pi na jānāti kṛtaghno nirguṇo'dhamah ।
tvamānītā mayā sādhvī duḥkhaśokasamākulā ॥ 27॥
idānīmapi nāyāti bhaktihīnaḥ katham vrajet ।
niḥsattvo nirmamo mānī mūḍhaḥ paṇḍitamānavān ॥ 28॥

27-28. Though he (Lord Ram) had enjoyed everything, he is so thankless and ungrateful (kṛtaghno), so dumb and lacking in good manners (nirguṇo), as well as so lowly and mean ('dhamah) that he never bothers to remember them and those who were instrumental in providing him those pleasures and enjoyments.

Look, I have kidnapped you (tvamānītā mayā), you are his chaste, loyal and honourable wife (sādhvī), and there is no doubt that you feel greatly tormented and feel confounded by sorrows, distresses and troubles (duḥkhaśokasamākulā)¹ (27).

Inspite of all this, he has still not come to provide you any relief from your miseries, and he has not made any effort yet to take you back (idānīmapi nāyāti). How can he come when he has no affection for you, when he is not devoted to you (bhaktihīnaḥ katham vrajet)?

He is absolutely inept and incapable of doing anything (niḥsattvo); he is devoid of all compassion for he seems to be heartless, cruel and merciless (nirmamo). He surely seems to be very proud, arrogant and haughty (mānī). And though truly he

is an utterly foolish person and a dud-head (*mūḍhaḥ*), yet he thinks himself to be very sagacious, wise and intelligent (*pañḍitamānavān*)²’ (28)

[Note—¹The other way this verse can be interpreted from metaphysical angle is this: “The supreme Lord does not regard himself as the one who does anything, or involves himself in enjoying anything. Similarly, he is the destroyer of deeds done together with their fruits, is without any of the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama, and is most humble inspite of being the Supreme Being and only Lord of the world.”

²The other way this verse too can be interpreted is this: “He, Lord Ram, is not attached to or infatuated with Maya (delusions of having enduring relations in a world that is known to be mortal and transient; delusions that lead to worldly attachments, infatuations and involvements) which you (Sita) represent as a personified form of ‘Maha-Maya’, the ‘great delusion’. The proof of this is that he has paid no attention to ‘you’. To wit, since Lord Ram is a true renunciate, since he is an enlightened and self-realised Being, he is not at all attached to the material world for he knows that this world is mortal and transient, and therefore he is not concerned about the many artificial relationships that exist in this world.

He has not here to me, he has not come to Lanka as he believes that I am attracted to Maya (worldly delusions and attachments to sensual things of this world of sense objects) that is represented by you (Sita). Truly, Lord Ram has neglected me too because of you, and I could not be entirely devoted to him nor could I worship him with all my heart because I am attracted to you, because I worship and adore you, and you are Maya personified! These two opposite situations—one of being attracted to Maya, and the other being devoted to the Supreme Being—do not tally with each other. That is why Lord Ram cannot enter my heart till the time you, the Maya, has sway over it.

He, being a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, is without any attributes and worldly emotions, and he remains neutral towards all worldly things. But since he is neutral and dispassionate, since he shows no emotions and involvement in worldly affairs, he appears to be arrogant and proud to those who are fools and have no deep knowledge of who Lord Ram actually is, nor have they any knowledge of the eclectic principles of metaphysics and theology as enunciated in the Upanishads which would enlighten them about the reality of Lord Ram. Hence, to such dumb persons Lord Ram too appears to be dumb, but in actual fact, the Lord is most sagacious, erudite, wise, intelligent and enlightened.”

Verse nos. 23-28 are fine examples of statements in ancient scriptures that have a dual meaning—they appear to say one thing but mean another thing that is altogether different from it; they have a meaning that is quite the opposite of the literal meaning of the words used.

In the present context, what Ravana says in these verses puts him in a very bad spotlight; he seems to be an evil and lascivious creature who is teasing Sita by trying his best to denounce and demean Lord Ram in front of her, trying to convince her that the Lord is unfaithful to her, that he is an incompetent husband who has no love or compassion for her, and that he neither has manliness nor the wish to come and free her. It appears to be a clear attempt on his part to sway Sita’s loyalties away from Lord Ram, and at the same time to test her mettle, her internal strength, her character, and her loyalty towards the Lord. This view will be all the more evident when we read the next verse nos. 29-30 herein below.

But a deeper insight into the hidden meaning of what Ravana says, and a better understanding of him, would elevate him to a high pedestal of a person who is philosophically inclined and well versed in the knowledge of metaphysics as enunciated in the Upanishads. We must remember in the first instance that he had brought Sita with a clear mind that he wished to attain liberation and deliverance by getting killed at the hands of Lord Ram, and that he had regarded her as his mother. This fact is clearly mentioned in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61, and Canto 7, verse no. 65 respectively.

Indeed, if one understands, in the right context, about what Ravana wishes to convey, one would realize that he was an intellectually enlightened being who had a high level of spiritual understanding—for he knew that Lord Ram is not a human being and neither is Sita his worldly wife, but they are the personified forms of great cosmic powers that are described in the Upanishads dedicated to them—viz. the Ram Tapini Upanishad, Ram Rahasya Upanishad, and Sita Upanishad. Incidentally, and just to mention in the passing, a detailed English rendering of these Upanishads, with explanations, have been done by the author of this present Book.]

नराधमं त्वद्विमुखं किं करिष्यसि भामिनि ।
त्वय्यतीव समासक्तं मां भजस्वासुरोत्तमम् ॥ २९॥
देवगन्धर्वनागानां यक्षकिन्नरयोषिताम् ।
भविष्यसि नियोक्त्री त्वं यदि मां प्रतिपद्यसे ॥ ३०॥

narādhamaṃ tvadvimukhaṃ kiṃ kariṣyasi bhāmini ।
tvayyatīva samāsaktaṃ māṃ bhajasvāsurottamam ॥ 29॥
devagandharvanāgānāṃ yakṣakinnarayoṣitām ।
bhaviṣyasi niyoktrī tvam yadi māṃ pratipadyase ॥ 30॥

29-30. Oh noble woman (bhāmini)! What have you got to do with that lowly man (narādhamaṃ) who is indifferent to you? Look! I, who, is the best among the demons, have great affection for you. So you must accept me (29).

If you remain under me, you shall rule over the women of the Gods, the Gandharvas (celestial musicians), Naags (subterranean creatures; literally, legendary serpents), Yakshas (mythological demi-Gods), and Kinnars (celestials dancers and singers in heaven).

[To wit, if you accept to be one of my women, to become my companion, I can assure you that you shall have a special status. Don't you know that the greatest powers in creation, even the so-called mighty Gods who live in the heaven, and their junior brethrens such as the many Gandharvas, Naagas, Yakshas and Kinnars—all of them pay their homage to me, all of them are under my influence. So therefore, by accepting me and getting the honour of being called my woman, my companion, you will be entitled to great and unparalleled privileges which you can never expect to have by being Sri Ram's partner. Make your choice; decide which is best for you.]¹ (30).

[Note—¹We see here that Ravana is trying to seduce Sita and tempt her to abandon Lord Ram, and join him as his partner instead. But as we have noted earlier, this was a method employed by Ravana to test Sita's character and loyalty. It was an outwardly

show though, for internally he had great respect for her, and he saw in her a means of deliverance from his evil and sinful existence as a demon, for he knew that sooner or later Lord Ram is sure to come to free her, and that would definitely lead to a war as he would refuse to give her back, and in that war it was sure that Lord Ram would kill him. This in turn would ensure his liberation and deliverance. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61; and Canto 7, verse no. 65.]

रावणस्य वचः श्रुत्वा सीताऽमर्षसमन्विता ।
उवाचाधोमुखी भूत्वा निधाय तृणमन्तरे ॥ ३१॥
राघवाद्भिभ्यता नूनं भिक्षुरूपं त्वया धृतम् ।
रहिते राघवाभ्यां त्वं शुनीव हविरध्वरे ॥ ३२॥

rāvaṇasya vacaḥ śrutvā sītā'marṣasamanvitā ।
uvācādhomukhī bhūtvā nidhāya tṛṇamantare ॥ 31॥
rāghavādbibhyatā nūnaṁ bhikṣurūpaṁ tvayā dhṛtam ।
rahite rāghavābhyāṁ tvam śunīva haviradhvare ॥ 32॥

31-32. Hearing these most reprehensible, outrageously contemptuous and sarcastic words of Ravana that insulted Lord Ram, Sita felt very indignant, vexed, angry and appalled. She bent her head in disgust and great dismay, and keeping a blade of grass in between her and Ravana, she said indignantly (31),

'Oh you wretch; you are indeed a vile and lowly fellow (tvayā dhṛtam) who has no shame worth the while! There is no doubt in it that you became a mendicant (at the time of abducting me) because you were extremely frightened of Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) and dared not come in his presence, and when he and his brother were absent from the hermitage, you took me away stealthily like a dog would steal the offering made to a fire sacrifice when it finds the place unattended¹ (32).

[Note—¹A hungry dog greedily eyes the food and other offerings that are placed near the fire lit for a religious sacrifice. The dog hides somewhere, looking at the offerings greedily, and as soon as it finds that the priest and other attendants are absent, it quietly sneaks in, extremely nervous, crouching, tail drawn in between its hind legs which are bent at the knees, neck bending down so that the mouth almost grazes the ground, and so terrified at the prospect of being discovered and caught, which would mean certain trashing, that it quickly grabs whatever it can manage to do and scampers out in the greatest of haste.

Sita says that the way Ravana had abducted her was very similar to it. He did not dare to come near the hermitage of Lord Ram while he and his brother Laxman were there, but as soon as he saw that they had gone out to pursue the deer, which was actually a demon named Marich in this form, and whom Ravana himself had planted to lure the two brothers away from the hermitage, he disguised himself as a mendicant to come and kidnap Sita. Once he managed to get hold of her, he scampered away nervously like a terrified dog, for he was frightened that if Lord Ram and Laxman came back to the hermitage before he managed to escape from there, then all hell would break loose for him, and it was sure that he would be slayed instantly.

Sita sternly rebukes Ravana; her comparing him to a dog and reminding him of the way he abducted her disguised as a mendicant for he was too frightened to

reveal his true identity before her, was in answer to Ravana calling Lord Ram a virtual coward and an incompetent man.

Said she: “Oh you rascal and a coward! If you are as brave, courageous and powerful as you claim to be so much so that you have subdued even the mighty gods of heaven and other powerful forces in creation, say then why did you not boldly come and ask my beloved Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman that you wish to give them a fight because you wish to bring me to Lanka and keep me here? Well, you could then have defeated them in battle and proudly bring me as a trophy of victory, and then surely you had the right to claim that I am your slave or property. But you acted like that wretched dog which steals the offerings of a fire sacrifice surreptitiously, and then flees, as fast as it can, for its life with a morsel that it can grab in its mouth lest it would be caught in the act and thrashed fiercely, and even be killed. Is this your manliness; is this your valour and courage? Shame to you a million times! Forsooth, you have proved to me that you aren’t worthy of even looking at, and truly you are a ‘diabolical demon’ by all counts.”

In this context, this author recollects what Athos, one of the three musketeer friends whose real name was Count de la Fere, had said to Lady de Winter, whose true name was Anne de Breuil, a fiendish, devilish, selfish woman lacking any of the softness characteristic of women, whose eyes could “dart lightening” and who could “growl like a savage beast”, and with her “hairs disheveled she was like the very appalling image of Terror”, a criminal who was “branded on her shoulder by the executioner”, in Alexandre Dumas’ “The Three Musketeers”, Chapter 45, when he encounters her. Athos had exclaimed: “You are a demon let loose upon the earth. Your power is great, I know; but you know, also, that, with God’s assistance, men have overcome the most terrible demon.”

Sita tells Ravana that he might be a most powerful being as he claims himself to be, but after all he is a fiendish ‘demon’, and even if Lord Ram is an ‘ordinary human being’ with so many faults that Ravana dares to insinuate against him, then let him be ware that this very ‘ordinary human being’ would soon be the one who will be his nemesis, who will kill him.]

हतवानसि मां नीच तत्फलं प्राप्स्यसेऽविरात् ।
यदा रामशराघातविदारितवपुर्भवान् ॥ ३३॥
ज्ञास्यसेऽमानुषं रामं गमिष्यसि यमान्तिकम् ।
समुद्रं शोषयित्वा वा शरैर्बद्ध्वाथ वारिधिम् ॥ ३४॥
हन्तुं त्वां समरे रामो लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितः ।
आगमिष्यत्यसन्देहो द्रक्ष्यसे राक्षसाधम ॥ ३५॥

hṛtavānasi māṃ nīca tatphalaṃ prāpsyase'cirāt ।
yadā rāmaśarāghātavidāritavapurbhavān ॥ 33॥
jñāsyase'mānuṣaṃ rāmaṃ gamiṣyasi yamāntikam ।
samudraṃ śoṣayitvā vā śarairbaddhvātha vāridhim ॥ 34॥
hantum tvāṃ samare rāmo lakṣmaṇena samanvitaḥ ।
āgamiṣyatyasandeho drakṣyase rākṣasādhama ॥ 35॥

33-35. You shall very soon get reward (or rather punishment) for your deeds. You shall be pierced by the rain symbolizing Lord Ram's arrows that would fall on you (33), and this would lead you to hell. [To wit, when you die by being struck by a hail of Lord Ram's sharp arrows, there is no other place but hell where you shall go.]

It will be then that you would realize that he (Lord Ram) is not an ordinary human. [You are so confident of your invincibility and you feel that you are free from death because of the many boons which you extracted from Brahma by the virtue of doing severe penances, that when you will die at the hands of Lord Ram it is only then that you will realize that he is no ordinary man as you make him out to be. For, can a human being kill such a mighty and powerful person as you claim to be, a person who claims to have subdued even the mighty gods of heaven, and lord over them with impunity?]

The ocean would either be dried up or a bridge would be built over it by the arrows (of Lord Sri Ram and Laxman). [You think that the ocean would protect you. You think that your fort is well protected and secured by a moat symbolized by the ocean which makes all access to Lanka impossible. So wait and behold; the same ocean would be bridged by Lord Ram, a feat no human can achieve. And you will sit here biting your nails in frustration, for you will not be able to stop Lord Ram crossing the ocean on this bridge. Come, let me see how mighty and able you are, and how imbecile, incapable and incompetent Lord Ram is, when that happens.] (34).

Oh wretch; oh you most lowly and vile demon (*rākṣasādhama*)! There is no doubt that you will soon see (discover) that Lord Sri Ram, accompanied by Laxman, will come to kill you in the battle (that will follow after Lord Ram's arrival here) (35).

त्वां सपुत्रं सहबलं हत्वा नेष्यति मां पुरम् ॥
 श्रुत्वा रक्षःपतिः क्रुद्धो जानक्याः परुषाक्षरम् ॥ ३६॥
 वाक्यं क्रोधसमाविष्टः खड्गमुद्यम्य सत्वरः ।
 हन्तुं जनकराजस्य तनयां ताम्रलोचनः ॥ ३७॥

tvām saputram sahabalam hatvā neṣyati mām puram ॥
 śrutvā rakṣaḥpatiḥ kruddho jānakyaḥ paruṣākṣaram ॥ 36॥
 vākyaṁ krodhasamāviṣṭaḥ khaḍgamudyamya satvaraḥ ।
 hantum janakarājasya tanayām tāmralocanaḥ ॥ 37॥

36-37. He will kill you, along with your sons and your army (of whom you are so proud), and then take me back to his city (Ayodhya).¹

Hearing these stern words of rebuke and chastisement from Janki (Sita), the demon king Ravana became furious with anger (36).

His eyes became red with rage, and he pulled out his sword to kill the daughter of Janak (Sita) (37).

[Note—¹A very interesting question arises here: Why could Sita not see through Ravana's words and understand their hidden meaning like we have tried to interpret them previously. Why did she saw only the worldly side of his utterances instead of viewing them from a spiritual and metaphysical perspective? Had this been the case, she would have realized that Ravana did not actually mean to harm her, that whatever he was doing was only for external show for he had great respect for Lord Ram

internally, and that, therefore, she need not fear from him. Why then would she curse him as vehemently as she did; she wouldn't have called him a 'dog' (verse no. 32); she would not have behaved as a terrified prisoner who is on the edge of death, not eating anything and becoming emaciated and hopeless; she would not have spent her days weeping and brooding in a most despondent manner.

Well, the answer is this: We have read that before Ravana kidnapped Sita, Lord Ram had kept her in the safe custody of the Fire God; what was left to represent Sita was merely her shadow, called 'Maya Sita', or a form that was so surreal that it gave the impression that it was the real Sita, but which was actually a delusion—apropos: *Adhyatma Ramayan*, *Aranya Kand*, Canto 7, verse nos. 1-4.

But this secret was not even known to Laxman, and hence no one else can be expected to be aware of it. So, when Ravana brought Sita to Lanka he had thought that he was taking away the real Sita, but it was a delusion that befuddled him. Since 'this Sita' was a creation of Maya, a delusory form of the 'real Sita', it follows that this artificial form cannot have the same level of understanding, intelligence, erudition and wisdom that the original Sita had. This is the primary and the obvious reason why the Sita to whom Ravana made his overtures and threatening gestures could not see behind the external façade, and was misled by what was said at its face value.]

मन्दोदरी निवार्याह पतिं पतिहिते रता ।

त्यजैनां मानुषीं दीनां दुःखितां कृपणां कृशाम् ॥ ३८॥

देवगन्धर्वनागानां बह्व्यः सन्ति वराङ्गनाः ।

त्वामेव वरयन्त्युत्त्वैर्मदमतविलोचनाः ॥ ३९॥

mandodari nivāryāha patiṃ patihite ratā ।

tyajaināṃ mānuṣīṃ dīnāṃ duḥkhitāṃ kṛpaṇāṃ kṛśām ॥ 38॥

devagandharvanāgānāṃ bahvyaḥ santi varāṅganāḥ ।

tvāmeva varayantyuccairmadamattavilocanāḥ ॥ 39॥

38-39. Then Mandodari (the wife of Ravana and the chief queen of Lanka)—who was always eager to protect the interest of her husband (*nivāryāha patiṃ patihite ratā*)—intervened.

She stopped her husband (from taking any rash step in anger), and said, 'Oh my dear husband! Leave aside this woman who is already so distressed and in an extremely miserable condition. See, she is so emaciated and weak, full of sorrows, overcome with anguish, and feels highly tormented (38).

There are so many attractive, passionate and youthful women who are proud of their beauty, who have great charm and lustful eyes, belonging to the Gods, Gandharvas and Naags who are only too eager and anxious to accept you. [So why do you insist on this poor and miserable woman who is not a suitable match for you at all?]¹ (39).

[Note—¹We see here that Mandodari has come to the rescue of Sita. One reason for this is that Mandodari being a woman herself, and one who had noble thoughts, may have been driven by pity at Sita's miserable condition; and the other reason, also most probable, is that she felt that her husband Ravana was exceptionally enamoured of Sita, and should he be allowed to have his ways then his attention would be more

focused on Sita, and this would mean that he would start neglecting Mandodari. Of course, then, Mandodari would not like this situation to prevail.

Another important point to note here is this, and it shows Ravana is a very positive light indeed: He never approached Sita alone while she was held captive in Lanka; here he was accompanied by his wife and other ladies of his household—apropos: verse no. 20 herein above. Had he wanted so, no one could have prevented him from going to Sita alone, either in the dead of night or in broad daylight, with an order to the guards to go away. This is a clear sign that he actually did not mean any harm to her, and neither did he have any ill intentions towards Sita.

Then, if this is the case, why did he behave like a person driven by lust, threatening Sita if she did not yield to his overtures, and using so many provocative words against Lord Ram? The answer lies in Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19. Ravana did everything with the sole purpose of fulfilling his last wish to get killed by Lord Ram, and thereby attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation. He had a dream that a monkey has been sent as a messenger by Lord Ram, and so he urgently decided to act in such a way that would seem extraordinarily rude and threatening for Sita, with the sole intent that this messenger would observe all the proceedings and go back to report to Lord Ram about the dangers that Sita faces, which in turn would make the Lord take quick actions to come to Lanka to rescue her, and which in its own turn would provide a mean for Ravana to first have a divine glimpse of the Supreme Being from close quarters and feel blessed, and then to die at his hands so that his Atma, his soul, could make its easy exit from his evil body of a demon, to find eternal freedom and beatitude for itself.]

ततोऽब्रवीदशग्रीवो राक्षसीर्विकृताननाः ।
 यथा मे वशगा सीता भविष्यति सकामना ।
 तथा यतध्वं त्वरितं तर्जनादरणादिभिः ॥ ४०॥
 द्विमासाभ्यन्तरे सीता यदि मे वशगा भवेत् ।
 तदा सर्वसुखोपेता राज्यं भोक्ष्यति सा मया ॥ ४१॥
 यदि मासद्वयादूर्ध्वं मच्छय्यां नाभिनन्दति ।
 तदा मे प्रातराशाय हत्वा कुरुत मानुषीम् ॥ ४२॥

tato'bravīddaśagrīvo rākṣasīrvikṛtānanāḥ ।
 yathā me vaśagā sītā bhaviṣyati sakāmanā ।
 tathā yatadhvaṃ tvaritaṃ tarjanādaraṇādibhiḥ ॥ 40॥
 dvimāsābhyantare sītā yadi me vaśagā bhavet ।
 tadā sarvasukhopetā rājyaṃ bhokṣyati sā mayā ॥ 41॥
 yadi māsadvayādūrdhvaṃ macchayyāṃ nābhinandati ।
 tadā me prātarāśāya hatvā kuruta mānuṣīm ॥ 42॥

40-42. Then the 10-headed Ravana ordered many demonesses who had terrifying appearances, frightening demeanours, and whose bodies created horror in those who beheld them as they were so dreadful and fiendish (rākṣasīrvikṛtānanāḥ), 'Oh demonesses! Do such things (i.e. try all those methods) by which Sita gets attracted towards me, and comes under my control and influence—either out of fear of her life, or due to respect for my greatness, or to protect her honour (40).

If she comes under my control and yields to me within two months (dvimāsābhyantare)¹ then she will not only enjoy the privileges of our great kingdom of Lanka but shall also be granted all sorts of happiness and comfort that would be hers for the asking (41).

On the other hand, if she does not accept to come to my bed (“yadi macchayyām nābhinandati”; to become my wife) within these two months (māsadvayādūrdhvaṃ), then kill this human being (hatvā kuruta mānuṣīm), and serve her for my breakfast (tadā me prātarāśāya)² (42).

[Note—¹In Tulsidas’ “Ram Charit Manas”, Ravana has given a time limit of one month to Sita to accept his proposal of surrender—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10.

Besides the time frame, there is also a difference in the way Ravana threatens to kill Sita. In Ram Charit Manas he says he would kill her himself by using his sword, but here in Adhyatma Ramayan he orders his female demons, who were his valets, to kill her themselves, and make a breakfast of her for him!

As we have noted earlier while outlining the reasons for citing different scriptural texts to narrate this wonderful Story, there are many variations in the way the main Story is told, such as this example where Sita is given ‘one month’ time in Ram Charit Manas, and ‘two months’ time in Adhyatma Ramayan, and also the way she would be killed if she did not yield.

²The demons were flesh-eating ogres; they relished eating human flesh. So in order to terrify Sita and compel her to surrender to his wishes he threatens her that he would get her killed and cooked for breakfast.

Imagine what effect this ugly statement would have on Hanuman who was listening to all the proceedings from behind the leaves of the tree where he hid himself. He must have trembled by shock at the very words of Ravana that he heard; he must have clenched his teeth and bit his lips in disgust, and somehow restrained himself from jumping down and twisting Ravana’s ten heads right then because he wished to act prudently as yet he had not introduced himself to Sita, and any rash action on his part might spoil the whole plan.

But surely Hanuman had firmly resolved that before he left Lanka he would teach Ravana the bitterest lesson of his life to avenge for the way he behaved with Sita. And surely enough, it was the main motivation that led him to burn Lanka by-and-by.]

इत्युक्त्वा प्रययौ स्त्रीभि रवणोऽन्तःपुरालयम् ।
रक्षस्यो जानकीमेत्य भीषयन्त्यः स्वतर्जनैः ॥ ४३॥
तत्रैका जानकीमाह यौवनं ते वृथा गतम् ।
रवणेन समासाद्य सफलं तु भविष्यति ॥ ४४॥

ityuktvā prayayau strībhī rāvaṇo'ntaḥpurālayam ।
rākṣasyo jānakīmetya bhīṣayantyaḥ svatarjanaiḥ ॥ 43॥
tatraikā jānakīmāha yauvanam te vṛthā gatam ।
rāvaṇena samāsādya saphalam tu bhaviṣyati ॥ 44॥

43-44. Saying this, Ravana went back to his palace along with his women, whilst the demonesses came to Janki (Sita) and started frightening and tormenting her as they thought fit (43).

One among them said lewdly, 'Oh Janki! Your youth has gone to waste. If you establish some relationship with Ravana, if you become his partner and cohabit with him (*rāvaṇena samāsādyā*), then it can be beneficial for you (*saphalam tu bhaviṣyati*).

[To wit, if you agree to Ravana, you would have put your youth to some good use by enjoying it instead of frittering it away in sorrows and miseries. Besides that, you will have to die if you do not yield to the demands of Ravana, as you have heard yourself. Sorry to say this, but at the end of the time set by him we will be forced to kill you and serve you at his dining table. Think over this matter seriously and make a wise decision that would be in your own interests. We suggest that you yield to him, because it is the only way all your wishes can be fulfilled.] ' (44).

अपरा चाह कोपेन किं विलम्बेन जानकि ।

इदानीं छेद्यतामङ्गं विभज्य च पृथक् पृथक् ॥ ४५॥

अन्या तु खड्गमुद्यम्य जानकीं हन्तुमुद्यता ।

अन्या करालवदना विदार्यास्यमभीषयत् ॥ ४६॥

aparā cāha kopena kiṃ vilambena jānaki ।

idānīm chedyatāmaṅgaṃ vibhajya ca pr̥thak pr̥thak ॥ 45॥

anyā tu khaḍgamudyamya jānakīm hantumudyatā ।

anyā karālavadanā vidāryāsyamabhīṣayat ॥ 46॥

45-46. Another demoness showed her anger and exasperation at Sita, saying to her, 'Oh Janki! Why do you not listen to us and delay in taking a decision; why are you procrastinating?'

Some threatened to cut her body into separate pieces (*idānīm chedyatāmaṅgaṃ vibhajya ca pr̥thak pr̥thak*) (45), while another drew a sword to kill her (*anyā tu khaḍgamudyamya jānakīm hantumudyatā*). One demoness began to frighten her by opening her terribly frightening mouth as if she would bite her and tear her apart with her sharp teeth (*anyā karālavadanā vidāryāsyamabhīṣayat*) (46).

एवं तां भीषयन्तीस्ता राक्षसीर्विकृताननाः ।

निवार्य त्रिजटा वृद्धा राक्षसी वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ४७॥

शृणुध्वं दुष्टराक्षस्यो मद्राक्यं वो हितं भवेत् ॥ ४८॥

evaṃ tāṃ bhīṣayantīstā rākṣasīrvikṛtānanāḥ ।

nivārya trijaṭā vṛddhā rākṣasī vākyaṃ abravīt ॥ 47॥

śṛṇudhvaṃ duṣṭarākṣasyo madvākyaṃ vo hitaṃ bhavet ॥ 48॥

47-48. Then, when those horrifying demonesses were trying to terrify Sita into submission, an aged demoness by the name of Trijata stopped them and said (47), 'Oh

you wicked demonesses! Listen to what I say—it will be for your own benefit, so you must pay heed to my advice and pay attention to what I have to say (48).

न भीषयध्वं रुदतीं नमस्कुरुत जानकीम् ।
 इदानीमेव मे स्वप्ने रामः कमललोचनः ॥ ४९॥
 आरुह्यैरावतं शुभ्रं लक्ष्मणेन समागतः ।
 दग्ध्वा लङ्कापुरीं सर्वा हत्वा रावणमाहवे ॥ ५०॥

na bhīṣayadhvaṃ rudatīm namaskuruta jānakīm ।
 idānīmeva me svapne rāmaḥ kamalalocanaḥ ॥ 49॥
 āruhyairāvataṃ śubhram lakṣmaṇena samāgataḥ ।
 dagdhvā laṅkāpurīm sarvāṃ hatvā rāvaṇamāhave ॥ 50॥

49-50. Do not scare and torment the already harried, weeping and woefully lamenting Janki (Sita) (na bhīṣayadhvaṃ rudatīm -- jānakīm), but instead you must bow before her and pay your obeisance to her (namaskuruta).

[You know why I am warning you? Listen carefully.] I have seen a dream that the lotus-eyed Lord Sri Ram (49), accompanied by Laxman, has arrived astride a wonderful white elephant known as ‘Eravat’ (āruhyairāvataṃ śubhram). He has burnt the whole city of Lanka (dagdhvā laṅkāpurīm sarvāṃ) and has killed Ravana in a great war (hatvā rāvaṇamāhave) (50).

आरोप्य जानकीं स्वाङ्के स्थितो दृष्टोऽगमूर्धनि ।
 रावणो गोमयहृदे तैलाभ्यक्तो दिगम्बरः ॥ ५१॥
 अगाहत्पुत्रपौत्रैश्च कृत्वा वदनमालिकाम् ।
 विभीषणस्तु रामस्य सन्निधौ हृष्टमानसः ॥ ५२॥

āropya jānakīm svāṅke sthito dr̥ṣṭo'gamūrdhani ।
 rāvaṇo gomayahrade tailābhyakto digambaraḥ ॥ 51॥
 agāhatputrapautraiśca kṛtvā vadanamālikām ।
 vibhīṣaṇastu rāmasya sannidhau hr̥ṣṭamānasah ॥ 52॥

51-52. Then I saw that Lord Ram he is sitting on the summit of a high mountain with Janki (Sita) by his side (jānakīm svāṅke sthito).

Ravana is wearing a garland of human skulls, has oil smeared on his body; he is naked, and he is accompanied by his sons and grand-sons. He repeatedly plunges himself in a pond of slush made of cow dung. Vibhishan is sitting near Lord Sri Ram, and he is very cheerful and delighted in his heart (51-52)¹.

[Note—¹Trijata warns her companion guards that the dream she had seen is very gloomy and discouraging for the demon race. It portends grave calamities that are about to bedevil Ravana and ruin his clan. Lord Ram would be victorious in the war that seems unavoidable, and Ravana would be killed with his kith and kin, except

Vibhishan who seems to be happy at the turn of events as he is seen sitting with Lord Ram in a cheerful mood.

Trijata alerts the demonesses about the gloomy future that Ravana faces, and therefore it would be wiser for them not to torment Sita any more on the orders of Ravana who is sure to be defeated and killed in the war. It is not sensible for anyone to follow a king who is destined by destiny to fall and die. On the contrary, they would be wiser to leave Sita alone so that if the situation so demands then all of them can plead for mercy with her, and seek her forgiveness. Surely there is no merit in annoying Sita any further because if the dream comes to be true, and Lord Ram does gain victory over Ravana, then all those who torment Sita now would have to face dire consequences for their imprudence and rashness.]

सेवां करोति रामस्य पादयोर्भक्तिसंयुतः ।
सर्वथा रावणं रामो हत्वा सकुलमञ्जसा ॥ ५३॥
विभीषणायाधिपत्यं दत्त्वा सीतां शुभाननाम् ।
अङ्के निधाय स्वपुरीं गमिष्यति न संशयः ॥ ५४॥

sevām karoti rāmasya pādayorbhaktisaṃyutaḥ ।
sarvathā rāvaṇaṃ rāmo hatvā sakulamāñjasā ॥ 53॥
vibhiṣaṇāyādhipatyam dattvā sītāṃ śubhānanām ।
aṅke nidhāya svapurīm gamiṣyati na saṃśayaḥ ॥ 54॥

53-54. He (Vibhishan) is serving Lord Ram's feet with great devotion.

Now, this dream clearly means that Lord Ram will kill Ravana and destroy his entire clan (except Vibhishan) (53), and then give the kingdom to Vibhishan by anointing him as its new king. Then he will go back to his own city (Ayodhya) with the auspicious Sita by his side' (54).

[Note—This dream of Trijata was a forewarning of what was to come in the following days. This caused the demonesses to be so frightened that they immediately stopped tormenting Sita. In the next verse we shall read that these demonesses fell asleep, but in all probability when they woke up, all of them quietly went away to their homes.]

त्रिजटाया वचः श्रुत्वा भीतास्ता राक्षसस्त्रियः ।
तूष्णीमासंस्तत्र तत्र निद्रावशमुपागताः ॥ ५५॥
तर्जिता राक्षसीभिः सा सीता भीतातिविह्वला ।
त्रातारं नाधिगच्छन्ती दुःखेन परिमूर्च्छिता ॥ ५६॥

trijatāyā vacaḥ śrutvā bhītāstā rākṣasastriyaḥ ।
tūṣṇīmāsaṃstatra tatra nidrāvaśamupāgatāḥ ॥ 55॥
tarjitā rākṣasībhiḥ sā sītā bhītātivihvalā ।
trātāraṃ nādhigacchantī duḥkhena parimūrcchitā ॥ 56॥

55-56. Hearing these words of Trijata, the demonesses became extremely frightened. They sat down quietly to ponder, and after sometime, they all fell asleep (55).

Sita was so terrified at the aggressive and threatening postures and rude behaviour of the demonesses that when they became quiet and fell asleep, leaving her alone, she fainted due to exhaustion and mental anguish, for she was so distraught and hopeless about her situation that she saw no signs of succour coming her way to end her cycle of horrors, torments, sorrows, anguish, troubles and tribulations¹ (56).

[Note—¹When the female demon guards fell asleep, Sita too dozed off as she was already too exhausted to keep awake, and respite from continuous verbal torture gave her some mental relief. She was so despondent and miserable that she saw no ray of hope for succour.]

अश्रुभिः पूर्णनयना चिन्तयन्तीदमब्रवीत् ।
प्रभाते भक्षयिष्यन्ति राक्षस्यो मां न संशयः ।
इदानीमेव मरणं केनोपायेन मे भवेत् ॥ ५७॥

aśrubhiḥ pūrṇanayanā cintayantīdamabravīt ।
prabhāte bhakṣayiṣyanti rākṣasyo māṃ na saṃśayaḥ ।
idānīmeva maraṇaṃ kenopāyena me bhavet ॥ 57॥

57. When she (Sita) regained her consciousness, she became very worried and perturbed, and said with tearful eyes to Trijata, 'There is no doubt that the demonesses would eat me up as soon as it is dawn. What is the way that I can die now (instead of being killed by them)?' (57).

एवं सुदुःखेन परिप्लुता सा विमुक्तकण्ठं रुदती विराय ।
आलम्ब्य शाखां कृतनिश्चया मृतौ न जानती कश्चिदुपायमङ्गना ॥ ५८॥

evaṃ suduḥkhena pariplutā sā vimuktakaṇṭhaṃ rudatī cirāya ।
ālambya śākhāṃ kṛtaniścayā mṛtau na jānatī kaścidupāyamaṅganā ॥ 58॥

58. Having thus decided to end her life, but finding no way to do it, the most auspicious one (Sita) caught hold of the branch of a tree, and leaning against it, she wept very bitterly and profusely for a long time (58).

[Note—We really empathize with Sita. Even the hardened of souls is moved to pity at her pitiful and sorrowful condition. This last verse no. 58 is the climax for her sorrows, miseries and torments, for in the next Canto, Hanuman appears before her and gives the proverbial breath of life to her bemoaning and distressed soul. No wonder then that Sita blessed him with all the possible boons she could think of, and this blessing was made with utmost sincerity at her command. And no wonder also that he was the most favourite of her for the rest of her life.

What more can a mother expect from her son? Indeed, Sita felt so overwhelmingly grateful to Hanuman that she calls him his 'son'—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 63, which we shall read herein below by-the-bye.]

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे सुन्दरकाण्डे
द्वितीयः सर्गः ॥ २॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmaramāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde sundarakāṇḍe
dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 2॥

Thus ends Canto 2 of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and Uma, his divine consort.

7.2.3: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 3:

Hanuman meets Sita; the Destruction of the Ashok Garden; Hanuman voluntarily allows himself to be captured by Ravana's son Meghnad:-

॥ तृतीयः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

उद्धन्धनेन वा मोक्षये शरीरं राघवं विना ।
जीवितेन फलं किं स्यान्मम रक्षोऽधिमध्यतः ॥ १॥
दीर्घा वेणी ममात्यर्थमुद्धन्धाय भविष्यति ।
एवं निश्चितबुद्धिं तां मरणायाथ जानकीम् ॥ २॥
विलोक्य हनुमान् किञ्चिद्विचार्यैतदभाषत ।
शनैः शनैः सूक्ष्मरूपो जानक्याः श्रोत्राङ्गं वचः ॥ ३॥

॥ trtīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

udbandhanena vā mokṣye śarīraṁ rāghavaṁ vinā ।
jīvitena phalaṁ kiṁ syānmama rakṣo'dhimadhyataḥ ॥ 1॥
dīrghā veṇī mamātyarthamudbandhāya bhaviṣyati ।
evaṁ niścītabuddhiṁ tāṁ maraṇāyātha jānakīm ॥ 2॥
vilokya hanumān kiñcidvicāryaitadabhāṣata ।
śanaiḥ śanaiḥ sūkṣmarūpo jānakyāḥ śrotragaṁ vacaḥ ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! In this way, the lamenting and weeping Sita thought of ending her own life as she saw no succour forthcoming. So, overcome with despair, she said to herself, 'Why not I kill myself by hanging, and thereby get rid of my torments? What is the use of living amongst these wicked demons without Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) (to protect me and afford me some solace)? (1).

[Since I do not have access to a rope or any other means by which I can hang myself from this tree—] My long plait of hairs will suffice to hang myself with'.

Observing that Janki (Sita) has decided to kill herself (by hanging or by any other means that she can think of, and that there is no time to lose before any untoward development happens) (2), Hanuman, who was hiding in the tree in a miniature form, thought of something in his heart, and spoke in a soft voice that was loud enough to reach Sita's ears (but not too loud that it can be heard by any demon sentinel appointed by Ravana to guard Sita) (3).

इक्ष्वाकुवंशसम्भूतो राजा दशरथो महान् ।
अयोध्याधिपतिस्तस्य चत्वारो लोकविश्रुताः ॥ ४॥
पुत्रा देवसमाः सर्वे लक्षणैरुपलक्षिताः ।
रामश्चलक्ष्मणश्चैव भरतश्चैव शत्रुहा ॥ ५॥

ikṣvākuvaṃśasambhūto rājā daśaratho mahān ।
ayodhyādhīpatistasya catvāro lokaviśrutāḥ ॥ 4॥
putrā devasamāḥ sarve lakṣaṇairupalakṣitāḥ ।
rāmaścalakṣmaṇaścaiva bharataścaiva śatruhā ॥ 5॥

4-5. [Hanuman began to recite the glories of Lord Ram, about his family lineage, and about his life and times to indicate to Sita and reassure her that someone very close and devoted to her Lord is present in the vicinity. This would initially surprise her no doubt, but it would also help her to overcome abject despair and a sense of hopelessness that had overcome her, for now she would be eager to meet the person who had said the words that were so pleasant and sweet for her to hear. Sita was enveloped in a shroud of deep gloom and total despair, seeing no hope of freedom and succour, and so the soothing words of Hanuman came to her as a respite from her excessive torments that made her determined to end her life, like a ray of light in a dark tunnel that suddenly gives hope to someone trapped in it and sure of impending death. Forsooth, the very idea, the very notion, the very thought, that someone favourable, some helpful soul, is nearby, was like a streak of sunlight that pierced through the thick cover of dark clouds of doomsday that had covered Sita's emotional firmament, cheering her up and lifting her sinking spirit.]

Hanuman spoke softly and began to speak of the life and times of Lord Ram as follows: 'King Dasrath, who was born in the clan of Ikshwaku, was very renowned and virtuous. To him were born four sons who are famous in all the three worlds (i.e. in the whole world consisting of the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean divisions) (4).

These sons are as auspicious and divine as Gods themselves; and they are endowed with all the characters and qualities that are regarded as auspicious, divine, noble and virtuous. Their names are Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan (5).

ज्येष्ठो रामः पितुर्वाक्यादण्डकारण्यमागतः ।
लक्ष्मणेन सह भ्रात्रा सीतया भार्यया सह ॥ ६॥
उवास गौतमीतीरे पञ्चवट्यां महामनाः ।

तत् नीता महाभागा सीता जनकनन्दिनी ॥ ७॥

jyeṣṭho rāmaḥ piturvākyāddaṇḍakāraṇyamāgataḥ ।
lakṣmaṇena saha bhrātrā sītayā bhāryayā saha ॥ 6॥
uvāsa gautamīre pañcavaṭyāṃ mahāmanāḥ ।
tatra nītā mahābhāgā sītā janakanandinī ॥ 7॥

6-7. The eldest son, Lord Sri Ram, came to the Dandkaranya forest, along with his wife Sita and younger brother Laxman, on the orders of his father (6).

That exalted Lord (Sri Ram) stayed at Panchvati on the banks of river Gautami with Sita, the most fortunate and auspicious daughter of the great king Janak (7).

रहिते रामचन्द्रेण रावणेन दुरात्मना ।
ततो रामोऽतिदुःखार्तो मार्गमाणोऽथ जानकीम् ॥ ८॥
जटायुषं पक्षिराजमपश्यत्पतितं भुवि ।
तस्मै दत्त्वा दिवं शीघ्रमृष्यमूकमुपागमत् ॥ ९॥

rahite rāmacandreṇa rāvaṇena durātmanā ।
tato rāmo'tiduhkhārto mārgamāṇo'tha jānakīm ॥ 8॥
jaṭāyuṣaṃ pakṣirājamapaśyatpatitaṃ bhuvi ।
tasmai dattvā divaṃ śīghramṛṣyamūkamupāgamat ॥ 9॥

8-9. One day, when Lord Ram was not there in his hermitage, the evil-hearted and wicked Ravana took away Janki (Sita). Lord Ram was overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish of separation from her, and he started his search for her everywhere in the wild forest. While moving ahead in his search, he saw, on the path (8), the king of the birds, named Jatayu, who was wounded and lying on the ground. The Lord immediately sent Jatayu to the divine abode of Gods (i.e. to, heaven). [To wit, Lord Ram performed Jatayu's last rites, and gave his soul deliverance.]

After that, the Lord proceeded to the Rishyamook mountain (9).

सुग्रीवेण कृता मैत्री रामस्य विदितात्मनः ।
तद्भार्याहारिणं हत्वा वालिनं रघुनन्दनः ॥ १०॥
राज्येऽभिषिच्य सुग्रीवं मित्रकार्यं चकार सः ।
सुग्रीवस्तु समानाय वानरान् वानरप्रभुः ॥ ११॥
प्रेषयामास परितो वानरान् परिमार्गणे ।
सीतायास्तत् चैकोऽहं सुग्रीवसचिवो हरिः ॥ १२॥

sugrīveṇa kṛtā maitrī rāmasya viditātmanah ।
tadbhāryāhāriṇaṃ hatvā vāliṇaṃ raghunandanah ॥ 10॥
rājye'bhiṣicya sugrīvaṃ mitrakāryaṃ cakāra saḥ ।
sugrīvastu samānāyā vānarān vānaraprabhuḥ ॥ 11॥

preṣayāmāsa parito vānarān parimārgaṇe ।
sītāyāstatra caiko'haṃ sugrīvasacivo hariḥ ॥ 12॥

10-12. Upon arriving at that mountain, Lord Ram, who is a wise, sagacious, enlightened and self-realised soul, made friends with Sugriv (the prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha). Then Raghunandan (Lord Ram; the son of the family of the great king Raghu of Ayodhya) killed Baali (the elder brother of Sugriv) who had stolen his younger brother's wife¹ (10).

After that, the Lord installed Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha. In this manner, the Lord had successfully helped his friend Sugriv, and did his work for him. [To wit, Lord Ram restored Sugriv's wife and honour to him, and after punishing his elder brother Baali by killing him for committing the unpardonable crime of keeping his younger brother's wife as a mistress, the Lord crowned Sugriv as the king of Kishkindha.]

[Sugriv felt very obliged and grateful to the Lord, and he reciprocated the Lord's helpful gesture by promising to search for Sita.] Sugriv then summoned all the monkeys (and bears) to do the Lord's work (11), and sent them in all the directions in search of Sita. I am one of Sugriv's ministers, and one of the countless monkeys who were sent out to find the whereabouts of Sita (12).

[Note—¹Hanuman clearly gives the reason why Lord Ram killed Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv. It is certainly very wrong, illegal, unscrupulous, unrighteous and scandalous for anyone to kick his younger brother out of the house and keep his wife forcibly as a mistress. Baali certainly deserved severest of punishment for this sinful act.]

सम्पातिवचनाच्छीघ्रमुल्लङ्घ्य शतयोजनम् ।
समुद्रं नगरीं लङ्कां विचिन्वन् जानकीं शुभाम् ॥ १३॥
शनैरशोकवनिकां विचिन्वन् शिंशपातरुम् ।
अद्राक्षं जानकीमत्र शोचन्तीं दुःखसम्प्लुताम् ॥ १४॥
रामस्य महिषीं देवीं कृतकृत्योऽहमागतः ।
इत्युक्तवोपररामाथ मारुतिर्बुद्धिमतरः ॥ १५॥

sampātivacanācchīghramullaṅghya śatayojanam ।
samudraṃ nagarīm laṅkāṃ vicinvaṃ jānakīm śubhām ॥ 13॥
śanairāśokavanikāṃ vicinvaṃ śiṃśapātarum ।
adrākṣaṃ jānakīmatra śocantīm duḥkhasamplutām ॥ 14॥
rāmasya mahiṣīm devīm kṛtakṛtyo'hamāgataḥ ।
ityuktavopararāmātha mārutirbuddhimattaraḥ ॥ 15॥

13-15. I leapt across the ocean, which is 100 Yojans (800 miles) wide, on the advice of Sampati (the elderly vulture who had flown high up the sky and first observed Sita sitting in the garden of Lanka)¹, and have thus come to Lanka. Here, I searched all over the place for Janki (Sita), the auspicious and virtuous one (13).

Gradually, while searching for her in the Ashok grove, I saw this Shinshupa (Indian red wood) tree. Here I saw Janki sitting despondently, full of sorrow and anguish, and surrounded by a pall of gloom (14).

By seeing the goddess who is the consort of Lord Ram, the purpose of my coming here has been successfully accomplished; all my efforts have been amply rewarded as I have found her.'

Having said this, Hanuman, the wise, sagacious, erudite and intelligent son of the wind god, became silent (15).

[Note—¹Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 48-56. The group of monkeys and bears had met Sampati on the shore of the ocean. He had advised them that since Sita is in Lanka, anyone who could go and come back across a distance of 100 Yojans would be able to meet her. At that time, Hanuman was selected for this work.]

सीता क्रमेण तत्सर्वं श्रुत्वा विस्मयमाययौ ।
किमिदं मे श्रुतं व्योम्नि वायुना समुदीरितम् ॥ १६॥
स्वप्नो वा मे मनोभ्रान्तिर्यदि वा सत्यमेव तत् ।
निद्रा मे नास्ति दुःखेन जानाम्येतत्कुतो भ्रमः ॥ १७॥
येन मे कर्णपीयुषं वचनं समुदीरितम् ।
स दृश्यतां महाभागः प्रियवादी ममाग्रतः ॥ १८॥

sītā krameṇa tatsarvaṃ śrutvā vismayamāyayau ।
kimidaṃ me śrutaṃ vyomni vāyunā samudīritam ॥ 16॥
svapno vā me manobhrāntiryadi vā satyameva tat ।
nidrā me nāsti duḥkhena jānāmyetatkuto bhramaḥ ॥ 17॥
yena me karṇapīyusaṃ vacanaṃ samudīritam ।
sa dr̥śyatāṃ mahābhāgaḥ priyavādī mamāgrataḥ ॥ 18॥

16-18. Hearing this sequence of events, Sita was extremely astonished. She wondered, 'The words which I have heard from above, as if coming from the sky, have they been spoken by the Wind? (16).

Have I heard the words in a dream, or am I hallucinating, or is it merely my imagination? Or, is what I hear really true? Since I cannot sleep due to extremity of sorrow, anguish and mental torments and agitations, therefore it cannot be a dream; on the other hand, I can actually hear those words by my own ears, so it cannot be merely a flight of my imagination (17).

That person who has spoken these sweet and comforting words to me—words which appear like nectar for my ears—I request, I beseech, that great soul to appear before me, and make himself visible to me' (18).

श्रुत्वा तज्जानकीवाक्यं हनुमान् पत्रखण्डतः ।
अवतीर्य शनैः सीतापुरतः समवस्थितः ॥ १९॥
कलविड्कपूमाणाङ्गो रक्ताक्षः पीतवानरः ।
ननाम शनैः सीतां प्राञ्जलिः पुरतः स्थितः ॥ २०॥

śrutvā tājānakīvākyam hanumān patrakhaṇḍataḥ ।
 avatīrya śanaiḥ sītāpurataḥ samavasthitaḥ ॥ 19॥
 kalaviṅkapramāṇāṅgo raktāsyah pītavānarah ।
 nanāma śanakaiḥ sītām prāñjaliḥ purataḥ sthitaḥ ॥ 20॥

19-20. Hearing these words of Janki (Sita), Hanuman emerged from behind the cover of foliage, and coming down slowly from the tree¹, he stood before her (19).

At that moment he had the form of a monkey with the size of the bird 'Kalwink' (sparrow—"kalaviṅkapramāṇāṅgo"); his body had a reddish hue and it glowed like gold (raktāsyah pītavānarah). He came up slowly in front of Sita, and bowed before her reverentially with joined hands (20).

[Note—¹Hanuman approached Sita very cautiously, slowly and courteously, so as not to alarm her. His appearance was that of a monkey, but his size was that of a sparrow. It is very rare to find a monkey resembling a bird. So Hanuman feared that Sita would think that he is some demon sent by Ravana to tease her more if he showed any haste; if any of his manners could wrongly be interpreted by Sita as menacing, as she is already nervous and terrified, she would faint out of shock.

So it would be wise, thought Hanuman, to be very cautious while he went near her, because if Sita felt threatened by him going near her swiftly, if she was alarmed in the least by his approaching her quickly, perhaps she would withdraw herself in a cocoon of silence and become totally incommunicado.

Hanuman did not wish to startle Sita and do anything that would have made her nervous and terrified, because she was already on the edge and had taut nerves that were on the verge of a complete nervous breakdown.

Further, in case she panicked and shrieked, it would be disastrous for his mission, for it would alert the demon guards who surrounded Sita, and all secrecy would be severely compromised.

The next set of verses endorse what Hanuman had apprehended—for Sita did become suspicious of him.]

दृष्ट्वा तं जानकी भीता रावणोऽयमुपागतः ।
 मां मोहयितुमायातो मायया वानराकृतिः ॥ २१॥
 इत्येवं चिन्तयित्वा सा तूष्णिमासीदधोमुखी ।
 पुनरप्याह तां सीतां देवि यत्त्वं विशङ्कसे ॥ २२॥
 नाहं तथाविधो मातस्त्यज शङ्कां मयि स्थिताम् ।
 दासोऽहं कोसलेन्द्रस्य रामस्य परमात्मनः ॥ २३॥
 सचिवोऽहं हरीन्द्रस्य सुग्रीवस्य शुभपूदे ।
 वायोः पुत्रोऽहमखिलप्राणभूतस्य शोभने ॥ २४॥

dr̥ṣṭvā taṁ jānakī bhītā rāvaṇo'yamupāgataḥ ।
 māṁ mohayitumāyāto māyayā vānarākṛtiḥ ॥ 21॥
 ityevaṁ cintayitvā sā tūṣṇimāsīdadhomukhī ।
 punarapyāha tāṁ sītām devi yattvaṁ viśaṅkase ॥ 22॥

nāhaṃ tathāvidho mātastyaja śaṅkāṃ mayi sthitām ।
 dāso'haṃ kosalendrasya rāmasya paramātmānaḥ ॥ 23॥
 sacivo'haṃ harīndrasya sugrīvasya śubhaprade ।
 vāyoḥ putro'hamakhilaprāṇabhūtasya śobhane ॥ 24॥

21-24. Seeing him, Janki felt afraid that Ravana has come disguised as a monkey to trap her (21).

Thinking thus, she kept sitting stiffly, with a lowered head. Then he (Hanuman) said once again to Sita, 'Oh goddess! I am not the one whom you suspect me to be. Oh mother! Whatever suspicions and doubts you have about me, you must remove them. I am a humble servant of Lord Sri Ram, the Supreme Being himself (paramātmānaḥ) and the king of Kaushal (Ayodhya) (22-23).

Oh the one who bestows auspiciousness and good fortunes ("śubhaprade"; a reference to Sita)! I am a minister of Sugriv, the king of monkeys. Oh the adorable and worthy one (śobhane)! I am the son of the wind god, the god who presides over the forces in creation that give life to all living beings¹ (24).

[Note—¹Hanuman means that just as the air or the wind is the source that give life to the world, and not sniff it out, he too has come to her to give her a new lease of life, and not to be the cause of her death. So she need not be alarmed of him in the least. He is a friend, and not a foe. He is Lord Ram's messenger, and not Ravana's.]

तच्छ्रुत्वा जानकी प्राह हनूमन्तं कृताञ्जलिम् ।
 वानराणां मनुष्याणां सङ्गतिर्घटते कथम् ॥ २५॥
 यथा त्वं रामचन्द्रस्य दासोऽहमिति भाषसे ।
 तामाह मारुतिः प्रीतो जानकीं पुरतः स्थितः ॥ २६॥

tacchrutvā jānakī prāha hanūmantaṃ kṛtāñjalim ।
 vānarāṇāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ saṅgatirghaṭate katham ॥ 25॥
 yathā tvaṃ rāmacandrasya dāso'hamiti bhāṣase ।
 tāmāha mārutiḥ prīto jānakīṃ purataḥ sthitaḥ ॥ 26॥

25-26. Hearing this, Janki said to Hanuman, who was standing in front of her with hands joined in supplication, 'You say that you are a servant (subordinate, follower, devotee) of Sri Ramchandra—say, how is it possible that a monkey and a human can become friends and companions?'

Then Hanuman, who was standing in front of her, felt very happy as he replied to her¹ (25-26)—

[Note—¹Why was Hanuman cheerful and happy? Sita responding to Hanuman was a positive signal. The worse scenario would be her deciding to keep mum, and to retract herself in the cocoon of silence and gloom to which she had by now become accustomed.

So therefore, when Sita answered Hanuman, it was a positive sign that she would at least communicate with him, instead of shutting up tight. When a means of communication and dialogue was opened, Hanuman took a deep breath of relief, for

now it would be easy on his part to learn everything about her and her problems, and he would also be able to tell her what Lord Ram had told him to convey to her on the one hand, and on the other hand to learn what she herself wished to be conveyed to Lord Ram in return. An exchange of views was thus possible. Otherwise, not only his task would have become very difficult, it would also have been extremely difficult to convince anyone on his return that he had actually met Sita—for he would have no proof of it, no tangible sign from Sita to take back to Lord Ram, and neither any oral message from her that would convince the Lord that Hanuman had indeed met Sita.]

ऋष्यमूकमगाद्रामः शबर्या नोदितः सुधीः ।
 सुग्रीवो ऋष्यमूकस्थो दृष्टवान् रामलक्ष्मणौ ॥ २७॥
 भीतो मां प्रेषयामास ज्ञातुं रामस्य हृद्गतम् ।
 ब्रह्मचारिवपुर्धृत्वा गतोऽहं रामसन्निधिम् ॥ २८॥

r̥ṣyamūkamagādrāmaḥ śabaryā noditaḥ sudhīḥ ।
 sugrīvo r̥ṣyamūkastho dr̥ṣṭavān rāmalaṣṭmaṇau ॥ 27॥
 bhīto māṃ preṣayāmāsa jñātuṃ rāmasya hṛdgatam ।
 brahmacārivapurdhṛtvā gato'haṃ rāmasannidhim ॥ 28॥

27-28. 'At the instance of Sabari, the wise, erudite and sagacious Lord (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) came to the Rishyamook mountain. Sugriv, who was sitting on the summit of this mountain, saw Lord Ram and Laxman approach (27).

Sugriv was scared¹, and therefore he sent me to find out the cause (or the reason) of their arrival. Then I came to Lord Ram, disguising myself as a Brahmachari (a celibate Brahmin; a Brahmin student) (28).

[Note—¹Why was Sugriv scared when he saw strangers roaming at the foot of the Mt. Rishyamook? He was suspicious of the two strangers, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, when he saw them roaming in the vicinity of the mountain as he feared that his brother Baali, who was his bitter enemy and had chased him out of the kingdom of Kishkindha, had sent some spy with an evil intent to find Sugriv, and then devise some method of killing and getting rid of him.]

ज्ञात्वा रामस्य सद्भावं स्कन्धोपरि निधाय तौ ।
 नीत्वा सुग्रीवसामीप्यं सख्यं चाकरोत् तयोः ॥ २९॥
 सुग्रीवस्य हता भार्या वालिना तं स्मृतम् ।
 जयानैकेन बाणेन ततो राज्येऽभ्यषेचयत् ॥ ३०॥
 सुग्रीवं वानराणां स प्रेषयामास वानरान् ।
 दिग्भ्यो महाबलान् वीरान् भवत्याः परिमार्जणे ॥ ३१॥

29-31. When I found out about the good intent of the purpose of their visit (which was to search for Lord Ram's wife who had been abducted by some nasty demon), and specifically that the two brothers had no ill-will or malefic intentions against Sugriv, but rather that they were friendly disposed to anyone who would help them in

their noble endeavour of finding you, I took them to Sugriv on my shoulders, and befriended them (29).

Sugriv's wife herself had been snatched by Baali (his elder brother). [So, when told about the reason of Lord Ram's coming that way, Sugriv, who himself was suffering the agony of separation from his wife, could easily empathize with the Lord, and understand his pain and grief.]

The most exalted in Raghu's clan (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) killed Baali with a single arrow¹, and anointed Sugriv on the throne (of Kishkindha) (30).

After that, Sugriv sent monkeys, who were very brave, strong and valiant, in all the directions to search for you (31).

[Note—¹The reason why Lord Ram intervened on behalf of Sugriv and killed his elder brother Baali was that the Lord felt a great injustice had been done to his friend Sugriv by his powerful elder brother. Baali had not only exiled Sugriv from Kishkindha, disinheriting him of all his rights, but had also kept Sugriv's wife as his own mistress, an act that was absolutely unacceptable and most contemptible; he was not contented with this alone, as he was always on the look out to find a way to eliminate Sugriv by getting him assassinated. Sugriv was on the same page as Lord Ram in this matter—both had their wives taken away forcibly by their enemies, and both were subject to danger of attack by their adversaries.

Lord Ram felt that it was his moral duty, as a true friend, to help Sugriv get his honour back; and since Sugriv was not powerful enough to defeat Baali on the strength of his own arms to reclaim his lost rights, self-esteem and dignity, Lord Ram thought to help him by aiding Baali's defeat and death.

Besides the moral aspect of this decision, there was another important factor that weighed heavily in favour of Lord Ram's decision of helping Sugriv against Baali. It was this: The Lord needed help himself, first to find Sita, and then to launch a military campaign to free her from the clutches of ferocious demons. For this objective to be successful, he needed the support of an army as well as logistics. No help would come from his own kingdom of Ayodhya that was far away, and so to succeed the Lord would have to generate help locally by making powerful allies who would firmly stand by him in an alien land. So when the opportunity came his way in the form of helping Sugriv to overcome his misfortunes, the Lord decided to make the best of it.

To make Sugriv his ally and to expect any help from him, it was important for Lord Ram to first do something to oblige him, and in such a way that Sugriv would be eternally indebted to him. Hence, the Lord decided to help him against his brother Baali so that he could regain his right over the crown of the kingdom of Kishkindha, as well as retrieve his wife who was usurped forcibly by his brother. This would make Sugriv morally obliged to help his benefactor in return. And this is exactly how it happened—for it were Sugriv's messengers as well as his army of monkeys and bears that had helped Lord Ram to find out about Sita in the first place, and then to vanquish the demons and retrieve her later on after winning a fierce war.]

गच्छन्तं शयवो दृष्ट्वा मामभाषत सादरम् ॥ ३२॥

त्वयि कार्यमशेषं मे स्थितं मारुतनन्दन ।

बूढि मे कुशलं सर्वं सीतायै लक्ष्मणस्य च ॥ ३३॥

अङ्गुलीयकमेतन्मे परिज्ञानार्थमुत्तमम् ।

सीतायै दीयतां साधु मन्नामाक्षरमुद्रितम् ॥ ३४॥

gacchantam rāghavo dr̥ṣṭvā māmabhāṣata sādaram ॥ 32॥

tvayi kāryamaśeṣam me sthitam mārutanandana ।

brūhi me kuśalam sarvam sītāyai lakṣmaṇasya ca ॥ 33॥

aṅgulīyakametanme parijñānārthamuttamam ।

sītāyai dīyatām sādhu mannāmākṣaramudritam ॥ 34॥

32-34. When I was almost ready to start-off in search of you, Raghav (Lord Ram) saw me, called me near, and said (32), 'Oh Maruti's son! My work, which is very difficult and special, is dependent on you. Tell Sita about my and Laxman's welfare (33).

For your identification, I am giving you this beautiful finger-ring of mine, on which the letters of my name are engraved, so that Sita will recognise you when she sees this ring.' (34).

इत्युक्त्वा प्रददौ मह्यं करग्रादङ्गुलीयकम् ।

प्रयत्नेन मयानीतं देवि पश्याङ्गुलीयकम् ॥ ३५॥

इत्युक्त्वा प्रददौ देव्यै मुद्रिकां मारुतात्मजः ।

नमस्कृत्य स्थितो दूरद्वद्वाज्जलिपुटो हरिः ॥ ३६॥

दृष्ट्वा सीता प्रमुदिता रामनामाङ्कितं तदा ।

मुद्रिकां शिरसा धृत्वा स्रवदानन्दनेत्रजा ॥ ३७॥

ityuktvā pradadau mahyam karāgrādaṅgulīyakam ।

prayatnena mayānītam devi paśyāṅgulīyakam ॥ 35॥

ityuktvā pradadau devyai mudrikām mārutātmajaḥ ।

namaskṛtya sthito dūrādbaddhāñjalipuṭo hariḥ ॥ 36॥

dr̥ṣṭvā sītā pramuditā rāmanāmāṅkitam tadā ।

mudrikām śirasā dhṛtvā sraavadānandanetraja ॥ 37॥

35-37. Saying this, Lord Ram took off the ring from his finger and gave it to me. I have brought it very carefully with me. Oh goddess! You see this ring for yourself (for it would not only help to establish my identity and authenticity, but also assure you that Lord Ram is well and remembers you)' (35).

Saying so, the son of the wind god gave that ring to the goddess ("devyai"; Sita). Then he bowed to her and stood aside at a little distance from her (to give her time to examine the ring and reassure herself that Hanuman was indeed Lord Ram's messenger and not an imposter) (36).

When Sita saw that finger-ring with Lord Ram's initials engraved in it, she immediately recognized it and its authenticity. This made her thrilled and exhilarated. She raised the ring to her head and touched it with it even as a stream of tears gushed out of her eyes (37).

कपे मे पूणदाता त्वं बुद्धिमानसि राघवे ।

भक्तोऽसि प्रियकारी त्वं विश्वासोऽस्ति तवैव हि ॥ ३८॥
 नो वेन्मत्सन्निधिं वान्यं पुरुषं प्रेषयेत्कथम् ।
 हनूमन् दृष्टमखिलं मम दुःखादिकं त्वया ॥ ३९॥
 सर्वं कथय रामाय यथा मे जायते दया ।
 मासद्वयावधि प्राणाः स्थास्यन्ति मम सत्तम ॥ ४०॥

kape me prāṇadātā tvam buddhimānasi rāghave ।
 bhakto'si priyakārī tvam viśvāso'sti tavaiva hi ॥ 38॥
 no cenmatsannidhiṃ cānyam puruṣam preṣayetkatham ।
 hanūman dr̥ṣṭamakhilam mama duḥkhādikaṃ tvayā ॥ 39॥
 sarvaṃ kathaya rāmāya yathā me jāyate dayā ।
 māsadvayāvadhi prāṇāḥ sthāsyanti mama sattama ॥ 40॥

38-40. Then she said, 'Oh Kapi (Hanuman)! You are my saviour (for you have saved me from drowning in an ocean of grief, miseries and sorrows) (me prāṇadātā). You are very wise, clever and intelligent (tvam buddhimānasi), you are a devotee of Raghav (Sri Ram) (rāghave bhakto'si), and most dear to him (priyakārī tvam). I am certain he has full faith and trust in you (38).

Forsooth and without gainsay, if that hadn't been the case, why would he have sent a non-related male to me (as his messenger)?¹

Oh Hanuman! You have seen all my agonies; you have witnessed all my troubles and tribulations; you have seen my suffering and miserable existence (39).

Tell all these things to Lord Sri Ram when you go back to report to him, so that he develops greater mercy and more compassion for me. Oh the most exalted one! My life will survive for only two months more (because this evil demon Ravana has threatened to kill me after that period) (40).

[Note—¹In ancient societies, and even in the conservative societies of today's modern world, only a male relation is expected to meet a female relative while she is alone. So Sita expressed her confidence in Hanuman when she says that had Lord Ram not treated him as being very close to him, as his confidante, and almost as if he were his own son, then the Lord would not have thought of trusting him with either his finger-ring or with the confidential message that he sent for Sita.

This confidence helped Sita to open her heart to Hanuman without reservations. All her apprehensions and doubts about him were removed.]

नागमिष्यति चेद्रामो भक्षयिष्यति मां खलः ।
 अतः शीघ्रं कपीन्द्रेण सुग्रीवेण समन्वितः ॥ ४१॥
 वानरानीकपैः सार्धं हत्वा रावणमाहवे ।
 सपुत्रं सबलं रामो यदि मां मोचयेत्प्रभुः ॥ ४२॥

nāgamiṣyati cedrāmo bhakṣayiṣyati mām khalaḥ ।
 ataḥ śīghraṃ kapīndreṇa sugrīveṇa samanvitaḥ ॥ 41॥
 vānarānīkapaiḥ sārddham hatvā rāvaṇamāhave ।
 saputraṃ sabalaṃ rāmo yadi mām mocayetprabhuḥ ॥ 42॥

41-42. If this does not happen (i.e. if Lord Ram does not save me within the stipulated time of two months), then this wicked fellow will eat me up¹. Hence, it is urgent that Lord Ram should come here as soon as it is possible, along with Sugriv and other chief monkeys, to kill Ravana together with his sons and army, and liberate me. [It is urgent because if the Lord delays and I am not liberated within two months, this wretch would definitely kill me.] (41-42).

[Note—¹ Apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 42.]

ततस्य सदृशं वीर्यं वीर वर्णय वर्णितम् ।
 यथा मां तारयेद्रामो हत्वा शीघ्रं दशाननम् ॥ ४३॥
 तथा यतस्व हनुमन् वाचा धर्ममवाप्नुहि ।
 हनुमानपि तामाह देवि दृष्टो यथा मया ॥ ४४॥
 रामः सलक्ष्मणः शीघ्रमागमिष्यति सायुधः ।
 सुग्रीवेण ससैन्येन हत्वा दशमुखं बलात् ॥ ४५॥

tattasya sadrśaṃ vīryaṃ vīra varṇaya varṇitam ।
 yathā māṃ tārayedrāmo hatvā śīghraṃ daśānanam ॥ 43॥
 tathā yatasva hanuman vācā dharmamavāpnuhi ।
 hanumānapi tāmāha devi dr̥ṣṭo yathā mayā ॥ 44॥
 rāmaḥ salakṣmaṇaḥ śīghramāgamiṣyati sāyudhaḥ ।
 sugrīveṇa sasainyena hatvā daśamukhaṃ balāt ॥ 45॥

43-45. If it happens the way I have told you then surely all his efforts would be successful. And only then you would be justified to describe the Lord's glory and greatness again in the way you have done just a moment ago.

You should tell the Lord all that you have seen in such a tactful way, with all the deftness you can command, that the Lord gets angry at this 10-headed monster (Ravana) and kills him, so that I am liberated from this horrible existence and find my freedom (43).

And certainly by doing so you shall also feel contented and derive merit for the good deed that you would have done by employing your wisdom and words to help someone who is under immense distress. [To wit, if your clever use of words could sufficiently inspire and impel Lord Ram to act expeditiously and kill Ravana before he kills me, you will certainly be blessed with the reward of doing a righteous deed to save my life].

Then Hanuman said to Sita to reassure her, 'Oh goddess! What I have observed personally makes me feel confident that (44) Lord Ram and Laxman, both armed and well prepared, and accompanied by Sugriv and his army, shall come here very soon. He shall then use his might to kill the 10-headed demon Ravana (45).

समानेष्यति देवि त्वामयोध्यां नातृ संशयः ।
 तमाह जानकी रामः कथं वारिधिमाततम् ॥ ४६॥
 तीर्त्वायास्यत्यमेयात्मा वानरानीकपैः सह ।

हनुमानाह मे स्कन्धावारुह्य पुरुषर्षभौ ॥ ४७॥

samāneṣyati devi tvāmayodhyāṃ nātra saṃśayaḥ ।
tamāha jānakī rāmaḥ katham vāridhimātataṃ ॥ 46॥
tīrtvāyāsyatyameyātmā vānarānīkapaiḥ saha ।
hanūmānāha me skandhāvāruhya puruṣarṣabhau ॥ 47॥

46-47. He (Lord Ram) shall (after having killed Ravana) take you to Ayodhya. Oh goddess, there is no doubt about it'.

At this, Janki (Sita) said (expressing her doubts), 'How will Lord Ram cross the mighty ocean (46) along with a huge army of monkeys, though of course the Lord is known to be 'Ameyatma' (tīrtvāyāsyatyameyātmā), i.e. the Supreme Soul that prevails everywhere, the Supreme Being who cannot be measured¹.

Hanuman replied, 'Those two exalted souls (i.e. Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman), who are the most excellent beings amongst men, shall come here astride my shoulders. [To wit, if it is found that crossing the ocean is a problem for Lord Ram and Laxman, then there is no worry on that point, for I shall make both of them sit on my shoulders and bring them here in the same way as I have come. Hence, you ought not to worry on that account.] (47).

[Note—¹Sita was worried as to how Lord Ram would physically cross the ocean because presently he is in a human form, although in his primary form he is none but the Supreme Being for whom the worldly ocean is nothing but a shallow groove, not wider and deeper than a hollow made by a cow's hoof on earth, which even a child can cross easily.

Legend has it that Lord Vishnu had indeed measured the entire universe in merely two steps during his incarnation as Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant who had vanquished the haughtiness of king Bali. Bali had promised Vaaman a piece of land measuring an area that the latter can cover in his three steps, but when Vaaman covered the entire universe in merely two of his steps, and one step was still left to be put down for the purpose of measuring the land which was no more available, king Bali offered his own head for the Lord to put his foot on and complete the measurement. Though the Lord succeeded in vanquishing Bali's ego and haughtiness, but he was also moved by the king's greatness of spirit and steadfastness at keeping his words. So as a reward, Lord Vaaman offered Bali the kingdom of the nether world, and decided to protect Bali by becoming his guard himself so that no one can dethrone Bali from this kingdom.

But the problem in the present case of Lord Ram was that he had to play his role as a human being to perfection, and no human being can cross the width of the ocean measuring 100 Yojans (800 miles) by just walking across it like one would cross a small puddle on the road that comes in his way.

So Sita wondered how Lord Ram would manage to overcome this great hurdle because he would be accompanied by a huge army. Had he been alone, he could have done this miracle secretly without anyone knowing about it, but that's not feasible in the present case.

It ought to be noted here that earlier Sita had shown great courage and confidence when she had said, while sternly rebuking Ravana, that "Lord Ram would come here to kill him by crossing the ocean either by drying it up or making a bridge

across it by covering it with his arrows”—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 34-35.

But now she expresses great doubt in this regard. Why was this? It was because she was so extremely mentally disturbed and emotionally upset that she began seeing the negative side of everything. Her earlier outburst against Ravana was to show her indignation and anger to him, but after the storm blew over she had once again sunk into the pit of hopelessness aggravated and exacerbated by gloomy thoughts and a despairing mood.]

आयास्यतः ससैन्यश्च सुग्रीवो वानरेश्वरः ।
 विहायसा क्षणेनैव तीर्त्वा वारिधिमाततम् ॥ ४८॥
 निर्दहिष्यति रक्षौघांस्त्वत्कृते नात्र संशयः ।
 अनुज्ञां देहि मे देवि गच्छामि त्वरयान्वितः ॥ ४९॥
 द्रष्टुं यमं सह भ्रात्रा त्वरयामि तवान्तिकम् ।
 देवि किञ्चिदभिज्ञानं देहि मे येन राघवः ॥ ५०॥

āyāsyataḥ sasainyaśca sugrīvo vānareśvaraḥ ।
 vihāyasā kṣaṇenaiva tīrtvā vāridhimātataḥ ॥ 48॥
 nirdahiṣyati rakṣauḡhāṃstvatkr̥te nātra saṃśayaḥ ।
 anujñāṃ dehi me devi gacchāmi tvarayānvitaḥ ॥ 49॥
 draṣṭuṃ rāmaṃ saha bhrātrā tvarayāmi tavāntikam ।
 devi kiñcidabhiññānaṃ dehi me yena rāghavaḥ ॥ 50॥

48-50. As for Sugriv, the king of monkeys, he and his army shall cross the vast ocean by the air-route (the path of the sky as I have done myself), and they won't take long to do so. (48).

Then the Lord shall reduce to ashes and crush the entire horde of demons in order to recover you. There is no doubt about it. Oh goddess! Now give me your permission; I shall go back forthwith (49) and meet Lord Ram, and try to bring him, along with his brother, as soon as I can. Oh goddess! Give me some token (so that the Lord is convinced that I have met you) (50).

विश्वसेन्मां प्रयत्नेन ततो गन्ता समुत्सुकः ।
 ततः किञ्चिद्विचार्याथ सीता कमललोचना ॥ ५१॥
 विमुच्य केशपाशान्ते स्थितं चूडामणिं ददौ ।
 अनेन विश्वसेद्रामस्त्वां कपीन्द्र सलक्ष्मणः ॥ ५२॥

viśvasenmāṃ prayatnena tato gantā samutsukaḥ ।
 tataḥ kiñcidvicāryātha sītā kamalalocanā ॥ 51॥
 vimucya keśapāśānte sthitaṃ cūḍāmaṇiṃ dadau ।
 anena viśvasedrāmastvāṃ kapīndra salakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 52॥

51-52. That token from you will help Lord Ram believe me. I will take it with me very carefully; I shall approach the Lord with great urgency, and with a sincerity of

purpose. [To wit, I shall show due diligence and haste in executing the commission that you would be gracious enough to grant me, and you will not find me wanting in any way in its execution; be assured of it.]

Then the lotus-eyed Sita thought for some time (i.e. she pondered over what to give him as a token to be taken to Lord Ram) (51), and then she took off the 'Chudamani'¹ that was tucked in her hairs and gave it to him.

She then said to Hanuman, 'Oh the king amongst the monkeys (kapīndra)! By this token Lord Sri Ram and Laxman will definitely believe you. [The Lord will immediately recognize this ornament as being mine, and this will leave no doubt in his mind that you have indeed come and met me.] (52).

[Note—¹The "Chudamani" is an ornament worn by ladies in the hair, much like a hair pin. It is a sort of a diadem.]

अभिज्ञानार्थमन्यच्च वदामि तव सुव्रत ।
चित्कूटगिरौ पूर्वमेकदा रहसि स्थितः ।
मदङ्के शिर आधाय निद्राति रघुनन्दनः ॥ ५३॥
ऐन्द्रः काकस्तदागत्य नखैस्तुण्डेन चासकृत् ।
मत्पादाङ्गुष्ठमारक्तं विददारामिषाशया ॥ ५४॥

abhijñānārthamanyacca vadāmi tava suvrata ।
citrakūṭagirau pūrvamekadā rahasi sthitaḥ ।
madan̄ke śira ādhāya nidrāti raghunandanah ॥ 53॥
aindraḥ kākastadāgatya nakhaistuṇḍena cāsakṛt ।
matpādāṅguṣṭhamāraktaṁ vidadārāmiṣāśayā ॥ 54॥

53-54. Oh 'Suvrat' (i.e. one who is true to his words and righteous in his actions; it's a word Sita used to praise Hanuman)! I am telling you one more secret to make Lord Ram believe you.

Once it so happened that Raghunandan (Sri Ram) was sleeping with his head on my lap while we were alone during our sojourn on the Chitrakoot mountain (53).

Just at that time, the son of Indra (whose name was Jayant) came down to us disguised as a crow, and mistaking the red great toe of my foot to be a piece of meat, he bit and tore at it with his beaks and claws, thereby lacerating my toe and creating a bleeding wound (54).

[Note—It must be noted that Sita did not move her legs even a fraction of a centimeter nor had raised any alarm while the crow was poking and nibbling at her toe, because that would have disturbed the sleep of Lord Sri Ram. This is a great testimony of her extreme love, devotion, sense of duty and submission towards the comfort and service of her beloved Lord. She silently bore with extreme pain and discomforts herself, but did not want to disturb Lord Ram's sleep.]

ततो रामः प्रबुद्ध्याथ दृष्ट्वा पादं कृतव्रणम् ।
केन भद्रे कृतं चैतद्विप्रियं मे दुरात्मना ॥ ५५॥

इत्युक्त्वा पुरतोऽपश्यद्दायसं मां पुनः पुनः ।
अभिद्रवन्तं रक्ताक्तनखतुण्डं चुकोप ह ॥ ५६॥

tato rāmaḥ prabuddhyātha dr̥ṣṭvā pādaṃ kṛtavraṇam ।
kena bhadre kṛtaṃ caitadvipriyaṃ me durātmanā ॥ 55॥
ityuktvā purato'paśyadvāyasaṃ māṃ punaḥ punaḥ ।
abhidravantaṃ raktāktanakhataṇḍaṃ cukopa ha ॥ 56॥

55-56. When Lord Ram woke up from his sleep and saw the wound in my leg, he enquired, “Oh dear! Tell me, which wicked and evil soul has willingly done this harm to you?” (55).

Even as he was saying so, he watched the crow coming repeatedly near me. Its claws and beak were smeared with blood. Observing this wretch with blood sticking to its claws and beak, the Lord immediately understood what had happened while he was asleep. He felt excessively angry and exasperated at this development (56).

तृणमेकमुपादाय दिव्यास्त्रेणाभियोज्य तत् ।
चिक्षेप लीलया रामो वायसोपरि तज्ज्वलन् ॥ ५७॥
अभ्यद्रवद्दायसश्च भीतो लोकान् भ्रूमन् पुनः ।
इन्द्रब्रह्मादिभिश्चापि न शक्यो रक्षितुं तदा ॥ ५८॥
रामस्य पादयोरग्रेऽपतद्भित्त्या दयानिधेः ।
शरणागतमालोक्य रामस्तमिदमब्रवीत् ॥ ५९॥

tr̥ṇamekamupādāya divyāstreṇābhiyojya tat ।
cikṣepa līlayā rāmo vāyasopari tajjvalan ॥ 57॥
abhyadravadvāyasaśca bhīto lokān bhraman punaḥ ।
indrabrahmādibhiścāpi na śakyo rakṣitum tadā ॥ 58॥
rāmasya pādayoragre'patadbhityā dayānidheḥ ।
śaraṇāgatamālokya rāmastamidamabravīt ॥ 59॥

57-59. The Lord angrily picked up a blade of grass, activated it by infusing energy and dynamism into it, thereby transforming the otherwise ordinary blade of grass into a powerful weapon (such as an arrow), and then casually threw it at the crow as if he was shooing it away. [But that piece of grass magically transmuted itself into a powerful missile and dashed at the crow to kill it.] (57).

Then the crow became extremely terrified and ran for his life in all the worlds, but in vain. When he could not find any protection or succour anywhere, not even with Indra, his own father, or with Lord Brahma (the creator) or anyone else (58), he came and fell down at the feet of Lord Ram, petrified with fear. The Lord, who is a fountainhead of mercy, grace and compassion, saw the crow lying at his feet, seeking grace and mercy. The Lord said (59)—

अमोघमेतदस्त्रं मे दत्त्वैकाक्षिमितो वृज ।
सख्यं दत्त्वा गतः काक एवं पौरुषवानपि ॥ ६०॥

उपेक्षते किमर्थं मामिदानीं सोऽपि राघवः ।
 हनूमानपि तामाह श्रुत्वा सीतानुभाषितम् ॥ ६१॥
 देवि त्वां यदि जानाति स्थितामत्र स्यूतमः ।
 करिष्यति क्षणाद्भस्म तङ्कां राक्षसमण्डिताम् ॥ ६२॥

amoghametadastraṃ me datvaikākṣimito vraja ।
 savyaṃ dattvā gataḥ kāka evaṃ pauṛuṣavānapi ॥ 60॥
 upeṣate kimarthaṃ māmidānīm so'pi rāghavaḥ ।
 hanūmānapi tāmāha śrutvā sītānubhāṣitam ॥ 61॥
 devi tvāṃ yadi jānāti sthitāmatra raghūttamaḥ ।
 kariṣyati kṣaṇādbhasma taṅkāṃ rākṣasamaṇḍitām ॥ 62॥

60-62. 'My weapon is infallible. So sacrifice one of your eyes, and then go away from here'. [To wit, since the Lord's arrow cannot go to waste once it is shot, it must hit at some target. But the Lord spared Jayant's life by taking out one of his eyes.]

Then that crow gave (offered) its left eye to be hit by the arrow, and then went away from there.

This incident shows how powerful, manly, gallant and resourceful the Lord is (60).

This being the case, why is Raghav (Lord Ram) neglecting me now; why does he seem to be indifferent and apathetic towards me and my sufferings now? [To wit, at that time the Lord took immediate action to punish the wicked crow, but why is he delaying to punish this wicked demon Ravana now? I feel confounded.]

Hearing these remorseful words of Sita, Hanuman replied reassuringly (61), 'Oh goddess! As soon as the most exalted of the Raghus (Lord Sri Ram) comes to know of your whereabouts, then he will not waste time to turn to ashes (burn) this Lanka which is infested with demons. [But the problem till now was that the Lord was unaware of where you are. This problem has now been solved. So have some more patience; wait for some more time before the Lord comes here and burns the city of Lanka to avenge the misery caused to you by its demon inhabitants.] (62).

जानकी प्राह तं वत्स कथं त्वं योत्स्यसेऽसुरैः ।
 अतिसूक्ष्मवपुः सर्वे वानराश्च भवादृशाः ॥ ६३॥
 श्रुत्वा तद्वचनं देव्यै पूर्वरूपमदर्शयत् ।
 मेरुमन्दरसङ्काशं रक्षोगणविभीषणम् ॥ ६४॥

jānakī prāha taṃ vatsa kathaṃ tvāṃ yotsyase'suraiḥ ।
 atisūkṣmavapuḥ sarve vānarāśca bhavādrśāḥ ॥ 63॥
 śrutvā tadvacanaṃ devyai pūrvarūpamadārśayat ।
 merumandarasaṅkāśaṃ rakṣogaṇavibhīṣaṇam ॥ 64॥

63-64. Janki said, 'Oh son (vatsa)! You have a very diminutive form (i.e. your body is so small and of a miniature size). How will you then fight the colossus demons? All other monkeys must be small like you, aren't they?' (63).

Hearing these words of Sita that manifested her lingering doubts about him and his ability to take on the might of the ferocious demons, Hanuman showed his original form that was of a colossal dimension; a form whose size was as large and expansive as the huge legendary mountains known as Meru and Mandrachal. This form could indeed create great terror and instill fear among the demons¹ (64).

[Note—¹The huge size of his body which Hanuman showed Sita far exceeded that of the greatest of the demon warriors. Sita judged that when any of the mightiest of the demons would stand before Hanuman, the former would be dwarfed by the latter.

To wit, for all practical purposes, it would look as if Hanuman was the Gulliver standing tall, almost touching the sky overhead, in the land of the Lilliputian demons. If the need arose, Hanuman would have to simply expand his body, lift his foot, and put it down on the ground again, crushing and making a pulp of hundreds and thousands of demons underfoot at once.]

दृष्ट्वा सीता हनुमन्तं महापर्वतसन्निभम् ।
हर्षेण महताविष्टा प्राह तं कपिकुञ्जरम् ॥ ६५॥
समर्थोऽसि महासत्त्व द्रक्ष्यन्ति त्वां महाबलम् ।
राक्षस्यस्ते शुभः पन्था गच्छ रामान्तिकं द्रुतम् ॥ ६६॥

dr̥ṣṭvā sītā hanumantaṁ mahāparvatasannibham ।
harṣeṇa mahatāviṣṭā prāha taṁ kapikuñjaram ॥ 65॥
samartho'si mahāsattva drakṣyanti tvāṁ mahābalaṁ ।
rākṣasyaste śubhaḥ panthā gaccha rāmāntikaṁ drutam ॥ 66॥

65-66. Seeing Hanuman as huge as a great mountain, Sita felt extremely reassured, glad and happy. She said to him, who was the best amongst the monkeys (kapikuñjaram) (65), 'Oh truly great and powerful one (mahāsattva)! You are really very potent and able (samartho'si). Alright, now you must immediately go away from here, and proceed to Lord Sri Ram with haste. Otherwise, these great demonesses who are lying asleep all around here shall find out about you and create a great ruckus, throwing the secret plan out of gear. I bless you and wish you a happy journey; make haste your departure from here. Let your path be obstacle-free and happy for you' (66).

बुभुक्षितः कपिः प्राह दर्शनात्पारणं मम ।
भविष्यति फलैः सर्वैस्तव दृष्टौ स्थितौहि मे ॥ ६७॥
तथेत्युक्तः स जानक्या भक्षयित्वा फलं कपिः ।
ततः प्रस्थापितोऽगच्छज्जानकीं पूणिपत्य सः ।
किञ्चिद्दूरमथो गत्वा स्वात्मन्येवान्वचिन्तयत् ॥ ६८॥

bubhukṣitaḥ kapiḥ prāha darśanātpāraṇaṁ mama ।
bhaviṣyati phalaiḥ sarvaistava dr̥ṣṭau sthitairhi me ॥ 67॥
tathetyuktaḥ sa jānakyā bhakṣayitvā phalaṁ kapiḥ ।

tataḥ prasthāpito'gacchajjānakīm praṇipatya saḥ ।
kiñciddūramatho gatvā svātmānyevānvacintayat ॥ 68॥

67-68. The Kapi (Hanuman) was very hungry. So he said, 'I have already had your Darshan (holy sight). Now I have to break my fast by eating the fruits which I see on the trees all around you' (67).

Then, when the daughter of Janak (Sita) gave her consent, Hanuman ate those fruits, took leave of her after bowing reverentially before her, and departed from there¹.

When he had gone some distance, he thought to himself (68)—

[Note—¹We must note here that this conversation between Sita and Hanuman was held in a very hush-hush tone, virtually in a soft murmur as if some great secret and confidential matter of the greatest importance is being discussed between two individuals in such a low voice that no third person can hear anything about what is being said. The proof of this is that the many female demon guards who lay sleeping around Sita (apropos Canto 2, verse no. 55 herein above) could not have any inkling of what was going on; they were totally ignorant of Hanuman's visit to Sita.]

कार्यार्थमागतो दूतः स्वामिकार्याविरोधतः ।
अन्यत्किञ्चिदसम्पाद्य गच्छत्यधम एव सः ॥ ६९॥
अतोऽहं किञ्चिदन्यत्त्वं कृत्वा दृष्ट्वाथ रावणम् ।
सम्भाष्य च ततो रामदर्शनार्थं व्रजाम्यहम् ॥ ७०॥

kāryārthamāgato dūtaḥ svāmikāryāvirodhataḥ ।
anyatkiñcidasampādya gacchatyadhama eva saḥ ॥ 69॥
ato'haṁ kiñcidanyacca kṛtvā dr̥ṣṭvātha rāvaṇam ।
sambhāṣya ca tato rāmadarśanārthaṁ vrajāmyaham ॥ 70॥

69-70. 'A messenger—who comes to do his Lord's work, and having done the main part of the assigned job, returns without doing some peripheral work that is deemed to part of the mission and crucial for its complete success (because it is understood that without doing this little ancillary or subsidiary work the main mission would not be fully accomplished, although such extra little piece of work was not specifically outlined by the Lord as he thought it best to leave the finer details of the project to the discretion and wisdom of his intelligent messenger)—then such a messenger is not regarded as being fully competent and wise (for he has left something undone, which, if he had done it, would have lend shine to the successful accomplishment of the mission) (69).

Hence, I must also do something extra. I must meet Ravana and have a talk with him (to try to find out if some amicable way can be had out of this log-jam so that bloodshed can be avoided if possible, and Sita can be restored to Lord Ram without further problems).

After that I will go back to see (meet) Lord Sri Ram¹ (70).

[Note—¹Hanuman thought to himself, “Lord Ram has sent me on a mission. And what is the main objective of the mission? From what I understand, it is to free Sita

from the clutches of these evil demons on the one hand, and to punish them for this evil deed on the other hand. If Ravana is persuaded to give Sita back without the use of force, so much the better as it would avoid a bloody war and a lot of bloodshed. I am sure that if he surrenders and makes peace with the Lord, the Lord, being merciful, forgiving and compassionate, is sure to spare his life; and even if the Lord decides to punish him, it would be very mild.

In case Ravana decides to refuse to give Sita and surrender himself, but to confront the Lord, and in which case we are sure to launch a fierce no-holds-barred military campaign against the demons, then let me show him a sample of what is in store for the future of Lanka and its inhabitants once the assault comes. Let me do something in Lanka which would showcase the might of Lord Ram's army.

Further, personally I am so excessively angry with Ravana, after what I have witnessed of his treatment of Sita, that I can't resist myself from taking severe revenge upon him. If I go back without humiliating Ravana, I will not be able to rest in peace.

There is another plus point in doing something spectacular in Lanka before I leave; especially something that would shake the very foundation of the confidence of the demon army, which thinks itself to be invincible and mighty, and also to break its morale, as well as instill a general psyche of great fear and horror of the impending calamity in the populace of Lanka, so that, one, they would desist from tormenting Sita any more out of suspicion that I am somewhere around the corner, observing their behaviour, and I would not only protect Sita but also wreak vengeance upon anyone who disturbs her, and second, half of the war would already been won even before our troops actually land on the soil of Lanka, because an army whose morale is broken and confidence shaken, like the demon army would be if I manage to create utter chaos and havoc in Lanka right under the nose of the demons, it is definitely a defeated army!

Then surely I would be in a position to give a complete picture to the Lord. The main objective of the Lord is to free Sita from the clutches of Ravana, so therefore if I can find some way for it by discussing the matter with Ravana beforehand, and judge what his attitude is, then it would be so much the easier for the Lord to decide the next course of his action. If war is inevitable, my actions now would demoralize the demon army completely.

So I think that if I go back with just the news that I had been able to meet Sita and have information about her whereabouts, and doing nothing else, then I think it would be a job half done. So let me complete the mission.”]

इति निश्चित्य मनसा वृक्षखण्डान् महाबलः ।
उत्पाद्याशोकवनिकां निर्वृक्षामकरोत्क्षणात् ॥ ७१॥
सीताऽऽश्रयनं त्यक्त्वा वनं शून्यं चकार सः ।
उत्पाटयन्तं विपिनं दृष्ट्वा राक्षसयोषितः ॥ ७२॥
अपृच्छन् जानकीं कोऽसौ वानराकृतिरुद्धटः ॥ ७३॥

iti niścitya manasā vṛkṣakhaṇḍān mahābalaḥ ।
utpāṭyāśokavanikāṃ nirvṛkṣāmakarotkṣaṇāt ॥ 71॥
sītā"śrayanaṃ tyaktvā vanaṃ śūnyaṃ cakāra saḥ ।
utpāṭayantaṃ vipinaṃ drṣṭvā rākṣasayoṣitaḥ ॥ 72॥
apṛcchan jānakīṃ ko'sau vānarākṛtirudbhaṭaḥ ॥ 73॥

71-73. Having decided so, he who was very valiant, strong, courageous and powerful (i.e. Hanuman) started uprooting all the trees of the Ashok grove, and very quickly he completely ruined the garden (71).

Leaving untouched the tree under which Sita was sitting, he laid to waste the entire garden. Seeing him destroying the magnificent royal grove, the demonesses, who were till now in deep slumber, suddenly woke up due to the commotion, and, dazed as they were, half asleep and half awake, they were totally confounded at the sudden development and the unexpected sight of a stranger, an intruder (i.e. of Hanuman). They asked Sita, 'Who is this formidable warrior in the form of a monkey?' (72-73).

जानक्युवाच ।

भवत्य एव जानन्ति मायां राक्षसनिर्मिताम् ।

नाहमेनं विजानामि दुःखशोकसमाकुला ॥ ७४॥

इत्युक्तास्त्वरितं गत्वा राक्षस्यो भयपीडिताः ।

हनूमता कृतं सर्वं रावणाय न्यवेदयन् ॥ ७५॥

jānakyuvāca ।

bhavatya eva jānanti māyāṃ rākṣasanirmitām ।

nāhamenaṃ vijānāmi duḥkhaśokasamākulā ॥ 74॥

ityuktāstvaritaṃ gatvā rākṣasyo bhayapīḍitāḥ ।

hanūmatā kṛtaṃ sarvaṃ rāvaṇāya nyavedayan ॥ 75॥

74-75. Sita replied, 'Only you can know about this demonic, illusive, deceitful trick (that the demons, especially Ravana has been playing upon me to scare and torment me). What do I know about it because I am already suffering from extreme miseries, tormented with my own sorrows and anguish, and am confounded and overwhelmed with perplexity myself to pay attention to anyone who has entered this garden? '

[To wit, it is your duty to know who enters and leaves this garden. Hasn't Ravana appointed you to guard me and keep a watch out for all intruders? Why do you ask me; take care of your own safety now, for tell me, what answer would you give to Ravana when he asks you this same question: "who is this intruder whom you allowed to enter the garden under your watch". I am too occupied with my own problems to bother about anything else. So don't ask me who this monkey is. I didn't pay attention to him as I think he is some demon in disguise sent by Ravana to tease me.]¹ (74).

When Sita said this, the terrified demonesses hurried to Ravana and told him all about the deeds of Hanuman² (75).

[Note—¹Sita has deftly tried to conceal Hanuman's identity and the fact that they have already met and chalked out a plan for Lord Ram's invasion of Lanka to free her. It should also be noted that, as far as Sita could tell, Hanuman had taken her leave and was on his way to meet Lord Ram as is very clear from verse nos. 67-68.

His return to destroy the Ashok grove was an after-thought, and Sita could not be aware of it. Hanuman had not sought her permission to wreck havoc on Lanka. That was his own decision and a sort of personal agenda; Sita was not a party to it.

Hence, she was not lying when she denied any knowledge of what was happening. She rightly thought that the demons have staged this drama to make her shiver in fear of the potential of a terrible calamity which was about to unfold in the immediate environs of her habitat. This would terrorise her sufficiently to succumb to Ravana's wishes.

²What did the demonesses tell Ravana? The next verse nos. 76-77 answer this question.]

देव कश्चिन्महासत्त्वो वानराकृतिदेहभृत् ।
 सीतया सह सम्भाष्य ह्यशोकवनिकां क्षणात् ।
 उत्पाद्य चैत्यप्रासादं बभञ्जामितविक्रमः ॥ ७६॥
 प्रासादरक्षिणः सर्वान् हत्वा तत्रैव तस्थिवान् ।
 तच्छ्रुत्वा तूर्णमुत्थाय वनभङ्गं महाऽप्रियम् ॥ ७७॥

deva kaścinmahāsattvo vānarākṛtidehabhṛt ।
 sītayā saha sambhāṣya hyaśokavanikāṃ kṣaṇāt ।
 utpāṭya caityaprasādaṃ babhañjāmitavikramaḥ ॥ 76॥
 prāsādarakṣiṇaḥ sarvān hatvā tatraiva tasthivān ।
 tacchrutvā tūrṇamutthāya vanabhaṅgaṃ mahā'priyam ॥ 77॥

76-77. 'Oh Lord! A very brave, majestic and powerful creature in the form of a monkey has talked with Sita, and has uprooted the Ashok grove almost as if in an instant¹. This mighty and valiant creature has also broken the building (the main pavilion)² of the garden (76).

He has killed all its sentries and guards, and presently he is still sitting right there, in a defiant mood³.

As soon as Ravana heard the most unpleasant news of the destruction of the garden-forest which was very dear to him (77)—

[Note—¹It is clear from the report of these female demon guards that though they were apparently sleeping, at least some of them only pretended to sleep but were actually awake at the time Hanuman was talking with Sita. But they could not hear what was being said; they could only see them talking with each other.

So why did they not immediately get up when they saw a stranger talking with Sita? There are two plausible answers: one is that those who woke up decided to pretend to keep sleeping so that they can quietly hear the proceedings and then report the entire conversation to Ravana, who would be very glad with them and reward them for this information, and second, they were so terrified on seeing a stranger with an unconventional form with which they were unacquainted, reminding them of the horrifying dream of Trijata which she had told them a little while ago (apropos Canto 2, verse nos. 49-54), that they chose to keep still and lie like someone lost in deep sleep; they feared that this stranger would pounce upon them and strangle them to death if he finds out that they have woken up and discovered him.

When this most unexpected bit of news was conveyed to Ravana, he was so stunned that he was out of his wits altogether for he could not think of even asking these guards a very basic but pertinent question: "What were they doing when this

intruder entered the garden, why did they not raise an alarm; why did they allow him to go out of the garden unchallenged; and why did they keep quiet during the time he met Sita, went out, and then returned to unleash havoc in the garden, what were they doing in the meantime? What were the other male demon guards doing; why did they not call out for immediate help?”

²The word used in the text is “*caityaprāsādam*”, which literally means a building that looks like a ‘shrine’. It was perhaps a shrine of the deity of the demons which Ravana worshipped. Hanuman had destroyed its outer structure of the building, but he did not disturb its inner chambers, the sanctum sanctorum, where the idol of the deity was installed. As to the question if it is proper to destroy any shrine of whatever deity it was dedicated to, the answer is that if some evil Spirit, say a devil or satan, is worshipped by a person who himself is devilish in nature, like Ravana in this case, and who does not believe in the ‘true God’, then no sin befalls on a faithful who believes in this ‘true God’ if he denounces such evil practices.

Besides that, it was a time just preceding a war, and this deity installed in the shrine, if it was indeed a ‘shrine’ in the first place, was the object of worship of demons, the evil and sinful creatures, so, if after taking due precaution not to disturb the main idol and its sanctum chamber, the outer structure of the building, such as its courtyard, hall, rooms etc. were demolished by Hanuman, there was no great sin or unrighteousness done.

Hanuman had no idea what that building was; it had no external signs of a sacred place, like that of a temple. From its appearance it looked like a citadel meant to be a rest house or a pavilion, a place for pleasure and enjoying the garden.

³The reader would note that there is a clear difference in the way this episode of “Hanuman eating fruits of the Ashok garden and ruining it” has been described in the two scriptures we are quoting for the purpose of our own narration, viz. *Adhyatma Ramayan* and *Ram Charit Manas*. Whereas in *Adhyatma Ramayan*, which we are currently reading, Hanuman had eaten fruits quietly and had taken leave of Sita to return back to Lord Ram, but had second thoughts on the way, returned to the garden, and then started destroying it (apropos: verse nos. 68-71), while in *Ram Charit Manas* he had destroyed the garden directly, in the very first instance, while he was eating fruits (apropos: *Ram Charit Manas*, *Sundar Kand*, *Chaupai* line no. 1 that precedes *Doha* no. 18).

Secondly, in *Adhyatma Ramayan* we read that it were the female demon guards who had rushed to inform Ravana about the developments (apropos: verse no. 75), whereas in *Ram Charit Manas* it were the few male sentries, who had somehow escaped being beaten or killed by Hanuman, who rushed to tell Ravana that the garden has been ruined (apropos: *Ram Charit Manas*, *Sundar Kand*, *Chaupai* line nos. 2-6 that precede *Doha* no. 18).

Thirdly, in *Adhyatma Ramayan* we read that Hanuman had also destroyed some of the buildings in the garden (apropos: verse no. 76), but in *Ram Charit Manas* no such thing is mentioned.]

किङ्करान् प्रेषयामास नियुतं राक्षसाधिपः ।

निभग्नचैत्यप्रासादप्रथमान्तरसंस्थितः ॥ ७८॥

हनुमान् पर्वताकारो लोहस्तम्भकृतायुधः ।

किञ्चित्लाङ्गूलचलनो रक्तास्यो भीषणाकृतिः ॥ ७९॥

kiṅkarān preṣayāmāsa niyutaṁ rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
nibhagnacaityaaprāsādaprathamāntarasamsthitaḥ ॥ 78॥
hanumān parvatākāro lohastambhakṛtāyudhaḥ ।
kiñcillāṅgūlacalano raktāsyo bhīṣaṇākṛtiḥ ॥ 79॥

78-79. The king of the demons (Ravana) immediately dispatched a large number of attendants (soldiers). Here in the garden in the meantime, Hanuman was sitting in the forecourt of the broken pavilion (78).

He had assumed a huge mountain-like colossus form by that time. He used the broken iron pillar of the pavilion as his club or baton (and waited in ambush for the soldiers to arrive). His tail was slowly waving to and fro menacingly, while his face was reddened with anger, and his countenance was formidably terrifying¹ (79).

[Note—¹Hanuman waited in anticipation for the arrival of troops. He picked up a huge iron pillar of the citadel which he would use as a mace, a sort of a battering ram, if he is attacked by the demons. His anger and eagerness to give a fight is evident from his erect tail that was swaying menacingly, the red colour of his face, and his general appearance of someone seething with anger and ready to strike back at his adversary at the first opportunity.]

आपतन्तं महासङ्घं राक्षसानां ददर्श सः ।
चकार सिंहनादं च श्रुत्वा ते मुमुहूर्भृशम् ॥ ८०॥
हनुमन्तमथो दृष्ट्वा राक्षसा भीषणाकृतिम् ।
निर्जघ्नुर्विविधास्तूयैः सर्वराक्षसघातिनम् ॥ ८१॥
तत उत्थाय हनुमान् मुद्गरेण समन्ततः ।
निष्पिपेष क्षणादेव मशकानिव यूथपः ॥ ८२॥

āpatantaṁ mahāsaṅghaṁ rākṣasānāṁ dadarśa saḥ ।
cakāra siṃhanādaṁ ca śrutvā te mumuhurbhṛśam ॥ 80॥
hanumantamatho drṣṭvā rākṣasā bhīṣaṇākṛtim ।
nirjaghnurvividhāstraughaiḥ sarvarākṣasaghātinam ॥ 81॥
tata utthāya hanumān mudgareṇa samantataḥ ।
niṣpipeṣa kṣaṇādeva maśakāniva yūthapaḥ ॥ 82॥

80-82. Seeing that a huge army of demons has arrived, Hanuman made a loud roar like that of an angry lion which made all the entire demon warriors stunned and stupefied with fear (80).

Then seeing Hanuman—who was the slayer of all demons, and who had a colossus body—the demons shot various types of weapons at him (81).

Then, just as a great king of the elephants would easily crush or grind underfoot countless mosquitoes to pulp, Hanuman immediately pressed and crushed them all by his baton, which in this case was the iron pillar of the demolished pavilion (apropos: verse no. 79) (82).

निहतान् किङ्करान् श्रुत्वा रावणः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः ।
 पञ्च सेनापतींस्तत्र प्रेषयामास दुर्मदान् ॥ ८३॥
 हनूमानपि तान् सर्वाल्लोहस्तम्भेन चाहनत् ।
 ततः क्रुद्धो मन्त्रिसुतान् प्रेषयामास सप्त सः ॥ ८४॥

nihatān kiṅkarān śrutvā rāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrcchitaḥ ।
 pañca senāpatīṁstatra preṣayāmāsa durmadān ॥ 83॥
 hanūmānapī tān sarvāṁllohistambhena cāhanat ।
 tataḥ kruddho mantrisutān preṣayāmāsa sapta saḥ ॥ 84॥

83-84. Hearing the death of his servants (soldiers), Ravana became mad with anger; he literally he fainted out of shock and anger (“rāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrcchitaḥ”). He sent five of his most talented and virtually invincible commanders (83).

Hanuman killed all of them in a moment with his iron rod. After that, he (Ravana) sent seven of his ministers’ sons (84).

आगतानपि तान् सर्वान् पूर्ववद्वानरेश्वरः ।
 क्षणाग्निःशेषतो हत्वा लोहस्तम्भेन मारुतिः ॥ ८५॥
 पूर्वास्थानमुपाश्रित्य प्रतीक्षन् राक्षसान् स्थितः ।
 ततो जगाम बलवान् कुमारोऽक्षः प्रतापवान् ॥ ८६॥

āgatānapī tān sarvān pūrvavadvānareśvaraḥ ।
 kṣaṇāgnihśeṣato hatvā lohastambhena mārutiḥ ॥ 85॥
 pūrvasthānamupāśritya pratīkṣan rākṣasān sthitaḥ ।
 tato jagāma balavān kumāro'kṣaḥ pratāpavān ॥ 86॥

85-86. The king of monkeys, the son of the wind god (Hanuman) killed all of them in an instant with the iron pillar, as soon as they arrived there (85).

Then he sat at his earlier perch, waiting in ambush for others to come.

Then Akshaya Kumar, the strong, valiant and famed prince (who was a son of Ravana), himself came to the site of action (86).

तमुत्पपात हनुमान् दृष्ट्वाकाशे समुद्ररः ।
 गगनात्त्वरितो मूर्ध्नि मुद्गरेण व्यताडयत् ॥ ८७॥
 हत्वा तमक्षं निःशेषं बलं सर्वं चकार सः ॥ ८८॥

tamutpapāta hanumān dr̥ṣṭvākāśe samudgarah ।
 gaganāttvarito mūrdhni mudgareṇa vyatāḍayat ॥ 87॥
 hatvā tamakṣaṁ nihśeṣaṁ balaṁ sarvaṁ cakāra saḥ ॥ 88॥

87-88. Seeing him, Hanuman took his baton and immediately flew high up in the sky. From there, he threw that iron pillar with a great force on his (Akshaya Kumar's) head (87).

In this way he killed Akshaya Kumar and also removed all traces of his forces (by crushing them all simultaneously with the same iron pillar) (88).

ततः श्रुत्वा कुमारस्य वधं राक्षसपुङ्गवः ।
क्रोधेन महताविष्ट इन्द्रजेतारमब्रवीत् ॥ ८९॥
पुत्रं गच्छाम्यहं तत्र यत्रास्ते पुत्रहा रिपुः ।
हत्वा तमथवा बद्ध्वा आनयिष्यामि तेऽन्तिकम् ॥ ९०॥

tataḥ śrutvā kumārasya vadhaṁ rākṣasapuṅgavaḥ ।
krodhena mahatāviṣṭa indrajētāramabravīt ॥ 89॥
putraṁ gacchāmyaham tatra yatrāste putrahā ripuḥ ।
hatvā tamathavā baddhvā ānayaṣyāmi te'ntikam ॥90॥

89-90. Hearing of the death of the prince (Akshaya Kumar), the lord of the demons (Ravana) became very angry, and he said to Indrajeet (who was also known as Meghnad, Ravana's other son) (89), 'Oh son! I am going to where my enemy is, the one who has killed my son, and I shall either kill him or tie him and bring him to you' (90).

इन्द्रजित्पितरं प्राह त्यज शोकं महामते ।
मयि स्थिते किमर्थं त्वं भाषसे दुःखितं वचः ॥ ९१॥
बद्ध्वाऽऽनेष्ये द्रुतं तात वानरं ब्रह्मपाशतः ।
इत्युक्त्वा रथमारुह्य राक्षसैर्बहुभिर्वृतः ॥ ९२॥

indrajitpitaram prāha tyaja śokaṁ mahāmate ।
mayi sthite kimarthaṁ tvam bhāṣase duḥkhiṭaṁ vacaḥ ॥ 91॥
baddhvā"neṣye drutaṁ tāta vānaram brahmapāśataḥ ।
ityuktvā rathamāruhya rākṣasairbahubhirvṛtaḥ ॥ 92॥

91-92. Indrajeet said to his father, 'Oh my wise, intelligent and great father (mahāmate)! Stop lamenting and feeling remorseful in this way. Why do you say such sorrowful words, full of anguish and grief, when I am here to serve your majesty? (91).

I shall soon bring that monkey to you, tied in the 'Brahmapash'¹. [You need not go there for this simple thing.]'

Saying this he boarded a chariot, and accompanied (and surrounded) by countless demons, he went to face Hanuman (92).

[Note—¹The Brahma-pash is a powerful weapon that, when shot, ties its victim in a snare from which it is virtually impossible to escape. It was granted to Meghnad by the creator Brahma, and hence it gets its name from the latter. It is a magical weapon, activated by use of Mantras that are special formulas employed to deploy certain

weapons that only a handful gods are entitled to use. This weapon previously belonged to Brahma, and hence it was exclusive to him; but now it was in the hands of Meghnad. When activated, this weapon could tie its victim without killing him; it was regarded as being infallible, and could not be countered.]

जगाम वायुपुत्रस्य समीपं वीरविक्रमः ।
ततोऽतिगर्जितं श्रुत्वा स्तम्भमुद्यस्य वीर्यवान् ॥ ९३॥
उत्पपात नभोदेशं गरुत्मानिव मारुतिः ।
ततो भ्रमन्तं नभसि हनूमन्तं शिलीमुखैः ॥ ९४॥
विद्ध्वा तस्य शिरोभागमिषुभिश्चाष्टभिः पुनः ।
हृदयं पादयुगलं षड्भिरेकेन वालधिम् ॥ ९५॥
भेदयित्वा ततो घोरं सिंहनादमथाकरोत् ।
ततोऽतिहर्षाद्धनुमान् स्तम्भमुद्यस्य वीर्यवान् ॥ ९६॥

jagāma vāyuputrasya samīpaṃ vīravikramaḥ ।
tato'tigarjitaṃ śrutvā stambhamudyasya vīryavān ॥ 93॥
utpapāta nabhodeśaṃ garutmāniva mārutiḥ ।
tato bhramantaṃ nabhasi hanūmantaṃ śīlīmukhaiḥ ॥ 94॥
viddhvā tasya śirobhāgamiṣubhiścāṣṭabhiḥ punaḥ ।
hr̥dayaṃ pādayugalaṃ ṣaḍbhirekena vāladhim ॥ 95॥
bhedayitvā tato ghoraṃ siṃhanādamathākarot ।
tato'tiharṣāddhanumān stambhamudyasya vīryavān ॥ 96॥

93-96. That most valiant and brave one (i.e. Meghnad) went near the son of the wind god (Hanuman). Then the brave and courageous one (Hanuman)—who had the iron pillar in his hands—heard him (Meghnad) roar very loudly (93).

The son of the wind god flew into the sky like the bird ‘Garud’ (the legendary bird that is the mount of Lord Vishnu; here meaning “Hanuman flew up in the sky very swiftly”). Seeing Hanuman moving in the sky, Meghnad (94) shot eight arrows aimed to strike at his head. Then he aimed six more arrows at Hanuman—one at his heart, two at both his feet, and one at his tail (95).

Then he (Meghnad) roared thunderously like a lion. The manly, brave and valorous Hanuman lifted his iron pillar delightfully (to strike once again at Meghnad) (96).

जघान सारथिं साश्वं रथं चाचूर्णयत्क्षणात् ।
ततोऽन्यं रथमादाय मेघनादो महाबलः ॥ ९७॥
शीघ्रं ब्रह्मास्त्रमादाय बद्ध्वा वानरपुङ्गवम् ।
निनाय निकटं राज्ञो रावणस्य महाबलः ॥ ९८॥

jaghāna sārathiṃ sāśvaṃ rathaṃ cācūrṇayatkṣaṇāt ।
tato'nyaṃ rathamādāya meghanādo mahābalaḥ ॥ 97॥
śīghraṃ brahmāstramādāya baddhvā vānarapuṅgavam ।

nināya nikaṭaṃ rājñō rāvaṇasya mahābalaḥ ॥ 98॥

97-98. He quickly (Hanuman) killed Indrajeet's charioteer and crushed his chariot, along with its horses, reducing them to dust. Then Meghnad, who was very brave and strong, immediately mounted a second chariot (97).

Peeved and exasperated as this humiliation, Meghnad tied the most exalted of the monkeys (Hanuman) in the snare of the Brahmpash (apropos of verse no. 92), and then took him as a captive to the king (to Ravana) (98).

यस्य नाम सततं जपन्ति येऽज्ञानकर्मकृतबंधनं क्षणात् ।
सद्य एव परिमुच्य तत्पदं यान्ति कोटिरविभासुरं शिवम् ॥ ९९॥

yasya nāma satataṃ japanti ye'jñānakarmakṛtabaṃdhanam kṣaṇāt ।
sadya eva parimucya tatpadaṃ yānti koṭiravibhāsuram śivam ॥ 99॥

99. By constantly repeating Lord Sri Ram's divine and holy Name, which is very potent and powerful, the devotee is able to instantaneously cut through the snare created by the virtue of ignorance, worldly delusions, and the cumulative effect of the various deeds done and actions taken by him in this life (ye'jñānakarmakṛtabaṃdhanam).

Having thus broken free from this shackle that tie him to the world of transmigration, the devotee is able to attain emancipation and salvation for his self; he attains the most exalted state of blessedness, beatitude and felicity. It is an excellent state of existence that is most glorious and pure, and it is as splendidous and radiant as millions of suns shining together (99).

तस्यैव रामस्य पदाम्बुजं सदा हृत्पद्ममध्ये सुनिधाय मारुतिः ।
सदैव निर्मुक्तसमस्तबन्धनः किं तस्य पार्श्वैरितरैश्च बन्धनैः ॥ १००॥

tasyaiva rāmasya padāmbujam sadā hr̥tpadmamadhye sunidhāya mārutiḥ ।
sadaiva nirmuktasamastabandhanaḥ kiṃ tasya pāśairitaraiśca bandhanaiḥ ॥
100॥

100. The lotus-like feet of that same Lord, Sri Ram (the glory of whose name is eulogized in verse no. 99 herein above), is always enshrined by the son of the wind god (Hanuman) in the centre (core) of his lotus-like heart, and he always remembers the Lord. By doing so, he is eternally free from all the shackles/fetters/snares/knots etc. [To wit, Hanuman is eternally free from all sorts of fetters that tie an ordinary creature to this mundane and delusory world consisting of the cycle of transmigration—because he is an ardent devotee of Lord Ram, has the image of the Lord enshrined in the temple symbolized by his lotus-like heart, and he remembers the Lord and keeps on repeating his holy Name every moment of his life.]

This being the case, say then, what can ever happen to him (Hanuman) by this ordinary Brahma-pash, or for that matter, from any other snare?

[To wit, no snare in this world is strong enough to be able to trap Hanuman. If he had wanted, he could have easily overcome the Brahma-pash and remain free. So why was he caught? Verily indeed, he voluntarily allowed himself to be caught by the Brahma-pash because he had other plans in his mind, and to implement these plans it was necessary to get caught so that he would be brought face to face with Ravana, giving him a chance to have a dialogue with him (apropos: verse no. 70 herein above). Besides this, he thought it wise to honour the dignity and majesty of this unique weapon as it primarily belonged to the creator Brahma, and to defy it would be tantamount to showing disrespect to Brahma.] (100)

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे सुन्दरकाण्डे
तृतीयः सर्गः ॥ ३॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmarāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde sundarakāṇḍe
tṛtīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 3॥

Thus ends Canto 3 of Sundar Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and his consort Uma.

7.2.4: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 4:

The heated dialogue between Hanuman and Ravana; the Burning of Lanka:-

॥ चतुर्थः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

यान्तं कपीन्द्रं धृतपाशबन्धनं विलोकयन्तं नगरं विभीतवत् ।
अताडयन्मुष्टितलैः सुकोपनाः पौराः समन्तादनुयान्त ईक्षितुम् ॥ १॥

॥ caturthaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

yāntaṁ kapīndraṁ dhṛtapāśabandhanaṁ vilokayantaṁ nagaraṁ vibhītavat ।
atāḍayanmuṣṭitalaiḥ sukopanaḥ paurāḥ samantādanuyānta īkṣitum ॥ 1॥

1. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! When the lord of the monkeys (Hanuman) was passing through the city, pretending to be terrified and utterly scared after being captured and tied by the Brahmash (by Meghnad, though actually he wasn't at all afraid of the demons), he looked around the city and its inhabitants. The citizens, when they heard of the news, assembled from all over the city, from every corner of it, to have a glimpse of the mysterious captive. The crowd that gathered followed

Hanuman, mocking and jeering at him; they scorned at him, and angrily punched him with their clenched fists (1).

ब्रह्मास्त्रमेनं क्षणमात्रसङ्गमं कृत्वा गतं ब्रह्मवरेण सत्वरम् ।
ज्ञात्वा हनूमानपि फल्गुरज्जुभिर्धृतो ययौ कार्यविशेषगौरवात् ॥ २॥

brahmāstramenam kṣaṇamātrasaṅgamaṁ kṛtvā gataṁ brahmavareṇa
satvaram ।

jñātvā hanūmānapi phalgurajjubhirdhṛto yayau kāryaviśeṣagauravāt ॥ 2॥

2. The ‘Brahmastra’ (the special weapon of Brahma given to Meghnad by him; both Brahmastra and Brahmpash are the same thing; they are synonyms) had, however, only touched the body of Hanuman for only a fraction of a second, and then it went back to Brahma, the creator, because of the boons the latter had given to Hanuman¹.

In spite of being aware of it (that he is immune to any harm from Brahma’s weapon), Hanuman (voluntarily) remained tied by humble ropes² for the greater cause that he had determined to do, in a most dramatic manner, for Lord Sri Ram (2).

[Note—¹Brahma, the creator, had given a boon to Hanuman that his weapons will not have any effect on him—refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 36, verse no. 21. Brahma had also prophesized that during the war with Ravana and the demon army at Lanka, Hanuman would perform miraculous deeds that would have no parallel in this creation, he would not suffer from any great injury during the war, and his actions to accomplish Lord Ram’s mission successfully would be lauded and eulogized throughout the world for all times to come—refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 36, verse nos. 22-25.

²To wit, Hanuman could have very easily broken free from the ropes, but he preferred to remain ensnared in a humble and frightened way, as if he was out of his wits, for there were bigger things at stake, and he would get ample opportunities a little later on to show that nothing can keep him tied against his will. For sooth, he would soon break free from this snare, and show his dexterity and stupendous muscle power by burning Lanka.

In verse no. 14 herein below, Hanuman clearly tells Ravana that he was fully aware that the Brahmpash had no power to capture him, yet he still preferred to get himself caught by it so that he can have an opportunity to come to his court and have a direct interview with him so that he can advise the latter about what was good for him.]

सभान्तरस्थस्य च शवणस्य तं पुरो निधायाह बलारिजितदा ।
बद्धो मया ब्रह्मवरेण वानरः समागतोऽनेन हता महासुराः ॥ ३॥

sabhāntarasthasya ca rāvaṇasya taṁ puro nidhāyāha balārijittadā ।

baddho mayā brahmavareṇa vānaraḥ samāgato'nena hatā mahāsuraḥ ॥ 3॥

3. Then Indrajeet (literally one who has forcibly conquered Indra; Meghnad) took him (Hanuman) to the court of Ravana, and said, 'I have brought this monkey tied up by the powers of the boon given to me by Brahma (i.e. by using the 'Brahmpash'). This is the fellow who has killed many of our brave warriors (3).

यदुक्तमत्रार्य विचार्य मन्त्रिभिर्विधीयतामेष न लौकिको हरिः ।
ततो विलोक्याह स राक्षसेश्वरः पृहस्तमग्रे स्थितमञ्जनाद्रिभम् ॥ ४॥

yaduktamatrārya vicārya mantribhirvidhīyatāmeṣa na laukiko hariḥ ।
tato vilokyāha sa rākṣaseśvaraḥ prahastamagre sthitamañjanādribham ॥ 4॥

4. Consult with your ministers and decide what to do with him, for he is no ordinary monkey (na laukiko hariḥ).

[Father, decide what punishment should be given to him, and what course of action is to be adopted with respect to him. Remember that he is not an ordinary monkey who has entered Lanka by mistake; for no ordinary monkey would ever have been able to single-handedly kill my brave brother Akshaya Kumar as well as the troop of demons that was sent to capture him. Surely, there is certainly something very serious and sinister concerning this intruder. I have a hunch that he is definitely a spy of our enemy, and one who has great strength. So, once we have managed to lay our hands upon him, let's make the best of it.]

Then the king of the demons (Ravana) looked at Prahasta (one of his senior ministers); he had a dark complexion like that of the Kajjal mountain¹, and he was sitting right in the front.

Ravana said to Prahasta (4)—

[Note—¹The word “Kajjal” means a black paste made of soot and oil that is applied to the eyelids as an ointment. The “mountain of Kajjal” that Prahasta resembled implies that he had a huge dark body.]

पृहस्त पृच्छैनमसौ किमागतः किमत्र कार्यं कुत एव वानरः ।
वनं किमर्थं सकलं विनाशितं हताः किमर्थं मम राक्षसा बलात् ॥ ५॥

prahasta pṛcchainamasau kimāgataḥ kimatra kāryaṃ kuta eva vānaraḥ ।
vanaṃ kimarthaṃ sakalaṃ vināśitaṃ hatāḥ kimarthaṃ mama rākṣasā balāt ॥
5॥

5. 'Oh Prahasta! Ask this monkey why has he come here? What work or purpose does he have here? Where has he come from? Why has he ruined my whole garden? And why has he killed all my demon warriors so mercilessly and ruthlessly?' (5).

ततः पृहस्तो हनुमन्तमादरात् पपृच्छ केन प्रहितोऽसि वानर ।
भयं च ते मास्तु विमोक्ष्यसे मया सत्यं वदस्वाखिलराजसन्निधौ ॥ ६॥

tataḥ prahasto hanumantamādarāt papraccha kena prahito'si vānara ।
bhayaṃ ca te māstu vimokṣyase mayā satyaṃ vadasvākhilarājasannidhau ॥
6॥

6. Then Prahasta asked Hanuman very respectfully, 'Oh monkey! Who has sent you? Don't be afraid—tell everything truthfully before the emperor (Ravana). Then I shall set you free' (6).

ततोऽतिहर्षात्पवनात्मजो रिपुं निरीक्ष्य लोकत्रयकण्टकासुरम् ।
वक्तुं प्रचक्रे रघुनाथसत्कथां क्रमेण रामं मनसा स्मरन्मुहुः ॥ ७॥

tato'tiharṣātpavanātmajo ripuṃ nirīkṣya lokatrayakaṇṭakāsuram ।
vaktuṃ pracakre raghunāthasatkathāṃ krameṇa rāmaṃ manasā
smaranmuhuh ॥ 7॥

7. Then seeing his arch enemy, the demon (Ravana)—who was like a thorn for the three worlds¹ (i.e. the whole creation)—the son of the wind god (Hanuman) first invoked the grace of Lord Ram and remembered him in his heart, which made him feel extremely exhilarated and delighted (as he felt honoured to be doing the Lord's work for him, like a chosen one). Then he started to narrate the story of Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram) in a chronological order, in brief¹ (7)—

[Note—¹Ravana had wished to know who Hanuman was, and for what purpose had he come to Lanka. This is why Hanuman narrated the story of Lord Ram so that everything would be clear to Ravana.]

शृणु स्फुटं देवगणाद्यमित्रं हे रामस्य दूतोऽहमशेषहृत्स्थितेः ।
यस्याखिलेशस्य हताधुना त्वया भार्या स्वनाशाय शुनेव सद्भविः ॥ ८॥

śṛṇu sphuṭaṃ devagaṇādyamitra he rāmasya dūto'hamaśeṣahr̥tsthiteḥ ।
yasyākhileśasya hr̥tādhunā tvayā bhāryā svanāśāya śuneva saddhaviḥ ॥ 8॥

8. Hanuman said, 'Oh the enemy of Gods (devagaṇādyamitra), listen clearly and attentively. Just as a dog steals the offerings of a fire sacrifice¹, you have stealthily abducted the chaste wife of the 'Lord of the entire universe', Lord Sri Ram.

I am his messenger, and I warn you that you have taken this ill-thought and ill-advised evil step that would prove to be your own ruin (8).

[Note—¹Even Sita had earlier alluded to this simile in Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 33.

स राघवोऽभ्येत्य मतङ्गपर्वतं सुग्रीवमैत्रीमनलस्य सन्निधौ ।
कृत्यैकबाणेन निहत्य वालिनं सुग्रीवमेवाधिपतिं चकार तम् ॥ ९॥

sa rāghavo'bhyetya mataṅgaparvatam sugrīvamaitrīmanalasya sannidhau ।
kṛtvaikabāṇena nihatya vālinam sugrīvamevādhipatiṃ cakāra tam ॥ 9॥

9. That Raghav (i.e. Lord Ram, whom I have referred to just now) came to the Matang Mountain (i.e. to Kishkindha), and there he made friends with Sugriv with the sacred fire as a witness. He killed Baali with a single arrow, and made Sugriv the king of the monkeys (9).

स वानराणामधिपो महाबली महाबलैर्वानरयूथकोटिभिः ।
रामेण सार्धं सह लक्ष्मणेन भोः प्रवर्षणेऽमर्षयुतोऽवतिष्ठते ॥ १०॥

sa vānarāṇāmadhipo mahābalī mahābalairvānarayūthakoṭibhiḥ ।
rāmeṇa sārḍham saha lakṣmaṇena bhoḥ pravarṣaṇe'marṣayuto'vatiṣṭhate ॥
10॥

10. Presently, that great and valiant king of the monkeys (Sugriv), along with millions of other monkey commanders who are as manly, courageous and brave as him, and accompanied by Lord Ram and Laxman, are residing on the Prabarshan mountain¹. They are very angry (at what you have done, and are ready to vent their wrath on you as soon as they possibly can) (10).

[Note—¹Sugriv had come to Prabarshan mountain along with his army commanders when Laxman had gone to fetch him from Kishkindha. Presently he was camping with Lord Ram and Laxman on Mt. Prabarshan, along with his commanders. That is why Hanuman said that they are residing on this mountain instead of Kishkindha. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 59-63—to Canto 6, verse nos. 1-19.]

सञ्चोदितास्तेन महाहरीश्वरा धरासुतां मार्गयितुं दिशो दश ।
तत्राहमेकः पवनात्मजः कपिः सीतां विचिन्वन् शनकैः समागतः ॥ ११॥

sañcoditāstena mahāharīśvarā dharāsutāṃ mārgayitum diśo daśa ।
tatrāhamekaḥ pavanātmajaḥ kapiḥ sītāṃ vicinvan śanakaiḥ samāgataḥ ॥ 11॥

11. He (Sugriv) has sent very senior and famed lords of the different groups of monkeys (i.e. the many chieftains of the monkey race who ruled over different parts of the extended kingdom of Kishkindha), along with their attendants and troops, in all the ten directions¹ in search of the daughter of the earth (Sita)².

Out of those monkeys, I am one, and I am the son of the wind god. While gradually searching for her, I have happened to come here (11).

[Note—¹The “ten directions” of the world are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir. This means that teams had been dispatched in all the directions of earth to search for Sita.

²Sita is called “the daughter of earth” (dharāsutām) because she was found in a pitcher by her father Janak while he was clearing the field for the performance of a fire sacrifice. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-60.]

दृष्टा मया पद्मपलाशलोचना सीता कपित्वाद्विपिनं विनाशितम् ।
दृष्ट्वा ततोऽहं रभसा समागतान् मां हन्तुकामान् धृतचापसायकान् ॥ १२॥

dr̥ṣṭā mayā padmapalāśalocanā sītā kapitvādvipinaṃ vināśitam ।
dr̥ṣṭvā tato'haṃ rabhasā samāgatānmāṃ hantukāmān dhṛtacāpasāyakān ॥
12॥

12. I have already seen the lotus-eyed Sita. Then I have destroyed the forest due to my inherent nature as a monkey. When I saw that the demons were coming towards me, armed with bows and arrows, and appeared eager to kill me (12)—

मया हतास्ते परिरक्षितं वपुः प्रियो हि देहोऽखिलदेहिनां प्रभो ।
ब्रह्मास्त्रपाशेन निबध्य मां ततः समागमन्मेघनिनादनामकः ॥ १३॥

mayā hatāste parirakṣitaṃ vapuḥ priyo hi deho'khiladehināṃ prabho ।
brahmāstrapāśena nibadhya māṃ tataḥ samāgamanmeghaninādanāmakah ॥
13॥

13. —Then I killed them to protect myself, because oh lord, a person's body is dear to him, and every living being tries to defend himself if attacked. [To wit, if they hadn't attacked me I wouldn't have retaliated. It's not my fault that they were killed while I was only trying to save myself.]

After that, this demon named Meghnad had tied me with the snare (Brahmpash) given to him by Brahma, and thereafter he brought me here as a prisoner (13).

स्पृष्ट्वैव मां ब्रह्मवरप्रभावतः त्यक्त्वा गतं सर्वमवैमि रावण ।
तथाप्यहं बद्ध इवागतो हितं प्रवक्तुकामः करुणारसार्द्रधीः ॥ १४॥

spr̥ṣṭvaiva māṃ brahmavaraprabhāvataḥ tyaktvā gataṃ sarvamavaimi
rāvaṇa ।
tathāpyaham baddha ivāgato hitaṃ pravaktukāmaḥ karuṇārasārdhradhīḥ ॥ 14॥

14. Oh Ravana! Though I knew fully well that this Brahma's weapon had gone back as soon as it had touched me (refer verse no. 2 above), I still came here tied in shackles just to tell you something concerning your own welfare and well-being out of my compassion and mercy for you. [I also wished to avoid unnecessary bloodshed if possible.] (14).

विचार्य लोकस्य विवेकतो गतिं न राक्षसीं बुद्धिमुपैहि रावण ।
दैवीं गतिं संसृतिमोक्षहैतुकीं समाश्रयात्यन्तहिताय देहि नः ॥ १५॥

vicārya lokasya vivekato gatiṃ na rākṣasīm buddhimupaihi rāvaṇa ।
daivīm gatiṃ saṃsṛtimokṣahaitukīm samāśrayātyantahitāya dehinaḥ ॥ 15॥

15. Oh Ravana! You must contemplate; you must ponder over the matter wisely, and think about the fate of all creatures in this mortal world of transmigration.

Do not embrace demonic tendencies and do not follow evil inclinations of the mind. Instead, you must follow the path of righteousness and auspiciousness which leads all the creatures to the destination that would give them eternal peace and blessedness, the path that helps the creature to attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, a path that helps the creature to find emancipation and salvation for the soul (15).

त्वं ब्रह्मणो ह्युत्तमवंशसम्भवः ।
पौलस्त्यपुत्रोऽसि कुबेरबान्धवः ।
देहात्मबुद्ध्यापि च पश्य राक्षसो
नास्यात्मबुद्ध्या किमु राक्षसो नहि ॥ १६॥

tvam brahmaṇo hyuttamavaṃśasambhavaḥ ।
paulastyaputro'si kuberabāndhavaḥ ।
dehātmabuddhyāpi ca paśya rākṣaso
nāsyātmabuddhyā kimu rākṣaso nahi ॥ 16॥

16. [Look at the great and illustrious family to which you belong.] You have taken birth in the most exalted clan descending directly from Lord Brahma, the creator (i.e. you are a Brahmin by birth). You are a son of Visrava, who is the son of sage Pulastya (i.e. you are the grandson of sage Pulastya). Further, you are a brother of Kuber (the treasurer of Gods).

Hence, you are not a true 'demon' even by the virtue of your birth, genealogy or relationships.

[To wit, since your grandfather and father are great and renowned sages, your birth can never be said to be like an ordinary demon who is born from demon parents. Your brother is the treasurer of the Gods; hence you have a god as a sibling. Then why do you consider yourself a 'demon' and act like one? Change your attitude, for it appears that you are under some great delusion about your own self. Wake up while there is still time, and mend your ways.]

Surely, therefore, you are not a demon by your truthful 'self'. [Your soul, your Atma, your inner being, is as pure and holy as it can be. Then why are you behaving in such an evil way that does not behoove of your noble heritage; why do you forget about your great inheritance? Say, what has happened to you; can't you see for yourself your own mistakes?] (16).

शरीरबुद्धीन्द्रियदुःखसन्ततिः न ते न च त्वं तव निर्विकारतः ।

अज्ञानहेतोश्च तथैव सन्ततेः असत्त्वमस्याः स्वपतो हि दृश्यवत् ॥ १७॥

śarīrabuddhīndriyaduḥkhasantatiḥ na te na ca tvam tava nirvikārataḥ ।
ajñānahetośca tathaiva santateḥ asattvamasyāḥ svapato hi dṛśyavat ॥ 17॥

17. I shall tell you to the true nature of your ‘truthful self’, your ‘true identity’, which you have forgotten about, or are ignorant of. Listen: The Body, intellect, the pleasures of the sense organs, and all such derivatives of this material existence (śarīrabuddhīndriyaduḥkhasantatiḥ)—none of them belong to you, none of them represent your true self, none of them reflect your true nature, and neither do you represent any such thing that is related to this gross mortal world¹.

Verily, the fact is that you are ignorant of your ‘true self’, because it seems that delusions have had a better hold of you. So it is like you are living in a world of dreams, and you ought to wake up from it (17).

[Note—¹Listen, oh Ravana. All these things are related to the gross physical body, but your ‘true self’ is not this body, but your Atma, and this Atma is pure, holy and free from all delusions and corruptions, as it is an embodiment of pure consciousness. You are under severe delusions in case you identify yourself with your gross physical body and its attendant elements; for remember that this body is not ‘you’ and ‘neither does it belong to you’. Your Atma is merely an inhabitant of this body, and when this body is shed your Atma will be freed from this cage. So why do you commit such sorrowful sins for the sake of pleasure and comfort of your body which is nonetheless perishable like all things in this mortal world. If you were wise and are really intelligent, you will distance yourself from all the demands of your sense organs that impel you towards sins.

Verily, your gross mortal body may be sinful, but this body is impermanent, as one day or the other it is bound to die, as nothing in this creation is permanent because this creation itself is impermanent. Remember: Your body, as I have said, may be sinful, but your soul, which is your true identity, is pure, holy and immaculate. You may have committed a grave sin by abducting Sita, but it was done by your body and not by your soul, and so if you repent and confess now, if you bow before the Lord, asking sincerely for forgiveness, then be assured that all your misdoings will be instantly pardoned. The merciful and compassionate Lord knows that all living beings err, but the problem arises when they refuse to accept that they have erred.

Ravana, I thought that I must enlighten and warn you, as I thought that you are not properly advised. You are misled by the fatal combination of ignorance and delusion, which together are taking a heavy toll on your fate.

Remember: You ought not to do anything that would bring ignominy and shame to your illustrious ancestors, to your father and grandfather, both of whom were sages of repute. Think, ponder and contemplate on what I have said, and then take a final call on it; don’t rush through a trail that would be fatal for you and undermine your destiny.]

इदं तु सत्यं तव नास्ति विक्रिया विकारहेतुर्न च तेऽद्वयत्वतः ।
यथा नभः सर्वगतं न लिप्यते तथा भवान् देहगतोऽपि सूक्ष्मकः ।
देहेन्द्रियपूणशरीरसङ्गतः त्वात्मेति बुद्ध्वाखिलबन्धभाग्भवेत् ॥ १८॥

idaṃ tu satyaṃ tava nāsti vikriyā vikāraheturna ca te'dvayatvataḥ ।
 yathā nabhaḥ sarvagataṃ na lipyate tathā bhavān dehagato'pi sūkṣmakaḥ ।
 dehendriyaprāṇasaṁrasaṅgataḥ tvātmēti buddhvākḥilabandhabhāgbhavet ॥
 18॥

18. This is a truth that there is no fault or blemish in your 'true self' which is pure and holy, for it is a personified form of 'Consciousness', also known as the creature's Atma.

Being matchless and incomparable (in purity, divinity, majesty, enlightenment and wisdom), there is no scope of it being tarnished or tainted by the spot of any kind of fault, shortcoming or blemish that the body is subjected to in this gross mundane world.

Just like 'space', which is one of the five primary elements in creation¹, is present everywhere in this creation, both within and without all entities, yet remaining free from all attachments and unaffected by any of the characters of these entities, maintaining its primary purity and pristine form, your primary form, i.e. your Atma, too remains free from the evil nature of your gross physical body, though the Atma resides in it.

Therefore, since your 'true form' is your Atma and not your body, 'you' are never subjected to the sins and its attendant sorrows that are limited to your external body alone, as they never affect your Atma (18).

[Note—¹The five primary elements are space or sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth, in ascending order of grossness. To wit, the 'space' is the subtlest of the five elements, and the 'earth' is the grossest. The Atma represents the space element, while the body represents the earth element.]

चिन्मात्रमेवाहमजोऽहमक्षरो ह्यानन्दभावोऽहमिति प्रमुच्यते ।
 देहोऽप्यनात्मा पृथिवीविकारजो न प्राण आत्माऽनिल एष एव सः ॥ १९॥

cinmātramevāhamajo'hamakṣaro hyānandabhāvo'hamiti pramucyate ।
 deho'pyanātmā pṛthivīvikārajo na prāṇa ātmā'nila eṣa eva saḥ ॥ 19॥

19. The thought, the awareness or the wisdom that 'I am nothing but pure consciousness which is self-realised and enlightened, that I am without a birth, that I am imperishable and eternal, and that I am an image of pure bliss, peace and happiness'—because these are the characteristics of the Atma—well, this realization makes a creature feel liberated and emancipated.

[This is because only the physical body is subjected to limitations and inhibitions characteristic of the gross world which makes a creature feel trapped and shackled, but the 'spirit', the soul, the Atma, which is sublime and subtle as it is pure Consciousness, and which is the creature's 'true identity', is free from such limitations.]

Since the gross physical body has the faults and shortcomings inherently associated with the 'earth' element (because this element is the grossest and the heaviest of the five elements, and is prone to attract all things that are gross and heavy), it too is not the Atma (which is pure consciousness, and sublime and subtle),

while the ‘Pran’ (the vital life-sustaining wind forces present inside the body), which is but another form of the wind element, too cannot be called the Atma as it is also one of the five elements.

[The ‘Atma’ of a living being is pure cosmic super Consciousness personified. It is distinct and separate from all other entities in this creation. Meanwhile, the creature’s body consists of a combination of the five elements. Hence, the difference between the two, i.e. the ‘Atma’ and the ‘Body’, is obvious.] (19).

मनोऽप्यहङ्कारविकार एव नो न चापि बुद्धिः प्रकृतेर्विकारजा ।
आत्मा चिदानन्दमयोऽविकारवान् देहादिसङ्घादव्यतिरिक्त ईश्वरः ॥ २०॥

mano'pyahaṅkāravikāra eva no na cāpi buddhiḥ prakṛtervikārajā ।
ātmā cidānandamayo'vikāravāndehādisaṅghādvatirikta īśvaraḥ ॥ 20॥

20. The Mana (a combination of the mind and heart) is the breeding ground for Ahankar (pride, arrogance, ego and haughtiness associated with a creature’s nature). [To wit, Ahankar arises in the mind and the heart of the creature.]

Similarly, the faults associated with Buddhi (intellect) have their origin in a creature’s Prakriti (inherent nature and tendencies; inborn character). [A creature would think in a particular way and interpret things according to his nature and character.]

So therefore, they also can’t be the ‘Atma’. Verily, the Atma is pure consciousness personified; it is enlightened and wise; is it eternally blissful and contented. It is distinct from and independent of the body, and therefore it has no Ahankar or corrupted Buddhi which are limited to the gross body alone.

The fact is, the Atma is the “Lord” of all these entities. [To wit, the Atma is like the landlord of the physical gross body; the Atma is the master of the body, and not vice versa. None of the factors associated with the body can rule over the Atma, but the Atma rules over them.] (20)

निरञ्जनो मुक्त उपाधितः सदा ज्ञात्वैवमात्मानमितो विमुच्यते ।
अतोऽहमात्यन्तिकमोक्षसाधनं वक्ष्ये शृणुष्ववहितो महामते ॥ २१॥

nirañjano mukta upādhitaḥ sadā jñātvaivamātmānamito vimucyate ।
ato'hamātyantikamokṣasādhanaṁ vakṣye śṛṇuṣvāvahito mahāmate ॥ 21॥

21. The Atma is always pure, without faults, is dispassionate and divine, and it is without any title, attributes or honour. As soon as a creature realises its true form (i.e. becomes enlightened, aware and wisened about his Atma), he is freed from the shackles of this gross, mundane and deluding world.

Hence, oh the great and wise one (Ravana)! I am telling you the ultimate medium, the true path, which will help you to achieve emancipation and salvation. Listen to it carefully (21).

विष्णोर्हि भक्तिः सुविशोधनं धियः ततो भवेज्ज्ञानमतीव निर्मलम् ।

विशुद्धतत्त्वानुभवो भवेत्ततः सम्यग्विदित्वा परमं पदं वृजेत् ॥ २२॥

viṣṇorhi bhaktiḥ suvīśodhanam dhiyaḥ tato bhavejjñānamatīva nirmalam ।
viśuddhatattvānubhavo bhavettataḥ samyagviditvā paramam padam vrajet ॥
22॥

22. Dedication, devotion, adoration and worship of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord, is a great purifier of the mind-intellect-thought complex, and it helps to generate auspicious thoughts and positive spiritual energy in the heart of a creature.

By this means, one is able to have uncorrupted wisdom, which in turn enables him to become enlightened about his 'true self', i.e. about his Atma.

This enlightenment and self realisation helps the creature to attain the highest state of being, which means that he attains oneness with the Supreme Being. It is because he realises that he is an image of the Supreme Being because his Atma is an image of the Supreme Atma that is known as the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Lord (22).

अतो भजस्वाद्य हरि रमापतिं रामं पुराणं प्रकृतेः परं विभुम् ।
विसृज्य मौर्ख्यं हृदि शत्रुभावनां भजस्व रामं शरणागतप्रियम् ।
सीतां पुरस्कृत्य सपुत्रबान्धवो रामं नमस्कृत्य विमुच्यसे भयात् ॥ २३॥

ato bhajasvādya hariṁ ramāpatiṁ rāmaṁ purāṇam prakṛteḥ param vibhum ।
visṛjya maurkhyam hr̥di śatrubhāvanāṁ bhajasva rāmaṁ śaraṇāgatapriyam ।
sītāṁ puraskṛty saputrabāndhavo rāmaṁ namaskṛty vimucyase bhayāt ॥
23॥

23. Therefore, you must worship, adore and have devotion for Lord Sri Ram, who is a personified form of Lord Hari (another name for Lord Vishnu; the Supreme Being), the divine husband of goddess Rama (goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of prosperity and material welfare).

The Lord is the one who is extolled and glorified by the ancient scriptures known as the Purans; he is the Lord who is beyond Prakriti (Nature); he is the Supreme Being who is all pervading, all encompassing and omnipresent.

You must forsake the enmity and end the hostility that you have harboured, out of foolishness, in your heart for the Lord, and instead, you must worship and adore him, you must develop devotion for and dedication for the Lord who is very compassionate, very merciful and very endearing towards those who come to seek refuge with him, who abandon all pretensions and seek shelter with him.

So therefore, putting Sita in the vanguard, and accompanied by your sons as well as all your other kith and kin, you should go and seek refuge at the holy feet of Lord Ram, bow to him to pay your obeisance and homage, and ask protection from all fears. [To wit, once you go and submit yourself to Lord Ram, asking for forgiveness, be rest assured that then all your fears and consternations would be dispelled.] (23).

रामं परात्मानमभावयन् जनो भक्त्या हृदिस्थं सुखरूपमद्वयम् ।
कथं परं तीरमवाप्नुयाज्जनो भवाम्बुधेर्दुःखतरङ्गमालिनः ॥ २४॥

rāmaṃ parātmānamabhāvayan jano bhaktyā hṛdisthaṃ
sukharūpamadvayam ।
kathaṃ paraṃ tīramavāpnuyājjanam
bhavāmbudherduḥkhataṅgamālinam ॥ 24॥

24. Those who do not meditate, with due devotion, faith, belief and conviction, upon Lord Sri Ram who resides in their own hearts—the Lord who is none but the Supreme Being himself, and the Lord who is an embodiment of supreme bliss and contentment, the Lord who grants eternal bliss, peace, beatitude and blessedness to one and all—say then, how can such creatures ever hope to cross this symbolic ocean represented by this gross mundane world of transmigration, an ocean that is full of swift currents and huge waves in the form of countless sorrows, miseries, agonies, torments and tribulations that are characteristic of this world, to find peace and happiness that they desire (24).

नो चेत्त्वमज्ञानमयेन वह्निना ज्वलन्तमात्मानमरक्षितारिवत् ।
नयस्यधोऽधः स्वकृतैश्च पातकैः विमोक्षशङ्का न च ते भविष्यति ॥ २५॥

no cettvamajñānamayena vahninā jvalantamātmānamarakṣitārivat ।
nayasyadho'dhaḥ svakṛtaiśca pātakaiḥ vimokṣaśaṅkā na ca te bhaviṣyati ॥ 25॥

25. If you do not worship and adore Lord Ram, if you have devotion and dedication for him, then you shall keep on burning (i.e. tormented, afflicted, scorched and agonised) in the fire ignited by foolishness and ignorance.

Verily, you cannot keep yourself safe (protected, unharmed) by being an enemy of Lord Ram, by being opposed to the Lord. You would progressively, by gradual degrees, push yourself further down in the dark pit of sins, misdeeds and evil that would certainly, and without fail, lead you to sink in an abyss from where there is no recovery. To wit then, if this situation actually materializes, you will have no hope of getting redemption and finding salvation for yourself in the future.

[Hence, pay heed to my advice, for still there is time for you to mend your ways and seek peace and redemption. Act before you miss the chance.] (25).

[Note—Verse nos. 15-25 can be called the Gospel of Hanuman for Ravana.]

श्रुत्वामृतास्वादसमानभाषितं तद्वायुसूनोर्दशकन्धरोऽसुरः ।
अमृष्यमाणोऽतिरुषा कपीश्वरं जगाद रक्तान्तविलोचनो ज्वलन् ॥२६॥

śrutvāmṛtāsvādasamānabhāṣitaṃ tadvāyusūnordaśakandharo'suraḥ ।
amṛṣyamāṇo'tiruṣā kapīśvaraṃ jagāda raktāntavilocano jvalan ॥26॥

26. The 10-headed demon Ravana heard these nectar-like and sweet words spoken by the Lord of monkeys, Hanuman.

[But instead of understanding that they were meant for his own good, Ravana took Hanuman's advice as a lecture by his enemy's messenger to humiliate him in the front of his own ministers and commanders. Obviously this was intolerable for him, so he became excessively annoyed and angry.]

Ravana turned red in the eyes as a fierce fire of anger and vengeance erupted in his heart. He became exceedingly wrathful and disdainful as he contemptuously retorted to Hanuman (26)—

कथं ममाग्रे विलपस्यभीतवत् प्लवङ्गमानामधमोऽसि दुष्टधीः ।
क एष रामः कतमो वनेचरो निहन्मि सुग्रीवयुतं नराधमम् ॥ २७॥

kathaṃ mamāgre vilapasyabhītavat plavaṅgamānāmadhamo'si duṣṭadhīḥ ।
ka eṣa rāmaḥ katamo vanecaro nihanmi sugrīvayutaṃ narādhamam ॥ 27॥

27. 'Oh you wretch and wicked fellow (duṣṭadhīḥ)! You are the most lowly amongst the monkeys (plavaṅgamānāmadhamo'si). How dare you squeak (speak or lecture) with a big mouth in front of me without any fear (as if you were a great preacher; “vilapasyabhītavat”)?

Tell me, who are these two fellows—one who is known as ‘Ram’, and the forest-dwelling creature whose name is ‘Sugriv’. [To wit, what value or importance do they have in front of me, and how can they compare themselves with me on any count?]

Verily, I can myself, single handedly, kill that lowly man (Lord Ram) along with Sugriv. [Why do you boast of them so much? Don't you know that I can get rid of them myself, without any help? These two fellows lean on each other's arms to give and take support, whereas I stand on my own two legs. While they need each other's help to confront me, for none of them have the guts to face me alone, I am alone enough for both of them together.] (27).

त्वां चाद्य हत्वा जनकात्मजां ततो निहन्मि रामं सहलक्ष्मणं ततः ।
सुग्रीवमग्रे बलिनं कपीश्वरं सवानरं हन्म्यचिरेण वानर ।
श्रुत्वा दशग्रीववचः स मारुतिः विवृद्धकोपेन दहन्निवासुरम् ॥ २८॥

tvāṃ cādyā hatvā janakātmajāṃ tato nihanmi rāmaṃ sahalakṣmaṇaṃ tataḥ ।
sugrīvamagre balinaṃ kapīśvaraṃ savānaraṃ hanmyacireṇa vānara ।
śrutvā daśagrīvavacaḥ sa mārutiḥ vivṛddhakopena dahannivāsuraṃ ॥ 28॥

28. Today I shall slay you first; then I shall kill the daughter of Janak (Sita). After that I shall slay Lord Sri Ram along with Laxman, but before that I shall kill the most brave and strong king of the monkeys, Sugriv, along with his entire army'.

Hearing these boastful words of the 10-headed Ravana, the son of the wind god, Hanuman, felt exasperated. He sternly rebuked Ravana with an enhanced anger in his voice, which apparently burnt Ravana further. [When Hanuman answered back to Ravana, his voice was full of scorn, and this further exacerbated Ravana's anger, making him more wrathful and vehement, as it stoked his ego and arrogance.] (28).

न मे समा रावणकोटयोऽधम रामस्य दासोऽहमपारविक्रमः ।
श्रुत्वातिकोपेन हनूमतो वचो दशाननो राक्षसमेवमब्रवीत् ॥ २९॥

na me samā rāvaṇakoṭayo'dhama rāmasya dāso'hamapāravikramah ।
śrutvātikopena hanūmato vaco daśānanao rākṣasamevamabravīt ॥ 29॥

29. Hanuman shot back: 'Ravana, you are really a very mean and lowly fellow (rāvaṇakoṭayo'dhama)! Even millions of Ravana's like you cannot compare themselves with me (na me samā rāvaṇakoṭayo).

Don't you know—I am a humble servant (subordinate, follower, devotee, messenger) of Lord Sri Ram (rāmasya dāso'hama), and there is no limit to my strength, valour, powers, abilities, prowess and potentials (pāravikramah)'.
 Unable to bear these angry words of scorn and contempt spoken by Hanuman, Ravana, becoming excessively peeved, vengeful and indignant, ordered a demon (who was standing nearby)— (29).

पार्श्वे स्थितं मास्य खण्डशः कपिं पश्यन्तु सर्वेऽसुरमितृबान्धवाः ।
निवारयामास ततो विभीषणो महासुरं सायुधमुद्यतं वधे ।
राजन् वधाहो न भवेत्कथञ्चन प्रतापयुक्तैः परराजवानरः ॥ ३०॥

pārśve sthitaṁ māraya khaṇḍaśaḥ kapiṁ paśyantu sarve'suramitrabāndhavāḥ ।
nivārayāmāsa tato vibhīṣaṇo mahāsuram sāyudhamudyataṁ vadhe ।
rājan vadhārho na bhavetkathañcana pratāpayuktaiḥ pararājavānaraḥ ॥ 30॥

30. 'Thrash this monkey who is standing near me, and hack him into pieces. Let all the demons, their friends and compatriots, enjoy this novel spectacle.'

Then Vibhishan intervened to stop that furious, ferocious and aggressive demon, who was ready with sharp weapons to pounce upon Hanuman with an intent to kill him. Vibhishan said, 'Oh king (Ravana)! It does not seem proper and fit at all for a powerful, gallant, famed and valiant king of your majesty's stature to kill the monkey messenger of another king. [To wit, it would be a very infamous thing for you to do. The world would say that since you could not dare to fight your enemy, Lord Ram and his companion Sugriv, you vented your anger on their humble messenger who wasn't even armed. Oh King! It is never advisable to kill a messenger of another King. So be careful.] (30).

[Note—This is the first time that Vibhishan has made his appearance before Hanuman according to Adhyatma Ramayan. In Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, he had met Hanuman prior to his meeting with Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

हतेऽस्मिन् वानरे दूते वार्ता को वा निवेदयेत्

रामाय त्वं यमुद्दिश्य वधाय समुपस्थितः ॥ ३१॥
 अतो वधसमं किञ्चिदन्यत्त्विन्तय वानरे ।
 सचिह्नो गच्छतु हरिर्यं दृष्ट्वाऽऽयास्यति द्रुतम् ॥ ३२॥
 रामः सुग्रीवसहितस्ततो युद्धं भवेत्तव ।
 विभीषणवचः श्रुत्वा रावणोऽप्येतदब्रवीत् ॥ ३३॥

hate'smin vānare dūte vārtā ko vā nivedayet
 rāmāya tvaṃ yamuddiśya vadhāya samupasthitaḥ ॥ 31॥
 ato vadhasamaṃ kiñcidanyaccintaya vānare ।
 sacihno gacchatu hariryaṃ dṛṣṭvā'yāsyati drutam ॥ 32॥
 rāmaḥ sugrīvasahitastato yuddhaṃ bhavettava ।
 vibhīṣaṇavacaḥ śrutvā rāvaṇo'pyetadabravīt ॥ 33॥

31-33. If this monkey messenger is killed, then who will convey the news (that Sita is in your captivity) to Lord Ram with whom you are so eager to fight, and determined to kill (31).

Hence, instead of killing this monkey, decide on some other equivalent punishment for him. He will carry the marks of those injuries back with him, seeing which, and feeling challenged and insulted (32), Lord Ram would be obliged to come here, along with Sugriv, with great haste. Then you can fight with him'.

Hearing this logic of Vibhishan, Ravana agreed, and he observed (33)—

वानराणां हि लाङ्गूले महामानो भवेत्किल ।
 अतो वस्त्रादिभिः पुच्छं वेष्टयित्वा प्रयत्नतः ॥ ३४॥
 वह्निना योजयित्वैनं भ्रामयित्वा पुरेऽभितः ।
 विसर्जयत पश्यन्तु सर्वे वानरयूथपाः ॥ ३५॥

vānarāṇāṃ hi lāṅgūle mahāmāno bhavetkila ।
 ato vastrādibhiḥ pucchaṃ veṣṭayitvā prayatnataḥ ॥ 34॥
 vahninā yojayitvainam bhrāmayitvā pure'bhitaḥ ।
 visarjayata paśyantu sarve vānarayūthapāḥ ॥ 35॥

34-35. 'The monkeys are very fond of their tails. So, make efforts to wrap his tail with a lot of cloth etc., and then set fire to it. After that, take him around the city, and then set him free, so that when he goes back, all the monkey chieftains will see his miserable condition and scarred body!' (35).

तथेति शणपटैश्च वस्त्रैरन्यैरनेकशः ।
 तैलाक्तैर्वेष्टयामासुर्लाङ्गूलं मारुतेर्दृढम् ॥ ३६॥
 पुच्छाग्रे किञ्चिदनलं दीपयित्वाथ राक्षसाः ।
 रज्जुभिः सुदृढं बद्ध्वा धृत्वा तं बलिनोऽसुराः ॥ ३७॥
 समन्ताद्भ्रामयामासुश्चोरोऽयमिति वादिनः ।
 तूर्यघोषैर्घोषयन्तस्ताडयन्तो मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ ३८॥

tatheti śaṇapattāisca vastrairanyairanekaśaḥ ।
 tailāktairveṣṭayāmāsurlāṅgūlaṃ māruterdr̥ḍham ॥ 36॥
 pucchāgre kiñcidanalaṃ dīpayitvātha rākṣasāḥ ।
 rajjubhiḥ sudr̥ḍham baddhvā dhṛtvā taṃ balino'surāḥ ॥ 37॥
 samantādbhrāmayāmāsuścoro'yamiti vādinah ।
 tūryaghoṣairghoṣayantastāḍayanto muhurmuḥuḥ ॥ 38॥

36-38. Saying alright, the demons wrapped and tied the tail of Hanuman, the son of the wind god, very firmly with long strips of hemp and countless bundles of different types of tattered clothes and rags that were dipped in oil (36).

Then they ignited one end of the tail and tied Hanuman firmly with a rope (because Ravana had ordered that Hanuman be taken on a round of the city once his tail was set on fire).

Then some of the more powerful and strong amongst the demons (37) took him round the city, repeatedly kicking him and beating him, and sounding the trumpets and bugles to publicly proclaim that “this is a thief” (yāmāsuścoro'yamiti vādinah) (in order to humiliate Hanuman) (38).

हनूमतापि तत्सर्वं सोढं किञ्चित्चिकीर्षुणा ।
 गत्वा तु पश्चिमद्वारसमीपं तत्र मारुतिः ॥ ३९॥
 सूक्ष्मो बभूव बन्धेभ्यो निःसृतः पुनरप्यसौ ।
 बभूव पर्वताकारस्तत उत्प्लुत्य गोपुरम् ॥ ४०॥

hanūmatāpi tatsarvaṃ soḍham kiñciccikīrṣuṇā ।
 gatvā tu paścimadvārasamīpaṃ tatra mārutiḥ ॥ 39॥
 sūkṣmo babhūva bandhebhyo niḥsṛtaḥ punarapyasau ।
 babhūva parvatākārastata utplutya gopuram ॥ 40॥

39-40. Hanuman tolerated all this humiliation in order to display some spectacular fireworks and his desire to show some novel tricks to the demons.

When this procession reached near the western gate of the city, the son of the wind god (39) immediately reduced his size so that he could easily slip out and free himself from the ropes and layers after layers of cloth that were tied tightly around his tail. Then he assumed a colossus mountain-like form, and leapt atop the spire or the tower of the gate (40).

[Note—As is evident from veres nos. 39-40, Ravana and his cohorts had overlooked one very important factor while tying Hanuman with ropes and wrapping his tail with oil-dipped clothes—which was that he had the power to reduce or increase the size of his body. Hanuman used this unique ability of his to great advantage. When he was being tied with bundles of ropes and bales of cloth, he had gradually expanded his body, a little at a time, so that no one could perceive the changes. The stupid demons did not even pause to think for a while as to why such an easy thing as tying a monkey's tail with cloth proved to be so enormous a task that bales after bales of cloth were consumed for this simple enterprise, which ordinarily would require only a

few meters of cloth. This in itself proves either that the whole demon race had more muscle power than the power of the mind, or that they were so stiffly scared of Ravana that even if they had thought of this incredulous development they dared not to raise questions about it for fear of punishment.

When Hanuman was near the western gate, where he saw a huge spire or tower, he decided that it was time to free himself. So he simply reduced his size by, say, a few inches, which loosened the grip of the ropes tied around his tail as well as his body. Then he simply had to shake himself out of the trappings and become freed instantly. It was a child's play for him, and a big joke played on the demons!

After having done that, he assumed a huge, gigantic form of a colossus, like the one he had shown to his companions at the time of embarking on the mission from the other shore of the ocean, when they had some lingering doubts about his ability to achieve success in such a daunting and risky job—this is clearly mentioned in *Adhyatma Ramayan*, *Kishkindha Kand*, Canto 9, verse no. 22.

There is an alternative way in which Hanuman could have freed himself. He might as well have expanded his body while remaining tied with ropes and clothes. Then, what would happen? The ropes tied around his body and the clothes that covered his tail would have snapped under increased pressure from the inside as Hanuman enlarged his body.]

तत्रैकं स्तम्भमादाय हत्वा तान् रक्षिणः क्षणात् ।

विचार्य कार्यशेषं स प्रसादाग्रदृढादृढम् ॥ ४१॥

उत्प्लुत्योप्लुत्य सन्दीप्तपुच्छेन महता कपिः ।

ददाह लङ्कामखिलां सादृप्रसादतोरणाम् ॥ ४२॥

tatraikaṃ stambhamādāya hatvā tān rakṣiṇaḥ kṣaṇāt ।

vicārya kāryaśeṣaṃ sa prāsādāgrādgrḥādgrḥam ॥ 41॥

utplutyoplutya sandīptapucchena mahatā kapiḥ ।

dadāha laṅkāmakhilāṃ sātṭaprāsādatoraṇām ॥ 42॥

41-42. From there, he uprooted a pillar and killed all the demons with it in a short while (using it as a war mace or a battering ram). Then deciding on his next course of action, he jumped from the front of one building of the city to another, and in this way swiftly moved from house to house (41).

He used his burning tail to set fire to palaces, attics and terraces. Verily, the whole city of Lanka, which was very charming as it was tastefully decorated with colourful hangings, banners, buntings, festoons, garlands and other decorative paraphernalia, was soon ablaze (42).

[Note—When Hanuman had slipped out of his bondage as in verse nos. 39-40 by assuming a miniature form, obviously his tail also slipped out with his body. Then he assumed a colossal huge mountain-like form. It's absurd to think that his tail remained slender and small and only his body became mountain-like.

So, the most logical and practical explanation of the burning of Lanka appears to be that, to begin with, Hanuman had lengthened his slender tail like a flexible rubber tube, which the demons went on covering with layers after umpteen numbers of layers of cloth dipped in oil. This tube literally wended its way along the streets of

Lanka like a slithering snake, and almost encircled the whole city even as the amused demons went overboard to wrap it with cloth dipped in oil while making merry of the time by poking and pinching the tail.

So when the foolish demons set fire to the tip of this long tube formed by clothes tied around Hanuman's tail, and he suddenly reduced the size of his body and loosened the grip of the ropes to free himself, the effect was that this long tube of cloth that was dripping with inflammable oil lay like a huge flexible hose pipe that went around the major avenues of the city through which Hanuman was paraded by the mad demons.

Since oil had spilled all over the city, Hanuman had to simply hook his tail to the other end of this immensely long tube of cloth, the end from which nearest to his body and from which end he had pulled his tail out, and which was at the opposite end from the tip that was set afire, and then drag this blazing tube through the city streets drenched with oil. The result is obvious—flames leapt up everywhere and spread rapidly in all the directions, following the flow of the oil. It is like setting a lighted match to spilled petrol, and the fire leaps up instantaneously everywhere; and this fire is not easy to extinguish!

Further, as heat was generated, wind began to blow, and this fuelled the blaze and provoked it to spread more rapidly across the city of Lanka, almost like a wild forest fire funneled by hot gusts of wind.

So therefore, after Hanuman freed himself by becoming small in size and thereby loosening himself from the tight ropes, he must have either hooked his tail or used his hands to catch one end of the long tube-like layering of clothes that was just a while ago tied around his tail, and which resembled a thick wick of a candle burning at one end and harmless at the other, to drag it as he ran wild through the city. He might have also swung it round and round viciously in circles, dashed it, jerked it, shaken it, twirled it and twisted it in order to spread the fire as fast as he could.

We must remember that the thick tube formed by layers of cloth was well soaked in inflammable oil, and wherever sparks from the burning cloth or flames from the burning oil touched the ground, which must have already become slushy with spilled oil, as the demons had poured an excess of oil on the wrappings around Hanuman's tail in their enthusiasm, new flames would leap up afresh immediately. Thus, the fire spread rapidly across the length and the width of the city of Lanka.

There is another point to observe. Though we are made to understand that Lanka was made of gold, in practical terms it would imply that it was a 'gilded city' that appeared to be made of gold—i.e. a thick foil of gold was used to cover other basic construction materials such as wood, iron etc. that were employed for the actual structures of its buildings; no solid gold was used as the real construction material.

So as the fire spread, the outer gold melted, exposing the wood and other things present in every household, such as furniture, clothes, cooking oils etc., to the flames. And even if we do take into account that only solid gold was used in the construction of the buildings of Lanka, then as the fire spread and the heat increased, this gold would have melted.

It is seen in our modern times that in spite of all the precautions that are taken, when a building unfortunately catches fire, say from an electric short-circuit, the inferno spreads quickly and takes a heavy toll of the whole building, and often times, if not controlled, would spread to the neighbouring buildings.

The 'Burning of Lanka' has been vividly, and most fascinatingly, described by Goswami Tulsidas in his masterpiece book titled "Kavitawali", in its Sundar Kand.

We shall be reading it soon in the next section no. 7.4 of the present Chapter no. 7 of our Book.]

हा तात पुत्र नाथेति कून्दमानाः समन्ततः ।
 व्याप्ताः प्रसादशिखरेऽप्यारूढा दैत्ययोषितः ॥ ४३॥
 देवता इव दृश्यन्ते पतन्त्यः पावकेऽखिलाः ।
 विभीषणगृहं त्यक्त्वा सर्वं भस्मीकृतं पुरम् ॥ ४४॥

hā tāta putra nātheti krandamānāḥ samantataḥ ।
 vyāptāḥ prāsādaśikhare'pyārūḍhā daityayoṣitaḥ ॥ 43॥
 devatā iva drśyante patantyāḥ pāvake'khilāḥ ।
 vibhīṣaṇagrhaṁ tyaktvā sarvaṁ bhaṣmīkṛtaṁ puram ॥ 44॥

43-44. At that time, wildly shouting 'Oh dear, oh son, oh husband, and all others who hear us (hā tāta putra nātheti)' the terrified demonesses were woefully lamenting and wailing gravely everywhere in the city, such as from the terraces and attics of the palaces. Some of them were so horrified at the sight of the spectacle of their homes burning and getting reduced to cinders that, while escaping, they stumbled or fainted and fell in the burning fire.

All these demonesses appeared to be like so many goddesses and gods present everywhere¹. In this manner, except for the residence of Vibhishan, the whole city of Lanka was reduced to ashes² (43-44).

[Note—These female demons were so charming in their physical appearances that they resembled heavenly residents, the goddesses and gods. It might also mean that when they ran out of their homes and made their sudden appearances in every nook and corner of the city, coming out of private existence and revealing themselves in public, they were almost like the goddesses and gods who usually remain invisible but make their presence felt on special occasions. Previously these demonesses were not seen outside their homes as gods are usually not visible, except at the time of invocation during religious sacrifice etc. when they are supposed to reveal themselves and accept offerings. Here, the 'burning of Lanka' is the 'fire sacrifice'; and 'the demonesses' are like the 'gods' who have come to witness the performance of the fire sacrifice.

²Why did Hanuman burn Lanka? We have read earlier that he wished to do something special, something remarkable and spectacular, before returning home. We have also made an observation that he wished to clear the ground and lay the foundation by which the invasion of Lanka and its conquering would be made all the more easy by first breaking the morale of its army, and instilling such terror and fear in the hearts of the demons, both the civilians as well as the soldiers, that when the assault is actually launched the will to fight would be low, and there would be excess of pressure on Ravana to surrender.

So therefore, Hanuman decided that if he burns Lanka single handedly, it would send out a strong and clear signal to the enemy—if an individual member of Lord Ram's army can cause such unhindered havoc, and if the combined might of the demon forces could not prevent him from carrying it out, then one can easily imagine

what is in store when a whole army of the Lord descends on Lanka. This emotion is exactly what Ravana's wife Mandodari expressed while pleading with her husband to make amends and surrender—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 ; (ii) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 37.

The burning of Lanka would also ensure that the demons would leave Sita alone and stop tormenting her more, as they would now be pre-occupied with this new and most unexpected development that had devastated their city and their homes. They would have little time and inclination for any other thing. They would be especially wary of disturbing Sita out of fear of a backlash from Hanuman in case he comes to learn that any demon had troubled her in his absence.

Moreover, Hanuman had first tried to persuade Ravana to abstain from a confrontation with Lord Ram (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 15-25), but it had no affect on him. Ravana treated Hanuman with contempt and most insultingly; and so he decided to hit back, and hit hard.]

तत उत्प्लुत्य जलधौ हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः ।
लाङ्गूलं मज्जयित्वान्तः स्वस्थचित्तो बभूव सः ॥ ४५॥
वायोः प्रियसखित्वाच्च सीतया प्रार्थितोऽनलः ।
न ददाह हरेः पुच्छं बभूवात्यन्तशीतलः ॥ ४६॥

tata utplutya jaladhau hanūmānmārutātmajah ।
lāṅgūlaṁ majjayitvāntaḥ svasthacitto babhūva saḥ ॥ 45॥
vāyoḥ priyasakhitvācca sītayā prārthito'nalaḥ ।
na dadāha hareḥ pucchaṁ babhūvātyantaśītalah ॥ 46॥

45-46. After that, Hanuman, the son of the wind god, jumped into the ocean to douse his burning tail. [Actually, it was to extinguish the fiery 'tail of cloth' that had by now served its purpose and needed to be dipped in water to douse the flames. The heat and the exertion had also inspired Hanuman to jump in the ocean to cool himself.]

He then felt relaxed and refreshed (45). It was because of Sita's prayers, and because the 'fire god' was a fast friend of the 'wind god'¹ that the flames did not burn the monkey's (Hanuman's) tail.

On the contrary, the 'fire' became Hanuman's friend and cooperated with him to fulfill his desire to teach the demons a bitter lesson and avenge for the rough treatment they had given to Sita as well as to him. [To wit, though the fire scorches everyone who goes near it, but in the case of Hanuman it did not burn him. It is because Hanuman was the son of the 'wind god', and the patron god of fire, the 'fire god', is his friend. So therefore, the 'fire god' ensured that his friend's son Hanuman is not harmed.] (46).

[Note—¹The 'fire' and the 'wind' are called friends because 'air' is essential for the fire to burn. If there is no air, the fire would automatically be extinguished. So when the time came, the 'fire god' decided to oblige his friend, the 'wind god', by ensuring that the latter's son is protected from its wrath.]

यन्नामसंस्मरणधूतसमस्तपापाः तापत्रयानलमपीह तरन्ति सद्यः ।

तस्यैव किं रघुवरस्य विशिष्टदूतः सन्तप्यते कथमसौ प्रकृतानलेन ॥ ४७॥

yannāmasaṁsmaṇadhūtasamastapāpāḥ tāpatrayāṇalamapīha
taranti sadyaḥ ।

tasyaiva kiṁ raghuvarasya viśiṣṭadūtaḥ santapyate kathamasau
prakṛtānalena ॥ 47॥

47. How can this worldly fire cause any harm to (or can burn, torment or scorch) Lord Raghubar's (Lord Sri Ram's) special messenger because by remembering the Lord's holy and divine name, a person is immediately liberated and granted deliverance from all his sins and their horrifying consequences which are no less than being scorched by a raging fire.

Verily indeed, the Lord Ram's holy and divine name protects a creature from the three types of sufferings associated with this mundane world and its cycle of transmigration, sufferings that are no less than being roasted alive in three types of fires known as Traitap (tāpatrayāṇala)¹ (47).

[Note—¹The 3 Traitaps which torment a creature are the following—(i) Daihik—sufferings pertaining to the body, (ii) Daivik—sufferings pertaining to Gods and malignant stars, and (iii) Bhautik—sufferings pertaining to other creatures of this terrestrial world.]

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे सुन्दरकाण्डे
चतुर्थः सर्गः ॥ ४॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde sundarakāṇḍe
caturthaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 4॥

Thus ends Canto 4 of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and Uma, his divine consort.

7.2.5: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 5:

Hanuman takes leave of Sita to return home; He informs Lord Ram about all the developments:-

॥ पञ्चमः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

ततः सीतां नमस्कृत्य हनूमानब्रवीद्वचः ।
आज्ञापयतु मां देवि भवती रामसन्निधिम् ॥ १॥
गच्छामि रामस्त्वां द्रष्टुमागमिष्यति सानुजः ।

इत्युक्त्वा त्रिःपरिक्रम्य जानकीं मारुतात्मजः ॥ २॥

॥ pañcamah sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

tataḥ sītāṃ namaskṛtya hanūmānabravīdvacaḥ ।
ājñāpayatu māṃ devi bhavatī rāmasannidhim ॥ 1॥
gacchāmi rāmastvāṃ draṣṭumāgamiṣyati sānujaḥ ।
ityuktvā triḥparikramya jānakīm mārutātmajaḥ ॥ 2॥

1-2. Continuing his narrative, Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Then (after having jumped into the ocean and refreshing himself), Hanuman went to Sita, bowed before her, and said respectfully, 'Oh goddess (devi)! Give me your permission. I am now going back to Lord Sri Ram (1).

He will come here very soon, accompanied by his younger brother (Laxman), to see you'.

Saying this, the son of the wind god (Hanuman) circumambulated Janki (Sita) three times ("triḥparikramya jānakīm"; to pay her his profound respects) (2).

पूणम्य प्रस्थितो गन्तुमिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।
देवि गच्छामि भद्रं ते तूर्णं द्रक्ष्यसि राघवम् ॥३॥
लक्ष्मणं च ससुग्रीवं वानरायुतकोटिभिः ।
ततः प्राह हनूमन्तं जानकी दुःखकर्षिता ॥ ४॥
त्वां दृष्ट्वा विस्मृतं दुःखमिदानीं त्वं गमिष्यसि ।
इतः परं कथं वर्ते रामवार्ताश्रुतिं विना ॥ ५ ॥

praṇamya prasthito gantumidaṃ vacanamabravīt ।
devi gacchāmi bhadraṃ te tūrṇaṃ draṣṣyasi rāghavam ॥3॥
lakṣmaṇaṃ ca sasugrīvaṃ vānarāyutakoṭibhiḥ ।
tataḥ prāha hanūmantaṃ jānakī duḥkhakarśitā ॥ 4॥
tvāṃ drṣṭvā vismrtaṃ duḥkhamidānīm tvam gamiṣyasi ।
itaḥ paraṃ kathaṃ varte rāma-vārtāśrutim vinā ॥ 5 ॥

3-5. Then he bowed before her once again with clasped hands, went a short distance away from her, looked back, and said his final good-bye to her, 'Oh goddess (devi)! I am going. Oh you blessed one (bhadraṃ te)! Very soon you will see Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) (3) along with Laxman and Sugriv; they will be accompanied by crores (millions) of monkeys. [To wit, very soon Lord Ram would arrive here to free you, and at that time he would be accompanied by a huge army of countless monkey and bear warriors. So bear for some more time, and have courage and hope in the meantime.]'.

Then Janki (Sita), who was weakened and exhausted by extreme sorrows and miseries from which she was suffering, said to Hanuman (4), 'I had forgotten about my sufferings and torments when I saw you. But now even you are going away. How

am I going to survive now; how am I going to pass my days alone, hoping to hear some information about Lord Ram¹?

[¹Your company, my dear son, was like a balm for my tormented soul. Now I would be deprived of it also. I will be so alone and sore forlorn once again; my grief and sorrows that had abated for sometime would come to haunt me once again. My days and nights would once again be a sorrowful burden too heavy for me to bear. How unfortunate I am that what little succour came my way is being snatched from me again, so I would be forced to suffer all over again. But there is no way out. I understand the situation; I realize that there is no other alternative but for you to go back so that you can bring Lord Ram here. But please make haste; don't delay the least, for each moment of my life would be spent in expecting to hear the good tidings of the Lord's arrival. This is the only cord that I would cling to in order to survive, and I pray that this cord would hold good, that it would not be too fragile to snap and cast me into an abyss from which there is no delivery.

Son, by my faith, remember this: I rely on you and your word of honour—that you will bring Lord Ram here; remember that my life hangs on this single assurance from you. So my son, adieu till we meet again in happier times. Go, you be blessed!!]
' (5).

मारुतिरुवाच ।

यद्येवं देवि मे स्कन्धमारोह क्षणमातृतः

रमेण योजयिष्यामि मन्यसे यदि जानकि ॥ ६॥

mārutiruvāca ।

yadyevaṃ devi me skandhamāroha kṣaṇamātrataḥ

rāmeṇa yojayiṣyāmi manyase yadi jānaki ॥ 6॥

6. Observing the distressed emotional condition of Sita, Hanuman, the son of the wind god, offered to take her back to Lord Ram immediately. He said, 'Oh goddess! If this is the case, and if you agree and think it proper, then you can ride on my shoulders, and I shall take you to meet Lord Ram immediately, without a second thought' (6).

सीतोवाच ।

रामः सागरमाशोष्य बद्ध्वा वा शरपञ्जरैः ।

आगत्य वानरैः सार्धं हत्वा रावणमाहवे ॥ ७॥

मां नयेद्यदि रामस्य कीर्तिर्भवति शाश्वती ।

अतो गच्छ कथं चापि प्राणान् सन्धारयाम्यहम् ॥ ८॥

sītovāca ।

rāmaḥ sāgaramāśoṣya baddhvā vā śarapañjaraiḥ ।

āgatya vānaraiḥ sārḍhaṃ hatvā rāvaṇamāhave ॥ 7॥

māṃ nayedyadi rāmasya kīrtirbhavati śāśvatī ।

ato gaccha kathaṃ cāpi prāṇān sandhārayāmyaham ॥ 8॥

7-8. Sita replied, 'If Lord Sri Ram could dry up the ocean or tame it with his arrows (by constructing a bridge across it as token of his conquering the mighty ocean), come here along with his army of monkeys, and kill Ravana in the war that follows (7), it will give him eternal fame, renown, honour and glory.

Therefore, you should go back now (for it will not be proper for me to go back with you). I will survive somehow in the meantime' (8).

[Note—If Sita were to accept Hanuman's proposal as described in verse no. 6, that would have ended her torments and miseries forthwith. With what Hanuman had done to Lanka, it would be unimaginable for any demon to gather sufficient courage to pursue and stop him. That would have left Lord Sri Ram's main purpose of spending 14 years in the forest with the object of killing Ravana and other tyrannical, cruel and ferocious demons unfulfilled.

Further, Sita's wish to suffer a little more of the torments and miseries so that her Lord attains great fame and glory shows her in a very good light. She was confident that Lord Ram would win the war against Ravana—otherwise the rejection of Hanuman's offer would have been most impossible for her. She would have accepted to ride on his back and escape from Lanka, as it would have been the easiest way for her to escape her tormentors.]

इति प्रस्थापितो वीरः सीतया प्रणिपत्य ताम् ।
जगाम पर्वतस्याग्रे गन्तुं पारं महोदधेः ॥ ९॥
तत्र गत्वा महासत्त्वः पादाभ्यां पीडयन् गिरिम् ।
जगाम वायुवेगेन पर्वतश्च महीतलम् ॥ १०॥
गतो महीसमानत्वं त्रिंशद्योजनमुच्छ्रितः ।
मारुतिर्गगनान्तःस्थो महाशब्दं चकार सः ॥ ११॥

iti prasthāpito vīraḥ sītayā praṇipatya tām ।
jagāma parvatasyāgre gantum pāraṁ mahodadheḥ ॥ 9॥
tatra gatvā mahāsattvaḥ pādābhyāṁ pīḍayan girim ।
jagāma vāyuvegena parvataśca mahītalam ॥ 10॥
gato mahīsamānatvaṁ triṁśadyojanamucchritaḥ ।
mārutirgaganāntaḥstho mahāśabdaṁ cakāra saḥ ॥ 11॥

9-11. Being finally bid farewell by Sita, Hanuman bowed to her once again, for the last time before his departure.

Then the brave one (i.e. Hanuman; “vīraḥ”) climbed the summit of a mountain in order to launch himself to cross the ocean (9).

There (on the summit of the mountain), the most valorous and strong Hanuman (mahāsattvaḥ), pressed the mountain by his foot and sped-off with the speed of wind. The mountain, which was 30 Yojans (i.e. $30 \times 8 = 240$ miles) in height, was pressed into the earth with such a great force that it became almost flattened (mahīsamānatvaṁ triṁśadyojanamucchritaḥ).

While cruising through the sky, the son of the wind god, Maruti (Hanuman), roared thunderously (10-11).

[Note—In modern terms, it is simple to visualise the event if compared to a rocket launch with a heavy payload. The downward thrust generated by the prodigious leap of Hanuman, with both legs bent at the knees and suddenly straightened to generate an upward and forward motion, was sufficient to flatten the protuberance on the earth (called the hill) which acted more like a spring-board that, once pressed down and then released suddenly, created such an upward force that flung Hanuman into the sky and made him become air-borne. In this way, Hanuman launched himself almost like a rocket or a missile. When the pressure was thus removed after Hanuman became air-borne, the ‘spring’, symbolized by the hill in this case, tried to regain its former shape, but such was the immensity of the weight launched that it could not get back its original shape or height, but remained flattened for ever.

It is quite possible that the soil under this hill was soft and porous, instead of being hard rock, being as it was on the shore of the salty ocean whose corrosive water may have seeped in and gradually scooped out the solid material at the base of the hill over time, rendering it base hollow and fragile. So when an exceptional force was exerted on this hill, it sank into the softened earth as there was nothing solid to support it from below.

However, the pressing of the mountain into the bowls of the earth by 30 Yojans seems highly exaggerated and hyperbolic. Well, in ancient classical literature it was usual to magnify events manifold, even to render them look out of proportion and incredulous, just in order to give them a dramatic effect, to create a magical charm around them, and visualize an imagery of excessive grandeur and magnificence. Such as for example, saying that hundreds of thousands of soldiers were sent to catch hold of a single individual, Hanuman in this case, in the Ashok grove, as is said in Canto 3, verse nos. 78-79, is a clear case of an exaggerated statement.]

तं श्रुत्वा वानराः सर्वे ज्ञात्वा मारुतिमागतम् ।
हर्षेण महताविष्टाः शब्दं चकुर्महास्वनम् ॥ १२॥
शब्देनैव विजानीमः कृतकार्यः समागतः ।
हनूमानेव पश्यध्वं वानरा वानरार्षभम् ॥ १३॥

taṁ śrutvā vānarāḥ sarve jñātvā mārutimāgatam ।
harṣeṇa mahatāviṣṭāḥ śabdaṁ cakrurmahāsvanam ॥ 12॥
śabdenaiva vijānīmaḥ kṛtakāryaḥ samāgataḥ ।
hanūmāneva paśyadhvaṁ vānarā vānararṣabham ॥ 13॥

12-13. Hearing his thunderous roar, the monkeys (who were waiting on the other side of the ocean) realised that Hanuman was returning from Lanka. They were filled with great joy and exhilaration. They cheered and applauded loudly (12).

The monkeys said to each other, 'This terribly thunderous roar itself shows that Hanuman has been successful in his mission and is returning back. [Looking up into the sky, they uttered a cry of joy when they spotted Hanuman.] Oh monkeys! Look, is it not Hanuman?'

This sight of Hanuman returning home triumphantly filled all the monkeys with excess of joy and ecstasy (13).

[Note—The scene of action now shifts to ‘this side of the ocean’ where Hanuman’s companions were waiting for him. When they heard a loud roar in the sky, all of them looked up. And lo and behold—what did they see? They saw an overjoyed Hanuman approaching them! He was successful in his mission, so when he saw his friends on the ground, he was so ecstatic that he roared all the more loudly, saying joyfully: “Here I am, my friends! Behold, here I come, and rejoice, for I am successful!

The roar of Hanuman had spread all over the sky in gigantic ripples of sound waves; even today when a jet engine, a rocket, or even a helicopter passes overhead, its roar can be heard for miles around. If the wind was favourable, as surely it would have been because Hanuman was the dear son of the ‘wind god’, the hint of his arrival by way of a reverberating sound waves that echoed across the firmament, must have reached the ears of his friends on the ground much ahead of their actually seeing him physically in the sky overhead as he circled and made ready to descend.]

एवं ब्रुवत्सु वीरेषु वानरेषु स मारुतिः ।
 अवतीर्य गिरेर्मूर्ध्नि वानरानिदमब्रवीत् ॥ १४॥
 दृष्ट्वा सीता मया लङ्का धर्षिता च सकानना ।
 सम्भाषितो दशग्रीवस्ततोऽहं पुनरागतः ॥ १५॥

evaṃ bruvatsu vīreṣu vānareṣu sa mārutiḥ ।
 avatīrya girermurdhni vānarānidamabravīt ॥ 14॥
 drṣṭā sītā mayā laṅkā dharṣitā ca sakānanā ।
 sambhāṣito daśagrīvastato'haṃ punarāgataḥ ॥ 15॥

14-15. While the monkeys were discussing amongst themselves (as in verse nos. 12-13 herein above), the son of the wind god alighted on that mountain summit where they were all huddled together trying to see him come across the sky. He cheerfully told them (14), 'I have seen Sita, I have reduced Lanka and the Ashok grove to rubble, and I have talked with Ravana. After that, and having accomplished my task, I have come here to meet you (15).

इदानीमेव गच्छामो रामसुग्रीवसन्निधिम् ।
 इत्युक्त्वा वानराः सर्वे हर्षेणालिङ्ग्य मारुतिम् ॥ १६॥
 केचिच्चुम्बुर्लाङ्गूलं ननृतुः केचिदुत्सुकाः ।
 हनूमता समेतास्ते जग्मुः प्रस्रवणं गिरिम् ॥ १७॥

idānīmeva gacchāmo rāmasugrīvasannidhim ।
 ityuktā vānarāḥ sarve harṣeṇālīṅgya mārutim ॥ 16॥
 keciccucumburlāṅgūlaṃ nanṛtuḥ kecdutsukāḥ ।
 hanūmatā sametāste jagmuḥ prasravaṇaṃ girim ॥ 17॥

16-17. We will go to meet Lord Ram and Sugriv right now'.

All the monkeys were extremely delighted and exhilarated, and they enthusiastically embraced him (16). Some kissed his tail, and some others began

dancing ecstatically around him. After that, all of them accompanied Hanuman and went to Mt. Pravarshan (17).

गच्छन्तो ददृशुर्वीरा वनं सुग्रीवरक्षितम् ।
 मधुसंज्ञं तदा प्रादुरङ्गदं वानरर्षभाः ॥ १८॥
 क्षुधिताः स्मो वयं वीर देह्यनुज्ञां महामते ।
 भक्षयामः फलान्यद्य पिबामोऽमृतवन्मधु ॥ १९॥
 सन्तुष्टा राघवं द्रष्टुं गच्छामोऽद्यैव सानुजम् ॥ २०॥

gacchanto dadṛśurvīrā vanaṃ sugrīvarakṣitam ।
 madhusaṃjñam tadā prāhuraṅgadaṃ vānaraṣabhāḥ ॥ 18॥
 kṣudhitāḥ smo vayaṃ vīra dehyanuññāṃ mahāmate ।
 bhakṣayāmaḥ phalānyadya pibāmo'mṛtavanmadhu ॥ 19॥
 santuṣṭā rāghavaṃ draṣṭuṃ gacchāmo'dyaiva sānujam ॥ 20॥

18-20. While on their way, the jovial company of monkeys chanced to pass by and see the 'Madhuvan' (literally a forest of honey)¹, which was directly under the protection of Sugriv (the king of Kishkindha). They said to Angad (18), 'Oh the brave one (vīra)! We are very hungry. Hence, oh the wise one (mahāmate), give us your permission so that we can eat the sweet fruits of this forest and drink its honey, which is like nectar (19).

After that, once we have satisfied our hunger and quenched our thirst, we shall proceed ahead and go to meet Lord Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) along with his younger brother (Laxman).

[We have had no proper meal for quite a long time. Neither had we access to proper food and drink, nor our mental condition was such that we could have actually enjoyed any food even if was made available. But now the situation has changed for good. We have been successful in our mission, and this has stoked our hunger and thirst. We can't resist the sight of these fruit trees and honey dripping from its honeycombs. Let us all partake of these delicacies and tasty viands before we move ahead. You are with us, and verily, you are also the prince of this kingdom. So therefore, you have equal right over this Madhuvan as Sugriv has, and hence you are deemed to be authorized to allow us to enjoy the fruits of this wonderful royal garden. It's a grand treat for all of us, and you being a prince of the kingdom we have the right to expect this celebratory treat from you. And come, don't be apprehensive of Sugriv, for he can't deny us the right to celebrate this happy occasion by giving ourselves a feast!]' (20).

[Note—¹The "Madhuvan" was a forest where almost all the trees were laden with honeycombs. It was a royal forest of the kingdom of Kishkindha, and hence under the direct supervision of its king Sugriv.]

अङ्गद उवाच ।
 हनूमान् कृतकार्योऽयं पिबतैतत्पूसादतः ।
 जक्षध्वं फलमूलानि त्वरितं हरिसतमाः ॥ २१॥

ततः प्रविश्य ह्रस्यः पातुमारेभिरे मधु ।
रक्षिणस्ताननाहत्य दधिवक्त्रेण नोदितान् ॥ २२॥

aṅgada uvāca ।
hanūmān kṛtakāryo'yaṃ pibataitātprasādataḥ ।
jakṣadhvaṃ phalamūlāni tvaritaṃ harisattamāḥ ॥ 21॥
tataḥ praviśya harayaḥ pātumārebhire madhu ।
rakṣiṇastānanādṛtya dadhivaktreṇa noditān ॥ 22॥

21-22. Angad agreed most cheerfully, and he gladly gave his permission to the troop of monkeys to feast in the Madhuvan. He said, 'Hanuman has successfully done the great task that was assigned to all of us. Hence, oh the best among the monkeys (harisattamāḥ), don't hesitate and don't delay in eating the fruits and edible roots as well as in drinking honey as a token of the blessing he has brought for you all, and while you do so don't forget to thank him (Hanuman) and express your gratitude to him.

[Go forthwith and enjoy yourselves; celebrate this happy occasion of the successful completion of the mission by drinking honey and eating fruits to your heart's content. Thank Hanuman for all of it, raise a toast to him and thank him a lot because you owe him this expression of gratitude, for it is due to him that all of you have had this chance to celebrate.]' (21).

So the monkeys entered that forest, and not bothering about the guards appointed by the 'white-faced one' (dadhivaktreṇa)¹ to guard and protect the forest, they began drinking honey (and eating fruits to their heart's content) (22).

[Note—¹“Dadhimukh” was Sugriv's maternal uncle—refer verse no. 24 herein below. He was in-charge of this forest. He had a fair complexion, hence called a 'white faced monkey'.

Hanuman's successful completion of the mission is called a blessing for the monkeys in verse no. 21 because now they had no fear of punishment, either from Sugriv or from Lord Ram. Hanuman has given them a new lease of life. So it was indeed a time to celebrate, and on such occasions, eating, drinking, revelry and merry-making are accepted norms of behaviour. So, Angad assured his companions that there was nothing wrong and to worry about at all on this count.]

पिबतस्ताडयामासुर्वानरान् वानरर्षभाः ।
ततस्तान् मुष्टिभिः पादैश्चूर्णयित्वा पपुर्मधु ॥ २३॥
ततो दधिमुखः क्रुद्धः सुग्रीवस्य स मातुलः ।
जगाम रक्षिभिः सार्धं यत्र राजा कपीश्वरः ॥ २४॥

pibatastāḍayāmāsurvānarān vānararṣabhāḥ ।
tatastān muṣṭibhiḥ pādaiścūrṇayitvā papurmadhu ॥ 23॥
tato dadhimukhaḥ kruddhaḥ sugrīvasya sa mātulaḥ ।
jagāma rakṣibhiḥ sārḍhaṃ yatra rājā kapīśvaraḥ ॥ 24॥

23-24. When those monkey guards saw the excited troop of monkeys drinking honey and tried to stop them by using force, the former not only resisted the guards but even retaliated by beating them with their fist-blows and kicks as well as crushing many of the guards underfoot (*muṣṭibhiḥ pādaiścūrṇayitvā*), while merrily continuing to drink the honey (and eating the fruits) (*papurmadhu*) (23).

When the news reached Sugriv's maternal uncle Dadhimukh (who was in charge of the forest), he became very annoyed and exasperated, and accompanied by other forest guards, he went to the king of monkeys (Sugriv) to complain (24).

गत्वा तमब्रवीद्देव चिरकालाभिरक्षितम् ।
 नष्टं मधुवनं तेऽद्य कुमारेण हनूमता ॥ २५॥
 श्रुत्वा दधिमुखेनोक्तं सुग्रीवो हृष्टमानसः ।
 दृष्ट्वागतो न सन्देहः सीतां पवननन्दनः ॥ २६॥
 नो चेन्मधुवनं द्रष्टुं समर्थः को भवेन्मम ।
 तत्रापि वायुपुत्रेण कृतं कार्यं न संशयः ॥ २७॥

gatvā tamabraviddeva cirakālābhirakṣitam ।
 naṣṭam madhuvanam te'dya kumāreṇa hanūmatā ॥ 25॥
 śrutvā dadhimukhenoktam sugrīvo hr̥ṣṭamānasah ।
 dr̥ṣṭvāgato na sandehaḥ sītāṃ pavananandanaḥ ॥ 26॥
 no cenmadhuvanam draṣṭuṃ samarthaḥ ko bhavenmama ।
 tatrāpi vāyuputreṇa kṛtam kāryam na saṃśayaḥ ॥ 27॥

25-27. On reaching the palace, he said to Sugriv, 'The forest of honey, which you had diligently protected and nursed for a long time, has been laid to waste by the prince (Angad) and Hanuman' (25).

Hearing the words of Dadhimukh, Sugriv was happy. He said, 'There is no doubt that the son of the wind god (Hanuman) has come back successfully after seeing Sita (26). Otherwise, who had the guts to even glance at my forest of honey?

Verily indeed, I have no doubt whatever that the mission has been accomplished successfully by no one amongst those messengers except the son of the wind god (Hanuman)! (27).

श्रुत्वा सुग्रीववचनं हृष्टो रामस्तमब्रवीत् ।
 किमुच्यते त्वया राजन् वचः सीताकथान्वितम् ॥ २८॥
 सुग्रीवस्त्वब्रवीद्वाक्यं देव दृष्टावनीसुता ।
 हनुमत्प्रमुखाः सर्वे प्रविष्टा मधुकाननम् ॥ २९॥

śrutvā sugrīvavacanam hr̥ṣṭo rāmastamabravit ।
 kimucyate tvayā rājan vacaḥ sītākathānvitam ॥ 28॥
 sugrīvastvabravidvākyaṃ deva dr̥ṣṭāvanīsutā ।
 hanumatpramukhāḥ sarve praviṣṭā madhukānanam ॥ 29॥

28-29. Hearing the words of Sugriv, Lord Ram (who was sitting nearby) became delighted in his heart. He asked, 'Oh king (Sugriv)! What are you talking about Sita?' (28).

Sugriv replied, 'Oh Lord! It appears that the daughter of the earth ("avanīsutā"; Sita) has been found, because all of the monkeys, with Hanuman being the chief among them, have entered the forest of honey (and are having a great time there, something that couldn't have been possible for them to do had they not been successful in finding about her) (29).

भक्षयन्ति स्म सकलं ताडयन्ति स्म रक्षिणः ।
अकृत्वा देवकार्यं ते द्रष्टुं मधुवनं मम ॥ ३०॥
न समर्थास्ततो देवी दृष्टा सीतेति निश्चितम् ।
रक्षिणो वो भयं मास्तु गत्वा ब्रूत ममाज्ञया ॥ ३१॥

bhakṣayanti sma sakalam tādāyanti sma rakṣiṇaḥ ।
akṛtvā devakāryam te draṣṭum madhuvanam mama ॥ 30॥
na samarthāstato devī drṣṭā sīteti niścitam ।
rakṣiṇo vo bhayam māstu gatvā brūta mamājñayā ॥ 31॥

30-31. There inside the forest, they are eating everything and are beating the guards. Without doing your job, they couldn't have dared to look at my forest of honey, what to talk of eating fruits and drinking honey there (30).

Hence, it is certain that they have seen (i.e. successfully found out about) Sita.'

[Then turning to the guards who had rushed to inform Sugriv of the developments in the forest, he said—] 'Oh guards; don't be afraid. Go and give them this command of mine (31)—

वानरानङ्गदमुखानानयध्वं ममान्तिकम् ।
श्रुत्वा सुग्रीववचनं गत्वा ते वायुवेगतः ॥ ३२॥
हनुमत्प्रमुखानूचुर्गच्छतेश्वरशासनात् ।
द्रष्टुमिच्छति सुग्रीवः सरामो लक्ष्मणान्वितः ॥ ३३॥

vānarānaṅgadamukhānānayadhvaṁ mamāntikam ।
śrutvā sugrīvavacanam gatvā te vāyuvegataḥ ॥ 32॥
hanūmatpramukhānūcūrgacchateśvaraśāsanāt ।
draṣṭumicchati sugrīvaḥ sarāmo lakṣmaṇānvitaḥ ॥ 33॥

32-33. "Bring Angad and other monkeys here; bring them to me".

Hearing the orders of Sugriv, the guards went (back to the Madhuvan) with great haste (literally, with the speed of wind—"gatvā te vāyuvegataḥ") (32).

They said to Hanuman and others, 'It is the order of the king that all of you must go to him immediately, because Sugriv, along with Lord Ram and Laxman, want to see you without further delay (33).

युष्मानतीव हृष्टास्ते त्वरयन्ति महाबलाः ।
 तथेत्यम्बरमासाद्य ययुस्ते वानरोत्तमाः ॥ ३४॥
 हनूमन्तं पुरस्कृत्य युवराजं तथाङ्गदम् ।
 रामसुग्रीवयोरग्रे निपेतुर्भुवि सत्वरम् ॥ ३५॥

yuṣmānatīva hr̥ṣṭāste tvarayanti mahābalāḥ ।
 tathetyambaramāsādyā yayuste vānarottamāḥ ॥ 34॥
 hanūmantam puraskṛtya yuvarājam tathāṅgadam ।
 rāmasugrīvayoragre nipeturbhuvi satvaram ॥ 35॥

34-35. Oh the brave, strong and valiant ones (mahābalāḥ)! He (Sugriv) is very pleased with you all, and is therefore calling you immediately.'

Then saying 'alright', this troop of monkeys, which was superior to and the best amongst all the monkeys (vānarottamāḥ), proceeded to meet Sugriv by the path of the sky¹ ("tathetyambaramāsādyā"; they moved so fast that they appeared to fly from the Madhuvan to reach Sugriv) (34).

They kept Hanuman and Angad in the vanguard (to lead the triumphant group, as Hanuman was their champion, and Angad was their commander-in-chief and the prince of the kingdom), and landed on the ground in front of Lord Ram and Sugriv. [To wit, they literally "flew", or traveled as fast as they could, and stopped only when they reached the place where Sugriv and Lord Ram were eagerly waiting for them.] (35).

[Note—¹The monkeys of today can't fly. But perhaps in the time of Lord Ram, which was hundreds and thousands of years ago, they had the power to fly. We had giant lizards and insects when the earth was still relatively young, and they could fly like the birds of today; but since these creatures do not exist anymore does not mean that they hadn't ever. The world is ever-changing; what was in the past is not now, and what is now will not be in the future.

So, since monkeys and other such creatures, including humans, can't fly now, it does not mean that creatures who were called 'monkeys' at that time in the hoary past also could not fly.

They either had wings, or the science of flying was so evolved that they had some sort of a strap-on propeller or rocket that could lift them from the ground and enable them to fly like drones of today. This shows that the science of flying and rocket technology existed in an advanced stage at that time to which our story belongs.

It could have been a sky-bike that the inhabitants of that time used to travel quickly from one point to another. It could also have been a strap-on rocket or jet-engine, tied around the waist or shoulder, that enabled its wearer to travel in the air like being carried by a hot air balloon or a drone of today's world.]

हनूमान् राघवं प्राह दृष्ट्वा सीता निरामया ।
 साष्टाङ्गं प्रणिपत्याग्रे रामं पश्चाद्दृशीश्वरम् ॥ ३६॥
 कुशलं प्राह राजेन्द्र जानकी त्वां शुचान्विता ।

अशोकवनिकामध्ये शिंशुपामूलमाश्रिता ॥ ३७॥

hanūmān rāghavam prāha dr̥ṣṭā sītā nirāmayā ।
 sāṣṭāṅgam praṇipatyāgre rāmaṃ paścāddharīśvaram ॥ 36॥
 kuśalam prāha rājendra jānakī tvām śucānvitā ।
 aśokavanikāmadhye śimśapāmūlamāśritā ॥ 37॥

36-37. Hanuman prostrated himself, to pay his obeisance, first before Lord Ram and then before the king of monkeys, Sugriv. Then he said to Lord Ram, 'I have returned after having seen Sita, and ascertaining about her condition' (36).

Oh the King of kings (rājendra)! Janki, who is submerged in sorrows and miseries, has told me to convey about her welfare¹ to you. She is sitting in the shade of a tree called the Sinshupa (the Indian red wood tree) in the Ashok grove (37).

[Note—¹Obviously, Sita was not in a very happy condition as it might sound on hearing what Hanuman says in verse no. 37. She was suffering immensely, and so definitely she was not happy.

But it is customary to tell a messenger sent by someone we love that he should go back and inform the person who has sent him that we are happy. It is a sort of courteous reply, an introductory to the main message which is then conveyed in detail. It simply means that Sita was found alive, that she has successfully borne all sorts of pains and resisted all temptations, that she is hopeful of early redemption, and that she remembers Lord Ram, loves and adores him, and longs to meet him at the earliest.

Truly, it would sound too rough, uncultured, ill-humoured and ill-mannered if one were to complain straightaway to the messenger to “go and tell your lord that I am feeling miserable, that I am very unhappy, I am neglected, and should I lose all hopes of getting help from him!”

Of course Sita said things of this kind, but Hanuman was renowned to be very wise and prudent, he knew that Lord Ram was very anxious about the welfare of Sita, and it would not sound good to break the bad news about Sita's sufferings at once. So he decided to keep the breaking of the bad news for a little while later, and wait till he had first given the good tidings and saying good things about Sita to Lord Ram, which would act as a buffer for the hard stoke of the bad part of the news that he would be obliged to convey in a short while.

What Hanuman intended was to prevent the use of any shocking words or phrases about Sita at the very outset because of the danger of Lord Ram being unable to bear the shock of any bad news. The fact that the monkeys were highly elated had already hinted to Lord Ram that Hanuman had seen Sita alive and had brought good news. So, it would be improper on the part of Hanuman to spoil the happiness that the Lord felt in the first instance when he saw the monkeys come back in a cheerful mood; for a true and faithful servant and devotee always strives to make his Lord happy and cheerful, and not otherwise.

Once the welcoming formalities and the round of congratulations were over, and the Lord sat Hanuman down to narrate the details of his expedition, Hanuman found ample time and opportunity to brief the Lord about Sita's actual condition that was indeed miserable. But even after giving the bad part of the news—of the difficulties and the problems of freeing her from the clutches of the demons who were very strong and powerful—Hanuman was wise enough to keep Lord Ram's spirits

high and motivated by assuring him that bringing Sita back from the clutches of the enemy by defeating the latter was not really a great problem—see verse nos. 51-52 below.]

रक्षसीभिः परिवृता निराहारा कृशा प्रभो ।
 हा राम राम रामेति शोचन्ती मलिनाम्बरा ॥ ३८॥
 एकवेणी मया दृष्टा शनैराश्वसिता शुभा ।
 वृक्षशाखान्तरे स्थित्वा सूक्ष्मरूपेण ते कथाम् ॥ ३९॥

rākṣasībhiḥ parivṛtā nirāhārā kṛśā prabho ।
 hā rāma rāma rāmeti śocantī malināmbarā ॥ 38॥
 ekavenī mayā dr̥ṣṭā śanairāśvāsītā śubhā ।
 vṛkṣāśākhāntare sthitvā sūkṣmarūpeṇa te kathām ॥ 39॥

38-39. Oh Lord! She is always surrounded by demonesses. She has become very weak and emaciated because she has stopped taking food and water (i.e. she is fasting). She feels hopeless and hapless, and constantly laments and broods, saying to herself repeatedly 'Oh Ram' in a sorrowful tone. Her clothes have become dirty and unkempt (38).

The hairs have stuck together in a thick plait. I saw Sita in such a distressed and pitiable condition as I have briefly described to you. I tried to comfort her, who is auspicious and holy (śubhā), very politely and in a low voice (so as not to arouse suspicion amongst the demonesses, as well as not to alarm and scare Sita who was already on the verge of a nervous breakdown).

Lord, when I reached there, I had assumed a miniature form and hid myself behind leaves and branches of a tree. From there I narrated your divine and glorious story to her in brief (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 2-15) (39).

जन्मारभ्य तवात्यर्थं दण्डकागमनं तथा ।
 दशाननेन हरणं जानक्या रहिते त्वयि ॥ ४०॥
 सुग्रीवेण यथा मैत्री कृत्वा वालिनिबर्हणम् ।
 मार्गणार्थं च वैदेह्या सुग्रीवेण विसर्जिताः ॥ ४१॥

janmārabhya tavātyartham daṇḍakāgamanam tathā ।
 daśānanena haraṇam jānakyā rahite tvayi ॥ 40॥
 sugrīveṇa yathā maitrī kṛtvā vālinibarhaṇam ।
 mārgaṇārtham ca vaidehyā sugrīveṇa visarjitāḥ ॥ 41॥

40-41. I narrated your story to her from the beginning, starting with your birth, how you came to the Dandakaranya forest where the 10-headed Ravana abducted her who is the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita herself) in your absence (40), how you had befriended Sugriv, how you had slayed Baali, and finally, how Sugriv had dispatched large number of monkeys in order to search the whereabouts of Vaidehi (Sita) (41).

महाबला महासत्त्वा हरयो जितकाशिनः ।
 गताः सर्वत्र सर्वे वै तत्रैकोऽहमिहागतः ॥ ४२॥
 अहं सुग्रीवसचिवो दासोऽहं राघवस्य हि ।
 दृष्टा यज्जानकी भाग्यात्पूयासः फलितोऽद्य मे ॥ ४३॥

mahābalā mahāsattvā harayo jitakāśinaḥ ।
 gatāḥ sarvatra sarve vai tatraiko'hamihāgataḥ ॥ 42॥
 ahaṁ sugrīvasacivo dāso'haṁ rāghavasya hi ।
 dr̥ṣṭā yajjānakī bhāgyātpayāsaḥ phalito'dya me ॥ 43॥

42-43. These monkeys were truly strong, brave, courageous, valiant and steadfast; they were famed for the victories they had won in battles (mahābalā mahāsattvā harayo jitakāśinaḥ). Countless troops of such veteran monkeys were sent in all the directions (to search for Sita) (42).

I told her that I was a member of one such group, and that I am a minister of Sugriv (ahaṁ sugrīvasacivo) and a humble servant of Lord Raghav (Lord Ram) (dāso'haṁ rāghavasya hi). I also told her the purpose of my visit to Lanka—which was to search for her there.

Today it is my good luck and a favourable providence (bhāgyātpayāsaḥ) that has rewarded me for my efforts (phalito'dya me) by enabling me to see Jankī (Sita) personally (dr̥ṣṭā yajjānakī). [And here I've come to report the good tidings to you.]' (43).

इत्युदीरितमाकर्ण्य सीता विस्फारितेक्षणा ।
 केन वा कर्णपीयुषं श्रावितं मे शुभाक्षरम् ॥ ४४॥
 यदि सत्यं तदायातु महर्शनपथं तु सः ।
 ततोऽहं वानराकारः सूक्ष्मरूपेण जानकीम् ॥ ४५॥
 पूणम्य पूज्जलिर्भूत्वा दूरादेव स्थितः प्रभो ।
 पृष्टोऽहं सीतया कस्त्वमित्यादि बहुविस्तरम् ॥ ४६॥

ityudīritamākarnya sītā visphāritekṣaṇā ।
 kena vā karṇapīyusaṁ śrāvitam me śubhākṣaram ॥ 44॥
 yadi satyaṁ tadāyātu maddarśanapathaṁ tu saḥ ।
 tato'haṁ vānarākāraḥ sūkṣmarūpeṇa jānakīm ॥ 45॥
 praṇamya prāñjalirbhūtvā dūrādeva sthitaḥ prabho ।
 pr̥ṣṭo'haṁ sītayā kastvamityādi bahuvistaram ॥ 46॥

44-46. Hearing my words, Sita's eyes lit up immediately with joy. She said, 'Who is he who has made me here this pleasant and auspicious news which is like nectar for my ears? (44).

If all of this is true, then the one who has said such sweet words must come in front of me.'

So then I presented myself before Janki (Sita) in the form of a small monkey (45). I bowed before her with joined hands (to pay my respects to her), and stood quietly at some distance, waiting for further instructions from her. Then oh Lord, Sita asked me, 'who are you?', and many other things in detail to ascertain my identity and authenticity (46).

मया सर्वं क्रमेणैव विज्ञापितमरिन्दम ।
 पश्चान्मयार्पितं देव्यै भवदत्ताङ्गुलीयकम् ॥ ४७॥
 तेन मामतिविश्वस्ता वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ।
 यथा दृष्टास्मि हनुमन् पीड्यमाना दिवानिशम् ॥ ४८॥
 राक्षसीनां तर्जनैस्तत्सर्वं कथय राघवे ।
 मयोक्तं देवि रामोऽपि त्वत्त्वन्तापरिनिष्ठितः ॥ ४९॥
 परिशोचत्यहोरात्रं त्वद्वार्तां नाधिगम्य सः ।
 इदानीमेव गत्वाहं स्थितिं रामाय ते ब्रुवे ॥ ५०॥

mayā sarvaṃ krameṇaiva vijñāpitamarindama ।
 paścānmayārpitaṃ devyai bhavaddattāṅgulīyakam ॥ 47॥
 tena māmatisvastā vacanaṃ cedamabravīt ।
 yathā dr̥ṣṭāsmi hanuman pīḍyamānā divānīśam ॥ 48॥
 rākṣasīnāṃ tarjanaistatsarvaṃ kathaya rāghave ।
 mayoktaṃ devi rāmo'pi tvaccintāpariniṣṭhitaḥ ॥ 49॥
 pariśocatyahorātraṃ tvadvārtāṃ nādhigamya saḥ ।
 idānīmeva gatvāhaṃ sthitiṃ rāmāya te bruve ॥ 50॥

47-48. Oh Lord (Ram) who is a vanquisher of enemies (marindama)! I enlightened her about everything in a chronological order, in the sequence as they happened (mayā sarvaṃ krameṇaiva vijñāpita). After that I gave her the finger ring you had given me (47).

This token of yours made her believe me completely; she no longer doubted me and my identity in the least. Being fully convinced of me, she confided in me thus: 'Oh Hanuman! You have seen me, and how I am being tormented day and night (48) by these cruel demonesses. Go and tell Lord Raghav (Lord Ram) all of it as you have personally witnessed. [To wit, tell the Lord all the things you have seen yourself, and how much I suffer. Tell him that there is no exaggeration in it, as you have been a witness to all.]'

I replied, 'Oh goddess! Lord Ram is also very worried about you; he remembers you, he constantly broods about you, and is very concerned about your welfare (49).

Since he had no news (or information) about you, he keeps on worrying day and night for you. But that will end soon, for I shall now go back and tell him everything about you and your condition. [This will reassure the Lord; it will ignite a fresh spark of hope in his distraught heart. Be comforted mother, for everything will end soon.] (50).

रामः श्रवणमात्रेण सुग्रीवेण सलक्ष्मणः ।
 वानरानीकपैः सार्धमागमिष्यति तेऽन्तिकम् ॥ ५१॥
 रावणं सकुलं हत्वा नेष्यति त्वां स्वकं पुरम् ।
 अभिज्ञां देहि मे देवि यथा मां विश्वसेद्विभुः ॥ ५२॥

rāmaḥ śravaṇamātreṇa sugrīveṇa salakṣmaṇaḥ ।
 vānarānīkapaiḥ sārddhamāgamiṣyati te'ntikam ॥ 51॥
 rāvaṇaṁ sakulaṁ hatvā neṣyati tvāṁ svakaṁ puram ।
 abhijñāṁ dehi me devi yathā māṁ viśvasedvibhuḥ ॥ 52॥

51-52. As soon as Lord Ram hears my report, there is verily no doubt that he will come to you without wasting any time, and with him will come Sugriv, Laxman and other great monkey commanders (51).

He would then slay Ravana along with his kith and kin, and all his relatives and compatriots will meet the same fate. After that, the Lord shall take you back to his capital city (of Ayodhya). Oh goddess (devi)! You should give me some sign, some sort of a token, some kind of memento so that the Lord would believe me.

['Please mother', I requested her, 'give me something which is exclusive to you, and which will identify you without leaving a trace of doubt in the mind of Lord Ram, so that when I go back and tell him I have met and talked with you, and then give him that token from you, the Lord would be fully convinced with what I tell him, and also that I have met no one else but Sita, that I have not been deceived.'] (52).

इत्युक्त्वा सा शिरोरत्नं चूडापाशे स्थितं प्रियम् ।
 दत्त्वा काकेन यद्वृत्तं चित्रकूटगिरौ पुरा ॥ ५३॥
 तदप्याहाश्रुपूर्णाक्षी कुशलं ब्रूहि राघवम् ।
 लक्ष्मणं ब्रूहि मे किञ्चिदुरुक्तं भाषितं पुरा ॥ ५४॥
 तत्क्षमस्वाज्ञभावेन भाषितं कुलनन्दन ।
 तारयेन्मां यथा रामस्तथा कुरु कृपान्वितः ॥ ५५॥

ityuktā sā śiroratnaṁ cūḍāpāśe sthitaṁ priyam ।
 dattvā kākena yadvṛttaṁ citrakūṭagirau purā ॥ 53॥
 tadapyāhāśrupūrṇākṣī kuśalaṁ brūhi rāghavam ।
 lakṣmaṇaṁ brūhi me kiñciduruktaṁ bhāṣitaṁ purā ॥ 54॥
 tatksamasvājñabhāvena bhāṣitaṁ kulanandana ।
 tārayenmāṁ yathā rāmastathā kuru kṛpānvitaḥ ॥ 55॥

53-55. When I had said so, she gave me the 'Choodamani' (an ornament, kind of a diadem, worn by married women in the hair on her head) which was stuck in her hairs, and which was very dear to her. Then she told me about an incident that occurred in Chitrakoot that pertained to the crow (i.e. the Jayant's episode)¹ (53), and filling her eyes with tears, she said: Tell Raghav (Lord Ram) about my welfare.

Tell Laxman: Oh the great son of the family (kulanandana)! Whatever harsh, accusing and scornful words that I might have used for you earlier due to my stupidity and ignorance², you must excuse me and forgive me for it. Besides this, adopt

whatever strategy is necessary so that Lord Ram, being merciful, graceful and kind, liberates me from the torment from which I am suffering horribly.' (54-55).

[Note—¹This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

Briefly, Jayant, the son of Indra, the king of the gods, tried to tease Lord Ram and Sita while they lived on a mountain in Chitrakoot. So he disguised himself as a crow and pricked Sita's feet while Lord Ram was asleep. Blood oozed out from the wound, and when the Lord woke up and discovered Jayant's mischief, he picked up a blade of grass and shot it at the crow like a live arrow. This 'arrow' pursued Jayant everywhere he went to hide and escape from it, but he found no relief anywhere. At last, sage Narad advised him to go and surrender himself to Lord Ram and beg for forgiveness if he wants to survive. Jayant went and fell at the feet of the Lord, who spared his life but punished him by taking out one of his eyes, making the 'crow' blind with one of its eyes. This is because the Lord told him that his arrow could not go in vain, and it must strike an object, so Jayant's eyes took the hit as a warning to him not to cast an evil eye on anyone any longer.

This particular incident was a private affair, and not even Laxman, who was a constant companion of the Lord, was aware of it as he had gone out to the forest for some errand at that time. By narrating this incident, which was only known to Lord Ram, and telling Hanuman to remind Lord Ram about it, Sita intended to convince the Lord that Hanuman indeed has met her, for otherwise he could never have known what transpired that day at Chitrakoot concerning Jayant.

This incident would serve as a double check for Lord Ram, in addition to the Choodamani which Sita sent to him. She also took this precaution because in case some accident occurs and Hanuman loses the Choodamani, then at least he would have at least this one proof, of the incident concerning Jayant, that he has indeed met Sita.

²This incident is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 27-37. Sita had used some harsh words and accused Laxman of malefic intentions, forcing him to leave her and go in the direction that Lord Ram had taken in pursuit of the decoy golden deer. Finding Sita alone, Ravana had abducted her. Sita sorely regretted her behaviour, but it was too late by then.

She realized that she had made a grave mistake by using harsh words against Laxman who was totally and completely devoted to her and Lord Ram, and had always treated her as his mother and Lord Ram as his father. So she now asks Hanuman to beg his forgiveness on her behalf.]

इत्युक्त्वा रुदती सीता दुःखेन महतावृता ।
मयाप्याश्वसिता राम वदता सर्वमेव ते ॥ ५६॥
ततः प्रस्थापितो राम त्वत्समीपमिहागतः ।
तदागमनवेलायामशोकवनिकां प्रियाम् ॥ ५७॥

ityuktvā rudatī sītā duḥkhena mahatāvṛtā ।
mayāpyāśvāsītā rāma vadatā sarvameva te ॥ 56॥
tataḥ prasthāpito rāma tvatsamīpamihāgataḥ ।

tadāgamanavelāyāmaśokavanikāṃ priyām ॥ 57॥

56-57. Saying this, Sita became overwhelmed with great emotional distress; sorrow, anguish and pain overcame her as she began to weep bitterly. I tried to console her, I tried to reassure her, by narrating all details about you (about your welfare, about how you remember her, about how much you truly love her and have immense affection for her) (56).

Then I took leave of her and came back to you. At the time of coming here, I had ruined Ravana's Ashok grove which was very dear to him (57).

उत्पाद्य राक्षसांस्तत् बहून् हत्वा क्षणादहम् ।
रावणस्य सुतं हत्वा रावणेनाभिभाष्य च ॥ ५८॥
तत्कामशेषतो दग्ध्वा पुनरप्यागमं क्षणात् ।
श्रुत्वा हनूमतो वाक्यं रामोऽत्यन्तपूहृष्टधीः ॥ ५९॥

utpāṭya rākṣasāṃstatra bahūn hatvā kṣaṇādaham ।
rāvaṇasya sutam hatvā rāvaṇenābhibhāṣya ca ॥ 58॥
laṅkāmaśeṣato dagdhvā punarapyāgamam kṣaṇāt ।
śrutvā hanūmato vākyaṃ rāmo'tyantaprahṛṣṭadhīḥ ॥ 59॥

58-59. While destroying that garden I had first killed many demons within a short time, and then I killed Ravana's son (Akshay Kumar). After that, I got an opportunity to have a talk with Ravana himself (58).

Thereafter I burnt Lanka and came here quickly, as soon as I could, without wasting any time.'

Hearing these words of Hanuman, Lord Ram felt very happy and contented (59).

हनूमंस्ते कृतं कार्यं देवैरपि सुदुष्करम् ।
उपकारं न पश्यामि तव प्रत्युपकारिणः ॥ ६०॥
इदानीं ते प्रयच्छामि सर्वस्वं मम मारुते ।
इत्यालिङ्ग्य समाकृष्य गाढं वानरपुङ्गवम् ॥ ६१॥

hanūmaṃste kṛtaṃ kāryaṃ devairapi suduṣkaram ।
upakāraṃ na paśyāmi tava pratyupakāriṇaḥ ॥ 60॥
idānīm te prayacchāmi sarvasvaṃ mama māroute ।
ityāliṅgya samākṛṣya gāḍhaṃ vānarapuṅgavam ॥ 61॥

60-61. Lord Ram said, 'Oh Hanuman! The work which you have done is very difficult and daunting even for the Gods to do. I do not know what good I can do for you in return (60).

Oh Maruti (the son of the wind god)! Come dear, I will offer to you myself as a whole, for I do not know any other way to recompense you.'

Saying this, Lord Ram pulled Hanuman, who was the most exalted of the monkeys, near him, and most affectionately embraced him, clasped him firmly to his heart. [To wit, it was a rare privilege bestowed to only a few by the Lord. By publicly embracing Hanuman the Lord gave out a signal to all those who were standing around that he will forever treat Hanuman as his dear brother and friend, as someone who is very near and dear to him.] (61).

सार्द्रनेत्रो रघुश्रेष्ठः परां प्रीतिमवाप सः ।
 हनूमन्तमुवाचेदं राघवो भक्तवत्सलः ॥ ६२॥
 परिम्भो हि मे लोके दुर्लभः परमात्मनः ।
 अतस्त्वं मम भक्तोऽसि प्रियोऽसि हरिपुङ्गव ॥ ६३॥

sārdranetro raghuśreṣṭhaḥ parāṃ prītimavāpa saḥ ।
 hanūmantamuvācedaṃ rāghavo bhaktavatsalaḥ ॥ 62॥
 parirambho hi me loka durlabhaḥ paramātmanaḥ ।
 atastvaṃ mama bhakto'si priyo'si haripuṅgava ॥ 63॥

62-63. His (Lord Ram's) eyes welled up with tears (of joy and thanks-giving) even as emotions of extreme affection and gratitude began to heave in his heart for Hanuman.

Then Raghav (Lord Ram), who loves his devotees and is most gracious, merciful, kind, compassionate, benevolent and munificent towards them (bhaktavatsalaḥ), said to Hanuman (62), ---

'Oh Hanuman, you are indeed the best amongst the monkeys (haripuṅgava)! It is very rare for a creature to be get the honour of embracing me, who am the Supreme Soul (i.e. the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Being, the Lord God) of this creation. You are therefore exceptionally privileged and most lucky to have got this honour. Forsooth and without gainsay, you are most dear to me; you are my ardent devotee' (63).

यत्पादपद्मयुगलं तुलसीदलाद्यैः सम्पूज्य विष्णुपदवीमतुलां प्रयान्ति ।
 तेनैव किं पुनरसौ परिब्धमूर्ती रामेण वायुतनयः कृतपुण्यपुञ्जः ॥ ६४॥

yatpādapadmayaṅgalaṃ tulasīdalādyaiḥ sampūjya
 viṣṇupadavīmatulāṃ prayānti ।
 tenaiva kiṃ punarasau parirabdhamūrti rāmeṇa vāyutanayaḥ
 kṛtapuṇyapuñjaḥ ॥ 64॥

64. [Lord Shiva makes the following observation—] By worshipping his (Lord Sri Ram's) two lotus-like holy feet, using Tulsi leaves (basil plant leaves) etc., one can attain the most exalted and matchless state of existence that entitles the worshipper to attain the holy feet of Lord Vishnu (i.e. to attain heaven).

What can one say, therefore, about the great privilege, the great fortune and the great luck of the son of the wind god (Hanuman), who does deeds that are righteous and auspicious, because he was embraced by Lord Ram himself! (64).

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे सुन्दरकाण्डे

पञ्चमः सर्गः ॥ ५॥

॥ समाप्तमिदम् सुन्दरकाण्डम् ॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde sundarakāṇḍe
pañcamah sargaḥ ॥ 5॥

॥ samāptamidam sundarakāṇḍam ॥

Thus ends Adhyatma Ramayan's Sundar Kand, Canto 5 that describes the conversation between Lord Shiva and his divine consort Uma.

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Section 7.3:

Geetawali Ramayan

{Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-21, 47-51}

So far by now in this Chapter no. 7 we have read two classical works, viz. Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas (section no. 7.1), and Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas (section no. 7.2), to be acquainted with how Sita, who was held as a captive by the demon king Ravana in his capital city of Lanka, was discovered by Hanuman, how he had burnt the great city to ashes, and how he came back to give the good and happy tidings to Lord Ram, that he has found Sita.

Till now both Lord Ram and Sita were surrounded by a dark cloud of hopelessness and despair, when everything seemed to be lost as there was but little chance that Sita would ever be found by the distraught Lord Ram. But now the situation had suddenly changed, and changed for the better, as if a bright sunlight of hope and expectation of succour gleamed in the horizon, the rays of which pierced through the all-engulfing darkness of gloomy thoughts. The fate that was a few days ago shrouded in grief and dismay now shone in a brilliant light of cheer and happiness.

This is why that part of the fascinating and wondrous Story which narrates the discovery of Sita, especially when the chances of finding her were very remote, and a partial punishment of the demons by way of burning of their city of Lanka by Hanuman, is called the “Sundar Kand”, or the ‘beautiful chapter in the whole Story’—as it marked the positive turn of events from what was previously considered to gloomy, sad and lost, to a situation when there was cheer and happiness all around with the arrival of good tidings about her. From now on things would start looking up, for Lord Ram would launch a determined campaign to free Sita and slay the demons, which would also help the Lord to fulfil his earlier promise made to the gods and the sages that he would rid the earth from the terror and the scourge of the cruel and

sinful demons, and his subsequent triumphant return to his own capital city of Ayodhya where he would be crowned the King-Emperor.

But before we move on with this marvellous Story, let us take a brief pause and rewind to have a closer look at some of the major events narrated in ‘Sundar Kand’, events that would look all the more fascinating when we look at them from closer quarters and read about them at a slow pace, by paying a little more attention to certain important mile-stone events which we had till now witnessed unfold in quick succession.

For this purpose, we shall first read the relevant part of the Story from Tulsidas’ classic “Geetawali Ramayan” in the current sub-section no. 7.3, and then from his other classic titled “Kavitawali Ramayan” in the next sub-section no. 7.4.

While ‘Geetawali Ramayan’ excellently narrates the emotional meeting of Hanuman with Sita and his subsequent report to Lord Ram about her pitiful condition in its Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-21, the ‘Kavitawali Ramayan’ presents a very vivid account of the burning of Lanka and the devastation it caused in its Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-32. Meanwhile, The way Trijata, the elderly demoness who had been friendly to Sita, tried to console and comfort her has been soulfully described in Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 47-51.

We will now proceed to read Geetawali Ramayan:-

Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-21, 47-51:-

सुन्दरकाण्ड

अशोकवनमें हनूमान्
राग केदार

(5 / 1)

रजायसु रामको जब पायो ।
गाल मेलि मुद्रिका, मुदित मन पवनपूत सिर नायो ॥ 1 ॥
भालुनाथ नल-नील साथ चले, बली बालिको जायो ।
फरकि सुअँग भए सगुन, कहत मानो मग मुद-मंगल छायो ॥ 2 ॥
देखि बिबर, सुधि पाइ गीधसों सबनि अपनो बलु मायो ।
सुमिरि राम, तकि तरकि तोयनिधि, लंक लूक-सो आयो ॥ 3 ॥
खोजत घर घर, जनु दरिद्र-मनु फिरत लागि धन धायो ।
तुलसी सिय बिलोकि पुलक्यो तनु, भूरिभाग भयो भायो ॥ 4 ॥

Sundarakāṇḍa

aśōkavanamēm hanūmān

rāga kēdāra

(5/1)

rajāyasu rāmakō jaba pāyō.
 gāla mēli mudrikā, mudita mana pavanapūta sira nāyō.. 1..
 bhālunātha nala-nīla sātha calē, balī bālikō jāyō.
 pharaki su'aṁga bha'ē saguna, kahata māmō maga muda-maṅgala chāyō.. 2..
 dēkhi bivara, sudhi pā'i gīdhasōm sabani apanō balu māyō.
 sumiri rāma, taki taraki tōyanidhi, laṅka lūka-sō āyō.. 3..
 khōjata ghara ghara, janu daridra-manu phirata lāgi dhana dhāyō.
 tulasī siya bilōki pulakyō tanu, bhūribhāga bhayō bhāyō.. 4..

Departure of Hanuman for Lanka

Verse no. 5/1—[When all the monkey groups sent to reconnoiter for Sita had been dispatched, one final group consisting of the chief members of Sugriv's court was awaiting orders from Lord Ram to proceed. It consisted of Hanuman, Angad, Jamvant, Nal and Neel etc.

Lord Ram, who was omniscient and all-knowing, knew who will finally accomplish success in this daunting task: it would be Hanuman. So the Lord called him close and gave him his personal signet ring to be taken to Sita for the purpose of establishing Hanuman's identity as well as a token to remind her that the Lord was on his way. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-13 that precede Doha no. 23.

This group headed southwards, in the direction where the chariot bearing Sita had gone through the sky. Finally, they reached the shores of the mighty "southern ocean", and seeing this formidable barrier, all lost hope.

Here, they met Sampati, the old brother of the vulture Jatau. When he discovered who these monkeys and bears were and their purpose of coming hither, he mounted the top of a mountain summit and gazed in the distant horizon whereat he descried Sita sitting forlorn and broken by distress under a tree in the royal garden of Ravana in the city of Lanka in the middle of the ocean. The question now was how to go there and who would do so.

At this juncture, Jamvant persuaded Hanuman to shed his withdrawn, humble, meek, submissive and docile nature, and instead come out in his true form and mettle. So encouraged, Hanuman assumed a colossal form, and prepared to leap across the ocean in one mighty leap. This part of the story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Doha no. 23—Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.

The present verse no. 5/1 of Geetawali summarises these developments. From the ground Hanuman looked like a comet streaking against the dark firmament of the heavens as he made his way to Lanka.]

When Hanuman got Lord Ram's permission, he bowed his head reverentially at the holy feet of the Lord with an exhilarated mind, and kept (tucked away safely) the signet ring (given to him by Lord Ram as a token of recognition of Hanuman by Sita) in his mouth (gāla mēli mudrikā)¹ (1).

[¹This freed both the hands of Hanuman and also ensured that the ring does not fall on the way. It is common observance that monkeys have a pouch of skin at the

back of their mouths where they tuck away eatables quickly when they find some, only to retrieve it later on when they are at ease, and ruminate on it, chewing the food properly before actually swallowing it.

So, Hanuman tucked Lord Ram's signet ring safely here.]

Accompanying him on the mission (to find Sita) were Jamvant (the bear king), Nal, Neel (the engineers of the monkey army), and Angad, the brave son of Baali. At the time of departure, the parts of their bodies began to flutter or quiver to indicate auspicious results (or success in their endeavours), and a happy and comfortable journey (2).

On the way, they came across a cave and examined (or explored) it, found Sampati, the king of vultures (and brother of Jatau) who told them the whereabouts of Sita².

(Realising that they have a vast ocean stretching before them which has to be crossed twice—once while going to Lanka, and the second time to come back from there, besides the task of penetrating the impregnable fort of Lanka and warding off the ferocious demons who will have to be fought and won over—) They (the bears and the monkeys) weighed (judged) their strengths and abilities. [All discovered that they cannot match the task at hand.³]

(At last, on Jamvant's encouragement—) Hanuman remembered the potential powers of the holy name of Lord Sri Ram, glanced at the ocean (in both contempt as well as a challenge), jumped and crossed it (i.e. flew over it) like a bright streak of lightning (i.e. like a bright comet or meteor), and finally landed in Lanka⁴ (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 30.

⁴Hanuman looked at the ocean with 'contempt' because it was creating a formidable hurdle in fulfilling the Lord's task because of its stubbornness and arrogance. The ocean was haughty that no one can dare to cross it. Hanuman took it as a 'challenge', and wished to tell the ocean 'look, let us see who is stronger—try to stop me if you can. I have great faith in the strength of the Lord's holy name, and I'll invoke it while flying across you, and I dare you to stop me if you have the guts.']

Tulsidas says that even as a pauper (or anyone who is in dire need of money) wistfully wanders everywhere searching for money, Hanuman went from house to house in search of Sita, and when he finally saw her (in the Ashok grove), he was extremely thrilled and euphoric. In this way, having achieved his goal (or, being successful in his endeavour of finding Sita), he considered himself to be profoundly fortunate⁵ (4).

[⁵After landing on the soil of Lanka, Hanuman had to first defeat the city's formidable gate-keeper, a demoness by the name of Lankini. Hanuman overcame her easily. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 4.

Having overcome this first hurdle, Hanuman began his search for Sita, looking into each home and place throughout the night, but could not spy her anywhere. Finally, on the next morning of his arrival, he met Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana who happened to be of a pious nature as opposed to the rest of the demon race. Vibhishan guided Hanuman to the garden where Ravana had kept Sita in confinement. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.

Thereafter, Hanuman silently sneaked in the garden and hid himself in the thick foliage of the tree under which Sita stayed, contemplating upon his next move. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9.]

(5/2)

देखी जानकी जब जाइ।
 परम धीर समीरसुतके प्रेम उर न समाइ॥ 1॥
 कृस सरीर सुभाय सोभित, लगी उड़ि उड़ि धूलि।
 मनहु मनसिज मोहनी—मनि गयो भोरे भूलि॥ 2॥
 रटति निसिबासर निरंतर राम राजिवनैन।
 जात निकट न बिरहिनी—अरि अकनि ताते बैन॥ 3॥
 नाथके गुनगाथ कहि कपि दई मुँदरी डारि।
 कथा सुनि उठि लई कर बर, रुचिर नाम निहारि॥ 4॥
 हृदय हरष—बिषाद अति पति—मुद्रिका पहिचानि।
 दास तुलसी दसा सो केहि भाँति कहै बखानि ?॥ 5॥

(5/2)

dēkhī jānakī jaba jā'i.
 parama dhīra samīrasutakē prēma ura na samā'i.. 1..
 kṛsa sarīra subhāya sōbhita, lagī uḍi uḍi dhūli.
 manahu manasija mōhanī-mani gayō bhōrē bhūli.. 2..
 raṭati nisibāsara nirantara rāma rājivanaina.
 jāta nikaṭa na birahinī-ari akani tātē baina.. 3..
 nāthakē gunagātha kahi kapi da'ī muṁdarī ḍāri.
 kathā suni uṭhi la'ī kara bara, rucira nāma nihāri.. 4..
 hṛdaya haraṣa-biṣāda ati pati-mudrikā pahicāni.
 dāsa tulasī dasā sō kēhi bhāṁti kahai bakhāni?.. 5..

Hanuman in the Ashok Garden where he discovers Sita

Verse no. 5/2—After entering Lanka, when Hanuman saw Sita, his affection knew no limits and it virtually overflowed from his heart (1).

He found that Sita's body was emaciated but effused radiance. It was covered with dust (for she hadn't bathed for a long time), and she looked like Kamdeo (cupid) devoid of his glamour and glory (2).

She chanted Lord Ram's holy name day and night. Hearing her agony-filled words and laments, even the cool breeze did not go near her because it feared of getting heated by the fire of her agonies (3).

Seeing this pitifully doleful condition of Sita, Hanuman began to sing praises of Lord Ram, and dropped the signet ring (of Lord Ram that he had brought).

Sita heard the praises and the life-history of Lord Ram, and noticing the ring, she picked it up (4).

Seeing her beloved's article, she was at once thrilled as well as overcome with grave sorrow¹. Tulsidas says he is unable to describe that moment (5).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow this Doha.

Sita was stunned when she first heard some unseen voice narrating the story of Lord Ram, and then seeing the Lord's ring dropped before her. She had never expected under the circumstances she was in both these things as she knew that the place was tightly secured by ferocious demons, and that it lied in the middle of the ocean which was like a no-man's land in the wilderness of creation. Till this moment she was virtually reconciled to her doomed fate, waiting for that day when her breath would finally leave her emaciated body.

But Hanuman's singing Lord Ram's glories and the signet ring of the Lord seemed like a bolt from the heaven to her. So, on the one hand she was exceptionally thrilled and ecstatic as one can ever be when one sees hope at the end of a dark tunnel, but on the other hand she immediately became suspicious and apprehensive. Is it that these demons have subdued or killed the Lord, and have brought his ring to prove it to her? Is it that they have sent one of their guards to tease her by singing the praises of the Lord before dropping the ring, thereby deriving sadistic and malicious pleasure at her compounded misery and grief?]

राग सोरठ

(5 / 3)

बोलि, बलि, मूँदरी ! सानुज कुसल कोसलपालु।
 अमिय-बचन सुनाइ मेटहि बिरह-ज्वाला-जालु॥ 1॥
 कहत हित अपमान मैं कियो, होत हिय सोइ सालु।
 रोष छमि सुधि करत कबहू ललित लछिमन लालु ?॥ 2॥
 परसपर पति-देवरहि का होति चरचा चालु।
 देवि ! कहु केहि हेत बोले बिपुल बानर-भालु॥ 3॥
 सीलनिधि समरथ सुसाहिब दीनबंधु दयालु।
 दास तुलसी प्रभुहि काहु न कह्यो मेरो हालु॥ 4॥

rāga sōraṭha

(5/3)

bōli, bali, mūṃdarī! sānuja kusala kōsalapālu.
 amiya-bacana sunā'i mēṭahi biraha-jvālā-jālu.. 1..
 kahata hita apamāna mairṃ kiyō, hōta hiya sō'i sālu.

rōṣa chami sudhi karata kabahū lalita lachimana lālu?.. 2..
 parasapara pati-dēvarahi kā hōti caracā cālu.
 dēvi! kahu kēhi hēta bōlē bipula bānara-bhālu.. 3..
 sīlanidhi samaratha susāhiba dīnabandhu dayālu.
 dāsa tulasī prabhuhi kāhu na kahyō mērō hālu.. 4..

Sita's astonishment when she saw the Signet Ring of Lord Ram

Verse no. 5/3—[Sita, stunned at seeing Lord Sri Ram's signet ring coming to her without any apparent bearer in sight, said—] ‘Oh Ring! I offer (literally, surrender) myself to you, and I sincerely ask you: say, tell me, is the king of Kaushal clan (Lord Sri Ram) happy and well along with his younger brother?

Quench (or douse) my fire of torments and agonies of separation by letting me hear your nectar-like (sweet, pleasant, favourable and soothing) words. (In other words, tell me the good news about Lord Ram and Laxman.) (1).

Alas! I had scorned at, reproached and humiliated Laxman by using harsh words for him though he was most sincere and bonafide in his advice to me¹. My heart never ceases to regret it. Does dear Laxman ever remember me; has he overcome his bitterness and anger and frustration at me? (2).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 3/6, stanza no. 2, and verse no. 3/7, stanza no. 2 herein above.]

What is the topic of discussion now-a-days between my husband and my brother-in-law? Goddess! Do tell me, why has he (Sri Ram) called so many bears and monkeys²? (3).

[²The question arises, how did she know that Lord Ram has collected bears and monkeys around him? Well, she had a good companion with her in the person of the demoness Tadka. It was she who used to reassure Sita every time the latter sank in deep despair—this will be clear later on in verse no. 5/47-5/51 of this chapter. The spies of Ravana were constantly bringing news of the developments in Kishkindha, and this leaked to the public and ultimately reached the ears of Sita through Trijata. So, Sita was not totally unaware about Sri Ram though she might not have been aware of the details. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12 where we read that Trijata has assured Sita that things would be alright if she holds her courage just before Hanuman dropped the ring.]

Oh Ring! The Lord is a treasury of virtues and courage, is potent and able in every respect, is a true Lord and Master (having all the good virtues that is expected of them), is a friend of the distressed, the lowly, the humble, the underdog, the downtrodden and the miserable ones, and is most kind, merciful and compassionate. It appears that no one has conveyed my news (about my whereabouts, my pathetic condition etc.) to the Lord till now (otherwise, he wouldn't have delayed so much) (4).

(5 / 4)

सदल सलषन हैं कुसल कृपालु कोसल राउ !

सील—सदन सनहे—सागर सहज सरल सुभाउ ॥ 1 ॥
 नींद—भूख न देवरहि, परिहरेको पछिताउ ।
 धीरधुर रघुबीरको नहि सपनेहु चित चाउ ॥ 2 ॥
 सोधु बिनु, अनुरोध रितुके, बोध बिहित उपाउ ।
 करत हैं सोइ समय साधन, फलति बनत बनाउ ॥ 3 ॥
 पठए कपि दिसि दसहु, जे प्रभुकाज कुटिल न काउ ।
 बोलि लियो हनुमान करि सनमान, जानि समाउ ॥ 4 ॥
 दर्इ हौं संकेत कहि, कुसलात सियहि सुनाउ ।
 देखि दुर्ग, बिसेषि जानकि, जानि रिपु—गति आउ ॥ 5 ॥
 कियो सीय—प्रबोध मुँदरी, दियो कपिहि लखाउ ।
 पाइ अवसर, नाइ सिर तुलसीस—गुनगन गाउ ॥ 6 ॥

(5/4)

sadala salaṣana hairṁ kusala kṛpālu kōsala rā'u!
 sīla-sadana sanahē-sāgara sahaja sarala subhā'u.. 1..
 nīnda-bhūkha na dēvarahi, pariharēkō pachitā'u.
 dhīradhura raghubīrakō nahi sapanēhu cita cā'u.. 2..
 sōdhu binu, anurōdha ritukē, bōdha bihita upā'u.
 karata hairṁ sō'i samaya sādhana, phalati banata banā'u.. 3..
 paṭha'ē kapi diṣi dasahu, jē prabhukāja kuṭila na kā'u.
 bōli liyō hanumāna kari sanamāna, jāni samā'u.. 4..
 da'ī hauṁ saṅkēta kahi, kusalāta siyahi sunā'u.
 dēkhi durga, bisēṣi jānaki, jāni ripu-gati ā'u.. 5..
 kiyo sīya-prabōdha muṁdarī, diyō kapihi lakhā'u.
 pā'i avasara, nā'i sira tulasīsa-gunagana gā'u.. 6..

The Signet Ring's reply and assurance to Sita

Verse no. 5/4—[The signet ring replied¹] ‘The most merciful, compassionate, kind, benevolent and gracious Lord of the Kaushal clan (Sri Ram) is happy and comfortable with his army, companions and Laxman. He is by nature an abode of virtues and noble characters, is an ocean of affection and endearment and is of a simple, straight forward and humble temperament and bearing (1).

[¹A ring does not speak. But this is the way employed by poets where they personify inanimate things and make them behave and speak like ordinary living beings. We have other examples of this tactic employed by poets: after Sita was abducted, Lord Ram had started his search for her by asking the trees, creepers, birds and animals if they knew where she was. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-16 that precede Doha no. 30.

Some very interesting modern-day interpretations can be made with regards to this signet ring speaking. It could have been, perhaps, a pre-recorded message from Sri Ram himself. Or the ring had a remote controlled transmitter or speaker, operated by Hanuman hiding behind the leaves. Stanza no. 5 is also very amusing—‘and Sri Ram gave Hanuman certain clues or hints...’ which probably can mean ‘gave direction to Hanuman how to operate the device’.

Further, the ring could also have incorporated in it an in-built navigational device which guided Hanuman during his cruise across the ocean.

All these are not mere flight of imagination. If the science of that age was advanced enough to design a plane called Pushpak which was pilot-less and could be steered by mere thought waves, no wonder such devices were in existence. Tulsidas was a poet all right, but he wasn't exaggerating things beyond a certain limit. He couldn't say 'the ring spoke' if it didn't. So, the only possible conclusion and plausible explanation is as proposed above.]

Your brother-in-law has forsaken his sleep and hunger, for he is full of regret and contrition that he had left you alone inspite of your scornful words of reproachment that you spoke to him. As a result he has stopped eating and sleeping properly.

On the other hand, Lord Raghubir (i.e. Lord Ram), who is very courageous, brave and valiant, has no happiness in his mind even in his dreams (2).

It was because of the rainy season that attempts could not be made to begin the search for you. Now, when the appropriate (and favourable) time has come, necessary arrangements are being made and resources put together so that success can be assuredly achieved. [That is, all efforts are being made to find about your whereabouts, and then a campaign would be launched in a well-planned manner so that you can be rescued from here. Have patience meanwhile, and be assured that none of the two brothers have neglected you.] (3).

With this aim or task in view, he (Sri Ram) has sent such monkeys (and bears) in all the 10 directions who will never show carelessness, negligence or apathy towards the Lord's work. However, recognising the fact that only Hanuman was competent enough to accomplish this herculean task, he (Sri Ram) summoned him (Hanuman) (4).

And, the Lord gave Hanuman some clues and indications, including giving me to him, and ordered, 'Tell Sita about our well-being. Have a good look at the enemy's fort, and reconnoitre about his strength, preparedness and armour. Take special care to meet Sita (to reassure her and to see her first hand) before coming back.' (5).

In this way, the signet ring reassured Sita and showed her the hiding place of Hanuman.

Thereafter, Hanuman (came out from behind the foliage where he had concealed himself), seeing that it was the right moment, and then bowed his head before Sita (to pay his obeisance) and began to sing (narrate, describe) the virtues, glories and fame of Tulsidas' Lord (6).

(5 / 5)

सुवन समीरको धीरधुरीन, बीर-बड़ोइ ।
देखि गति सिय-मुद्रिकाकी बाल ज्यों दियो रोइ ॥ 1 ॥
अकनि कटु बानी कुटिलकी क्रोध-बिंध्य बड़ोइ ।
सकुचि सम भयो ईस-आयसु-कलसभव जिय जोइ ॥ 2 ॥
बुद्धि-बल, साहस-पराक्रम अछत राखे गोइ ।

सकल साज—समाज साधक समउ, कहै सब कोइ॥ 3॥
 उतरि तरुतें नमत पद, सकुचात सोचत सोइ।
 चुके अवसर मनहु सुजनहि सुजन सनमुख होइ॥ 4॥
 कहे बचन बिनीत प्रीति—प्रतीति—नीति निचोइ।
 सीय सुनि हनुमान जान्यो भली भौति भलोइ॥ 5॥
 देबि ! बिनु करतूति कहिबो जानिहैं लघु लोइ।
 कहौंगो मुखकी समरसरि कालि कारिख धोइ॥ 6॥
 करत कछू न बनत, हरिहिय हरष—सोक समोइ।
 कहत मन तुलसीस लंका करहुँ सघन घमोइ॥ 7॥

(5/5)

suvana samīrakō dhīradhurīna, bīra-baṛō'i.
 dēkhi gati siya-mudrikākī bāla jyōm diyō rō'i.. 1..
 akani kaṭu bānī kuṭilakī krōdha-bindhya baṛhō'i.
 sakuci sama bhayō īnsa-āyasu-kalasabhava jiya jō'i.. 2..
 bud'dhi-bala, sāhasa-parākrama achata rākhē gō'i.
 sakala sāja-samāja sādhaaka sama'u, kahai saba kō'i.. 3..
 utari tarutēm namata pada, sakucāta sōcata sō'i.
 cukē avasara manahu sujanahi sujana sanamukha hō'i.. 4..
 kahē bacana binīta prīti-pratīti-nīti nicō'i.
 sīya suni hanumāna jān'you bhalī bhāṁti bhalō'i.. 5..
 dēbi! binu karatūti kahibō jānihaiṁ laghu lō'i.
 kahauṅgō mukhakī samarasari kāli kārikha dhō'i.. 6..
 karata kachū na banata, harihiya haraṣa-sōka samō'i.
 kahata mana tulasīsa laṅkā karahuṁ saghana ghamō'i.. 7..

Hanuman's meeting with Sita--I

Verse no. 5/5—The son of the Wind God (suvana samīrakō) was most brave and courageous, but seeing the signet ring and Sita's pitiful condition (and hearing their sorrowful talk), he began weeping like a child (1).

Hearing the bitter, scornful and contemptible talk of the wicked demon Ravana¹, his (Hanuman's) anger and indignation had begun to rise like Mt. Vindhyachal, but on seeing sage Agastya represented by Sri Ram's command (verse no. 5/4, stanza no. 5), it became hesitant, docile and reluctant, and remained under control² (2).

[¹When Hanuman waited in hiding in the thick cover of foliage of the tree under which Sita was confined, Ravana had come to the garden and had threatened Sita with dire consequences if she did not surrender herself to him. Hanuman refers to this here. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10.

²Once, Mt. Vindhyachal asked the sun to circumambulate it. When the latter refused, the former got annoyed and began to rise to obstruct its path. Seeing a calamity in the offing, the Gods asked sage Agastya—who was the Guru of Vindhyachal—to restrain the mountain. The sage approached the haughty and stubborn mountain, and the latter prostrated before his Guru in reverence. The sage

asked him to remain at that position—flat, horizontal—till the time he came back again. It was simply a ruse. The sage never ever came back, and the mountain could not rise.

Here, when Hanuman watched the way Ravana treated Sita, his anger rose to a boiling point, but he had to restrain himself because he was told to just go and bring the news of Sita.]

Though he (Hanuman) possessed immense wisdom, intellect, strength, valour, courage and might etc. he suppressed (and restrained) them because everyone says (i.e. it is common belief or adage) that all resources and efforts give fruits (results) only when the time is opportune³ (3).

[³Hanuman had decided in his mind that before he leaves Lanka he will teach Ravana a good lesson. But it was dangerous to act just now—for there were fair chances that in the melee that is bound to follow Ravana could draw his sword and harm Sita. So it was wiser to wait for some other more opportune time. And sure enough that time would come soon when Hanuman would destroy the royal garden on the pretext of eating fruits, would be caught by Ravana's henchmen, and then after a heated debate with the demon king where Hanuman would get an ample opportunity of insulting Ravana in full court, he would burn the city to ashes.]

Hanuman got down from the tree (where he had been hiding), bowed his head at the feet of Sita and became hesitant and pensive as if a gentleman misses an opportunity to be of some help to another noble person and then has to approach him with a guilty conscience. [To wit, Hanuman felt very sorry he could not punish Ravana right there, and had to bear with his harsh treatment of Sita.] (4).

Thereafter, Hanuman spoke polite words that were full of affection, respect and sincerity, words that were according to established principles of good manners, civility, etiquette and traditional wisdom. [He wished to assure Sita that he is cultured, well-mannered, polite and well-bred, and not some foul-mouthed rascal out to torment her further.]

Hearing these (well regulated, apt, full of decorum, carefully weighed, civilised and courteous) words, Sita was assured (i.e. she realised) that Hanuman was a noble and gentle person (of good rearing and education) (5).

He said, 'Oh Goddess! Without taking any serious action that is compatible with what I wish to tell you, people would regard me as merely boasting with a loud mouth. Forsooth, I shall wash the black stain on my face in the river of battle tomorrow, and then speak to you.'⁴ (6).

[⁴This stanza clearly indicates that Hanuman considered his circumstantial compulsion of tolerating whatever Ravana had said to Sita as a virtual cuff on his face and a stain, because he heard it being said right in his front without doing anything to punish the speaker. Refer also to verse no. 5/6, stanza no. 2 herein below.

During his meeting with Sita, Hanuman will assure her that soon Lord Ram would come with a huge army of monkeys and bears, and launch a fierce offensive to free her from the clutches of the demon. In this process, let he be sure, her tormentors would be sufficiently punished. Now, all this appeared to Sita as mere boast and she was very doubtful of it actually happening, especially when she observed the diminutive form of Hanuman who had sneaked in Lanka with a size not bigger than an average mosquito. So, in order to overcome all her apprehensions, Hanuman had,

for an fleeting moment, showed her the colossus form with which he had crossed the ocean, a sight that reassured her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 17.

The present stanza should be read in this context. Hanuman was getting ready to convey Lord Ram's message and give her the assurance as noted above. But just a few moments ago Sita was tormented by Ravana while Hanuman lay hidden in the foliage and sat there quietly. Immediately after the demon left, Hanuman appeared. So it must have been obvious to Sita, Hanuman rightly guessed, that he was witness to all that Ravana had said a while ago. If what he would soon say his companions are capable of doing, then why did he keep quiet when the opportunity arose and Ravana was just right in his front? Why did he not trounce him then and there and take Sita back? It is to address this question in Sita's mind that he makes the observations in this verse. Stanza nos. 2-3 also explain why Hanuman didn't react then.

So he told Sita that first he would remove this stain by squaring up the account with Ravana by trouncing his army to prove that he indeed is brave and valiant and powerful as he claims to be to assure Sita, and then he goes on to tell her that a huge army of monkeys and bears is poised to launch an offensive to rescue her. He calculated that this would assure her that whatever Hanuman says is not mere boast but a fact as was proved by the developments that he plans to do now.

Now the question arises: how did Hanuman actually prove his strength and his vows to settle accounts with Ravana? As we read on with the story we shall soon see that he first destroyed a substantial part of the demon army, and then finding an excuse he had burnt the city of Lanka to ashes. Refer stanza no. 7 of this present verse, as well as (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26; and (b) more vividly described in Kavitawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 5/3—5/25.]

Hanuman could not in the beginning decide what to do (and how to punish Ravana) because overwhelming sorrows (at the pitiful condition of Sita) and surging indignation and anger (at her treatment at the hands of Ravana) had made him indecisive⁵.

At the end, the Lord of Tulsidas (i.e. Hanuman) decided in his mind that he would pound, plummet, batter and pulverise Lanka to a pulp (i.e. he would reduce the golden city to a mound of rubble) (7).

[⁵It was wise of him, indeed, to hold back at that time. One should always take action when the mind is cool and calculating. An agitated mind leads to bellicose and rash actions which might prove counter productive. The situation at that time was too dangerous for Hanuman to intervene, for there were fair chances that Ravana would draw his scythe and go for Sita's head immediately. Besides this, if he had intervened at that time, Hanuman would not have got a chance to sternly rebuke Ravana and trounce his pride in full public view as would be possible if he somehow confronts the demon in his court. Then, Sita would also be out of harm's way. So Hanuman decided to wait and watch.]

हौं रघुबंसमनि को दूत ।
 मातु मानु प्रतीति जानकि ! जानि मारुतपूत ॥ 1 ॥
 मैं सुनी बातें असैली, जे कही निसिचर नीच ।
 क्यों न मारै गाल, बैठो काल—डाढ़नि बीच ॥ 2 ॥
 निदरि अरि, रघुबीर—बल लै जाउँ जौ हठि आज ।
 डरौं आयसु—भंगतें, अरु बिगरिहै सुरकाज ॥ 3 ॥
 बाँधि बारिधि, साधि रिपु, दिन चारिमैं दोउ बीर ।
 मिलहिंगे कपि—भालु—दल सँग, जननि ! उर धरु धीर ॥ 4 ॥
 चित्रकूट—कथा, कुसल कहि सीस नायो कीस ।
 सुहृद—सेवक नाथको लखि दई अचल असीस ॥ 5 ॥
 भये सीतल स्रवन—तन—मन सुने बचन—पियूष ।
 दास तुलसी रही नयननि दरसहीकी भूख ॥ 6 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(5/6)

hauṁ raghubansamani kō dūta.
 mātu mānu pratīti jānaki! jāni mārutapūta.. 1..
 maiṁ sunī bātair̥ asailī, jē kahī nīsicara nīca.
 kyōm̐ na mārāi gāla, baiṭhō kāla-ḍāṛhani bīca.. 2..
 nidari ari, raghubīra-bala lai jā'uṁ jau haṭhi āja.
 ḍaraum̐ āyasu-bhaṅgatēm̐, aru bigarihai surakāja.. 3..
 bām̐dhi bāridhi, sādhi ripu, dina cārimēm̐ dō'u bīra.
 milahiṅgē kapi-bhālu-dala saṁga, janani! ura dharu dhīra.. 4..
 citrakūṭa-kathā, kusala kahi sīsa nāyō kīsa.
 suhṛda-sēvaka nāthakō lakhi daī acala asīsa.. 5..
 bhayē sītala sravana-tana-mana sunē bacana-piyūṣa.
 dāsa tulasī rahī nayanani darasahīkī bhūkha.. 6..

Hanuman's Assurance to Sita

Verse no. 5/6—[Hanuman introduces himself to Sita and assures her that her freedom would come soon. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16.]

Hanuman said to Sita, ‘Mother Janki, believe me! I am a messenger of him who is the jewel in the family of kings of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Sri Ram; “hauṁ raghubansamani kō dūta”); I am the son of the Wind-God (mārutapūta) (1).

I have heard all the mischievous things which Ravana had said¹; he is in the jaws of death, so his mind has gone wild and astray (2).

[¹Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10 describe what Ravana had said even as Hanuman lay hidden in the foliage of the same tree under the shadow of which Sita sat. In essence,

Ravana threatened her with death if she did not agree to surrender herself to him within a month's time. At this, Sita had strongly rebuffed him, whereat Ravana got exceedingly peeved and poured vitriol at her, appointing demonesses to torment her.]

I can defeat the enemy and forcefully take you back, today itself. But I'm afraid to break my Lord's order (because Hanuman's brief was to go, search and report back about Sita, and do nothing more), as well as my intervention may hamper the God's work (because Lord Ram was destined to destroy the entire lot of the demons who were tormenting the Gods, and so it would be very improper to interfere with what the Creator has ordained) (3).

So, Mother, have patience—the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) will construct a bridge within the next four days across the ocean, and accompanied by an army of bears and monkeys, they shall come and meet you² (4).'

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 16.]

Then Hanuman reminded her about Jayant's episode at Chitrakoot³ (with the twin purpose in mind viz.—one, to reassure Sita that anyone who hurts her will be punished by Lord Ram, and second, as a proof of his being Lord Ram's confidante and favourite because that episode was so secret that even Laxman did not know about it). Then he bowed his head in reverence. Thereafter, Sita blessed him⁴ (5).

[³This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Doha no. 3.

Jayant was the wicked son of Indra, the king of Gods. Once he decided to tease Lord Ram and Sita. So, disguised as a crow, he came and pricked Sita with its beak on her feet while Lord Ram lay to rest. Seeing blood oozing out of Sita's feet and the pervert crow crowing merrily nearby, the Lord got angry, and picking up a reed to act as an arrow, he shot it at Jayant. Terrified Jayant went around the whole of the heaven and the rest of the world in his attempt to hide or find someone to protect him. The reed-turned arrow pursued it wheresoever he went, and no one durst to offer him protection. Finally, on the verge of collapse out of fatigue and sorely lamenting, he met Narad, the celestial sage, who advised him to go back and surrender at the feet of Lord Ram if he wishes to survive, for there is no power in the entire creation which can neutralise the Lord's wrath. Hence, Jayant went to Lord Ram and ask for forgiveness. Considering all the facts, and that since Jayant was the spoilt and pervert son of Indra and had assumed the form of a crow which is by nature crooked and meat-eater, and that he has come to surrender unconditionally, the Lord spared his life but took out one of his eyes because the arrow of the Lord, once shot, cannot go in vain.

This episode was unbeknown to Laxman. And it was good for Jayant that Laxman didn't know of it: for it was sure that had Laxman been aware of this mischief he would have certainly killed that wicked fellow then and there.

Lord Ram had told Hanuman to narrate it to Sita because it would help convince her that he was a genuine messenger of the Lord as this particular incident was very confidential, and unless Lord Ram tells it to someone himself, no one would have been aware of it.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precedes Doha no. 17.]

Hearing the words of Hanuman, Sita's ears, heart and body found peace and solace⁵; now only her eyes were eager to quench their thirst for the sight of Lord Ram⁶ (6).

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

(5 / 7)

तात ! तोहूसों कहत होति हिये गलानि ।
 मनको प्रथम पन समुझि अछत तनु,
 लखि नइ गति भइ मति मलानि ॥ 1 ॥
 पियको बचन परिहर्यो जियके भरोसे,
 संग चली बन बड़ो लाभ जानि ।
 पीतम—बिरह तौ सनेह सरबसु, सुत !
 औसरको चूकिबो सरिस न हानि ॥ 2 ॥
 आरज—सुवनके तो दया दुवनहुपर,
 मोहि सोच, मोतें सब बिधि नसानि ।
 आपनी भलाई भलो कियो नाथ सबहीको,
 मेरे ही दिन सब बिसरी बानि ॥ 3 ॥
 नेम तो पपीहाहीके, प्रेम प्यारो मीनहीके,
 तुलसी कही है नीके हृदय आनि ।
 इतनी कही सो कही सीय, ज्योंही त्योंही
 रही, प्रीति परी सही, बिधिसों न बसानि ॥ 4 ॥

(5/7)

tāta! tōhūsōm kahata hōti hiyē galāni.
 manakō prathama pana samujhi achata tanu,
 lakhi na'i gati bha'i mati malāni.. 1..
 piyakō bacana pariharyō jiyakē bharōsē,
 saṅga calī bana baṛō lābha jāni.
 pītama-biraha tau sanēha sarabasu, suta!
 ausarakō cūkibō sarisa na hāni.. 2..
 āraja-suvanakē tō dayā duvanahupara,
 mōhi sōca, mōtēm saba bidhi nasāni.
 āpanī bhalā'ī bhalō kiyō nātha sabahīkō,
 mērē hī dina saba bisarī bāni.. 3..
 nēma tō papīhāhīkē, prēma pyārō mīnahīkē,
 tulasī kahī hai nīkē hṛdaya āni.
 itanī kahī sō kahī sīya, jyōnhī tyōnhī
 rahī, prīti parī sahī, bidhisōm na basāni.. 4..

Sita's reply to Hanuman

Verse no. 5/7—‘Oh dear son (tāta)! I feel grieved and melancholic even while talking to you. Remembering my mind's primary (first) vow (that I shall not live without my beloved husband), and finding that my body is still alive, my mind and intellect are full of gloom, contrition and remorse (1).

I had relied on (the firm conviction of) my mind and intellect, and had violated (or did not pay heed to) the advice of my husband and accompanied him to the forest thinking that (or under the impression that) it was in the best of my interests and well-being¹.

Oh Son! Separation from the husband and its accompanying sorrows, tribulations, agonies, miseries and pains are akin to snatching away everything there is to take away (or, that can be taken away) from the person representing the virtues of ‘love and affection’².

It is true that if one loses a chance to prove the sincerity of oneself, there is no greater calamity (or damage to one's reputation) (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68.

²Here, the virtues of love and affection have been personified. Sita simply means that she should have died when she was kidnapped, or forcibly separated from Sri Ram, but she regrets and laments that she did not. This was the argument she had proffered at Ayodhya when Sri Ram had asked her to stay back in the city. At that time, she had argued that it was not possible for her to survive without him. Refer: Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 2/6, stanza no. 3.]

‘Arya Putra’ (literally, a person belonging to the Aryan race, here meaning Sri Ram) has mercy and compassion even on his enemies (and opponents). My only regret is that everything went wrong for me. The Lord has been most benevolent, munificent and gracious on all—but when my turn (day, chance) came, he appeared to forget his natural temperament and habit³. [To wit, it appears to me, at least, that this is the reason why he is neglecting me, to teach me a lesson that I should have obeyed his commands at Ayodhya and stayed back instead of being stubborn and pretending to be too overtly devoted to him so much that I can't live without him! So now here I am: living without him!!] (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

Forsooth and without gainsay it is true that it is only the ‘Papiha’ (the sparrow hawk) and the ‘fish’ that are true to their vows of love towards their respective objects⁴, and this is why both of them have been rightfully honoured by the people after proper deliberations and scrutiny.’

Tulsidas says that after saying this much, Sita abruptly felt silent; this was enough to endorse her intensity of affection and love for the Lord. [Probably, Sita had fainted, or was so overcome with grief and sorrows that she could not utter a word more.]

No one has control over what the Creator (of destiny) wants (4).

[⁴The ‘Papiha’ drinks only the rain drops falling from the sky during the appearance of a special asterism called the Swati Nakshatra, for this bird would prefer death to drinking any other form of water to survive. Likewise, the ‘fish’ will not survive without water. Their unflinching loyalty towards their lovers—rain and water

respectively—are legendary. Sita here means that she would go down in history as an imposter and deceitful person who only pretended to have great love for her husband, for she did not die the instant she was separated from her. If her love would have been true like the sparrow hawk and the fish, she should have not survived so long without Lord Ram.]

(5 / 8)

मातु ! काहेको कहति अति बचन दीन ?
 तबकी तुही जानति, अबकी हौं ही कहत,
 सबके जियकी जानत प्रभु प्रबीन ॥ 1 ॥
 ऐसे तो सोचहि न्याय निदुर-नायक-रत
 सलभ, खग, कुरंग, कमल, मीन ।
 करुनानिधानको तो ज्यों ज्यों तनु छीन भयो,
 त्यों त्यों मनु भयो तेरे प्रेम पीन ॥ 2 ॥
 सियको सनेह, रघुबरकी दसा सुमिरि
 पवनपूत देखि भयो प्रीति-लीन ।
 तुलसी जनको जननी प्रबोध कियो,
 'समुझि तात ! जग बिधि-अधीन' ॥ 3 ॥

(5/8)

mātu! kāhēkō kahati ati bacana dīna?
 tabakī tuhī jānati, abakī haum̐ hī kahata,
 sabakē jiyakī jānata prabhu prabīna.. 1..
 aisē tō sōcahi n'yāya niṭhura-nāyaka-rata
 salabha, khaga, kuraṅga, kamala, mīna.
 karunānidhānakō tō jyōm̐ jyōm̐ tanu chīna bhayō,
 tyōm̐ tyōm̐ manu bhayō tērē prēma pīna.. 2..
 siyakō sanēha, raghubarakī dasā sumiri
 pavanapūta dēkhi bhayō prīti-līna.
 tulasī janakō janani prabōdha kiyō,
 'samujhi tāta! jaga bidhi-adhīna'.. 3..

Hanuman's Rejoinder

Verse no. 5/8—[Hanuman replied to Sita—] ‘Mother (mātu)! Why do you speak so sorrowful and gloomy words that are full of despair and anguish? What sort of affection the Lord (Sri Ram) had for you earlier, you are the best person to judge it; but what he has for you now, I too am a witness to it.

The Lord is very expert and proficient in it, for he knows what is inside the heart of all (as he is omniscient, all-knowing, omnipresent and all-pervading). [To wit, why do you feel so depressed and say that Lord Ram has forgotten you or has less love for you. I have personally seen his distressed condition and the way he has been searching for you from forest to forest, wondering barefoot and wailing all the way.

Forsooth I can vouchsafe that he is more concerned about you than you can ever imagine.]¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

This kind of sorrow, mournful and distressful behaviour can suit those who endear themselves with stone-hearted, stern and cruel lovers, such as the ‘moth’ (which endears itself to the lamp and gets burnt by its flame), the ‘Papiha’ (sparrow hawk yearns for rain drops, but gets battered by hail and scorned by the cloud in the form of thunder), the ‘deer’ (who is attracted to music, and gets trapped and killed by the hunter), the ‘lotus’ (that opens its petals at day break, but gets scorched by the sun) and the ‘fish’ (that cannot survive without water, but the latter isn’t bothered about the fish’s welfare as is evident when shoals of fish die due to a variety of causes inspite of being surrounded by water on all sides). [That is to say, the ‘wick of the lighted lamp’, the ‘rain-bearing cloud’, the ‘music used to lure the deer into the trap’, the ‘daylight of the sun’, and the ‘water’ are not at all bothered about the good or bad fortune of their respective lovers.]

That is alright as far as they are concerned. But the condition of Lord Ram is absolutely different, and there is no comparison. [Hanuman makes this comment because Sita has alluded to the ‘Papiha’ and the ‘fish’ in verse no. 5/7, stanza no. 4 to chide Lord Ram in the guise of admonishing herself over the quality of love she has for the Lord, saying in effect that he has forgotten her and neglected her just like the cloud and the water neglect the Papiha and the fish respectively.]

Look, I have observed that even as the body of Sri Ram—who is an abode of mercy, compassion, kindness, benevolence, munificence, benediction and grace—gets gradually emaciated, his heart gets all the more robust and strengthened by the nourishment that it derives by the virtue of having love, endearment and affection for you.’ (2).

Presently, seeing Sita's affection and recalling Raghubar's (Sri Ram's) condition, the son of the Wind God (Hanuman) was himself drenched and submerged in surging waves of love and affection. [To wit, Hanuman was overwhelmed with the emotions of pure love and affection for Lord Ram, and by the virtues of its purity and intensity, that he witnessed in his meeting with Sita.]

Tulsidas says that then, the mother (Sita) consoled and advised her son (Hanuman), saying, ‘Oh dear son! This world (creation) is under the control of (i.e. is subservient) to the Creator. Understand this (and do not feel despaired or remorseful).’ [Now, when Sita saw the distressed condition of Hanuman, she immediately recovered herself and regained her composure, encouraging him to have courage and fortitude, for she feared that at this crucial juncture if Hanuman lost his wits and courage then everything would crumble and whatever chances there are of redemption would be lost for ever.] (3).

राग जैतश्री

(5/9)

कहु कपि ! कब रघुनाथ कृपा करि, हरिहैं निज बियोग संभव दुख ।

राजिवनयन, मयन—अनेक—छबि, रबिकुल—कुमुद—सुखद, मयंक—मुख ॥ 1 ॥
 बिरह—अनल—स्वासा—समीर निज तनु जरिबे कहँ रही न कछु सक ।
 अति बल जल बरषत दोउ लोचन, दिन अरु रैन रहत एकहि तक ॥ 2 ॥
 सुदृढ़ ग्यान अवलंबि, सुनहु सुत ! राखति प्राण बिचारि दहन मत ।
 सगुन रूप, लीला—बिलास—सुख सुमिरति करति रहति अंतरगत ॥ 3 ॥
 सुनु हनुमंत ! अनंत—बंधु करुनासुभाव सीतल कोमल अति ।
 तुलसिदास यहि त्रास जानि जिय, बरु दुख सहौं, प्रगट कहि न सकति ॥ 4 ॥

rāga jaitaśrī

(5/9)

kahu kapi! kaba raghunātha kṛpā kari, harihaiṁ nija biyōga sambhava dukha.
 rājivanayana, mayana-anēka-chabi, rabikula-kumuda-sukhada, mayaṅka-
 mukha.. 1..
 biraha-anala-svāsā-samīra nija tanu jaribē kahaṁ rahī na kachu saka.
 ati bala jala baraṣata dō'u lōcana, dina aru raina rahata ēkahi taka.. 2..
 sudṛṛha gyāna avalambi, sunahu suta! rākhati prāna bicāri dahana mata.
 saguna rūpa, līlā-bilāsa-sukha sumirati karati rahati antaragata.. 3..
 sunu hanumanta! ananta-bandhu karunāsubhāva sītala kōmala ati.
 tulasidāsa yahi trāsa jāni jiya, baru dukha sahaum, pragaṭa kahi na sakati.. 4..

Sita's reply to Hanuman-I

Verse no. 5/9—[Then Sita said—] ‘Say, Oh Monkey (kahu kapi)¹! Tell me, will Lord Sri Ram ever come? Tell me, when will the Lord whose beautiful face is like the full moon’s disc that provides happiness to the lily symbolising the exalted Solar race (in which Lord Ram was born), and say when will the Lord whose radiance is like that of millions of Kamdeos provide solace and succour to me by removing my agonies and pain arising out my separation from him?’² (1).

[¹The use of the word ‘monkey’ is not meant to be derogatory or demeaning in any manner whatsoever for Hanuman. Since the physical appearance of Hanuman resembled that of a monkey, Sita used this word. Remember, she has also addressed him as ‘son’, ‘dear’ etc. How can a monkey be a human's son? These are affectionate and endearing forms of address.

²Lord Ram was born in the Sun Race, or the Solar Race. The lily flower thrives in the light of the moon. So here Sita means that Lord Ram provides happiness to the Solar-race just like the moon provides joy to the lily flower.

Kamdeo/cupid is the patron god of beauty and charm. Hence, Lord Ram is compared to this god here because he is extremely charming and handsome to behold.]

There is no doubt that my body would have been charred by the fierce fire of separation that was stoked by the wind called ‘Pran Vayu’ (a form of wind force which sustains life inside the body of all living beings). But howbeit I managed to survive because my these two eyes continued to douse the flame by constantly raining a torrent of water (tears). [This is why I could not die and my body could not be burnt.] (2).

Listen dear son (*sunahu suta*)! I have taken recourse to sound and solid wisdom, and with its help, I have been able to protect my life and prevent this body from being burnt (or scorched to death). [Now I shall tell you how I managed to survive.]

Forsooth, I had always, constantly and persistently, thought of (or concentrate my thoughts on) the Lord's divine form (which is called 'Sagun' or visible aspect or manifestation of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Sri Ram), and I had been focusing my memory in remembering all his divine activities, and have all along been cherishing these sweet memories deep down in my heart. [To wit, this does not leave space for evil thoughts and forebodings to ever enter my heart. They give me sufficient courage, solace and succour, and in all sooth they act as a prop to support my morale from sinking to an abysmal low level.] (3).

Listen Hanuman! Laxman's brother ("ananta-bandhu"; i.e. Sri Ram³) is of a very merciful, compassionate and kind temperament, is extremely calm and poised, and is of an immense soft heart that has tender emotions (*karunāsubhāva sītala kōmala ati*).

Hence, realising that he will feel extremely distressed and sorrowful on hearing these things (i.e. about my woeful condition, how I managed to keep alive, my miseries, sorrows, troubles and tribulations), I cannot (or do not) say it overtly though I am in extreme distress and anguished, and going through intolerable miseries, agonies and pain⁴ (4).

[³Laxman was a manifestation of Seshnath, the legendary Serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean. This Serpent is also called 'Anant'. Hence the phrase "ananta-bandhu" has been used by Sita for Lord Ram who is the brother of Laxman.

⁴To wit, I wish to keep my miseries secret and confined to myself. I prithee that you would also not tell much of it to Lord Ram when you return, except to give him a hint of my situation, because if he hears of my condition as truly as it stands, he would grieve exceedingly, I am certain of it. And I don't want him to feel sad and depressed and dejected as this is not the time for it. He has to remain strong and resolute at this crucial juncture, and if he feels weak in his heart and drops down on his knees in grief, everything will be lost. So it is wise for me to keep my agonies to myself and put up a brave face!

Refer to Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/15, stanza no. 2 in this context.]

राग केदारा

(5 / 10)

कबहूँ, कपि ! राघव आवहिंगे ?

मेरे नयनचकोर प्रीतिबस राकाससि मुख दिखरावहिंगे ॥ 1 ॥

मधुप, मराल, मोर, चातक है लोचन बहु प्रकार धावहिंगे ।

अंग-अंग छबि भिन्न-भिन्न सुख निरखि-निरखि तहूँ-तहूँ छावहिंगे ॥ 2 ॥

बिरह-अग्नि जरी रही लता ज्यों कृपादृष्टि-जल पलुहावहिंगे ।

निज बियोग-दुख जानि दयानिधि मधुर बचन कहि समुझावहिंगे ॥ 3 ॥

लोकपाल, सुर, नाग, मनुज सब परे बंदि कब मुक्तावहिंगे?

रावनबध घृनाथ-बिमल-जस नारदादि मुनिजन गावहिंगे ॥ 4 ॥

यह अभिलाष रैन—दिन मेरे, राज बिभीषन कब पावहिंगे।
तुलसिदास प्रभु मोहजनित भ्रम, भेदबुद्धि कब बिसरावहिंगे ॥ 5 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(5/10)

kabahūṁ, kapi! rāghava āvahiṅgē?
mērē nayanacakōra prītibasa rākāsasi mukha dikharāvahiṅgē.. 1..
madhupa, marāla, mōra, cātaka hvai lōcana bahu prakāra dhāvahiṅgē.
aṅga-aṅga chabi bhinna-bhinna sukha nirakhi-nirakhi tahaṁ-tahaṁ
chāvahiṅgē.. 2..
biraha-agini jari rahī latā jyōm kṛpādr̥ṣṭi-jala paluhāvahiṅgē.
nija biyōga-dukha jāni dayānidhi madhura bacana kahi samujhāvahiṅgē.. 3..
lōkapāla, sura, nāga, manuja saba parē bandi kaba mukatāvahiṅgē?
rāvanabadha raghunātha-bimala-jasa nāradādi munijana gāvahiṅgē.. 4..
yaha abhilāṣa raina-dina mērē, rāja bibhīṣana kaba pāvahiṅgē.
tulasidāsa prabhu mōhajanita bhrama, bhēdabud'dhi kaba bisarāvahiṅgē.. 5..

Sita's reply to Hanuman-II

Verse no. 5/10—‘Oh monkey! (See verse no. 5/9, stanza no. 1.) Will Raghav (Sri Ram) ever come? Will he ever show his moon-like face to my Chakor-like eyes which are enamoured by his love and affection¹? (1).

[¹The Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge. This bird is said to be highly enamoured of the moon so much that it starts gazing at the moon as soon as it rises in the east, and continues to gaze at it till it sets in the west.]

When I see him, my eyes will rush forward in various modes and in different ways to see him and have a glimpse of him in the best possible way they can, transmewing themselves into a bumble or a black-bee, a goose (or a swan), a peacock and a Papiha (the sparrow hawk) to enable me to have the best sight, the best view of Lord Ram's divine form from different perspectives and angles² (2).

[²Like a ‘black or the bumble-bee’, my eyes would rest on his lotus-like face, eyes, palms, and soles of his holy feet. Like a ‘swan’, they will swim in the lake represented by his navels. Like a ‘peacock’, they will dance and spread their plumes on seeing his dark complexioned body that resembles dark rain-bearing clouds, complete with its dazzle of lightening that would come with the shine of the Pitambar the Lord wears. And like a bird ‘Papiha’ my eyes would rush to drink the nectar of beauty that would drop from this dark-as-cloud body of the Lord.]

Like a humble creeper, I am being scorched by the fire of separation. Will he revive me and make me blossom once again with the water of his merciful, compassionate and kind glance?

Will he—who is an abode of kindness and graciousness—console and comfort me with his sweet words, realising that I am tormented by the sorrows, pains and anguish of separation? (3).

The Lokpals (custodians of the various Lokas or worlds), the Gods, the legendary Serpents and Humans—all of them are lying locked up in the prison (of the demon Ravana). [That is, the demons have subdued them all, and no one is free from their tyranny.]

When will he (Sri Ram) liberate them, and when will Narad (the celestial sage) and other sages get an opportunity to hail the slaying of the demon Ravana, as well as the opportunity to sing about the pristine, pure and magnificent glories of Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram), and about the great, marvellous and stupendous great deeds that the Lord would have done? (4).

I am anxious, day and night, to know when Vibhishan shall be crowned as the sovereign (of Lanka)? And, when will the Lord forget and forgive me for first for the delusions I had (with respect to Marich whom I had erroneously thought to be a golden deer, and which error of judgement had led to such horrendous consequences), and then for my doubting the integrity and sincerity of Laxman (when he had tried to convince me that Lord Ram was in no danger, and I had utterly disregarded his advice and forced him to leave me alone in the wild forest and go to where the Lord was pursuing the deceitful deer)³? (5).

[³Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3/3—to 3/6.

Sita realized that it was she who is to blame for all the misfortunes and miseries that have befallen upon them all—herself as well as Lord Ram and Laxman. She sorely regrets that she had fallen prey to delusions, not realizing that there cannot be a living deer that has a golden hide. It was she who had insisted that Lord Ram bring it for her. That was not all: for it was she who had forced Laxman to go behind the Lord inspite of the former telling her that the sound she heard of his name being called out was made by Marich and it was not a call by Lord Ram seeking his help.

To wit, all the root of suffering can be traced back to her own foolishness, and therefore she is so worried if Lord Ram and Laxman would ever excuse her for her stupidity and stubborn nature.]

(5 / 11)

सत्य बचन सुनु मातु जानकी !
जनके दुख रघुनाथ दुखित अति, सहज प्रकृति करुनानिधानकी ।। 1 ।।
तुव बियोग—संभव दारुन दुख बिसरि गई महिमा सुबानकी ।
नतु कहूँ, कहूँ रघुपति—सायक—रबि, तम—अनीक कहूँ जातुधानकी ।। 2 ।।
कहूँ हम पशु साखामृग चंचल, बात कहाँ मैं बिद्यमानकी !
कहूँ हरि—सिव—अज—पूज्य—ग्यान—घन, नहि बिसरति वह लगनि कानकी ।। 3 ।।
तुव दरसन—संदेस सुनि हरिको बहुत भई अवलंब प्रानकी ।
तुलसिदास गुन सुमिरि रामके प्रेम—मगन नहि सुधि अपानकी ।। 4 ।।

(5/11)

satya bacana sunu mātu jānakī!

janakē dukha raghunātha dukhita ati, sahaja prakṛti karunānidhānakī.. 1..

tuva biyōga-sambhava dārūna dukha bisari gaī mahimā subānakī.

natu kahu, kahaṁ raghupati-sāyaka-rabi, tama-anīka kahaṁ jātudhānakī.. 2..
 kahaṁ hama paśu sākhāmṛga cañcala, bāta kahaurṁ mairṁ bidyamānakī!
 kahaṁ hari-siva-aja-pūjya-gyāna-ghana, nahi bisarati vaha lagani kānakī..3..
 tuva darasana-sandēsa suni harikō bahuta bhaī avalamba prānakī.
 tulasidāsa guna sumiri rāmakē prēma-magana nahi sudhi apānakī.. 4..

Hanuman Assures Sita of Lord Ram's Gracious Nature

Verse no. 5/11—[Hanuman replied—] ‘Mother Janki (“mātu jānakī”; i.e. Mother Sita)! Here my truthful and sincere words. Lord Sri Ram is always sorrowful, distressed, anguished and full of remorse at the miseries, agonies, sorrows and distresses of his devotees—this is the natural temperament and habit of the Lord who is an abode of mercy, compassion and grace (1).

It is because of the intensity of the mental agonies generated by your separation that he has almost forgotten the potential powers of his arrows (and appears to be so dejected and despaired).

Otherwise, say, whereas on the one hand is the sun-like splendour of Sri Ram's arrows, and on the other hand are the demons representing darkness; so how could the latter have survived in the presence of the former? [How can darkness ever survive or prevail in the presence of the sun? It is just that he has forgotten this fact about the powers of his arrows because his intellect has been mired by and submerged in the sorrows of your separation so much that the Lord's intellect has virtually become numb and he has lost his wits.] (2).

I am telling you about ourselves—on the one hand are we, the fickle minded monkeys born as animals, and on the other hand is Lord Sri Ram who is most wise and intelligent as well as revered and worshipped by even the Trinity Gods consisting of (the creator) Brahma, (the sustainer) Vishnu and (the annihilator) Shiva. In spite of this, I cannot forget how the Lord lends his ears to us and listens to our advice closely.

In order to have private discussion, to seek our personal opinion, and to give instructions, I cannot forget how he brings his head close to our ears as if we are equal in stature to him even though we are very humble creatures and no match for the Lord's exalted being. [To wit, the Lord is omniscient and all-knowing as well as so exalted that even the Trinity Gods pay their respects to him, while we are simple living beings and no match for him. Yet, the Lord is so gracious and kind that he listens to us and pays heed to our advice; he consults us on all matters though he need not.] (3).

When he had heard the news about you from the mouth of Sugriv, it was a kind of great prop or support for his life; the news rejuvenated his sagging spirits and injected life in his body.’

Tulsidas observes that by thus narrating the condition of Sri Ram and recalling his great virtues, noble bearing and excellent character, Hanuman was submerged (overwhelmed, imbued or soaked) in the virtues of love and affection for the Lord so much so that for some moments he even forgot who he was and what the prevailing situation was (i.e. he became unaware of his surroundings because of his surging emotions of love and affection for Lord Ram as he remembered the Lord's gracious nature) (4).

हनुमान् और रावणकी भेंट
राग कान्हरा

(5/12)

रावन ! जू पै राम रन रोषे ।
को सहि सकै सुरासुर समरथ, बिसिष काल—दसननितें चोषे ॥ 1 ॥
तपबल, भुजबल, कै सनेह—बल सिव—बिरंचि नीकी बिधि तोषे ।
सो फल राजसमाज—सुवन—जन आपु न नास आपने पोषे ॥ 2 ॥
तुला पिनाक, साहु नृप, त्रिभुवन भट—बटोरि सबके बल जोषे ।
परसुराम—से सूरसिरोमनि पलमें भए खेतके धोषे ॥ 3 ॥
कालिकी बात बालिकी सुधि करि समुझि हिताहित खोलि झरोखे ।
कह्यो कुमन्त्रिनको न मानिये, बड़ी हानि, जिय जानि त्रिदोषे ॥ 4 ॥
जासु प्रसाद जनमि जग पुरषनि सागर सृजे, खने अरु सोखे ।
तुलसिदास सो स्वामि न सूझ्यो, नयन बीस मंदिर के—से मोखे ॥ 5 ॥

hanūmān aura rāvaṇakī bhēmṭa

rāga kānharā

(5/12)

rāvana! jū pai rāma rana rōṣē.
kō sahi sakai surāsura samaratha, bisīṣa kāla-dasananitēṁ cōṣē.. 1..
tapabala, bhujabala, kai sanēha-bala siva-birañci nīkī bidhi tōṣē.
sō phala rājasamāja-suvana-jana āpu na nāsa āpanē pōṣē.. 2..
tulā pināka, sāhu nṛpa, tribhuvana bhaṭa-baṭōri sabakē bala jōṣē.
parasurāma-sē sūrasirōmani palamēṁ bha'e khētakē dhōṣē.. 3..
kālikī bāta bālikī sudhi kari samujhi hitāhita khōli jharōkhē.
kahyō kumantrinakō na māniyē, baṛī hāni, jiya jāni tridōṣē.. 4..
jāsu prasāda janami jaga puraṣani sāgara sṛjē, khanē aru sōkhē.
tulasidāsa sō svāmi na sūjhyō, nayana bīsa mandira kē-sē mōkhē.. 5..

Hanuman meets Ravana-I

Verse no. 5/12—[As it happened, after Sita and Hanuman had exchanged their respective news and Hanuman had assured her that soon Lord Ram will come with the army of monkeys and bears to free her from the clutches of the demons by defeating and slaying them in the war to free her, he requested her permission to feed himself on the fruits of the trees in the orchard where she was held captive. Sita first expressed her reservations as she did not wish any harm to come to Hanuman, but judging that he was exceptionally powerful and would be able to trounce her tormentors, she gave her consent. Hereat, Hanuman started to eat fruits, and using this

as an excuse he commenced to destroy the royal orchard of Ravana by breaking and uprooting its trees and plundering the place in general.

The guards who tried to stop him were beaten black and blue. They rushed to report and complain to Ravana who became very peeved. He sent his son Meghanad to capture the intruder and bring him bound to court. Hanuman saw this as an opportunity to have a face-to-face with Ravana, and so he submitted himself to be bound and taken prisoner to the court of Ravana.

In the full demon court where a large crowd had meanwhile gathered to witness the spectacle, an acerbic verbal dual full of vitriol ensued betwixt Ravana and Hanuman, with each calling the other names, and Hanuman severely rebuffing and rebutting Ravana in a very strong language that amounted to severe censor and insult for the demon king to which he was not accustomed.

When the heated exchange reached its climax and got out of hand, Ravana ordered his ministers and attendants to punish Hanuman by burning his tail. Why the tail? Because the tail is very dear to a monkey and it is equivalent to inflicting severe insult to a person's dignity and self respect by snipping off his ears or nose to deform him and make a clown of him. But this was one error that Ravana made and which led to the burning of his golden city of Lanka: for Hanuman first elongated his tail endlessly so that all the cloth available in Lanka was used to wrap it and soak it in oil, then he suddenly reduced the size of his body to loosen the grip of the ropes with which he was tied, slipped out easily, and then dragging the coiled cloth that burnt behind him and whipping it around him like a whip or a sling string, he jumped from one house to another, and in due course set the whole city afire.

Having accomplished his task of settling accounts with Ravana on the one hand, and on the other hand successfully instilling sore affright in the minds and hearts of the demons as a whole to demoralize them, he jumped in the ocean, doused the flame, went to Sita and took her permission, and flew back boldly across the ocean to the other side of its shore where his companions were eagerly waiting for his arrival with the news of Sita.

This part of the great story is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 28.

The 'burning of Lanka' has been vividly described in Tulsidas' book "Kavitawali", Sundar Kand, verse nos. 5/3—5/25.

Presently, we read about these developments in our book Geetawali, Sundar Kand, from verse nos. 5/12—to 5/15.]

Now, in the court of Ravana at Lanka, when Hanuman was presented as a captive, the latter said, 'Oh Ravana! If Lord Ram becomes angry and aggressive during the battle, which God or Demon is there in this world who can withstand his arrows which are like the jaws of death itself? (1).

You have satisfied Lord Shiva and God Brahma with your austerities, strength and devotion. Now, in all wisdom and prudence, I advice you not to destroy your kith and kin who you've got as a blessing and a boon from them (Shiva and Brahma), and have nourished and sustained them yourself. [That is, don't do anything reckless and without thinking that would put you and your kin in great danger. Do not be the cause

of destruction of your own family and kith and kin by being inimical to Lord Ram.] (2).

King Janak had weighed the strength of all the princes in this world against the bow of Lord Shiva and found them inept; even the most courageous and brave Parashuram became a dud (like a scare-crow in a farmer's field) in front of the valour and powers of Lord Ram¹ (3).

[¹Hanuman refers to the Bow-breaking ceremony where Lord Ram had broken Lord Shiva's bow which no other warrior could as much as move an inch, and then when sage Parashuram came angrily to vent his ire at the Lord for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva whom Parashuram worshipped, Lord Ram had calmly tackled him and dissipated his anger effortlessly.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/89—to 1/90; and Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

Even a little while ago (a few days ago), don't you remember the fate of Baali (the king of Kishkindha who was killed by Lord Ram using a single arrow), and can't you think what is good for you (aren't you aware that the same fate awaits you)?

Look! Do not pay heed to sycophants and flatterers and ill-advised ministers, for you'll come to harm that way because your advisors' wisdom have been eclipsed by the so-called three faults² (4).

[²The three faults are the following—Adhibhautik which refers to the faults of the mind and lack of wisdom related to worldly behaviour and action, Adhyatmic which relates to one's wisdom in the field of spiritual welfare, and Adhidaivic which relates to Gods and stars when they become angry, antagonistic and malevolent. When the three faults occur simultaneously the creature is brought to ruin because his mind and intellect cannot think properly, rationally, righteously, and for the welfare of the creature.]

Oh you dull witted one! Don't you know that Lord Ram's predecessors who were born on this earth had first dug up the earth to create the mighty reservoir of water called the ocean, and then they had subdued the pride of the same ocean which had become haughty that no one can measure it or conquer it because of its vast size and bulk³.

Say, if you can't recognize the Lord (who belongs to this great family of kings who had created the ocean and then conquered it), then forsooth all your twenty eyes are nothing but hollows in the wall of a home! (5).

[³The legend has it that the ocean was 'created' by King Priya Vrat, son of Manu and Satrupa. He circumambulated the earth 7 times, creating the 7 oceans made of milk, curd, Ghee, butter-milk, sugarcane juice, salt and wine. The oceans were 'dug-up' by King Sagar's 60,000 sons in search of the horse hidden by God Indra. The ocean was 'consumed' by sage Agastya in three gulps on the strength of Lord Ram's legendary holy name.]

(5/13)

जो हौं प्रभु-आयसु लै चलतो ।
 तौ यहि रिस तोहि सहित दसानन ! जातुधान दल दलतो ॥ 1 ॥
 रावन सो रसरज सुभट-रस सहित लंक-खल खलतो ।
 करि पुटपाक नाक-नायकहित घने घने घर घलतो ॥ 2 ॥
 बड़े समाज लाज-भाजन भयो, बड़ो काज बिनु छलतो ।
 लंकनाथ ! रघुनाथ-बैरु-तरु आजु फैलि फूलि फलतो ॥ 3 ॥
 काल-करम, दिगपाल, सकल जग-जाल जासु करतल तो ।
 ता रिपुसों पर भूमि रारि रन जीवन-मरन सुफल तो ॥ 4 ॥
 देखी मैं दसकंठ ! सभा सब, मोतें कोउ न सबल तो ।
 तुलसी अरि उर आनि एक अब एती गलानि न गलतो ॥ 5 ॥

rāga mārū

(5/13)

jō hauṁ prabhu-āyasu lai calatō.
 tau yahi risa tōhi sahita dasānana! jātudhāna dala dalatō.. 1..
 rāvana sō rasarāja subhaṭa-rasa sahita laṅka-khala khalatō.
 kari puṭapāka nāka-nāyakahita ghanē ghanē ghara ghalatō.. 2..
 baṛē samāja lāja-bhājana bhayō, baṛō kāja binu chalatō.
 laṅkanātha! raghunātha-bairu-taru āju phaili phūli phalatō.. 3..
 kāla-karama, digapāla, sakala jaga-jāla jāsū karatala tō.
 tā ripusōm para bhūmi rāri rana jīvana-marana suphala tō.. 4..
 dēkhī maim dasakaṇṭha! sabhā saba, mōntērṁ kō'u na sabala tō.
 tulasī ari ura āni ēka aba ēti galāni na galatō.. 5..

Hanuman Meets Ravana-II

Verse no. 5/13—Severely reprimanding Ravana, Hanuman admonishes him: ‘Oh you ten-headed one (“dasānana”; Ravana)! If I had come with the Lord's permission, I would have found my capturing by you as an excuse to slay you along with all your demon army in my anger and wrath (1).

I would have used the crucible representing Lanka and stirred the broth consisting of the (metal) mercury representing you, Ravana, along with the juice representing other warrior demons, whom I would have squeezed into a pulp into this crucible, to prepare a medicinal concoction for Indra, the king of gods who is being subjected to a great disease because of you rascals. Then, having readied this potion, I would have destroyed all the houses in Lanka and used them as cups and pots to serve this medicine to Indra¹ (2).

[¹Here, Hanuman cites the practice of ancient medicine-men of preparing remedies to cure serious ailments by mixing different herbs and metals and boiling them in proclaim crucibles to prepare medicinal concoction that is then served to the patient. This is the usual way traditional medicinal potions are prepared.

In this analogy, the city of Lanka is treated as a huge crucible in which a variety of metals and herbs represented by the demons and their king Ravana would be crushed and beaten to pulp, then thoroughly mixed, stirred and heated by Hanuman to produce a concoction that has remedial values by way of redemption and retribution for the gods for the way the demons had been tyrannizing them since long. It will be like preparing an anti-biotic remedy to get rid of infection of germs and viruses symbolizing the demons that need the latter's 'juice', their 'serum', their blood and flesh for its preparation.

In brief, Hanuman says that for the purpose of preparing a remedy for Indra and other gods who are suffering from a disease that needs an unconventional anti-biotic medicine prepared from the blood and flesh of the germs and viruses representing the demons and their king Ravana, he would need to kill them all and squeeze them to pour out their 'juice' on the streets of Lanak. Then, he would upturn the houses and mansions and use them as cups to serve this concoction to the gods to satisfy their thirst and cure them of their desire for retribution upon the demons who had been tormenting these gods since long. But unfortunately, his hands are tied as his Lord, Sri Ram, has not given him the permission to do so.

Hanuman hinted to Ravana not to provoke him beyond a certain tolerable limit. Because if Ravana did not desist and continues with his haughty behaviour, then Hanuman would be forced to take immediate steps to carry out the treatment for the disease of the gods which is the basic mandate of his Lord Sri Ram. And in doing so Hanuman would be well within his brief, and would not be violating the Lord's mandate, because when a war is fought, then a wise commander leaves many decisions to be taken by the foot soldier on the battle field as the situation demands on the spot, with the broad aim of winning the war, rather than being too overtly concerned with procedures and processes like a bureaucrat, that would entail obeying the commander and seeking his permission for each and every move on the battle field, which may not be feasible and practical in the heat of battle. Some discretion and freedom is always given to the messenger or the soldier by a wise and prudent lord and commander.]

Today, I am ashamed to be defamed and become a victim of derision and shame at your hands without any cause (especially when I am fully competent to give a befitting reply to you) in this huge gathering. I would have done this great work (refer stanza 2 herein above) most easily.

Oh king of Lanka! The tree of enmity with Raghunath (Sri Ram) that you have sown would have blossomed and borne large fruits (by way of your death and the slaying of the entire demon race)! (3).

Forsooth, even 'Kaal' (death, time and circumstances), 'Karma' (deeds, their effects, and one's destiny), and 'Dikpals' (the custodians of the four corners of the world; a kind of demi gods), along with the rest of this deluding creation, is subject to the control of Lord Ram, and are under his hands (i.e. all of them obey his commands as he is the Lord of creation).

Say, how lucky and fortunate I would have been if I had had an opportunity to fight his battle for him, right inside the country and the capital city of the Lord's enemy. Verily, then both my life as well as my death would have been proved worthwhile, fruitful and successful (i.e. put to good use) (4).

Oh 10-necked (or 10-headed) Ravana (*dasakaṇṭha*)! I have seen your whole assembly. There is no one more strong and brave in it than me. If I had got my Lord's permission, I would not have so meekly and so easily submitted myself to you, having judged the strength of the enemy.

[To wit, having recognised that you do not stand a fig of a chance in front of me, I am not that stupid that I would have let you humiliate me with impunity in the way you are doing. I wouldn't have taken it lying down with docility and humbleness. I would have taught you a lesson that you wouldn't have forgotten in your life. But, the only constraint is that Sri Ram has barred me to harm you—refer verse no. 5/4, stanza no. 5.] (5).'

सीताजीसे विदाई

(5 / 14)

तौलौं, मातु ! आपु नीके रहिबो ।
 जौलौं हौं ल्यावौं रघुबीरहि, दिन दस और दुसह दुख सहिबो ॥ 1 ॥
 सोखिकै, खेतकै, बाँधि सेतु करि उतरिबो उदधि, न बोहित चाहिबो ।
 प्रबल दनुज—दल दलि पल आधमें, जीवत दुरित दसानन गहिबो ॥ 2 ॥
 बैरिबुंद—बिधवा—बनितनिको देखिबो बारि—बिलोचन बहिबो ।
 सानुज सेनसमेत स्वामिपद निरखि परम मुद मंगल लहिबो ॥ 3 ॥
 लंक—दाह उर आनि मानिबो साँचु राम सेवकको कहिबो ।
 तुलसी प्रभु सुर सुजस गाइहैं, मिटि जैहै सबको सोचु दव दहिबो ॥ 4 ॥

sītājīsē vidā'ī

(5/14)

taulaum, mātu! āpu nīkē rahibō.
 jaulaum hauṁ lyāvauṁ raghubīrahi, dina dasa aura dusaha dukha sahibō.. 1..
 sōkhikai, khētakai, bāṁdhi sētu kari utaribō udadhi, na bōhita cahibō.
 prabala danuja-dala dali pala ādhamēm, jīvata durita dasānana gahibō.. 2..
 bairibṛmda-bidhavā-banitanikō dēkhibō bāri-bilōcana bahibō.
 sānuja sēnasamēta svāmipada nirakhi parama muda maṅgala lahibō.. 3..
 laṅka-dāha ura āni mānibō sāṁcu rāma sēvakakō kahibō.
 tulasī prabhu sura sujasa gā'ihairṁ, miṭi jaihai sabakō sōcu dava dahibō.. 4..

Hanuman takes leave from Sita to return to Lord Ram-I

Verse no. 5/14—[In Geetawali, the details of the 'burning of Lanka' has been skipped, perhaps because the book's primary author, Goswami Tulsidas, has already narrated it in vivid detail in one of his other books on the story of Lord Ram, i.e. in 'Kavitawali', Sundar Kand. An English version of this book has already been published by me, the present author of these books. A brief glimpse is also provided

in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.

Having reduced Lanka to ashes, Hanuman jumped in the ocean to douse the flame of his burning tail, and then having cooled himself he came back to Sita to seek her permission to go back to Lord Ram and report to him. This is narrated in verse nos. 5/14—5/15 herein below.]

At the time of departure, Hanuman said to Sita, ‘Oh Mother! Take care of your self till the time I bring Lord Ram here. Tolerate this agony and sorrow for another ten days (dina dasa aura dusaha dukha sahibō) (1).

We have to cross the ocean either by drying it, filling it, or constructing a bridge over it. We do not need a boat or a ship. Then our great army will destroy the enemy's army in half a second (“prabala danuja-dala dali pala ādhamēñ”; literally meaning ‘very soon’), and catch hold of the ten-headed Ravana alive (jīvata durita dasānana gahibō)¹ (2).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/6, stanza no. 4.]

You shall watch the widows of the enemy shed tears, and shall derive immense joy seeing Sri Ram and Laxman with their army (3).

Seeing what I've done to Lanka, you should be now reassured and believe me in what I, the messenger of Lord Ram, say².

Tulsidas says that soon the time would come for the Gods to sing the glory of Lord Ram and for the end of their burning in the fire of sorrows (inflicted upon them by the demons)³ (4).

[²Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/5, stanza nos. 6-7.

³It will be pertinent to note here that Tulsidas has completely excluded the burning of Lanka and its accompanying havoc in Geetawali. For, he had described this feat with great enthusiasm and aplomb in the Sundar Kand of Kavitawali as well as in Ram Charit Manas—where he has painted a very vivid picture of the mayhem and destruction. See authors book on Kavitawali as well as Ram Charit Manas. What Hanuman did to Lanka is just mentioned in the passing in stanza 4 line 1 here. A little better hint is available when Laxman describes to Sri Ram the achievements of Hanuman on the latter's return to Kishkindha in verse no. 5/16, stanza nos. 1-11 which follows shortly.

Well, though not specifically narrated in Geetawali, the burning of Lanka by Hanuman is an incontrovertible fact narrated in all other versions of the story of Ramayan, even those classics penned by Tulsidas himself as indicated above.

Now, after completely burning Lanka to ashes, Hanuman jumped in the ocean to douse the burning cloth that he had been dragging behind him, and also to refresh himself by taking a cool bath in the water of the ocean. Then he met Sita once again before making his exit from Lanka to report back to Lord Ram in Kishkindha.]

(5 / 15)

कपिके चलत सियको मनु गहबरि आयो ।

पुलक सिथिल भयो सरीर, नीर नयनन्हि छायो ॥ 1 ॥
 कहन चह्यो सँदेस, नहि कह्यो, पियके जिय की जानि
 हृदय दुसह दुख दुरायो ।
 देखि दसा ब्याकुल हरीस, ग्रीष्मके पथिक ज्यों धरनि तरनि—तायो ॥ 2 ॥
 मीचतें नीच लगी अमरता, छलको न बलको निरखि थल
 परुष प्रेम पायो ।
 कै प्रबोध मातु—प्रीतिसों असीस दीन्हीं हैहै तिहारोई मनभायो ॥ 3 ॥
 करुना—कोप—लाज—भय—भरो कियो गौन, मौन ही चरन कमल
 सीस नायो ।
 यह सनेह—सरबस समौ, तुलसी रसना रूखी, ताही तें परत गायो ॥ 4 ॥

(5/15)

kapikē calata siyakō manu gahabari āyō.
 pulaka sithila bhayō sarīra, nīra nayanānhi chāyō.. 1..
 kahana cahyō saṁdēsa, nahi kahyō, piyakē jiya kī jāni hṛdaya dusaha dukha
 durāyō.
 dēkhi dasā byākula harīsa, grīṣmakē pathika jyōm dharani tarani-tāyō.. 2..
 mīcatēm nīca lagī amaratā, chalakō na balakō nirakhi thala paruṣa prēma
 pāyō.
 kai prabōdha mātu-prītisōm asīsa dīnhīm hvaihai tihārō'ī manabhāyō.. 3..
 karunā-kōpa-lāja-bhaya-bharō kiyō gauna, mauna hī carana kamala sīsa nāyō.
 yaha sanēha-sarabasa samau, tulasī rasanā rūkhī, tāhī tēm parata gāyō.. 4..

Hanuman takes leave from Sita to return to Lord Ram-II

Verse no. 5/15—As soon as Hanuman left, Sita's heart overflowed and was overwhelmed with emotions. Her body was thrilled and benumbed, while tears welled up in her eyes (1).

She wanted to send a message (for Sri Ram), but considering the mental condition of her husband, she decided to hold back her insurmountable sorrows and profound torments inside her heart (i.e. she did not want to reveal them as it would only add to his miseries)¹.

Seeing her woeful and agitated condition, torn as she was in a dilemma² and grieving beyond measure, the king of monkeys (Hanuman) became emotionally upset, anguished, agitated and extremely tormented³ like a pedestrian gets horrified when he has to walk on the ground which is heated by a scorching sun in the summer month⁴.
 (2).

[¹Refer to Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/9, stanza no. 4 in this context.

²What dilemma did Sita have? Well, on the one hand she wished to die due to the grief of separation from Lord Ram, and on the other hand she wished to live to see the Lord once again. Then, sometimes she wished to tell Hanuman to convey details of her miserable condition to Lord Ram, then she would decide against it as it would cause unnecessary sorrows for the Lord. She was like on a see-saw, thinking one way for a moment, and then deciding on another the other moment.

³Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/5, stanza no. 1, and verse no. 5/8, stanza no. 3.

⁴The ground under the feet becomes so hot that it literally burns one's soles, and walking barefoot is an exercise in torture and horror. Blisters form and one gets immensely agitated and woeful.]

He regretted at his eternal life which he considered worse than death⁵.

Seeing that there was no scope for employing cunning, trickery, and use of force and strength of arms (to destroy the enemy there and there), he felt that his love (devotion for and loyalty to Sri Ram) was too much for him to bear with under the present circumstances (because it is out of his respect for Lord Ram that he had to somehow restrain himself, for otherwise he would have himself killed all the demons and take Sita back to Kishkindha on his back without even once asking the Lord for his permission)⁶.

Thence, Sita consoled him affectionately like a mother, and blessed him saying 'What you have in your mind will be done. (But, wait for the right moment)⁷.' (3).

[⁵Hanuman had a boon of a long, eternal life, and because of it he wouldn't die even if he wanted to. So, he was so remorseful that he would have preferred death to being alive and be a witness to such a woeful spectacle of Sita without being able to do anything about it; for he was unable to avenge Sita's torments inflicted upon her by Ravana inspite of being capable of doing it because the Lord had not instructed him to do so. This frustration—at being tied down because of Sri Ram's constraining orders—added to his despair and woes.

⁶He felt that had it not been for the danger of violating established norms of devotion, which include following the Lord's orders without asking questions and to do as you are told, he would have crushed the demons like nine pins and would have taken Sita back.

⁷This almost sealed the fate of the demons, for Hanuman had wished that he would crush the demon army single handedly and avenge Sita's agonies. This is perhaps the reason why the entire credit for demolishing the enemy was given to Hanuman in the Sundar and Lanka Kands of Kavitawali. There, even Lord Sri Ram was spellbound and astonished at the valour and marvelous deeds of Hanuman in the battle ground, so much so that he expressed this in clear terms to Laxman. Refer: Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/40. In fact, even a cursory reading of the Sundar and Lanka Kands of Kavitawali would make it abundantly clear that the war of Lanka was fought and won by Hanuman single-handedly, and the rest of the warriors of the Lord's army only played a secondary role.]

Thereafter, Hanuman silently bowed his head at the feet of Sita (to pay his obeisance to her), and filled with compassion and pity (for Sita), anger and indignation (at Ravana), shame and regret (at himself, that he could not avenge his insult and pour his wrathful anger on the demons) and fear (that Sri Ram would become annoyed because he had burnt the city of Lanka without his permission), he made his exit from there (from Lanka).

Tulsidas admonishes himself by saying that he is so insensitive and emotionless that is able to describe those touching moments of Hanuman taking his leave from Sita. [To wit, it was a gravely poignant moment, and Sita was left alone to face her fate till the Lord comes to rescue her. The bidding of good-bye by Hanuman was a moment full of emotions and grief, for neither he nor Sita wished to be out of

touch with each other. Hanuman was worried about what would happen to her in his absence, and Sita was worried as to what would happen next after Hanuman left the place.]⁸ (4).

[⁸Much is left here on imagination. Sita's last and only channel of communicating with Sri Ram was gone. The future was uncertain, and she found herself once again alone and forlorn in an enemy's land.

The condition can be compared to a person marooned on a desolate island with cannibals all around. Then a ray of hope comes as a spy sent by the king of the realm to locate that person, and the spy also leaves with promise of coming back with reinforcements to rescue him. What if the reinforcements so promised do not materialize? There are hordes of imponderables, a sea of uncertainties. The endless barrier of the ocean has to be crossed; the demons are so fierce that they had subdued and imprisoned even the gods, and were armed to the teeth. The Lord has to fight a war on an alien soil whereas the demons were on their home turf, which is always a dangerous prospect for an invading army.

One can well visualize the state of that person's mind and physical bearing. The tortures at the hands of the enemy are bound to increase—because the spy was revealed and caught red handed, the city was burnt by him, the impotence and incompetence of the demons in the face of Sri Ram's single messenger had come to the fore—and it is sure now that they will wreak vengeance upon her for all they had to endure, finding her without any protection once Hanuman left for Kishkindha. There was the looming danger of a calamitous war. In all sooth, Sita must have been petrified with fear!

This verse highlights Sita's anguish and apprehension on one hand, and her indomitable spirit and confidence on the other hand.]

हनुमान्जीका भगवान् रामके पास पहुँचना
राग बसन्त

(5/16)

रघुपति! देखो आयो हनूमंत। लंकेस-नगर खेल्यो बसंत॥ 1॥
श्रीराम-काजहित सुदिन सोधि। साथी प्रबोधि लाँघ्यो पयोधि॥ 2॥
सिय-पाँय पूजि, आसिषा पाइ। फल अमिय सरिस खायो अघाइ॥ 3॥
कानन दलि, होरी रचि बनाइ। हठि तेल-बसन बालधि बँधाइ॥ 4॥
लिए ढोल चले सँग लोग लागि। बरजोर दर्ई चहुँ ओर आगि॥ 5॥
आखत आहुति किये जातुधन। लखि लपट भभरि भागे बिमान॥ 6॥
नभतल कौतुक, लंका बिलाप। परिनाम पचहिं पातकी पाप॥ 7॥
हनुमान-हाँक सुनि बरषि फूल। सुर बार बार बरनहिं लँगूर॥ 8॥
भरि भुवन सकल कल्यान-धूम। पुर जारि बारिनिधि बोरि लूम॥ 9॥
जानकी तोषि पोषेउ प्रताप। जय पवन-सुवन दलि दुअन-दाप॥ 10॥
नाचहिं-कूदहिं कपि करि बिनोद। पीवत मधु मधुबन मगन मोद॥ 11॥
यों कहत लषन गहे पाँय आइ। मनि सहित मुदित भेंट्यो उठाइ॥ 12॥
लगे सजन सेन, भयो हिय हुलास। जय जय जस गावत तुलसिदास॥ 13॥

hanumānjīkā bhagavān rāmakē pāsa pahuṁcanā

rāga basanta

(5/16)

raghupati! dēkhō āyō hanūmanta. laṅkēsa-nagara khēlyō basanta.. 1..
 śrīrāma-kājahita sudina sōdhi. sāthī prabōdhi lāmghyō payōdhi.. 2..
 siya-pāmya pūji, āsiṣā pā'i.phala amiya sarisa khāyō aghā'i.. 3..
 kānana dali, hōrī raci banā'i. haṭhi tēla-basana bāladhi baṁdhā'i.. 4..
 li'ē ḍhōla calē saṁga lōga lāgi. barajōra da'ī cahum̐ ōra āgi.. 5..
 ākhata āhuti kiyē jātudhana. lakhi lapaṭa bhabhari bhāgē bimāna.. 6..
 nabhatala kautuka, laṅkā bilāpa. parināma pacahim̐ pātakī pāpa.. 7..
 hanumāna-hāmka suni baraṣi phūla. sura bāra bāra baranahim̐ laṁgūra.. 8..
 bhari bhuvana sakala kalyāna-dhūma. pura jāri bārinidhi bōri lūma.. 9..
 jānakī tōṣi pōṣē'u pratāpa. jaya pavana-suvana dali du'ana-dāpa..10..
 nācahim̐-kūdahim̐ kapi kari binōda.pīvata madhu madhubana magana
 mōda..11..
 yōm kahata laṣana gahē pāmya ā'i.mani sahita mudita bhēṇṭyō uṭhā'i..12..
 lagē sajana sēna, bhayō hiya hulāsa. jaya jaya jasa gāvata tulasidāsa..13..

Hanuman back in Kishkindha to report to Lord Ram

Verse no. 5/16—[Hanuman roared back with a thunder over the ocean with increased enthusiasm than what he had on his way to Lanka, because he was successful in his mission and this injected a sense of extreme joy and excitement in him. His companions were waiting for him on this side of the shore, and as soon as they saw him and espied his cheerful countenance they immediately deduced that he had found Sita. Soon upon landing, Hanuman was thronged by them, all caressing him, showering their love and prise upon him, and applauding him as their saviour and hero. Then the company departed from the shore of the ocean in a procession of victory, and like an army returning to its king after a successful campaign, all the messengers who had accompanied Hanuman to the ocean's shore from Kishkindha regarded themselves as one team which has won. They danced and sang on the way back, and when near the capital they entered the royal orchard of the monkey king Sugriv, eating and jumping around as is the wont of frolicking monkeys who are let loose.

Meanwhile, one of the companions was rushed to Kishkindha with an express order to report about Hanuman's successful mission. He went forthwith and told everyone in the capital about the exploits of Hanuman. The news reached the ears of Laxman who conveyed it to Lord Ram even before the main party arrived.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

Hearing the news of Hanuman's successful return from Lanka, Laxman said to Ram, 'Lord! See, Hanuman has come back. He has literally played Holi¹ in Lanka (1).

[¹Holi—It is a festival of colours celebrated in the Basant season which falls roughly in February-March. It is related to the story of Prahalad, a child devotee of Lord Vishnu whose father was a demon named Hiranyakashipu. The child was put to great torture by his demon father so that he stops worshipping Lord Vishnu. The

demon had attempted to get him burnt alive on a fire but Prahalad survived unscathed. In the night a fire is lit and rituals performed to commemorate that event. On the next day coloured water and powder is used to celebrate. It is also a festival to honour the spirit of universal brotherhood as even strangers are welcome to join and celebrate. The colour removes all distinction of caste and creed, and the entire mass of humanity looks like one big sea of colour. The spring season also heralds flowers and trees of myriad colours, and this is metaphorically depicted by playing with colours on the streets and in the homes.

In the present case, Holi is cited with reference to the burning of Lanka because the city was burnt to ashes while Sita and Vibhishan's residence remained unscathed just like Prahalad escaped from the fire in which his aunt was burnt.]

Fixing an auspicious day for your work, he had assured his companions and leapt across the ocean (2).

There he worshipped Sita's holy feet and ate his full of the sweet fruits in the Ashok grove (3).

Then he lay waste that garden and prepared for playing a symbolic form of Holi, and respectfully urged the demons to wrap his tail with cloth soaked in oil (4).

People mocked him and beat drums before he set fire in all the four directions (corners) of the city (5).

He offered the demons as sacrifice in the fire; seeing its leaping flames, even the chariots of Gods hurriedly escaped from the site (6).

At that moment, there was a lot of wonder and marvel amongst the Gods in the sky and wailing amongst the demons; a sinner is at last burnt in his own sins (7).

Hearing his roar, the God's repeatedly showered flowers and praised his tail (8).

In this way, spreading the good news everywhere (about the Lord's glories and his arrival to eliminate the scourge of the demons as had been promised to the Gods on some previous occasion), then burning to ashes the city of Lanka (as a prelude to the final destruction of its inhabitants, the demons), he had jumped in the ocean to douse his tail. Thereafter, he consoled Sita, and reinforced your glory.

Verily, we all praise the glory of Hanuman who is the destroyer of false pride of all enemies (of the Lord as well as his devotees) (9-10).

At present, he and his companions are enjoying themselves on their success by drinking honey in the Forest of Honey (Madhu Van)² (11).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29.]

While Laxman was talking with Lord Ram, Hanuman came and clasped the Lord's feet, and Lord Ram embraced him most affectionately³.

Then, the Lord took the jewel of Sita's hair (a pin; "Chudamani") that Hanuman had brought along with him as a token of his meeting with Sita (just as he

had taken Lord Ram's signet ring when he had gone to Lanka to convince Sita of his credentials)⁴ (12).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; Doha no. 32 and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follows it.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

All were very happy on Hanuman's return and started to prepare the army (for the assault on Lanka)⁵.

Tulsidas also joins them in singing the glories of Lord Ram at that auspicious moment (13).

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

राग जैतश्री

(5 / 17)

सुनहु राम बिश्रामधाम हरि ! जनकसुता अति बिपति जैसे सहति ।
 'हे सौमित्रि-बंधु करुनानिधि!' मन महुँ रटति, प्रगट नहिं कहति ॥ 1 ॥
 निजपद-जलज बिलोकि सोकरत नयननि बारि रहत न एक छन ।
 मनहु नील नीरज ससि-संभव रबि-बियोग दोउ स्रवत सुधाकन ॥ 2 ॥
 बहु राच्छसी सहित तरुके तर तुम्हरे बिरह निज जनम बिगोवति ।
 मनहु दुष्ट इन्द्रिय संकट महुँ बुद्धि बिबेक उदय मगु जोवति ॥ 3 ॥
 सुनि कपि बचन बिचारि हृदय हरि अनपायनी सदा सो एक मन ।
 तुलसिदास सुख-सुखातीत हरि सोच करत मानहु प्राकृत जन ॥ 4 ॥

rāga jaitaśrī

(5/17)

sunahu rāma biśrāmadhāma hari! janakasutā ati bipati jaisē sahati.
 'hē saumitri-bandhu karunānidhi!' mana mahaṁ raṭati, pragaṭa nahim
 kahati..1..
 nijapada-jalaja bilōki sōkarata nayanani bāri rahata na ēka chana.
 manahu nīla nīraja sasi-sambhava rabi-biyōga dō'u sravata sudhākana.. 2..
 bahu rācchasi sahita tarukē tara tumharē biraha nija janama bigōvati.
 manahu duṣṭa indriya saṅkaṭa mahaṁ bud'dhi bibēka udaya magu jōvati.. 3..
 suni kapi bacana bicāri hṛdaya hari anapāyanī sadā sō ēka mana.
 tulasidāsa sukha-sukhātīta hari sōca karata mānahu prākṛta jana.. 4..

Hanuman's Report to Lord Ram-I

Verse no. 5/17— [When the group led by Hanuman reached Lord Ram, he bowed his head in respect to the Lord and narrated the soulful condition of Sita to him. The

following verse nos. 5/17—to 5/20 from Geetawali narrate the intensity and poignancy of Sita's emotional sufferings and physical torments.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Doha no. 31.]

[Hanuman reported—] 'Oh Sri Ram, Oh Hari (another name for Lord Vishnu)! You are an abode or treasury of bliss (*rāma biśrāmadhāma hari*)! Listen to the way Sita is coping with extreme sorrows and insurmountable torments and anguish.

She does not overtly say anything about her anguish and tribulations, arising out of separation from you. Instead of it, she consistently mutters the words 'Oh brother of Laxman, the son of Sumitra¹! Oh the merciful Lord who is compassionate and kind! (*hē saumitri-bandhu karunānidhi*)' (1).

[¹In the Hindu tradition, a wife is not supposed to take the first name of her husband. That is why Sita remembered Sri Ram, but pronounced his name indirectly by referring to him as 'Lord' and 'brother of Laxman' even as she freely called Laxman by his name as he was her husband's brother and no such restrictions applied on him.]

She constantly stares intently at her lotus-like feet, while the tears from her sorrowful eyes do not stop even for a moment as if the two blue lotuses, which have emerged from the moon, incessantly drip drops of nectar because of the agony of separation from the sun² (2).

[²Here, the 'moon' is Sita's beautiful face, the 'blue lotus flowers' are her eyes; the 'sun' is Sri Ram and the 'drops of nectar' which are dripping are the flow of tears from her eyes. As is evident, a lotus loves the sun, but since it is trapped inside the moon, it cannot face or see its beloved sun, for the sun and the moon do not rise together but are slotted for the day and night respectively.]

Surrounded by numerous demonesses and submerged in the anguish of your separation, she passes her days most remorsefully under a tree as if the intellect, trapped amongst the wicked sense organs, is awaiting the rising of wisdom (to liberate it from their shackles)³ (3).'

[³The sense organs of a creature's body keep on constantly distracting him as they always yearn to derive the pleasures from their respective sense objects in this material world. This robs the creature of his peace and happiness. As soon as wisdom dawns upon him, he realizes the futility of this pursuit, and consequentially withdraws himself from the material world and its deluding charms. This metaphysical truth is being alluded to here by Hanuman.]

Hearing the words (i.e. narration of Sita's miserable, wretched and woeful condition) from Hanuman, the Lord determined in his heart that Sita has my eternal, stable and pure devotion firmly entrenched (rooted, established) in her heart.

Tulsidas says that thinking thus, Sri Hari (Ram) began lamenting and grieving, though he is beyond the reach of such mundane emotions as happiness and distress, joys and sorrows⁴ (4).

[⁴By using the word "Hari", meaning Lord Vishnu, for Lord Ram, Tulsidas wishes to emphasis that we should not be misled by seeing Sri Ram wailing for a woman like an ordinary man. This is part of the play he has to act—because the Lord has assumed a human form. Would it not look highly incongruous and untenable if he

laughs and shows that he cares not a dime about Sita because he is the Lord of all creation, and as such, worldly emotions do not affect him?

A good actor is one who plays the role perfectly, without faltering a whit, as long as he is on the stage. But once off the stage, he regains his composure, becomes his former self. This will answer the skeptics who say that Ram was infatuated by a woman. No; not at all. The Lord was simply playing his role as a human being to perfection. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 39.]

राग केदारा

(5 / 18)

रघुकुलतिलक ! बियोग तिहारे ।
 मैं देखी जब जाइ जानकी, मनहु बिरह—मूरति मन मारे ॥ 1 ॥
 चित्र—से नयन अरु गढ़ेसे चरन—कर, मढ़े—से स्रवन, नहि सुनति पुकारे ।
 रसना रटति नाम, कर सिर चिर रहै, नित निजपद—कमल निहारे ॥ 2 ॥
 दरसन—आस—लालसा मन महुँ राखे प्रभु—ध्यान प्रान—रखवारे ।
 तुलसिदास पूजति त्रिजटा नीके रावरे गुन—गन—सुमन सँवारे ॥ 3 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(5/18)

raghukulatilaka! biyōga tihārē.
 mair̥m dēkhī jaba jā'i jānakī, manahu biraha-mūrati mana mārē.. 1..
 citra-sē nayana aru garhēsē carana-kara, marhē-sē sravana, nahi sunati
 pukārē.
 rasanā raṭati nāma, kara sira cira rahai, nita nijapada-kamala nihārē..2..
 darasana-āsa-lālasā mana maham̐ rākhē prabhu-dhyāna prāna-rakhavārē.
 tulasidāsa pūjati trijaṭā nīkē rāvarē guna-gana-sumana saṁvārē.. 3..

Hanuman's Report to Lord Ram-II

Verse no. 5/18—‘Oh the most exalted one in king Raghu's clan (“raghukulatilaka”)! When I first went and saw Sita, she looked so pathetic, tormented and miserable by the agony of your separation that she resembled ‘Separation and Loss’ personified, sitting in the form of an uncared for and neglected statue to me (1).

[Describing her pathetic state, he goes on to tell the Lord—] Her eyes were immobile like that of a portrait; the limbs were cast in a fixed position as if moulded or sculpted from a stone; her ears too appeared to be chiseled out from the same stone. As a result of which, she did not listen (and respond) when someone called out to her. She chants your name incessantly. Her hand pensively support her head, while the eyes are constantly transfixed at her own lotus-like feet (2).

She has a great yearning to have your Darshan (divine and holy viewing).

Hence (in order to prevent the exit of her soul from her body), she has made her 'concentration' as her guard to keep vigil on her soul.¹

Tulsidas says that, further, it is also true that the demoness Trijata worships her with the symbolic flowers that represent Lord Ram's glories, virtues, fame and majesty². (3)

[¹To wit, she concentrates on your name, on your glories, on your divine form, on your activities and the hope of meeting you once again. This acts as a guard against her soul from leaving her body. Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/9 in this context.

²Trijata constantly reminds Sita about the Lord's name and glories. She keeps Sita's hopes alive by reminding her of Lord's great powers and strength. She is the only one who supports Sita in the otherwise desolate, hostile and bleak surroundings at Lanka. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 11; Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 100.]

(5 / 19)

अतिहि अधिक दरसनकी आरति ।

राम-बियोग असोक-बिटपतर सीय निमेष कलपसम टारति ॥ 1 ॥

बार-बार बर बारिजलोचन भरि भरि बरत बारि उर ढारति ।

मनहु बिरहके सद्य घाय हिये लखि तकि-तकि धरि धीरज तारति ॥ 2 ॥

तुलसिदास जद्यपि निसिबासर छिन-छिन प्रभुमूरतिहि निहारति ।

मिटति न दुसह तउ तनकी, यह बिचारि अंतर गति हारति ॥ 3 ॥

(5/19)

atihi adhika darasanakī āratī.

rāma-biyōga asōka-biṭapatara sīya nimēṣa kalapasama tārati.. 1..

bāra-bāra bara bārijalōcana bhari bhari barata bāri ura ḍhārati.

manahu birahakē sadya ghāya hiyē lakhi taki-taki dhari dhīraja tāratī..2..

tulasidāsa jadyapi nisibāsara china-china prabhumūratīhi nihārati.

miṭati na dusaha ta'u tanakī, yaha bicāri antara gati hārati.. 3..

Hanuman's Report to Lord Ram-III

Verse no. 5/19—[Hanuman continued—] 'Sita is greatly eager to have your Darshan (i.e. she is eager to have your divine and sacred sight).

She is spending each moment like it were a 'Kalpa' (i.e. a very long period of time), drowned in the sorrows and anguish of your separation as she sits sad and forlorn under that Ashok Tree (1).

She fills her eyes with warm water (tears) and repeatedly pours it on her heart as if she is trying to wash the blisters representing pains of separation which keep forming

repeatedly in her heart with warm water so as to soothe them and prevent them from spreading.¹ (2).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/9.]

Tulsidas says that though she recalls the image of the Lord (on her mental screen) and remembers him day and night, the torments, sorrows and agitations of her body do not seem to abate or end.

Hence, the internal peace (which she gets by remembering the Lord) gets defeated in the face of external signs of agonies and miseries (as is evident from her transfixed stare, immobile body, constant tears pouring down from her eyes, lack of hunger and proper care of the body that has made her very emaciated and weary, and so on.) (3).

(5 / 20)

तुम्हरे बिरह भई गति जौन ।
चित दै सुनहु, राम करुनानिधि! जानौं कछु, पै सकौं कहि हौं न ॥ 1 ॥
लोचन-नीर कृपिनके धन ज्यों रहत निरंतर लोचनन कोन ।
'हा' धुनि-खगी लाज-पिंजरी महुँ राखि हिये बड़े बधिक हठि मौन ॥ 2 ॥
जेहि बाटिका बसति, तहुँ खग-मृग तजि-तजि भजे पुरातन भौन ।
स्वास-समीर भेंट भइ भोरेहु, तेहि मग पगु न धर्यो तिहुँ पौन ॥ 3 ॥
तुलसिदास प्रभु ! दसा सीयकी मुख करि कहत होति अति गौन ।
दीजै दरस, दूरि कीजै दुख, हो तुम्ह आरत-आरति दौन ॥ 4 ॥

(5/20)

tumharē biraha bha'ī gati jauna.
cita dai sunahu, rāma karunānidhi! jānaum kachu, pai sakauṁ kahi hauṁ
na..1..
lōcana-nīra kṛpinakē dhana jyōṁ rahata nirantara lōcanana kōna.
'hā' dhuni-khagī lāja-piñjarī mahaṁ rākhi hiyē baṛē badhika haṭhi mauna..2..
jēhi bāṭikā basati, tahaṁ khaga-mṛga taji-taji bhajē purātana bhauna.
svāsa-samīra bhēṇṭa bha'i bhōrēhu, tēhi maga pagu na dharyō tihuṁ pauna..
3..
tulasidāsa prabhu! dasā sīyakī mukha kari kahata hōti ati gauna.
dījai darasa, dūri kijai dukha, hau tumha ārata-ārati dauna.. 4..

Hanuman's Report to Lord Ram-IV

Verse no. 5/20—[A lot of metaphors have been used by Hanuman in this verse to describe the exceedingly sorrowful condition of Sita.]

'Oh Lord Ram, the abode of mercy and compassion (rāma karunānidhi)! Listen carefully at the (physical and mental) state of Sita that she is suffering from as a consequence of your separation. I am aware of it a bit, but I cannot (fully) narrate (or

describe) it (because words have their own limitations and they won't be able to do justice to the gravity and intensity of Sita's grief, horrors and torments) (1).

The tears in her eyes always remain at the corner like the wealth of a miser¹.

[¹To wit, a miser is very careful about his wealth; he does not want to show it to others and so hides it somewhere, but keeps a close watch on it from the corners of his eyes. Likewise, the tears are not shed from the eyes of Sita because she does not want others to know about the gravity and intensity of her grief and agonies. She makes her best effort to conceal her tears, but they continue to pop up on the corners of her eyes just like the great riches of a miser that are so huge that they virtually spill over from his coffers though he tries to keep them firmly under lock and key.]

A mighty hunter representing 'silence' has forcibly caught hold of a bird called 'Alas' (i.e. the sound of lamentation, woes, anguish and sorrows), and has trapped it in a 'cage' of shame and hesitation, and 'tucked it away' in the secret chambers of his heart².

[²Hence, that sound of moaning and utter dismay—"Alas, Ah, Alack" etc.—remains muted and cannot come out or be heard openly from the mouth of Sita as she is both ashamed to pronounce them and hesitant too as it may invite taunt and sarcasm from the demonesses who have been assigned by the demon king Ravana to guard her and keep tormenting her. In other words, Sita sighs silently as she has been overcome with hopelessness and haplessness. She is distraught and resigned to her ill-fate. She is counting her days and waiting for death to relieve her of her miseries.] (2).

In the garden where she lives, all the birds and animals have abandoned their traditional homes (i.e. they have left the Ashok grove and fled from there because of the heat generated by the fire of Sita's sorrows and miseries), and the wind—which is usually cool, soft and fragrant—does not step in that direction for fearing to get heated and become foul and unpleasant if it happens to come in contact with her breath even once (3).

Oh Tulsidas' Lord (*tulasidāsa prabhu*)³! Trying to describe Sita's sorrows and tribulations with this mouth of mine (i.e. Hanuman's mouth) seems to make them negligible or inconsequential because words can't capture the poignancy of the situation; words can never do justice to the actual state of suffering in which Sita is, for they have their limitations.

Hence oh Lord, now you should give her your Darshan (i.e. present yourself of in front of her and give her the chance to have your divine sight), thereby removing all the causes of her miseries and agonies because you are the vanquisher of the sorrows, anguish, miseries and tribulations of the meek, humble, lowly, hapless and helpless ones (*tumha ārata-ārati dauna*) (4).'

[³The point to note is that Hanuman addresses Lord Ram as the "Lord of Tulsidas". At the time these events had unfolded long-long ago, Tulsidas was not there. This single instance establishes that Tulsidas wishes to convey to all that he is indeed a devotee of Lord Ram, and to endorse his claim he has made Hanuman acknowledge it by addressing Lord Ram as being the "Lord of Tulsidas"! A true devotee has the same relation with his Lord God as a mother has for her son or a friend for his dearest friend. The mother takes pride in calling her son as 'her own', and so does a true friend. And if that 'son' or 'friend' happens to be some great person of renown and stature, the pride of calling him one's own is all the more profound. Now, Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince but the Lord God in a personified form, and

he is therefore the Lord of all living beings. So Tulsidas has all the more reasons to feel proud that he is so favourite of the Lord that the latter has chosen him to narrate his divine story for the benefit of the rest of the world, a rare privilege that the Lord has bestowed upon Tulsidas over the heads of other more experienced and able poets and bards. So naturally Tulsidas has an occasion and reason to celebrate his elevation to such a high pedestal as being the scribe chosen by the Lord God himself to write down his history for the sake of posterity.]

(5/21)

कपिके सुनि कल कोमल बैन ।
 प्रेमपुलकि सब गात सिथिल भए, भरे सलिल सरसीरुह—नैन ॥ 1 ॥
 सिय—बियोग—सागर नागर—मनु बूझन लग्यो सहित चित—चैन ।
 लही नाव पवनज—प्रसन्नता, बरबस तहाँ गह्यो गुन—मैन ॥ 2 ॥
 सकत न बूझि कुसल, बूझे बिन गिरा बिपुल ब्याकुल उर—ऐन ।
 ज्यों कुलीन सुचि सुमति बियोगिनि सनमुख सहै बिरह—सर पैन ॥ 3 ॥
 धरि—धरि धीर बीर कोसलपति किए जतन, सके उत्तरु दै न ।
 तुलसिदास प्रभु सखा अनुजसों सैनहिं कह्यो चलहु सजि सैन ॥ 4 ॥

(5/21)

kapikē suni kala kōmala baina.
 prēmapulaki saba gāta sithila bha'e, bharē salila sarasīruha-naina.. 1..
 siya-biyōga-sāgara nāgara-manu būṛana lagyō sahita cita-caina.
 lahī nāva pavanaja-prasannatā, barabasa tahāṁ gahyō guna-maina.. 2..
 sakata na būjhi kusala, būjhē bina girā bipula byākula ura-aina.
 jyōm kulīna suci sumati biyōgini sanamukha sahai biraha-sara paina..3..
 dhari-dhari dhīra bīra kōsalapati ki'ē jatana, sakē uttaru dai na.
 tulasidāsa prabhu sakhā anujasōm sainahim kahyō calahu saji saina.. 4..

Condition of Lord Ram and the decision to invade Lanka

Verse no. 5/21—Hearing such sweet and tender words of Hanuman, Lord Sri Ram's body was thrilled and benumbed with an upsurge of affection and emotions even as his lotus-like eyes were filled with tears (1).

The clever/expert swimmer represented by Lord Sri Ram's mind and heart had begun to sink, along with his happy and contented intellectual bearing and temperament that is normally resolute and neutral from emotions and sentiments, in the ocean of anguish and sorrows at Sita's separation.

Just at this moment (when he was about to drown), he found a boat of hope, solace, succour and happiness in the form of her news heard from the mouth of Hanuman. But it appeared that 'Kamdeo' (i.e. his intense desire or eagerness to meet his beloved Sita) seemed to hold that boat forcibly (so that Sri Ram's hope and

happiness was short-lived, and he appeared to plunge in gloom and remorseful mood once again)¹ (2).

[¹When Sita was abducted, Lord Ram felt so depressed, distraught and dejected in his heart and mind that he virtually sort of began to sink in an ocean of despair and hopelessness. He had thought that he will never hear of Sita ever again in his life. This thought made him abjectly gloomy and he despaired for life.

In this helpless condition, when Hanuman arrived with the news of Sita, it acted as a buoy for Lord Ram, and his hopes were refreshed. But soon he was once again subdued with agony when he reflected upon Sita's miseries.]

This is why (being overwhelmed by emotions that choked his throat) Lord Ram could not utter a word of enquiry about Sita, and at the same time he felt that his voice was being stifled (strangled, suffocated) in his own heart because he could not express himself openly and let known his agonies to anyone.

It was like the case of some noble, pure and chaste woman, who being separated from her beloved, suffers internally, but has to stoically bear the sharp, caustic, sarcastic, derogatory and insinuating words spoken by others for her, on her face or behind her back, without her being able to answer back or retort sharply to her tormentor (because if she does try, her tormentors would become all the more louder and more verbal in passing taunts at her to tease her even more, and thereat derive sadistic pleasure from her discomfiture) (3).

Kaushalpati ('the Lord of Kaushal, Ayodhya'; i.e. Lord Sri Ram) tried many a times to gather enough strength and courage to speak, but not a word came out of his mouth.

Tulsidas says that, finally, the Lord indicated by signs to his friend Sugriv and brother Laxman that they should immediately collect the army and embark on the mission without delay (to rescue Sita from Lanka)² (4).

[²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35; and (ii) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no.13 also.]

जानकी—त्रिजटा—संवाद
राग जैतश्री

(5 / 47)

कब देखौंगी नयन वह मधुर मूरति ?
राजिवदल—नयन, कोमल, कृपा—अयन,
मयननि बहु छबि अंगनि दूरति ॥ 1 ॥
सिरसि जटा—कलाप, पानि सायक,
चाप, उरसि रुचिर बनमाल लूरति ।
तुलसिदास रघुबीरकी सोभा सुमिरि,
भई है मगन नहि तनकी सूरति ॥ 2 ॥

jānakī-trijaṭā-sanvāda

rāga jaitaśrī

(5/47)

kaba dēkhauṅī nayana vaha madhura mūrati?
 rājivadala-nayana, kōmala, kṛpā-ayana,
 mayanani bahu chabi aṅgani dūrati.. 1..
 sirasi jaṭā-kalāpa, pāni sāyaka,
 cāpa, urasi rucira banamāla lūrati.
 tulasidāsa raghubīrakī sōbhā sumiri,
 bha'ī hai magana nahi tanakī sūrati.. 2..

Conversation between Sita and Trijata-I

Verse no. 5/47—[After Hanuman had left Lanka, Sita felt lonely and dejected. A demoness named Trijata was deputed by Ravana to keep an eye on Sita. Trijata was a noble soul despite of her body being that of a demoness. She felt deeply sympathetic towards Sita and empathized with her case, feeling very pity for her. She was Sita's only constant companion all through her confinement in Lanka. By and by, the two became friends, and Sita used to confide in her all her emotions and sentiments. So Sita told her in a very poignant mood that she is very depressed and distressed, and wonders whether she will ever meet her beloved husband Lord Ram again in life. Trijata, like a true and trusted friend and companion, kept her spirit buoyed and her morale boosted by always assuring her that she should not doubt that she would be rescued by the Lord sooner rather than later. The conversation between the two has been described in Geetawali, Sundar kand, verse no. 5/47 to 5/51.

This conversation is also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12; (b) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.

Refer also to Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/2—6/3.

Now, let us read the conversation betwixt Trijata and Sita.]

[Sita said to the demoness Trijata—] ‘When shall I see that enchanting and lovable (sweet, pleasant) image (of my beloved husband Sri Ram) with these eyes? When shall I see him whose eyes are akin to the lotus flower, who is most tender, who is a mine of mercy and kindness, and whose most enchanting image puts to shame the magnificence and glamour of numerous Kamdeo-cupids put together? (1).

(When shall I meet—) The Lord (who) has matted hairs on the head, a bow and arrow in the hands, and an attractive ‘Van-mala’ (a garland made of marigold flowers) always hanging on his broad chest.’

Tulsidas says that Sita has become immersed in the thoughts of Raghubir (literally the strong and brave warrior of king Raghu's clan; i.e. Lord Ram) whose magnificence, majesty and spectacular beauty is so overwhelming and enrapturing that she appears to have lost awareness of her body (and her surroundings) by the remembrance of the Lord (2).

राग केदारा

(5/48)

कहु, कबहुँ देखिहौं आली ! आरज—सुवन ।
 सानुज सुभग—तनु जबतें बिछुरे बन,
 तबतें दव—सी लगी तीनिहू भुवन ॥ 1 ॥
 मूरति सूरति किये प्रगट प्रीतम हिये,
 मनके करन चाहैं चरन छुवन ।
 चित चढ़िगो बियोग—दसा न कहिबे जोग,
 पुलक गात, लागे लोचन चुवन ॥ 2 ॥
 तुलसी त्रिजटा जानी, सिय अति अकुलानी
 मृदुबानी कह्यौ ऐहैं दवन—दुवन ।
 तमीचर—तम—हारी सुरकंज—सुखकारी
 रबिकूल—रबि अब चाहत उवन ॥ 3 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(5/48)

kahu, kabahuṁ dēkhihauṁ ālī! āraja-suvana.
 sānuja subhaga-tanu jabatēm bichurē bana,
 tabatēm dava-sī lagī tīnihū bhuvana.. 1..
 mūrati sūrati kiyē pragaṭa prītama hiyē,
 manakē karana cāhairṁ carana chuvana.
 cita caḍhigō biyōga-dasā na kahibē jōga,
 pulaka gāta, lāgē lōcana cuvana.. 2..
 tulasī trijaṭā jānī, siya ati akulānī
 mṛdubānī kahyau aihairṁ davana-duvana.
 tamīcara-tama-hārī surakañja-sukhakārī
 rabikula-rabi aba cāhata uvana.. 3..

Conversation between Sita and Trijata-II

Verse no. 5/48—[Sita continued—] ‘Friend Trijata! Say, will I be ever able to have a ‘Darshan’ (a reverential viewing) of the ‘Aaryaputra’ (the son born in the Aryan race; here referring to Lord Ram), who is an image (i.e. embodiment, personification) of beauty and magnificence, as well as of his brother (Laxman)?

Ever since I was separated from them in the forest, the three Lokas (subterranean, terrestrial and heavenly worlds; literally meaning the whole world) seem to be engulfed in a wild forest-fire for me¹ (1).

[¹To wit, I don’t find peace and comfort anywhere. Day and night, morning and evening, summer or winter, rainy season or dry days—I feel equally tormented and burn inside by the fire ignited due to the agony and misery caused by separation from Lord Ram. The grief and anguish are roasting me alive.]

My beloved (Ram) reveals himself in my heart as soon as I remember his image (form) which is most adorable and loving. I want to touch his feet by the hands of my mind (imagination), but when I recall his separation from me, then my (physical and mental) condition cannot be described—the body becomes thrilled and tears roll down my eyes (2).’

Tulsidas says that when Trijata saw that Sita was excessively agitated and anguished, she consoled her with these sweet and comforting words, ‘Sri Ram, who is the destroyer of enemies, will come soon. The ‘Sun’ of the Solar Race is the destroyer (eliminator, remover, vanquisher) of darkness representing the demons, and is favoured by the garden of lotuses representing the Gods. This Sun is about to rise²!’

[²Here, the ‘Sun’ is a metaphor for Sri Ram. The phrase ‘the Sun of the Solar-Race’ means that Lord Ram is the brightest, the most glorious and the most renowned amongst all the kings of the Sun-Race.

The ‘demons’ stand for all the wicked, evil and unrighteous creatures. The Gods are compared to the ‘lotus’ because of their good virtues just like the lotus flower, which is deemed to be pure and clean and in spite of it living inside a dirty pond.

The Lord is a favourite with the Gods because he affords them his full support and protection, and like the celestial ‘sun’ he removes the darkness represented by the evil and wicked demons.

In other words, just as the lotus flower blooms and find joy when the sun rises in the sky, the Gods will find joy as soon as Lord Ram and his army is sighted on the horizon of Lanka, because it would mean the end of the tyranny that the demons had spread throughout the world.]

(5 / 49)

अबलौं मैं तोसों न कहे री।
 सुन त्रिजटा! प्रिय प्राननाथ बिनु बासर निसि दुख दुसह सहे री॥ 1॥
 बिरह बिषम बिष-बेलि बढी उर, ते सुख सकल सुभाय दहे री।
 सोइ सींचिबे लागि मनसिजके रहँट नयन नित रहत नहे री॥ 2॥
 सर-सरीर सूखे प्रान-बारिचर जीवन-आस तजि चलनु चहे री।
 तैं प्रभु सुजस-सुधा सीतल करि राखे, तदपि न तृप्ति लहे री॥ 3॥
 रिपु-रिस घोर नदी बिबेक-बल, धीर-सहित हुते जात बहे री।
 दै मुद्रिका-टेक तेहि औसर, सुचि समीरसुत पैरि गहे री॥ 4॥
 तुलसिदास सब सोच पोच मृग मन-कानन भरि पूरि रहे री।
 अब सखि सिय सँदेह परिहरु हिय, आइ गए दोउ बीर अहेरी॥ 5॥

(5/49)

abalaum maim tōsōm na kahē rī.

suna trijaṭā! priya prānanātha binu bāsara nisi dukha dusaha sahē rī..1..

biraha biṣama biṣa-bēli barhī ura, tē sukha sakala subhāya dahē rī.

sō'i sīñcibē lāgi manasijakē rahaṁṭa nayana nita rahata nahē rī.. 2..

sara-sarīra sūkhē prāna-bāricara jīvana-āsa taji calanu cahē rī.
 taim prabhu sujasa-sudhā sītala kari rākhē, tadapi na tṛpti lahē rī.. 3..
 ripu-risa ghōra nadī bibēka-bala, dhīra-sahita hutē jāta bahē rī.
 dai mudrikā-ṭēka tēhi ausara, suci samīrasuta pairi gahē rī.. 4..
 tulasidāsa saba sōca pōca mṛga mana-kānana bhari pūri rahē rī.
 aba sakhi siya saṁdēha pariharū hiya, ā'i ga'ē dō'u bīra ahērī.. 5..

Conversation between Sita and Trijata-III

Verse no. 5/49—[Sita replied to Trijata—] ‘Dear, I have not disclosed this to you until now. Listen Trijata, I have suffered intensely day and night without (the company of) my beloved (husband, Sri Ram) (1).

The poisonous creeper representing horrible miseries of separation has grown robust in my heart. It has naturally burnt (sucked out and destroyed) all my joys and happiness.

It appears that my eyes are like the bulls who are always yoked to the water-wheel of Kamdeo to draw water so that somehow this fire of agony caused by separation from the Lord is doused and kept under control¹ (2).

[¹Sita means that tears constantly flow from her eyes to soothe her weary, exhausted, pained and tormented nerves. Her grief is somewhat alleviated when she weeps. She compares the condition of her eyes that continuously shed tears to that of the bulls who are yoked to a water-wheel and go round and round to draw water to irrigate dry land. So similarly, Sita’s eyes continue to shed endless streams of tears to douse her fire of agony and grief that keeps burning inside her heart.]

My body-like lake has dried up (i.e. it has become emaciated and withered). Hence, the water-bird representing my soul (life) residing in it now wants to depart (i.e. I wish to die).

Albeit you have temporarily stopped them from departing by attempting to quench their thirst by providing them with the life-sustaining nectar in the form of reassurance (that the Lord would definitely come to my rescue), alongside narrating the divine glories and the auspicious virtues of the Lord (Sri Ram) to keep my sagging spirits buoyed, they still are not satisfied (quenched and contented)² (3).

[²Sita means that inspite of all the reassurances by Trijata, she is finding it too much of a burden to live any longer without her beloved Lord Ram. She is longing desperately for the Lord, and mere words and assurances do not seem to help substantially unless there is some sort of positive signal or development to prove them. The odds are so heavily stacked against her that inspite of all the assurances of Trijata that the Lord would come soon and kill the demons and release her from captivity, Sita does not seem to rely or believe in them. Of course such sweet and reassuring words give her temporary relief, but sooner than later the feeling of wretchedness and misery returns with a vengeance.]

These birds (representing my soul, my body and life) were just floating or drifting away in the fierce current of the river symbolized by wrath of the enemy (demons) with courage derived from the strength that comes with wisdom and fortitude³.

[³To wit, I would have drowned in the turbulent river with very fierce currents of water representing the torments and horrors that I faced in the hands of my captors.

But I held on to dear life with courage and fortitude, in the hope that I will gain nothing by losing hope and dying, but if I manage somehow to keep my life afloat then haply there may be a chance I may see light at the end of the dark tunnel and meet my Lord once again. Hereat, and aught but this, I managed to survive so long.]

But the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman), who is of a pure heart and intellect, swam across swiftly, caught hold of them and prevented them from getting lost by giving them a life-support (a buoy) in the form of the signet ring (that the Lord had given him to be delivered to me). Thus, these birds⁴ were not only saved from drowning but also from getting lost for ever.

[⁴The birds symbolize the life and body of Sita. Wisdom had prevented her from dying because she knew that if she lost courage and died then whatever chance she had of meeting the Lord again would be lost for ever. So she drew on her reserve of courage and fortitude to somehow linger on with life in a tenacious manner. But life was slowly ebbing away from her body just like the bird which was drifting away in the vicious current of the rapid water of the fast-flowing river. Then Hanuman came and threw the life-buoy in the form of the ring of Lord Ram. Sita clinged to this ring to save her precious life from sinking in the ocean of agony, misery, grief and torment to which she was subjected. Hanuman's arrival had helped to pull her out from the brink of certain death by injecting hope in her. The hope and the expectation that now she will soon meet her beloved Lord provided her the will and the encouragement to live on for some more time till the Lord comes and rescues her.] (4).'

Tulsidas continues his narration and says that Sita told Trijata—'Oh Trijata! In my mind representing a forest, there are hordes of wild animals representing all sorts of sorrows, miseries, grief, distresses and troubles to which I am being subjected to. [And these wild animals continue to harass me and create endless horrors for me.]'

[Trijata replied to Sita, reassuring her once again with her wise words. She said—] 'Oh friend Sita (**sakhi siya**)! Shrug-off the doubts in your heart now. Both the hunters (Sri Ram and Laxman) have arrived, and they are ready to hunt down the game⁵.' (5).

[⁵In other words, Lord Ram and Laxman would soon kill the demons like hunter-princes pursue their games and kill them. This will be the end of Sita's cause of so much pain.]

राग बिलावल

(5/50)

सो दिन सोनेको, कहू, कब ऐहै !
जा दिन बँध्यो सिंधु त्रिजटा! सुनि तू संभ्रम आनि मोहि सुनैहै ॥ 1 ॥
बिस्व-दवन सुर-साधु-सतावन रावन किया आपनो पैहै ।
कनकपुरी भयो भूप बिभीषन, बिबुध-समाज बिलोकन धैहै ॥ 2 ॥
दिब्य दुंदुभी, प्रसंसिहैं मुनिगन, नभतल बिमल बिमाननि छैहै ।
बरषिहैं कुसुम भानुकुल-मनिपर, तब मोको पवनपूत लै जैहै ॥ 3 ॥
अनुज सहित सोभिहैं कपि महँ, तनु-छबि कोटि मनोजहि तैहै ।
इन नयनन्हि यही भाँति प्रानपति निरखि हृदय आनँद न समैहै ॥ 4 ॥
बहुरो सदल सनाथ सलछिमन कुसल कुसल बिधि अवध देखैहै ।

गुर, पुरलोग, सास, दोउ देवर, मिलत दुसह उर तपनि बुतैहै ॥ 5 ॥
 मंगल—कलस, बधावने घर—घर, पैहैं माँगने जो जेहि भैहै।
 बिजय राम राजाधिराजको, तुलसीदास पावन जस गैहै ॥ 6 ॥

rāga bilāvala

(5/50)

sō dina sōṇēkō, kahu, kaba aihai!
 jā dina baṁdhyō sindhu trijaṭā! suni tū sambhrama āni mōhi sunaihai.. 1..
 bisva-davana sura-sādhū-satāvana rāvana kiya āpanō paihai.
 kanakapurī bhayō bhūpa bibhīṣana, bibudha-samāja bilōkana dhaihai.. 2..
 dibya dundubhī, prasansihaiṁ munigana, nabhatala bimala bimānani chaihai.
 baraṣihaiṁ kusuma bhānukula-manipara, taba mōkō pavanapūta lai jaihai..
 3..
 anuja sahita sōbhihaiṁ kapi maham, tanu-chabi kōṭi manōjahi taihai.
 ina nayanānhi yahī bhāṁti prānapati nirakhi hṛdaya ānaṁda na samaihai.. 4..
 bahurō sadala sanātha salachimana kusala kusala bidhi avadha dēkhaihai.
 gura, puralōga, sāsa, dō'u dēvara, milata dusaha ura tapani butaihai.. 5..
 maṅgala-kalasa, badhāvanē ghara-ghara, paihaiṁ māṁganē jō jēhi bhaihai.
 bijaya rāma rājādhirājako, tulasīdāsa pāvana jasa gaihai.. 6..

Conversation between Sita and Trijata-IV

(Sita visualises the Victory Day)

Verse no. 5/50—[Sita said—] ‘Oh Trijata! When will that golden (auspicious, fortunate) day dawn when, hearing that the ocean has been tamed (i.e. bridged), and you will come hurriedly to convey this good news to me? (1).

When will the Gods rush to see (the spectacular marvel) that Ravana, who has crushed the world and tormented the Gods, has got the fruit of (i.e. punishment for) his (evil, sinful and unrighteous) deeds, and Vibhishan has become the king of Lanka instead? (2).

[I’m eagerly waiting for that fine day when—] There would be a loud chorus of kettle-drums (musical instruments) being played in the sky (by the Gods) to celebrate the victory, the sages and hermits shall be singing praises (of Lord Ram and Laxman), the clear sky shall be covered by the vehicles of Gods from which flowers would be showered on the ‘Bhanukul Mani’ (literally, the jewel or the gem of the Solar Race, i.e. Lord Sri Ram), and at the opportune moment the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman) would take me there (to where my beloved Lord Sri Ram is) (3).

When I would see him (Sri Ram), along with his younger brother (Laxman), amongst the monkeys? His divine sight and its spectacular beauty would be so magnificent and

bewitching to behold that it would be putting to shame millions of Kamdeo-cupids by its enrapturing charm and profound magnificence.

Indeed my heart will swell with joy and exhilaration on seeing my heart's beloved with mine own eyes at that time (4).

Will the clever Creator let me happily see Ayodhya once again, accompanied by our group (of monkeys, bears etc.), alongside our Lord (Sri Ram) and Laxman?

The fierce and intolerable fire burning in my heart shall be doused when I see the Guru (sage Vasistha), the citizens (of Ayodhya), the mothers-in-law (Kaushalya, Sumitra etc.), and both my brothers-in-law (Bharat and Shatrughan) (5).

On that occasion, auspicious pitchers and pots would be put up as decorations in each and every household, and celebratory, felicitous songs would be sung everywhere. The alms-seekers would get what they want, while Tulsidas¹ will sing the song of glorious victory of the Great King, Lord Sri Ram! (6).'

[¹Once again Tulsidas prophesizes that when the happy days return to Ayodhya, he will be present, in a symbolic manner, at the time of Sri Ram's coronation to participate in the rejoicings and celebrations there. And as true scribe, he will give a first-hand account of the rejoicings, celebrations and festivities accompanying the Lord's ascension to the throne of Ayodhya.]

(5 / 51)

सिय ! धीरज धरिये, राघौ अब ऐहैं ।
 पवनपूतपै पाइ तिहारी सुधि, सहज कृपालु, बिलंब न लैहैं ॥ 1 ॥
 सेन साजि कपि-भालु कालसम कौतुक ही पाथोधि बँधैहैं ।
 घेरोइपै देखिबो लंकगढ़, बिकल जातुधानी पछितैहैं ॥ 2 ॥
 निसिचर-सलभ कृसानु राम सर उड़ि-उड़ि परत जरत जड़ जैहैं ।
 रावन करि परिवार आगमनो, जमपुर जात बहुत सकुचैहैं ॥ 3 ॥
 तिलक सारि, अपनाय बिभीषन, अभय-बाँह दै अमर बसैहैं ।
 जय धुनि मुनि, बरसिहैं सुमन सुर, ब्योम बिमान निसान बजैहैं ॥ 4 ॥
 बंधु समेत प्रानबल्लभ पद परसि सकल परिताप नसैहैं ।
 राम-बामदिसि देखि तुमहि सब नयनवंत लोचन-फल पैहैं ॥ 5 ॥
 तुम अति हित चितइहौ नाथ-तनु, बार-बार प्रभु तुमहि चितैहैं ।
 यह सोभा, सुख-समय बिलोकत काहू तो पलकैं नहिं लैहैं ॥ 6 ॥
 कपिकुल-लखन-सुजस-जय-जानकि सहित कुसल निज नगर सिधैहैं ।
 प्रेम पुलकि आनंद मुदित मन तुलसिदास कल कीरति गैहैं ॥ 7 ॥

(5/51)

siya! dhīraja dhariyē, rāghau aba aihaim.

pavanapūtapai pā'i tihārī sudhi, sahaja kṛpālu, bilamba na laihaim.. 1..

sēna sāji kapi-bhālu kālasama kautuka hī pāthōdhi baṁdhaihim.

ghērō'ipai dēkhibō laṅkagarḥa, bikala jātudhānī pachitaihamai.. 2..
 nisicara-salabha kṛsānu rāma sara uḍi-uḍi parata jarata jaṛa jaihaiṁ.
 rāvana kari parivāra āgamanō, jamapura jāta bahuta sakucaihami.. 3..
 tilaka sārī, apanāya bibhīṣana, abhaya-bāṁha dai amara basaihaiṁ.
 jaya dhuni muni, barasihaiṁ sumana sura, byōma bimāna nisāna bajaihaiṁ..
 4..
 bandhu samēta prānaballabha pada parasi sakala paritāpa nasaihaiṁ.
 rāma-bāmadisi dēkhi tumahi saba nayanavanta lōcana-phala paihaiṁ.. 5..
 tuma ati hita cita'ihau nātha-tanu, bāra-bāra prabhu tumahi citaihaiṁ.
 yaha sōbhā, sukha-samaya bilōkata kāhū tō palakaiṁ nahirṁ laihami.. 6..
 kapikula-lakhana-sujasa-jaya-jānaki sahita kusala nija nagara sidhaihaiṁ.
 prēma pulaki ānanda mudita mana tulasidāsa kala kīrati gaihaiṁ.. 7..

Conversation between Sita and Trijata-V

(Trijata's Reply and Reassurance to Sita)

Verse no. 5/51—[Trijata replied to Sita as she sought to reassure her—] ‘Have courage and patience! Now, having got information about you from the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman), Raghav (Sri Ram) will come soon. He is merciful and kind by nature, and hence he will delay no further¹ (1).

[¹Trijata's guess was correct. When Hanuman returned to Kishkindha and conveyed all the tidings to the Lord, he pleaded with the Lord to start preparations forthwith. The Lord too did not waste any time, and the Lord's army started for Lanka soon thereafter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 31; and from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

The Lord would bridge (tie, tame) the ocean playfully (without effort, easily), like Kaal (the God of death) does (with a creature when the time of its death arrives), after assembling an army of monkeys and bears.

Now you would soon see Lanka surrounded on all the sides (i.e. besieged), and the demonesses would become extremely agitated and regret at the turn of events (2).

The foolish moths² representing the demons would fly towards and get burnt by the fire of Sri Ram's arrows (i.e. they will be enticed and lured towards Sri Ram's arrows, and die in multitudes by being shot by these arrows of the Lord), even as Ravana would feel extremely contrite, remorseful and repentant while going to the ‘Yam Lok’ (the abode of Yam, the God of death and hell) upon his death, and he would be accompanied by his family following him in the vanguard³ (3).

[²Like the moths that fly towards the fire only to get burnt to death, the demons would voluntarily go and get killed by the arrows shot by Lord Ram and Laxman. When Ravana would be finally killed, he would go to the abode of the God of death, known as ‘Yam’, and would be regretting at his decision of creating unnecessary enmity with Lord Ram that eventually led to the slaying of the entire demon race, except of course some who did not oppose the Lord, such as Vibhishan and his companions.

³Ravana had died last of all the demons. Hence it is said that all other members of his family and race would precede him to the abode of the God of death.]

The Lord (Sri Ram) would accept Vibhishan's right to the throne and anoint him as the King of Lanka. Simultaneously, the Lord would also make the Gods fearless and establish (reinstate) them in the heavens.

At that auspicious moment, the sages and hermits would applaud, saying aloud in chorus: 'Hail, Hail the Lord and his glories!'

Meanwhile, the Gods would shower flowers from the sky as they watch the events from their aerial vehicles even as they simultaneously play their musical instruments to celebrate the occasion (4).

All the creatures would destroy (overcome, vanquish) all their sorrows, heart-burns and torments by touching the holy feet of Lord Ram and his brother (Laxman).

All the creatures who have eyes would get the reward (fruit) of their eye-sight by seeing you (Sita) sitting on the left-hand side of Lord Ram (5).

You would look (glance) at the Lord with most affectionate glances with enchanted eyes, and the Lord would reciprocate.

Watching those adorable, happy, joyous and magnificent moments, (a view of spectacular and of momentous importance and charm), all would be transfixed, staring at the wonderful image of Lord Ram by your side, without blinking even for a moment (6).

Thereafter, Lord Sri Ram—accompanied by the monkey army and Laxman, with the glory and the good fame that he has acquired by the victory of Lanka as a trophy to his credit, and with Sita by his side—would go back happily to his city (capital, Ayodhya).

Tulsidas says that he will sing the Lord's glories, virtues and famous deeds that are most magnificent and stupendously fascinating, with a thrilled body and a mind that is exhilarated and euphoric beyond description (7).

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Section 7.4:

Kavitawali Ramayan

{Kavitawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-32}

We have read in the above section no. 7.3 about Hanuman's meeting with Sita and his report to Lord Ram as narrated in Geetawali Ramayan.

Now in this section no. 7.4 we shall have a fascinating view of how Lanka was actually burnt and devastated by Hanuman. For this purpose we will read Tulsidas' classical book named 'Kavitawali Ramayan', from its Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-32.

Kavitawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-32:-

The Ashok Garden (the royal garden of Rāvanā)

बासव-बरुन बिधि-बनतें सुहावनो,
 दसाननको काननु बसंतको सिंगारु सो ।
 समय पुराने पात परत, डरत बातु,
 पालत लालत रति-मारको बिहारु सो ॥
 देखें बर बापिका तड़ाग बागको बनाउ,
 रागबस भो बिरागी पवनकुमारु सो ।
 सीयकी दसा बिलोकि बिटप असोक तर,
 'तुलसी' बिलोक्यो सो तिलोक-सोक-सारु सो ॥ १ ॥

1. bāsava-baruna bidhi-banatēm suhāvanō,
 dasānanakō kānanu basantakō siṅgāru sō.
 samaya purānē pāta parata, ḍarata bātu,
 pālata lālata rati-mārakō bihāru sō..
 dēkhēm bara bāpikā tarāga bāgakō banā'u,
 rāgabasa bhō birāgī pavanakumāru sō.
 sīyakī dasā bilōki biṭapa asōka tara,
 'tulasī' bilōkyō sō tilōka-sōka-sāru sō..1..

Verse no. 5/1—Tulsidas says that the garden of Ravana (i.e. the Ashok grove) was more pleasant than that of Indra, Varun and Brahma. It appeared to be an ornament for even Basant (the spring season). [Tulsidas means that spring is the time when all the gardens, groves and forests bloom and blossom, but the garden of Ravana was so beautiful and enchanting that it appears that spring season drew its own ability of providing beauty and magnificence to Nature from the garden of Ravana known as the Ashok Grove.]

Old leaves fell when the ripe time came because wind was afraid to enter (intrude) into the garden out of Ravana's fear, and instead, it nourished and looked after it like it were the playing field for Kamdeo and Rati (the God of love and his consort respectively).

Seeing excellent ponds, lakes and the layout of the garden, even a great renouncer like Hanuman became enchanted and enthralled. But when he saw the pitiful condition of Sita under the Ashok tree, the same garden appeared to be the core of all sorrows in the three worlds for him.

[Note—This was the garden within the palace of Ravana where he had kept Sita in captivity.

Hanuman landed on the soil of Lanka in the night, and after overcoming the first obstacle, a fierce demoness known as Lankini who was the chief gate-keeper of the fort and whom Hanuman punched so hard that she swooned and bled in the mouth, he entered the city. Thereafter, he searched for Sita everywhere throughout the night but couldn't locate her. In the morning he met Vibhishan, the brother of the king of demons, Ravana, and a great devotee of Lord Ram. He guided Hanuman to the Ashok garden where Sita was held captive. Hanuman went there and after some time

met Sita and exchanged news with her. This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chuapai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chuapai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Now, Tulsidas did not describe the Ashok garden nor the burning of Lanka in as fine detail in Ram Charit Manas as was his wont, so he compensates this shortcoming here in Kavitawali. Why he could not do so in Ram Charit Manas is natural to deduce—it is because he had an extensive story to narrate within the limited space of a book, though his heart yearned that he ought to have done so. But he feared that if he did start elaborating and writing as much as his heart dictated the book would become huge and unmanageably long. He wanted it to be readable and compact, and not so voluminous that the mere sight of it would discourage the potential reader and put him off. So he chose to write three other separate books to satisfy the wish of his heart—to focus exclusively on a particular aspect of the story or personality of its hero Lord Ram. So came into being (i) Kavitawali, (ii) Geetawali, and (iii) Barvai Ramayan.

In Kavitawali he has highlighted some of the subtle things and finer aspects to focus the reader's attention on them which they might have missed or failed to interpret correctly in the main narrative of the story of the life and time of Lord Ram in the book Ram Charit Manas. For instance, take the burning of Lanka. It is more extensively, more vividly and more lucidly described in the verses of Kavitawali as compared to the other texts.

Then when we move on to the next chapter, the Lanka Kand, we will observe that the way the war has been described there it is absolutely made clear that the real hero of the battle-field is Hanuman, and no one else. Even Lord Ram has explicitly declared it in verse no. 40 of Lanka Kand. Remember: Hanuman was the incarnation of Lord Shiva's eleventh form known as Rudra, and Tulsidas wished to emphasize the fact that the war was actually fought by Shiva on behalf of Ram and the Gods. This he could not do in his other epic narratives to maintain balance and equilibrium and do justice to the other characters of the story, but nevertheless it was important to highlight this point. So he decided to devote the entire part of the narrative of the war at Lanka to Hanuman in Kavitawali's Lanka Kand.]

माली मेघमाल, बनपाल बिकराल भट,
नीकें सब काल सींचैं सुधासार नीरके ।
मेघनाथ तैं दुलारो, प्रान तैं पियारो बागु,
अति अनुरागु जियँ जातुधान धीर कैं ।।
'तुलसी' सो जानि-सुनि, सीयको दरसु पाइ,
पैठो बाटिकाँ बजाइ बल रघुबीर कैं ।
बिद्यमान देखत दसाननको काननु सो
तहस-नहस कियो साहसी समीर कैं ।। 2 ।।

2. mālī mēghamāla, banapāla bikarāla bhaṭa,
nīkēm saba kāla sīñcaim̐ sudhāsāra nīrakē.
mēghanātha tēm̐ dulārō, prāna tēm̐ piyārō bāgu,
ati anurāgu jiyam̐ jātudhāna dhīra kēm̐..
'tulasi' sō jāni-suni, sīyakō darasu pā'i,
paiṭhō bāṭikām̐ bajā'i bala raghubīra kēm̐.
bidyamāna dēkhata dasānanakō kānanu sō

tahasa-nahasa kiyō sāhasī samīra kēm..2..

[Here, Tulsidas describes the Ashok grove]

Verse no. 5/2—The clouds are the gardeners (i.e. they water the grove by their rains—this shows it was a big forest-like grove), and the guards are ferocious and huge-bodied. It appeared that the clouds watered the grove with nectar (1).

Ravana loved the garden immensely—more than even his son Meghnad and his own life (2).

Tulsidas says that inspite of knowing everything about this garden (that it is privileged place very much liked by the king of demons, and to enter it and ruin it would be like entering a lion's den to challenge him with bare hands), Hanuman fearlessly entered the grove on the strength of Lord Ram (3). Inspite of the awesome presence of Ravana and his special protection of this particular garden, the courageous son of the Wind-God (Hanuman) laid it to waste (4). [5/2]

{Acting on the ill-thought sycophantic advice of his dumb-witted advisors who said things that pleased their demon king Ravana, instead of being honest and giving an advice that would have been for the good of the kingdom of Lanka, orders were issued to wrap Hanuman's tail in cloth and set it afire. This is what Hanuman was waiting for. As soon as the cloth was lit with fire and oil, he became small in size, thereby easily pulling his tail out of the huge cylindrical tube that the cloth formed when it was wrapped around his thick tail earlier when he had a colossus form. Then he jumped from one place to another in the city, dragging the burning tube of cloth behind him. This started a big fire in Lanka, and the whole city was reduced to cinders.}

[Note—Upon landing in Lanka, Hanuman went all over the place but could not locate Sita. In the morning that followed the night of his landing, he heard Vibhishan reciting the holy name of Lord Ram. Deciding that he must surely be a devotee of the Lord, Hanuman went and introduced himself to him. It was Vibhishan who directed him to the garden where Sita was held. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 8.

Hanuman finally met Sita and gifted to her the signet ring that Lord Ram had given him for identification. After having exchanged news with her, he sought her permission to go and eat fruits in the orchard. Then he laid to waste the private garden of Ravana and beat back the demon guards. Finally he was captured by Meghnad, the son of Ravana, who brought Hanuman to the royal court. Then followed a heated and acrimonious verbal duel between the demon king and Hanuman. Furious at the latter's temerity and fearlessness inspite of being in captivity, Ravana ordered his staff to burn the monkey's tail and let him go back to his Master with a scarred body so that the latter can be shown the insult and rebuke in a symbolic manner because a person's messenger is his representative.

The stupid demons said—‘To hear is to obey’, and wrapped the tail with cloth wetted in oil. Miraculously, the tail kept on elongating till it circled the entire city. Then reduced himself in size to escape from the ropes that tied him and leapt all across the city, burying it to ashes. Then he jumped in the ocean to douse the flame, took permission from Sita and came back to this side of the ocean where his companions were waiting for him most anxiously.

This story is narrated in Ram Charit Mana, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 28. Refer also to Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 1-16.]

The Burning of Laṅkā

बसन बटोरि बोरि-बोरि तेल तमीचर,
 खोरि-खोरि धाड़ आड़ बाँधत लँगूर हैं ।
 तैसो कपि कौतुकी डेरात ढीले गात कै-कै,
 लातके अघात सहै, जीमें कहै, क्रूर हैं ॥
 बाल किलकारी कै-कै, तारी दै-दै गारी देत,
 पाछे लागे, बाजत निसान ढोल तूर हैं ।
 बालधी बढ़न लागी, ठौर-ठौर दीन्ही आगी,
 बिंधिकी दवारि कैधौ कोटिसत सूर हैं ॥३॥

3. basana baṭōri bōri-bōri tēla tamīcara,
 khōri-khōri dhā'i ā'i bāṁdhata laṁgūra haim.
 taisō kapi kautukī ḍērāta ḍhīlē gāta kai-kai,
 lātakē aghāta sahai, jīmēm kahai, krūra haim..
 bāla kilakārī kai-kai, tāri dai-dai gārī dēta,
 pāchēm lāgē, bājata nisāna ḍhōla tūra haim.
 bāladhī baṛhana lāgi, ṭhaura-ṭhaura dīnhī āgi,
 bindhikī davāri kaidhaum kōṭisata sūra haim..3..

Verse no. 5/3—The demons rushed along all the lanes and bye-lanes (of the city of Lanka), collected all available cloth, dipped them in oil and wrapped them on Hanuman's tail. Similarly, the playful Hanuman pretends to be afraid and tolerates their kicks and blows with relaxed muscles (i.e. he does not resist), and considers them to be cowards. The children, clapping and laughing in derision, are abusing him and having a merry of a time as they joined the elder demons; and drums, tom-toms and bugles are being sounded (as if a great drama is being staged in the city).

The tail started elongating and the demons ignited it (i.e. they lit the wrapped cloth with fire) randomly at various points which made it appear like the great (forest or wild) fire of the Vindhya mountains, or like one hundred crore (millions of) suns shining simultaneously.

[Note—The story of how and why Lanka was burnt has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 26.

But however, the description of the actual destruction of Lanka as has been described in Ram Charit Manas is very brief, only from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Doha no. 26, as compared to the narration here in Kavīṭawālī which is exceptionally fine and vivid. Here it is spread over from verse no. 3—right upto verse no. 25.]

लाड़-लाड़ आगि भागे बालजाल जहाँ तहाँ,
 लघु है निबुकि गिरि मेरुतें बिसाल भो ।
 कौतुकी कपीसु कूदि कनक-कँगूरौ चढ्यो,
 रावन-भवन चढ़ि ठाढ़े तेहि काल भो ॥
 'तुलसी' विराज्यो ब्योम बालधी पसारि भारी,
 देखें हहरात भट, कालु सो कराल भो ।

तेजको निधानु मानो कोटिक कृसानु-भानु,
नख बिकराल, मुखु तैसो रिस लाल भो ।। 4 ।।

4. lā'i-lā'i āgi bhāgē bālajāla jahāṁ tahāṁ,
laghu hvai nibuki giri mērutēm bisāla bhō.
kautukī kapīsu kūdi kanaka-kaṁgūrāṁ caḍhyō,
rāvana-bhavana caḍhi ṭhārḥō tēhi kāla bhō..
'tulasī' virājyō byōma bāladhī pasāri bhārī,
dēkhēm haharāta bhaṭa, kālu sō karāla bhō.
tējako nidhānu mānō kōṭika kṛsānu-bhānu,
nakha bikarāla, mukhu taisō risa lāla bhō..4..

Verse no. 5/4—The mischievous children of Lanka ignited the tail of Hanuman and ran away jesting and laughing, and when the cloth wrapped around the tail was fully ablaze Hanuman shrank his body to a miniscule size. The tail slipped out of the wrappings, and once free of his bondage, he assumed a colossal body like that of Mt. Sumeru (1).

The playful Hanuman then leapt on the golden pinnacle atop the palace of Ravana (2).

Tulsidas says he looked remarkable there with his long tail, flames leaping from it against the sky. Seeing him, even the courageous demons shivered out of fear. Hanuman became ferocious like the God of death and destruction (3).

He appeared to be the fountain of energy as if he embodied millions of fires and suns at the same time. His nails looked ferocious, and the face was red with anger (4).

बालधी बिसाल बिकराल, ज्वालजाल मानो
लंक लीलिबेको काल रसना पसारी है ।
कैधौ ब्योमबीथिका भरे हैं भूरि धूमकेतु,
बीररस बीर तरवारि सो उधारी है ।।
'तुलसी' सुरेस-चापु, कैधौ दामिनि-कलापु,
कैधौ चली मेरु तें कृसानु-सरि भारी है ।
देखें जातुधान-जातुधानी अकुलानी कहैं,
काननु उजार्यो, अब नगरु प्रजारिहै ।। 5 ।।

5. bāladhī bisāla bikarāla, jvālajāla mānō
laṅka līlibēkō kāla rasanā pasārī hai.
kaidhauṁ byōmabīthikā bharē haiṁ bhūri dhūmakētu,
bīrarasa bīra taravāri sō ughārī hai..
'tulasī' surēsa-cāpu, kaidhauṁ dāmini-kalāpu,
kaidhauṁ calī mēru tēm kṛsānu-sari bhārī hai.
dēkhēm jātudhāna-jātudhānīm akulānī kahaiṁ,
kānanu ujāryō, aba nagaru prajārihai..5..

Verse no. 5/5—The huge tail, burning with a terrible ferocity of a fire with leaping flames, resembled the outstretched tongue of Death, eager to gobble up Lanka, or as if a thousand comets have covered the sky, or Bravery, in a personified form, has drawn the sword to kill.

Tulsidas wonders whether it is a rainbow, a fount of lightening or a river of fire flowing down from Mt. Sumeru. Seeing all this, the demons and demonesses (female demons) say—‘He (Hanuman) has already laid the garden (the Ashoka grove) to waste, and now he shall burn the city.’

जहाँ-तहाँ बुबुक बिलोकि बुबुकारी देत,
जरत निकेत, धावौ, धावौ लागी आगि रे।
कहाँ तातु-मातु, भ्रात-भगिनी, भामिनी-भाभी,
ढोटा छोटे छोहरा अभागे भोंडे भागि रे॥
हाथी छेरौ, घोरा छेरौ, महिष-वृषभ छेरौ,
छेरी छेरौ, सोवै सो जगावौ, जागि, जागि रे।
‘तुलसी’ बिलोकि अकुलानि जातुधानी कहै,
बार-बार कहौ, पिय! कपिसों न लागि रे॥६॥

6. jahāṁ-tahāṁ bubuka bilōki bubukārī dēta,
jarata nikēta, dhāvau, dhāvau lāgi āgi rē.
kahāṁ tātu-mātu, bhrāta-bhaginī, bhāminī-bhābhī,
ḍhōṭā chōṭē chōharā abhāgē bhōṇḍē bhāgi rē..
hāthī chōrau, ghōrā chōrau, mahīśa-bṛśabha chōrau,
chērī chōrau, sōvai sō jagāvau, jāgi, jāgi rē.
‘tulasī’ bilōki akulāni jātudhānīm kahaim,
bāra-bāra kahyauṁ, piya! kapisōṁ na lāgi rē..6..

Verse no. 5/6—There was a huge tumult in the city as demons and demonesses, seeing the huge blaze and scorching heat (generated by the flames), ran out in panic, yelling—‘Oh run, run for your lives! Houses are burning; everything is on fire (1). Oh you wretched! Where are the parents, brothers and sisters, wives and in-laws, children—where are they? (2) Oh fool! Run, run—hurry, make haste as there is no time left; everything is on fire! Set free the elephants, horses, buffaloes, oxen, goats etc. Those who are asleep, wake them up. Oh wake up, wake up—this is not the time to sleep!’ (3)

Tulsidas says that the wives sternly admonished their demon husbands, saying, ‘We repeatedly told you not to play funny with this monkey, but you all didn't pay heed; now what do we do? (4)’.

देखि ज्वालाजालु, हाहाकारु दसकंध सुनि,
कहौ, धरो, धरो, धाए बीर बलवान हैं।
लिउँ सूल-सेल, पास-परिघ, प्रचंड दंड,
भाजन सनीर, धीर धरें धनु-बान हैं॥
‘तुलसी’ समिध सौंज, लंक जग्यकुंडु लखि,
जातुधान पुंगीफल जव तिल धान हैं।
सुवा सो लँगूल, बलमूल प्रतिकूल हबि,
स्वाहा महा हाँकि हाँकि हुनै हनुमान हैं॥७॥

7. dēkhi jvālājālu, hāhākāru dasakandha suni,
kahyau, dharō, dharō, dhā'ē bīra balavāna hairi.
li'ēṁ sūla-sēla, pāsa-parigha, pracaṇḍa daṇḍa,

bhājana sanīra, dhīra dharēm dhanu-bāna haim..
 'tulasī' samidha sauñja, laṅka jagyakuṇḍu lakhi,
 jātudhāna puṁgīphala java tila dhāna haim..
 sruvā sō laṁgūla, balamūla pratikūla habi,
 svāhā mahā hāmki hāmki hunaim hanumāna haim..7..

Verse no. 5/7—Alarmed at the scorching and leaping flames, and the distressed tumult of the citizens, Ravana shouted, 'Oh! Catch him, catch him!' Hearing his orders, many strong warriors rushed forward, armed with tridents, spears, lances, strong batons (to beat), snares (to trap the monkey Hanuman) and bows and arrows (to shoot and kill him if necessary).

Tulsidas compares the scene to a fire sacrifice (Yagya), saying that Lanka resembled the sacrificial pit, the property was like wood (or fuel), and the demons were nuts, barley, mustard and rice (materials used to offer sacrifice in the fire). Hanuman's tail is a ladle, strong enemy is the 'Havi' (butter, rice, pudding, sweets and sacrificial items offered to the fire as described above), and the high-pitched war-cry of challenge made by Hanuman appears to be the chanting of the Vedic Mantras (scriptural hymns) during the rituals of the fire sacrifice.

गाज्यो कपि गाज ज्यो, बिराज्यो ज्वालजालजुत,
 भाजे बीर धीर, अकुलाइ उद्यो रावनो ।
 धावौ, धावौ, धरौ, सुनि धाए जातुधान धारि,
 बारिधारा उलदै जलदु जौन सावनो ॥
 लपट-झपट झहराने, हहराने बात,
 भहराने भट, पर्यो प्रबल परावनो ।
 ढकनि ढकेलि, पेलि सचिव चले लै ठेलि,
 नाथ! न चलैगो बलु, अनलु भयावनो ॥८॥

8. gājyō kapi gāja jyōm, birājyō jvālajālajuta,
 bhājē bira dhīra, akulā'i uṭhyō rāvanō.
 dhāvau, dhāvau, dharau, suni dhā'ē jātudhāna dhāri,
 bāridhārā uladai jaladu jauna sāvanōm..
 lapaṭa-jhapaṭa jhaharānē, haharānē bāta,
 bhaharānē bhaṭa, paryō prabala parāvanō.
 ḍhakani ḍhakēli, pēli saciva calē lai ṭhēli,
 nātha! na calaigō balu, analu bhayāvanō..8..

Verse no. 5/8—Hanuman looked like a furnace and roared like a thunderbolt; the most courageous and brave among the demons were so scared that they took to their heels, and Ravana, being extremely distressed and very agitated, shouted at the top of his voice—'Catch him, catch him!' (1).

At his cajoling and coaxing, the army of demons rushed forward as if the dark rain bearing clouds wished to douse the fire (2), but those warriors were scorched and scalded by the leaping flames and the burning breeze sweeping towards them (3).

They ran helter-skelter. Ravana was pushed, shoved and forcefully removed from the site by his ministers, who warned him, 'Oh Lord! The fire is absolutely ferocious and out of control. We can't stand against it.' (4).

बड़ो बिकराल बेषु देखि, सुनि सिंघनादु,
 उठ्यौ मेघनादु, सबिषाद कहै रावनो ।
 बेग जित्यो मारुतु, प्रताप मारतंड कोटि,
 कालऊ करालताँ, बड़ाई जित्यो बावनो ।।
 'तुलसी' सयाने जातुधान पछिताने कहैं,
 जाको ऐसो दूतु, सो तो साहेबु अबै आवनो ।
 काहेको कुसल रोषे राम बामदेवहू की,
 बिषम बलीसों बादि बैरको बढ़ावनो ।।9।।

9. baṛō bikarāla bēśu dēkhi, suni siṅghanādu,
 uṭhyau mēghanādu, sabiśāda kahai rāvanō.
 bēga jityō mārutu, pratāpa mārataṇḍa kōṭi,
 kāla'ū karālatām̐, baṛā'īm jityō bāvanō..
 'tulasi' sayānē jātudhāna pachitānē kahaim̐,
 jākō aisō dūtu, sō tō sāhēbu abai āvanō.
 kāhēkō kusala rōśēm̐ rāma bāmadēvahū kī,
 biśama balisōm̐ bādi bairakō baṛhāvanō..9..

Verse no. 5/9—Seeing the ferocious and terribly angry countenance of Hanuman, and hearing his chilling war-cry that resounded in every direction, Meghnad stood up. A worried Ravana said, 'This fellow (Hanuman) has out-smarted wind in speed, millions of suns in splendour, Kaal (death) in ferocity, and Lord Vaaman* in his colossus size.' [*Lord Vaaman had measured the entire creation in his three steps.]

Tulsidas says that those demons that had some wisdom left in them, lamented and said, 'The master, whose servant is so terrible and awesome, is yet to come (say—what will happen then?). One wonders how even Lord Shiva can ever expect to be happy if Lord Ram becomes angry at him? It is futile and unwise to enhance enmity with such a warrior as Hanuman.

[In other words, it would have been wiser if our king Ravana had not ordered Hanuman's tail to be burnt, for then the city would have been spared from being reduced to ashes. It is not wise to make Lord Ram's messenger an enemy.]'

पानी!पानी!पानी! सब रानी अकुलानी कहैं,
 जाति हैं परानी, गति जानी गजचालि है ।
 बसन बिसारैं, मनिभूषन सँभारत न,
 आनन सुखाने, कहैं, क्योंहू कोऊ पालिहै ।।
 'तुलसी' मँदोवै मीजि हाथ, धुनि माथ कहै,
 काहूँ कान कियो न, मैं कह्यौ केतो कालि है ।
 बापुर्ते बिभीषन पुकारि बार-बार कह्यौ,
 बानरु बड़ी बलाइ घने घर घालिहै ।।10।।

10. pānī!pānī!pānī! saba rānī akulānī kahaim̐,
 jāti haiṁ parānī, gati jānī gajacāli hai.
 basana bisāraim̐, manibhūśana saṁbhārata na,
 ānana sukhānē, kahaim̐, kyōnhū kō'ū pālihai..
 'tulasi' maṁdōvai miji hātha, dhuni mātha kahai,

kāhūṃ kāna kiyō na, mairṃ kahyau kētō kāli hai.
bāpurēm bibhīśana pukāri bāra-bāra kahyau,
bānaru baṛi balā'i ghanē ghara ghālihai..10..

Verse no. 5/10—All the queens of Ravana ran hither-thither agitatedly, shouting, 'Water, water!' They can be recognised by their elephant-like majestic gait. They had forgotten to put on proper clothes (in a hurry), and neither could they take care of gem-studded ornaments (as they ran in panic, seeking water). Their mouths are parched and they lament woefully, 'Can any one protect us in some way?'

Tulsidas says that Mandodari (the chief queen) grieves and laments by wringing her hands and beating her head—'Oh goodness! I tried to reason with my husband Ravana so much yesterday, but no one lent me his ears. Poor Vibhishan had also warned repeatedly that this monkey is a great problem, and he shall ruin many households, but no one paid attention to either of us.'

काननु उजार्यो तो उजार्यो, न बिगार्यो कछु,
बानरु बेचारो बाँधि आन्यो हठि हारसों ।
निपट निडर देखि काहू न लख्यो बिसेषि,
दीन्हो ना छड़ाइ कहि कुलके कुठारसों ॥
छोटे औ बड़े मेरे पूतऊ अनेरे सब,
साँपनि सों खेलैं, मेलैं गरे छुराधार सों ।
'तुलसी' मँदोवै रोड़-रोड़ कै बिगोवै आपु,
बार-बार कहौ मैं पुकारि दाढ़ीजारसों ॥११॥

11. kānanu ujāryō tō ujāryō, na bigāryō kachu,
bānaru bēcārō bāṃdhi ān'yō haṭhi hārasōṃ.
nipaṭa niḍara dēkhi kāhū na lakhyō bisēśi,
dīnhō nā charā'i kahi kulakē kuṭhārasōṃ..
chōṭē au baṛērē mērē pūta'ū anērē saba,
sāṃpani sōṃ khēlaim, mēlaim garē churādhāra sōṃ.
'tulasi' maṃdōvai rō'i-rō'i kai bigōvai āpu,
bāra-bāra kahyau mairṃ pukāri dāṛhijārasōṃ..11..

Verse no. 5/11—Mandodari continues lamenting, 'There was not much harm done by laying to waste the Ashok garden, but these fellows had unnecessarily tied this humble monkey and brought him here (in the city from the outskirts). Seeing him absolutely fearless, could no one get a hint (that there surely is some hidden strong power behind this monkey on whose strength he could do such things that are beyond imagination of even the strongest of creatures in the creator's creation of even dreaming of, let alone actually doing; say, how stupid these demons are indeed)? And no one had advised Meghnad, who is ruinous for his clan, to release this monkey before he could cause further harm to the city. Oh I lament that all my sons, young or old, are haughty, arrogant, reckless, senseless and evil—out of all the playthings meant for playing they select to play with snakes, and they prefer to put their throat on the sharpened edge of a knife during play (not bothering for the danger they are subjecting themselves to).'

[Mandodari laments at the bellicose, reckless, haughty and defiant nature of her sons that they do not ponder about the consequences of their acts before doing anything. And driven by the same nature Meghnad had played into the hands of

Hanuman by thinking that he had subdued the latter when he managed to ensnare him, little realising that he is playing with fire and falling into a trap. He should have realised that this monkey was not an ordinary animal but surely someone backed by a mighty force, for was it not clear to my son that it wasn't easy to enter Lanka with all the safety measures that his formidable father, the demon king Ravana, has got in place? Why is Meghnad so dumb-witted so as to have overlooked this fact, and the fact that a diminutive monkey could beat the life out of the fiercest of demons who tried to capture him as he plundered the royal garden with impunity?]

Tulsidas says that Mandodari weakens herself by weeping inconsolably, and says that she had warned repeatedly this stupid and cursed 'Dadhijaar' (dārḥijāra)* son Meghnad to be wary of acting in a nonsensical manner, but he didn't listen to her or cared for her warning.

[*The word 'dārḥijāra' is a derisive term often used as an abusive curse by women against men. It literally means "one who has burnt his beard".]

रानी अकुलानी सब डाढ़त परानी जाहिं,
 सकैं न बिलोकि बेषु केसरीकुमारको ।
 मीजि-मीजि हाथ, धुनै माथ दसमाथ-तिय,
 'तुलसी' तिलौ न भयो बाहेर अगारको ।।
 सबु असबाबु डाढ़ो, मैं न काढ़ो, तैं न काढ़ो,
 जियकी परी, सँभारै सहन-भँडार को ।
 खीझति मँदोवै सबिषाद देखि मेघनादु,
 बयो लुनियत सब याही दाढ़ीजारको ।।12 ।।

12. rānī akulānī saba dārḥata parānī jāhim,
 sakaim na bilōki bēśu kēsarikumārakō.
 mīji-mīji hātha, dhunaim mātha dasamātha-tiya,
 'tulasi' tilau na bhayō bāhēra agārakō..
 sabu asabābu dārḥō, maim na kārḥō, taim na kārḥō,
 jiyakī parī, saṁbhārai sahana-bhaṁḍāra kō.
 khījhati maṁdōvai sabisāda dēkhi mēghanādu,
 bayō luniyata saba yāhī dārḥijārakō..12..

Verse no. 5/12—Being scorched by the ferocity of the raging fire, the demon-queens ran out of their inner chambers, extremely agitated and very perturbed. They cannot watch the ferocious shape of 'Kēsarikumāra' (Hanuman, the son of Kesari).

Ravana's wives wring their hands, beat their heads and lament that not a single item could be salvaged from their homes. They cried woefully—'Everything has got burnt. Neither could I remove anything, nor could you. Everyone was concerned about his own safety, so who was bothered about the household.'

Sighting Meghnad, Mandodari became wrathfully angry at him, poignantly admonishing him for the woes that had befallen upon the entire city and the demon race, cursing him in these words: 'Everyone is reaping the harvest of what this accursed and stupidest of all beings had sown. [Had he not brought the monkey inside the city and had let him go away, such a sordid calamity would not have befallen on the city at all. Why, say why did he do what he did, just to boast about his exploit that he had caught a monkey! Well now, where has Meghnad's strength gone now, for a toss or where else, that he ain't able to tame the same monkey he had boasted to have subdued not a long while ago? Having evil sons is indeed a cursed bane for the

mother as they cause more grief to her than even the most unfavourable of stars and malignant of fates.]"

रावन की रानी बिलखानी कहै जातुधानी,
हाहा! कोऊ कहै बीसबाहु दसमाथसों।
काहे मेघनाद! काहे, काहे रे महोदर ! तूँ
धीरजु न देत, लाइ लेत क्यों न हाथसों।।
काहे अतिकाय! काहे, काहे रे अकंपन!
अभागे तीय त्यागे भोंडे भागे जात साथ सों।
'तुलसी' बढ़ाई बादि सालतें बिसाल बाहैं,
याही बल बालिसो बिरोधु रघुनाथसों।।13।।

13. rāvana kī rānīm bilakhānī kahai jātudhānīm,
hāhā! kō'ū kahai bīsabāhu dasamāthasōm.
kāhē mēghanāda! kāhē, kāhē rē mahōdara! tūm̃
dhīraju na dēta, lā'i lēta kyōm na hāthasōm..
kāhē atikāya! kāhē, kāhē rē akampana!
abhāgē tīya tyāgē bhōṇrē bhāgē jāta sātha sōm.
'tulasī' barhā'īm bādi sālātēm bisāla bāhairm,
yāhīm bala bālisō birōdhu raghunāthasōm..13..

Verse no. 5/13—Demonesses, who were queens of Ravana, cried uncontrollably and inconsolably, lamenting woefully as they wailed, 'Oh Gosh! Someone should inform our pitiable condition to the ten-headed and twenty-armed Ravana (their husband, the demon king).

Why, oh you Meghnad! And why, oh you Mahodar! Why don't you now step forward to console us and why don't you give us protection of your arms (something of which you had boasted of ever since you had stepped out of your cradle)? Oh you Atikai, and you Akampan! Oh you luckless idiots. Why do you abandon your women folk and run away en-masse, leaving us in the lurch?

You fellows have uselessly lengthened your arms as long as teak trees. [That is, you pretend to have long and sturdy arms that have a long reach and can encircle your enemies and hold them in a vice-like grip, but actually they are no better than feeble creepers.]

Oh you fools and loggerheads! Is this the cowardly strength relying on which you have created enmity with Sri Raghunath (the Lord of Raghu's kingdom; Lord Sri Ram)? [Now come on; show your valour when the time has come. Instead, you prefer to flee.]

हाट-बाट, कोट-ओट, अटनि, अगार, पौरि,
खोरि-खोरि दौरि-दौरि दीन्ही अति आगि है।
आरत पुकारत, सँभारत न कोऊ काहु,
ब्याकुल जहाँ सो तहाँ लोक चले भागि हैं।।
बालधी फिरावै, बार-बार झहरावै, झरै
बुँदिया-सी लंक पघिलाइ पाग पागिहै।
'तुलसी' बिलोकि अकुलानी जातुधानी कहैं,
चित्रहू के कपि सों निसाचरु न लागिहै।।14।।

14. hāṭa-bāṭa, kōṭa-ōṭa, aṭani, agāra, pauri,
 khōri-khōri dauri-dauri dīnhī ati āgi haiai.
 ārata pukārata, saṁbhārata na kō'ū kāhū,
 byākula jahāṁ sō tahāṁ lōka calē bhāgi haiṁ..
 bālādī phirāvai, bāra-bāra jhaharāvai, jharaiṁ
 buṁdiyā-sī laṅka paghilā'i pāga pāgihai.
 'tulasī' bilōki akulānī jātudhānīṁ kahaiṁ,
 citrahū kē kapi sōṁ nisācaru na lāgihai..14..

Verse no. 5/14—In this way, Hanuman set to fire the market places, forts, palaces, ramparts and gates, houses, lanes and by-lanes, every nook and corner of the city (1).

Everyone is crying in agony, and no one bothers about another; all are running helter-skelter (2).

Hanuman shook his tail often, and ambers and sparks of fire flew from it as if he wished to prepare a sweet dish called Bundiya made of small round globules of gram-flour soaked in treacle (molasses) symbolized by the melted-down gold of Lanka (3).

Seeing all this, the demonesses (female demons) said that after witnessing such a horrific scene, the demons would not dare to fight even a dummy monkey in future (4).'

लगी, लागी आगि, भागि-भागि चले जहाँ-तहाँ,
 धीयको न माय, बाप पूत न सँभारहीं।
 छूटे बार, बसन उघारे, धूम-धुंध अंध,
 कहैं बारे-बूढ़े 'बारि, बारि' बार बारहीं॥
 हय हिहिनात, भागे जात घहरात गज,
 भारी भीर ठेलि-पेलि रौंदि-खौंदि डारहीं।
 नाम लै चिलात, बिललात, अकुलात अति,
 'तात तात! तौंसिअत, झौंसिअत, झारहीं'॥15॥

15. lagī, lāgī āgi, bhāgi-bhāgi calē jahāṁ-tahāṁ,
 dhīyakō na māya, bāpa pūta na saṁbhārahīṁ.
 chūṭē bāra, basana ughārē, dhūma-dhundha andha,
 kahaiṁ bārē-būṛhē 'bāri, bāri' bāra bārahīṁ..
 haya hihināta, bhāgē jāta ghaharāta gaja,
 bhārī bhīra ṭhēli-pēli raundi-khaundi ḍārahīṁ.
 nāma lai cilāta, bilalāta, akulāta ati,
 'tāta tāta! taunsi'ata, jhaunsi'ata, jhārahīṁ'..15..

Verse no. 5/15—Everyone is panicky and run hither-thither at random, shouting 'It has caught fire. It's burning!'

Neither does a mother bother about her daughter, nor a father about his son. Their hairs and clothes have become dishevelled, everyone has become (virtually) naked, and having been blinded by the dense smoke (emerging from the fire), all are shouting for water. The horses run away neighing, the elephants trumpet wildly as they trample underfoot the huge crowd which has collected. Everyone is calling others by their names, and all of them are agitated and writhing in agony due to the scorching heat. A raucous cry fills the city with everyone shouting, 'Oh my God! The

flames are scorching us; it's intolerably hot! [Where to do we escape from this raging hell of a fire that surrounds us from all quarters?]

लपट कराल ज्वालजालमाल दहूँ दिसि,
धूम अकुलाने, पहिचानै कौन काहि रे।
पानीको ललात बिललात, जरे गात जात
परे पाइमाल जात 'भात! तूँ निबाहि रे॥
प्रिया तूँ पराहि, नाथ!नाथ! तूँ पराहि, बाप!
बाप तूँ पराहि, पूत!पूत! तूँ पराहि रे'।
'तुलसी' बिलोकि लोग ब्याकुल बेहाल कहैं,
लेहि दससीस अब बीस चख चाहि रे॥16॥

16. lapaṭa karāla jvālajālamāla dahūṁ disi,
dhūma akulānē, pahicānai kauna kāhi rē.
pānīkō lalāta bilalāta, jarē gāta jāta
parē pā'imāla jāta 'bhrāta! tūṁ nibāhi rē..
priyā tūṁ parāhi, nātha!nātha! tūṁ parāhi, bāpa!
bāpa tūṁ parāhi, pūta!pūta! tūṁ parāhi rē'.
'tulasi' bilōki lōga byākula bēhāla kahaim,
lēhi dasasīsa aba bīsa cakha cāhi rē..16..

Verse no. 5/16—The terrible, leaping flames of the 'garland' (the girdle) of fire has spread in all the 10 directions (i.e. everywhere)¹. All are extremely distressed due to the choking smoke. Who could recognise anyone in that tumult? All are dying for water; their bodies are getting scorched, they are highly distressed and cry out, 'Oh brother! Save me! Dear! You run away from here to save yourself! Oh Lord, run away! Father, oh father! Run! Oh son, listen son! Escape from here!'

Tulsidas says that everyone is extremely distressed, woeful to the extreme, agitated and tormented, and all of them curse Ravana by the bountiful—'Oh you wretched fellow known as Ravana! Now see what you have done, with all of your 20 eyes².'

[Note—¹The 10 directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, nadir and zenith.

²Ravana had ten heads, each with two eyes. Hence he had 10 heads x 2 eyes in each head = 20 eyes. To say 'look with all your 20 eyes' is a sort of scorn-filled remark implying that Ravana should open all his eyes wide to watch the destruction he has brought forth upon the city, and not turn his face away to behave like an ostrich when it is in distress.]

बीथिका-बजार प्रति, अटनि अगार प्रति,
पवरि-पगार प्रति बानरु बिलोकिए।
अध-ऊर्ध बानर, बिदिसि-दिसि बानरु है,
मानो रह्यौ है भरि बानरु तिलोकिएँ॥
मूँदै आँखि हियमें, उघारें आँखि आगें ठढो,
धाइ जाइ जहाँ-तहाँ, और कोऊ कोकिए।
लेहू, अब लेहु तब कोऊ न सिखाबो मानो,
सोई सतराइ जाइ जाहि-जाहि रोकिए॥17॥

17. bīthikā-bajāra prati, aṭani agāra prati,
 pavari-pagāra prati bānaru bilōki'ē.
 adha-ūrdha bānara, bidisi-disi bānaru hai,
 mānō rahyau hai bhari bānaru tilōki'ēṃ..
 mūṃdaiṃ āṃkhi hiyamēṃ, ughārēṃ āṃkhi āgēṃ ṭhārḥō,
 dhā'i jā'i jahāṃ-tahāṃ, aura kō'ū kōki'ē.
 lēhū, aba lēhu taba kō'ū na sikhābō mānō,
 sō'i satarā'i jā'i jāhi-jāhi rōki'ē..17..

Verse no. 5/17—Hanuman is moving so swiftly that wherever one sees—lanes and by-lanes, markets, house-tops, every house, doorway and its walls etc.—only the monkey is seen, above and below, in all the directions. Wherever one turns, one can see that monkey as if he has filled (spread over) all the 3 worlds (like an evil omen that had descended upon the city of Lanka).

His image is visible while one closes one's eyes, and on opening them he appears to be standing right in front, menacingly. Whenever, wherever they (the citizens of Lanka) call anyone, it appears that Hanuman answers the call and stands in front to frighten the wits out of the caller. When they try to stop anyone, he gets angry, saying, 'Look; look now! No one had paid attention to our advice earlier¹.'

[Note—¹Surely there must have been some wise demons in the city who had been in favour of allowing the monkey to get away from there after they had witnessed how he had laid to waste the royal garden of Ravana and had beaten black and blue the guards who had tried to intervene. It would have made sense not to aggravate the situation any more right then, but instead be alarmed and take warning that this fellow, the monkey, is sure to come back at the behest of his master, whosoever he may be, in full strength alongside his companions once he had seen how to breach the city's defenses. It would have made sense to pull up the sock and learn a lesson from this intrusion to be prepared with full diligence and might for the almost certain ill-tidings that were to come upon the city like the dark clouds of doomsday that loomed over the horizon. Due diligence and proper preparations and girdling one's self with resolve to face the unforeseen eventuality was the demand of the day and advice of the wisdom, and not the stupidity and foolishness of trying to further instigate the monkey who seems to possess some mysterious strength that was far superior to the combined strength of all the demon army.

So the wise demons who were in favour of releasing Hanuman and letting him go away now lamented that their views were neglected and brushed aside by the nature of belligerence, haughtiness and arrogance that dominated the majority of the demon clan. And now the result is for everyone to behold.]

एक करै धौज, एक कहै, काढ़ौ सौज, एक
 औजि, पानी पीकै कहै, बनत न आवनो ।
 एक परे गाढ़े एक डाढ़त ही काढ़े, एक
 देखत हैं ठाढ़े, कहै, पावकु भयावनो ।।
 'तुलसी' कहत एक 'नीकें हाथ लाए कपि,
 अजहूँ न छाड़ै बालु गालको बजावनो' ।
 'धाओ रे, बुझाओ रे,' कि 'बावरे हौ रावरे, या
 औरै आगि लागी न बुझावै सिंधु सावनो' ।।18।।

18. ēka karaim̐ dhauñja, ēka kahaim̐, kār̥hau sauñja, ēka
 auñji, pāñi pīkai kahaim̐, banata na āvanō.
 ēka parē gār̥hē ēka ḍār̥hata hīm̐ kār̥hē, ēka
 dēkhata haim̐ ṭhār̥hē, kahaim̐, pāvaku bhayāvanō..
 'tulasī' kahata ēka 'nīkēm̐ hātha lā'ē kapi,
 ajahūṃ na chār̥ai bālu gālakō bajāvanō'.
 'dhā'ō rē, bujhā'ō rē,' ki 'bāvarē hau rāvarē, yā
 aunrai āgi lāgi na bujhāvai sindhu sāvanō'..18..

Verse no. 5/18—Some are running helter-skelter in panic; some say 'take out the arms (so that we can fight back with this bellicose monkey)'; some become distressed due to intensity of the heat and reply 'it is not possible to come any longer'; some are not able to decide what to do; some are being dragged out of the fire half-burnt; some are standing stunned and cry out, 'the fire is very intolerable and ferocious.'

Tulsidas observes that some of the demons say—'This fellow Hanuman has taught him (i.e. the demon king Ravana) a nice lesson, but the pity is that this idiot still does not understand how things are, and he still does want to refrain himself from being arrogant and haughty'.

Some of the demons exhort others, saying—'Oh run, and put out the fire', and the listener retorts, 'have you become mad? This is a different type of fire which cannot be doused by even the ocean itself, or the rain-clouds of Sawan (the rainy season) if they pour out their entire content upon the city.'

कोपि दसकंध तब प्रलय पयोद बोले,
 रावन-रजाइ धाए आइ जूथ जोरि कै ।
 कह्यो लंकपति लंक बरत, बुताओ बेगि,
 बानरु बहाइ मारौ महाबारि बोरि कै ॥
 'भलें नाथ!' नाइ माथ चलें पाथप्रदनाथ,
 बरछैं मुसलधार बार-बार घोरि कै ।
 जीवनतैं जागी आगी, चपरि चौगुनी लागी,
 'तुलसी' भभरि मेघ भागे मुखु मोरि कै ॥19॥

19. kōpi dasakandha taba pralaya payōda bōlē,
 rāvana-rajā'i dhā'ē ā'i jūtha jōri kai.
 kahyō laṅkapati laṅka barata, butā'ō bēgi,
 bānaru bahā'i mārau mahābāri bōri kai..
 'bhalēm̐ nātha!' nā'i mātha calēm̐ pāthapradanātha,
 baraśaim̐ musaladhāra bāra-bāra ghōri kai.
 jīvanatēm̐ jāgī āgī, capari caugunī lāgī,
 'tulasī' bhabhari mēgha bhāgē mukhu mōri kai..19..

Verse no. 5/19—Then Ravana angrily summoned the dooms-day clouds, and they came in hurriedly along with all their companions. The lord of Lanka told them 'Oh clouds! Douse the fire burning Lanka with your water (torrential rains), and kill the monkey by drowning him in deep waters.' Saying, 'all right, Lord!', the clouds bowed their heads and started pouring torrential rain and rumbled repeatedly; but (to every one's astonishment) the fire increased four-fold by the water and became more ferocious and terrible.

Tulsidas says that the clouds became so afraid (at their failure to douse the fire) that they turned on their heels and ran away.

[Note—It is pertinent to make an observation at this juncture. According to metaphysical interpretation of things, Lord Ram's 'Beej Mantra' or 'seed Mantra' (which simply means the basic mystical formula consisting of some esoteric words that relate specifically to a particular Divinity or Divine Being, and which is used in spiritual practices such as doing meditation and repetition of the Divinity's holy name as a tool to invoke the Divinity's blessings and harness the cosmic energy represented by that particular Divinity) is "Raam/Raan(g)" (i.e. it is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ra' with a dot known as the anuswar on top). This Beej Mantra also happens to be the one for the 'fire element'. And this means that Lord Ram represents the energy of the cosmic 'fire' that is the most powerful force of creation. This fact is clear when we closely observe how Ram was born: he was born out of a pudding emerging from the pit of the fire sacrifice his father Dasrath had done to bet sons. So, Lord Ram harboured the cosmic fire in him, and no worldly water such as the rain will be able to douse it.

Now, when this cosmic spark of the fire assumed a form in the guise of Lord Ram and decided to descend upon the earth to scorch the demons to death (just like lightening from the cloud that falls upon the earth to reduce to charcoal anything upon which it lands), it needed some base to support it. And Sita was that base. Remember: Sita was born out of the earth hidden in a pitcher when her father Janak was ploughing the ground to prepare it for some religious sacrifice. So, Sita was the 'base' which was planted by Lord Ram as a ground-work to prepare for his own landing on the soil of Lanka.

Who was Hanuman and what does he symbolise? He is said to be the son of the Wind God and an incarnation of Rudra, the 11th and the most ferocious form of Shiva, the god overseeing the conclusion of creation as the third of the Trinity Gods. Fire needs 'air' to be ignited and kept alive, and the 'wind' fans its spread. Remember: Lord Ram had given a ring to Hanuman at the time of his departure for Lanka. This ring was to serve two purposes—one was as a identification tool so that Sita could know who he was, and the other was to 'send the fuse to ignite the fire by remote control'!

Say, who or what force on this small earth can put out the fire that has been ignited by the powerful cosmic spark that burns the greatest of suns like a hellish cauldron in the bowls of the universe. Say, can the petty rain coming down from the cloud with its limited stock of water douse it when it can't even water the stretch of the great sand deserts that spread on the surface of this earth at so many places?

This is the reason why the poor clouds could not douse the fire at Lanka. See also verse no. 22 below where Malyawan says essentially the same thing to Ravana.]

इहाँ ज्वाल जरे जात, उहाँ ग्लानि गरे गात,
 सूखे सकुचात सब कहत पुकार हैं।
 'जुग षट भानु देखे प्रलयकृसानु देखे,
 सेष-मुख-अनल बिलोके बार-बार हैं ॥
 'तुलसी' सुन्यो न कान सलिलु सर्पी-समान,
 अति अचिरिजु कियो कंसरीकुमार हैं'।
 बारिद-बचन सुनि धुने सीस सचिवन्ह,
 कहैं दससीस! 'ईस-बामता-बिकार हैं' ॥20॥

20. ihāṃ jvāla jarē jāta, uhāṃ glāni garē gāta,
 sūkhē sakucāta saba kahata pukāra haiṃ.
 'juga śaṭa bhānu dēkhē pralayakṛsānu dēkhē,
 sēśa-mukha-anala bilōkē bāra-bāra haiṃ..
 'tulasī' sun'yō na kāna salilu sarpī-samāna,
 ati aciriju kiyō kēsarikumāra haiṃ'.
 bārīda-bacana suni dhunē sīsa sacivanha,
 kahaiṃ dasasīsa! 'īsa-bāmatā-bikāra haiṃ'..20..

Verse no. 5/20—The clouds themselves were getting scorched by the leaping flames of the fire that reached as high as the sky, and they felt deeply frustrated and utterly astonished. All the clouds became dry (devoid of rain) and hesitantly called out, 'We had seen all the 12 suns¹ as well as the fire of dooms-day, and had also witnessed the flames leaping out of the mouth of the legendary serpent called Seshnath. But we have never heard water turn into Ghee (oil, clarified butter) that would stoke the raging fire instead of putting it down! This great miracle has been performed by the son of Kesari (Hanuman).'

Ravana's ministers banged their heads on hearing the clouds, and exclaimed, 'All this is due to being opposed to God (i.e. this is the fruit of our own sins).'

[Note—¹According to mythology, there are believed to be 12 cosmic suns called 'Adityas'. All of them are said to rise at the time of dooms-day to scorch the world with their combined heat.

According to Vishnu Puran, the twelve Adityas are the following— Dhaataa, Aryamaa, Mitra, Varun, Anshu, Bhug, Indra, Vivaswaan, Pushaa, Parjanya, Twashtaa and Vishnu.]

‘पावकु, पवनु, पानी, भानु, हिमवानु, जमु,
 कालु, लोकपाल मेरे डर डावाँडोल हैं।
 साहेबु महेसु सदा संकित रमेसु मोहिं
 महातप साहस बिरंचि लिन्हें मोल हैं।।
 ‘तुलसी’ तिलोक आजु दूजो न बिराजै राजु,
 बाजे-बाजे राजनिके बेटा-बेटी ओल हैं।
 को है ईस नामको, जो बाम होत मोहूसे को,
 मालवान! रावरेके बावरे-से बोल हैं’।।21।।

21. 'pāvaku, pavanu, pānī, bhānu, himavānu, jamu,
 kālu, lōkapāla mērē ḍara ḍāvāṃḍōla haiṃ.
 sāhēbu mahēsu sadā saṅkita ramēsu mōhim
 mahātapa sāhasa birañci linhēm mōla haiṃ..
 'tulasī' tilōka āju dūjō na birājai rāju,
 bājē-bājē rājanikē bēṭā-bēṭi ōla haiṃ.
 kō hai īsa nāmakō, jō bāma hōta mōhūsē kō,
 mālavāna! rāvarēkē bāvarē-sē bōla haiṃ'..21..

Verse no. 5/21—Hearing his ministers' lamentation (verse no. 20), Ravana expressed surprise and said boastfully, 'Fire, Wind, Water, Sun, the Himalayas, Yam (god who controls hell), Kaal (death personified), Indra and other Gods—all of them shiver and

tremble out of my fear. My Lord is Sri Shiva (the mightiest of Gods); Vishnu, the husband of Laxmi is always afraid of me. I have even brought Lord Brahma (the Creator) under my control due to hard penances and sacrifices; he also cannot go against me. There is no Emperor above me (and besides me) in all the 3 worlds so much so that I have held captive the sons and daughters of renowned kings. Oh Malyawan (who was one of his senior ministers)! You speak like a mad-man. Who is this fellow called 'Ishwar' (God) who can afford to go against me?'

[Note—Malyawan was an elderly maternal grandfather of Ravana. He had tried to make Ravana see reason and abandon his recklessness before it was too late. His advice to Ravana was sternly rebuked, and so was the advice of all others who had tried to avoid the calamitous war. Refer to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 40; and (b) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49 for Malyawan's advice.]

भूमि भूमिपाल, ब्यालपालक पताल, नाक-
पाल, लोकपाल जेते, सुभट-समाजु है।
कहै मालवान, जातुधानपति! रावरे को
मनहूँ अकाजु आनै, ऐसो कौन आजु है॥
रामकोहु पावकु, समीरु सीय-स्वासु, कीसु,
ईस-बामता बिलोकु, बानरको ब्याजु है।
जारत पचारि फेरि-फेरि सो निसंक लंक,
जहाँ बाँको बीरु तोसो सूर-सिरताजु है॥22॥

22. bhūmi bhūmipāla, byālapālaka patāla, nāka-
pāla, lōkapāla jētē, subhaṭa-samāju hai.
kahai mālavāna, jātudhānapati! rāvarē kō
manahūṁ akāju ānai, aisō kauna āju hai..
rāmakōhu pāvaku, samīru sīya-svāsu, kīsu,
īsa-bāmatā bilōku, bānarakō byāju hai.
jārata pacāri phēri-phēri sō nisaṅka laṅka,
jahāṁ bāṁkō bīru tōsō sūra-siratāju hai..22..

Verse no. 5/22—Then Malyawan replied, 'Of all the kings of this earth, the serpents of the subterranean world or Gods in the heaven—oh Lord of demons, who can ever think of doing harm to you? But this fire is totally different—it is Ram's anger and wrath personified, the hot wind which is blowing (to fan the flames) is the breath of Janki (Sita), and this monkey is the personification of opposition to the Lord God, his physical body being only an excuse for the retribution. This is the reason why inspite of the presence of such valiant warriors as yourself, this fellow is roaming fearlessly without any hesitation or obstruction, and burning down Lanka unhindered.'

पान-पकवान बिधि नाना के, सँधानो, सीधो,
बिबिध बिधान धान बरत बखारहीं।
कनककिरीट कोटि पलँग, पेटारे, पीठ
काढ़त कहार सब जरे भरे भारहीं॥
प्रबल अनल बाढ़ें जहाँ काढ़े तहाँ डाढ़े,
झपट-लपट भरे भवन-भँडारहीं।

‘तुलसी’ अगारु न पगारु न बजारु बच्यो,
हाथी हथसार जरे घोरे घोरसारही ।।23 ।।

23. pāna-pakavāna bidhi nānā kē, saṁdhānō, sīdhō,
bibidha bidhāna dhāna barata bakhārahīm.
kanakakirīṭa kōṭi palam̐ga, pētārē, pīṭha
kāṛhata kahāra saba jarē bharē bhārahīm..
prabala anala bārḥēm jahām̐ kāṛhē tahām̐ ḍārḥē,
jhapaṭa-lapaṭa bharē bhavana-bham̐ḍārahīm.
‘tulasī’ agāru na pagāru na bajāru bacyō,
hāthī hathasāra jarē ghōrē ghōrasārahīm..23..

Verse no. 5/23—Different types of drinks, eatables, pickles, rice, wheat and other grains and pulses, and various types of crops are burning in their storehouses. Labourers are being burnt alive in trying to remove crores (millions) of golden crowns, beds, boxes and thrones. Because of the ever increasing ferocity of the fire, all the substances and things were burnt outside even after being taken out of the houses and store-houses, and the licking flames have spread in all the houses and stores, sparing no nook or corner of the city.

Tulsidas says that neither any house could survive nor any market place or a wall was left standing. The elephants and horses got burnt (roasted) alive in their respective yards and stables.

हाट-बाट हाटकु पिघिलि चलो घी-सो घनो,
कनक-कराही लंक तलफति तायसों ।
नाना पकवान जातुधान बलवान सब
पागि पागि ढेरी कीन्ही भलीभाँति भायसों ।।
पाहुने कृसानु पवमानसों परोसो, हनुमान
सनमानि कै जेवाए चित-चायसों ।
‘तुलसी’ निहारि अरिनारि दै-दै गारि कहैं
‘बावरें सुरारि बैरु कीन्हौ रामरायसों’ ।।24 ।।

24. hāṭa-bāṭa hāṭaku pighili calō ghī-sō ghanō,
kanaka-karāhī laṅka talaphati tāyasōm.
nānā pakavāna jātudhāna balavāna saba
pāgi pāgi ḍhērī kīnhī bhalībhām̐ti bhāyasōm..
pāhunē kṛsānu pavamānasōm̐ parōsō, hanumāna
sanamāni kai jēnvā'e cita-cāyasōm.
‘tulasī’ nihāri arināri dai-dai gāri kahaim̐
‘bāvarēm̐ surāri bairu kīnhau rāmarāyasōm’..24..

Verse no. 5/24—Gold melted and flowed like melted butter (ghee) on the streets in the market places. The city of Lanka appeared to be a huge boiling cauldron of gold (1).

The dead demons appeared to be various sweet dishes being fried in it and arranged in heaps (2), and Hanuman was serving his guest (the Fire God), with the help of wind (the Wind God), the most delicious of sweets and snacks, as it were (3).

Seeing this, the demonesses are cursing, ‘Oh look! This mad Ravana has made Lord Ram an enemy (and wrought this havoc on us) (4).’

रावनु सो राजरोगु बाढ़त बिराट-उर,
 दिनु-दिनु बिकल, सकल सुख राँक सो ।
 नाना उपचार करि हारे सुर, सिद्ध, मुनि,
 होत न बिसोक, औत पावै न मनाक सो ।।
 रामकी रजाइतें रसाइनी समीरसूनु
 उतरि पयोधि पार सोधि सरवाक सो ।
 जातुधान-बुट पुटपाक लंक-जातरूप-
 रतन जतन जारि कियो है मृगांक-सो ।।25 ।।

25. rāvanu sō rājarōgu bār̥hata birāṭa-ura,
 dinu-dinu bikala, sakala sukha rām̐ka sō.
 nānā upacāra kari hārē sura, sid'dha, muni,
 hōta na bisōka, auta pāvai na manāka sō..
 rāmakī rajā'itēm rasā'inī samīrasūnu
 utari payōdhi pāra sōdhi saravāka sō.
 jātudhāna-buṭa puṭapāka laṅka-jātarūpa-
 ratana jatana jāri kiyō hai mṛgāṅka-sō..25..

Verse no. 5/25—Ravana was like tuberculosis that was increasing by each passing day in the chest of Viraat-Purush (the cosmic form of the Supreme God), due to which He was gradually getting emaciated and was being deprived of all peace and happiness (1).

The Gods, saints and mystics had tried all sorts of medicines and had failed to cure or relieve Him the slightest (2).

Then, on the orders of Lord Ram, the Aurvedic Doctor (a doctor who uses herbs as medicines) called Hanuman, crossed the ocean and made a special chemical remedy (a concoction) made up of the prey (Lanka), the herbs (the demons) and ashes and chemicals (of burnt gold and jewels which adorned the city) in order to cure the disease of the Viraat-Purush (3-4).

[Note—The metaphors are obvious. The Supreme Lord was feeling uneasy because of the tyranny that the cruel demon Ravana had unleashed on this world. The pain of the creatures was tormenting the Lord who could not bear it any longer. All methods adopted by the Gods and sages to control Ravana failed, so the Lord decided to call in the help of his trouble-shooter named Hanuman and asked him to do something. Hanuman went off to Lanka and made a final attempt to teach Ravana a lesson by punishing him ruthlessly so that he might relent and stop his reckless behaviour. By burning Lanka Hanuman sought to tell Ravana that he must realise the sort of pain, agony and horror he and his demons are causing to the rest of the helpless population in this world simply because they are strong and powerful and no one has the guts and the strength to oppose them. Now that he has got a first-hand taste of his own medicine, the Lord expected that Ravana would understand the pain of others, and stop his cruel actions forthwith.]

Hanumān's Departure from Lankā

जारि-बारि, कै बिधूम, बारिधि बुताइ लूम,

नाइ माथो पगनि, भो ठाढ़ो कर जोरि कै ।
 मातु! कृपा कीजै, सहिदानि दीजै, सुनि सीय
 दीन्ही है असीस चारु चूड़ामनि छोरि कै ।।
 कहा कहौ तात! देखे जात ज्यो बिहात दिन,
 बड़ी अवलंब ही, सो चले तुम्ह तोरि कै ।
 'तुलसी' सनीर नैन, नेहसो सिथिल बैन,
 बिकल बिलोकि कपि कहत निहोरि कै ।।26 ।।

26. jāri-bāri, kai bidhūma, bāridhi butā'i lūma,
 nā'i māthō pagani, bhō ṭhārḥō kara jōri kai.
 mātu! kṛpā kījai, sahidāni dījai, suni sīya
 dīnhī hai asīsa cāru cūḍāmani chōri kai..
 kahā kahaurṁ tāta! dēkhē jāta jyōm bihāta dina,
 baṛī avalamba hī, sō calē tumha tōri kai.
 'tulasī' sanīra naina, nēhasō sithila baina,
 bikala bilōki kapi kahata nihōri kai..26..

Verse no. 5/26—After burning down Lanka and making it luster-less and life-less (blackened like lamp-black and reduced to ash), Hanuman doused his burning tail by jumping into the ocean, and then stood before Sita with folded hands and palms touching each other as a token of great respect (1)—‘Oh Mother! Please be kind to give me a token (which I can take back to Lord Ram).’

Hearing this, Sita blessed him and detaching the jewel worn in her hairs, gave it to him, and said (2)—‘Son, what can I tell you! How I am passing my days, you've seen for yourself. Your presence was a great reassurance and source of courage for me, but you speak of departing (3).’

Tulsidas says tears welled-up in her eyes and the voice choked. Seeing her pitiful condition, Hanuman consoled her in these words (4)

[Note—Refer also to (i) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26—to Doha no. 27; and (ii) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 14-15.]

‘दिवस छ-सात जात जानिबे न, मातु! धरु
 धीर, अरि-अंतकी अवधि रहि थोरिकै ।
 वारिधि बँधाइ सेतु ऐहँ भानुकुलकेतु
 सानुज कुसल कपिकटकु बटोरि कै’ ।।
 बचन बिनीत कहि, सीताको प्रबोधु करि,
 ‘तुलसी’ त्रिकूट चढ़ि कहत डफोरि कै ।
 ‘जै जै जानकीस दससीस-करि-केसरी’
 कपीसु कूद्यो बात-घात उदधि हलोरि कै ।।27 ।।

27. 'divasa cha-sāta jāta jānibē na, mātu! dharu
 dhīra, ari-antakī avadhi rahi thōrikai.
 vāridhi baṁdhā'i sētu aihaim bhānukulakētu
 sānuja kusala kapikaṭaku baṭōri kai'..
 bacana binīta kahi, sītākō prabōdhu kari,
 'tulasī' trikūṭa caḍhi kahata ḍaphōri kai.
 'jai jai jānakīsa dasasīsa-kari-kēsari'

kapīsu kūdyō bāta-ghāta udadhi halōri kai..27..

Verse no. 5/27—‘Mother! Have patience! Bear for another 6-7 days. The end of the enemy is near; very little time is left (1).

Alongwith his brother (Laxman) and army (of monkeys) Lord Ram will construct a bridge across the ocean and come here soon (2).’

Thus consoling Sita, bowing his head to her (and taking her leave), he jumped above Mt. Trikoot and shouted at the top of his voice (3), "Glory to Lord Ram who is like a lion as opposed to Ravana who is like an elephant."

Saying this, Hanuman leapt across the ocean, and the turbulence caused in the air due to this created waves in the ocean below (4).

{Having taken leave from Sita, Hanuman leapt back across the ocean to arrive on this side where his companions had been eagerly waiting for him.}

Hanumān's Arrival Back at Kishkindhā

साहसी समीरसूनु नीरनिधि लंघि लखि
लंक सिद्धपीठु निसि जागो है मसानु सो ।
'तुलसी' बिलोकि महासाहसु प्रसन्न भई
देबी सीय-सारिखी, दियो है बरदानु सो ॥
बाटिका उजारि, अछधारि मारि, जारि गढु,
भानुकुलभानुको प्रतापभानु-भानु-सो ।
करत बिसोक लोक-कोकनद, कोक कपि,
कहै जामवंत, आयो, आयो हनुमानु सो ॥२८॥

28. sāhasī samīrasūnu nīranidhi laṅghi lakhi
laṅka sid'dhapīṭhu nisi jāgō hai masānu sō.
'tulasī' bilōki mahāsāhasu prasanna bhaī
dēbī siya-sārikhī, diyō hai baradānu sō..
bāṭikā ujāri, achadhāri māri, jāri garhu,
bhānukulabhānukō pratāpabhānu-bhānu-sō.
karata bisōka lōka-kōkanada, kōka kapi,
khai jāmavanta, āyō, āyō hanumānu sō..28..

Verse no. 5/28—The bear king Jamvant said—‘The brave son of the Wind-God had leapt across the ocean and treated Lanka as a ‘Sidha Peeth’ (a specially blessed place which can endow success in any venture, particularly related to spiritualism). He therefore had done mystical tantrik rituals as done in a cremation ground during the preceding night (i.e. he had burnt the city during the night). [In occult forms of worship of the goddess of death, the worshipper uses the cremation ground for his rituals. Here, the metaphor is employed to imply that Hanuman had burnt Lanka in a ritualistic manner, systematically and formally.]

Seeing his immense courage and valour, the Goddess-like Sita became very pleased and blessed him with a boon. Having ruined the garden (Ashok grove), slaying the army of Akshay Kumar and then burning Lanka, Hanuman has returned to us. He has removed the sorrows of this lotus-like world and Chakravak-like monkeys by assuming the form of the rays of the sun (daylight) that symbolizes the astounding

glory and majesty of Lord Ram who himself is like a sun of the Solar race¹. Look, he has come back, he has come back!!' [Chakravaks=ruddy goose]. [5/28]

[Note—¹Lord Ram was born in the Solar race. The lotus flower opens up during the day time and the ruddy goose also wakes up at dawn. In this stanza, Hanuman is compared to the light of the sun in as much as it is he who acted as the flag-bearer of Lord Ram's fame. Had it not been for Hanuman, neither would Sita have been found nor would the war won by Ram. Just like the rays of the sun eliminating darkness from all corners of the earth, arrival of Hanuman removed the pall of gloom and the scepter of disaster that loomed over the monkeys on this side of the ocean as they waited most eagerly looking up into the sky in the south direction as Hanuman flew in.]

गगन निहारि, किलकारी भारी सुनि,
हनुमान पहिचानि भए सानँद सचेत हैं।
बूझत जहाज बच्यो पथिकसमाजु, मानो
आजु जाए जानि सब अंकमाल देत हैं॥
'जै जै जानकीस, जै जै लखन-कपीस' कहि,
कूदैं कपि कौतुकी नटत रेत-रेत हैं।
अंगदु मयंदु नलु नील बलसील महा
बालधी फिरावैं, मुख नाना गति लेत हैं॥29॥

29. gagana nihāri, kilakārī bhārī suni,
hanumāna pahicāni bha'e sānaṁda sacēta haiṁ.
būṛata jahāja bacyō pathikasamāju, mānō
āju jā'e jāni saba aṅkamāla dēta haiṁ..
'jai jai jānakīsa, jai jai lakhana-kapīsa' kahi,
kūdaiṁ kapi kautukī naṭata rēta-rēta haiṁ.
aṅgadu mayandu nalu nīla balasīla mahā
bāladhī phirāvaiṁ, mukha nānā gati lēta haiṁ..29..

Verse no. 5/29—Hearing the joyful and shrill cry of Hanuman, all the assembled bears and monkeys (on this side of the ocean) looked skywards, and recognizing that he was Hanuman, they all became exuberant, exceedingly happy and euphoric as if a ship, along with its crew and passengers, has just escaped being sunk. They embraced each other in ecstasy as if they had been re-born.

Shouting 'Glory to the Lord of Janki (i.e. Ram)! Glory to Laxman! Glory to Sugriv!' all those monkeys and bears jumped gleefully and danced merrily on the sand of the ocean shore. Most valiant among them—Angad, Mayand, Neel, Nal—twisted and waved their large tails and happily made funny faces at each other.

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28.]

आयो हनुमानु, प्रानहेतु अंकमाल देत,
लेत पगधूरि एक, चूमत लँगूल हैं।
एक बूझैं बार-बार सीय-समाचार, कहैं

पवनकुमारु, भो बिगतश्रम-सूल हैं ॥
 एक भूखे जानि, आगे आनें कंद-मूल-फल,
 एक पूजै बाहु बलमूल तोरि फूल हैं ।
 एक कहै 'तुलसी' सकल सिधि तारै, जारै
 कृपा-पाथनाथ सीतानाथु साबुकूल हैं ॥३०॥

30. āyō hanumānu, prānahētu aṅkamāla dēta,
 lēta pagadhūri ēka, cūmata laṁgūla haiṁ.
 ēka bījhaiṁ bāra-bāra siya-samācāra, kahaiṁ
 pavanakumāru, bhō bigataśrama-sūla haiṁ..
 ēka bhūkhē jāni, āgēm ānaiṁ kanda-mūla-phala,
 ēka pūjaiṁ bāhu balamūla tōri phūla haiṁ.
 ēka kahaiṁ 'tulasī' sakala sidhi tākēm, jākēm
 kṛpā-pāthanātha sītānāthu sānukūla haiṁ..30..

Verse no. 5/30—On his landing on this side of the ocean, the monkeys regarded him as their saviour, and some embraced him, while others took the dust of his feet, or kissed his tail (1).

Some asked the news of Sita, and narrating it, it appeared the tiredness of Hanuman vanished (i.e. he felt exhilarated and joyful on telling the good news to them) (2).

Some of his companion brought bulbs, roots and fruits for him, thinking that he was hungry; still others adorned his arms with flowers and showered adulations on them (3).

Some said that one on whom Lord Ram has become benign and favourable can accomplish all the tasks in this world (4).

{The party of jubilant monkeys and bears came to the Rishyamook Mountain where Lord Ram waited with Laxman and Sugriv for the news.}

सीयको सनेहु, सीलु, कथा तथा लंकाकी
 कहत चले चायसों, सिरानो पथु छनमें ।
 कह्यो जुबराज बोलि बानरसमाजु, आजु
 खाहु फल, सुनि पेलि पैटे मधुबनमें ॥
 मारे बागवान, ते पुकारत देवान गे,
 'उजारे बाग अंगद' देखाए घाय तनमें ।
 कहै कपिराजु, करि काजु आए कीस, तुल-
 सीसकी सपथ महामोदु मेरे मनमें ॥३१॥

31. sīyakō sanēhu, sīlu, kathā tathā laṅkāki
 kahata calē cāyasōṁ, sirānō pathu chanamēm.
 kahyō jubarāja bōli bānarasamāju, āju
 khāhu phala, suni pēli paiṭhē madhubanamēm..
 mārē bāgavāna, tē pukārata dēvāna gē,
 'ujārē bāga aṅgada' dēkhā'ē ghāya tanamēm.
 kahai kapiṛāju, kari kāju ā'ē kīsa, tula-
 sīsakī sapatha mahāmōdu mērē manamēm..31..

Verse no. 5/31—Then they started to move towards Kishkindha from the shore of the ocean, all the while narrating and listening to the stories of Sita's devotion, affections, pure character and pious nature vis-à-vis her sorrowful surroundings and torments she was undergoing. As a result, the distance was covered soon (without them feeling tired). Reaching Kishkindha, Angad summoned all the monkeys and said, 'Today, all of you eat fruits to your heart's content!'

Hearing his orders, all the monkeys forcefully entered Madhuvan (i.e. a garden of sweet fruit trees laden with honey). Those gardeners who were beaten by excited monkeys ran to the court (of Sugriv) and complained. Showing him (Sugriv) their wounds they informed him that Angad had reduced the garden to waste. At this Sugriv exclaimed, 'In the name of the Lord of Tulsi (i.e. Sri Ram), it appears that the monkeys have completed the assigned task. Today my mind is feeling extremely happy (which is a good omen)!'

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 28—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29.]

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Part 3

Lord Ram collects an Army of Monkeys and Bears to Launch a Campaign to Recover Sita, Vibhishan Joins Lord Ram, Crossing the Ocean and the Arrival of the Lord's Forces in Lanka, the Prelude to the War and Attempts to avoid it through an Emissary for Peace.

(With Roman Transliteration of Verses, English Exposition and Notes)

This Part no. 3 of our Book has 4 Chapters as follows:-

Chapter 8 narrates how Lord Ram collected a huge army of monkeys and bears under the supervision of Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha and of the monkey race, to launch a military campaign to free Sita from the clutches of the demons; and the arrival of the Lord's army on the shore of the ocean.

Chapter 9 describes why and how Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, joins Lord Ram camp.

Chapter 10 narrates how the formidable army of Lord Ram crossed the mighty ocean by constructing a bridge across it, and landed on the shores of Lanka.

Chapter 11 deals with the prelude to the sacking of Lanka—The war parleys that were held, and Lord Ram’s sending of Angad as his emissary to Ravana to explore the possibility of avoiding a destructive bloody war.

In accordance with the method adopted by us in reading this wonderful and fascinating classical tale describing the story of Ravana and the epic war of Lanka, we shall be reading, one by one, from all the four classics as we have been doing till now—viz. Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan and Kavitaawali Ramayan.

Chapter 8

Lord Ram Collects a Huge Army of Monkeys and Bears and Launches a Military Campaign to Free Sita from the Clutches of the Demons; the Arrival of the Lord’s Army on the Shore of the Ocean.

After Hanuman had briefed Lord Ram about his adventurous journey to Lanka and the discovery of Sita, the Lord asked Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, to make immediate arrangements for the departure of the army of Kapis (monkeys and bears), that was kept on the stand-by, on the mission to free her from the clutches of her captor, the demon king Ravana, and at the same time to eliminate, once and for all, the scourge of the demons who had been tormenting the creatures of the earth. Orders were given, and a huge motivated and devoted army of countless Kapi warriors, who were all renowned for their matchless gallantry, bravery, courage and valour, was set in motion, marching enthusiastically and swiftly, with great zest and zeal, to accomplish the mission as quickly as possible. The formidable army of Lord Ram moved ahead in the southern direction as fast as the wind blows, swiftly and rapidly across the land, almost gliding through forests, valleys and mountainous terrain, till it finally reached the shore of the mighty ocean, and then their progress was suddenly checked as the ocean stood in the way and blocked further progress. Here Lord Ram pitched camp to discuss how to get over this barrier.

This part of this magnificent Story is covered in Chapter no. 8 of our Book. This Chapter has the following Sections:-

Section 8.1—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35;

Section 8.2—Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 1;

Section 8.3—Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 22;

Section 8.1: Ram Charit Manas

{Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35.}

तब रघुपति कपिपतिहि बोलावा । कहा चलैं कर करहु बनावा ॥ ६ ॥

अब बिलंबु केहि कारन कीजे । तुरत कपिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीजे ॥ ७ ॥
कौतुक देखि सुमन बहु बरषी । नभ तें भवन चले सुर हरषी ॥ ८ ॥

taba raghupati kapipatihi bōlāvā. kahā calaiṁ kara karahu banāvā. 6.
aba bilambu kē hi kārana kijē. turata kapinha kahuṁ āyasu dījē. 7.
kautuka dēkhi sumana bahu baraṣī. nabha tēm bhavana calē sura haraṣī. 8.

Then Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)¹ summoned the king of the Kapis (i.e. Sugriv)², and instructed him, ‘Make immediate arrangements for the departure of the army for Lanka. (6)

There is no reason why should there be any delay now. Call all the Kapis (the monkeys as well as their bear companions) and give them suitable instructions in this regard.’ (7)

The gods, who had assembled in the sky to watch the proceedings on the ground, greatly marveled and were amazed at the strange way the Lord acts and carries out his worldly sports; they were positively glad at the developments and the miraculous way the events had turned in their favour³. Then they showered flowers from the sky and cheerfully went to their respective abodes in the heaven⁴. (8)

[Note—¹During the course of reading of the Ramayana, many names of Lord Ram have been used, and one of them is “Raghupati”, literally meaning a Lord of the line of kings descending from the great and illustrious king Raghu of the ancient kingdom of Ayodhya.

²Tulsidas, a learned and skilled poet as he was, uses the term ‘Pati’, meaning a lord and a king, for both Lord Ram and Sugriv to signify that at this moment two great kings of two equally great kingdoms of Ayodhya and Kishkindha are joining hands to carry out a great campaign jointly. But here Lord Ram has no army of his own, whereas Sugriv commands a singularly formidable army. So by addressing them as ‘Raghupati’ and ‘Kapi-pati’ respectively the poet emphasizes that though Lord Ram has no physical army at present to support him in his campaign, but this does not undermine the fact that he belongs to a great empire of Ayodhya ruled by illustrious kings descending from the world famous king Raghu, and so both Lord Ram and Sugriv are on the same footing as far as this campaign—of freeing Sita—is concerned.

³The gods, who were well aware of the reality of Lord Ram, that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, were amazed that the supreme Lord of the world would need the help of humble forest-dwelling Kapis to win Lanka, instead of some great army of the city-dwelling human race!

They marveled as to how a single individual (Lord Ram), who has been sent to the forest along with his wife (Sita) and younger brother (Laxman), who had no other support except the strength of his own arms and who had only a little while ago seemed lost and dejected, would, out of the force of his will and enterprise, and of course a little help from a benevolent destiny and providence, would so astonishingly overcome all hurdles and obstacles, that would seem insurmountable for others, to accomplish success in an endeavour that had even baffled the gods themselves—

which was to launch a campaign to eliminate the powerful and invincible demon king Ravana and his equally powerful and ruthless army of ferocious demons. This enterprise was a very singular one—as it pitched demons renowned for their ferocity, extraordinary power and formidable strength, demons who had trounced even the gods and terrorized them at will, against humble beings such as the Kapis as well as the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman—and thus to imagine that the tables would finally turn against the demons was simply out of the question.

The gods also were immensely surprised at the way destiny and providence play their own games, in the way the most unlikely can often times become a reality, and the most unthinkable of situations can transmew themselves into a practical plan of action—for it was indeed remarkable that humans represented by Lord Ram and Laxman would team up with wild forest-dwelling creatures represented by the monkeys and bears to launch a well-planned and skillfully maneuvered military campaign to conquer a formidable army represented by the demons and overrun its citadel at Lanka. To wit, given the will and the determination, all odds can be surmounted, and anything can be made possible in this world.

It was remarkable that Lord Ram would take the help of humble ‘Kapis’, who were forest dwelling creatures, instead of his own army of Ayodhya which was renowned in the whole world for its valour, courage, skill and strength, to launch a campaign to free Sita, which was in fact an excuse to fulfill the promise the Lord had made to the gods and mother earth on an earlier occasion—that he would slay the cruel demons led by their king Ravana who had become invincible by the many boons that he had acquired, and thereby free the earth as well as the gods from their torments and horrors (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

⁴The gods celebrated the occasion by raining flowers from the sky. Lord Ram was now ready to finally go on a mission to eliminate the demons, and this was what the gods had always wanted. Since all the circumstances were now favourable and the Lord had issued instructions to Sugriv to start the preparations for the great campaign, the gods wished to show their happiness by showering flowers.]

दो०. कपिपति बेगि बोलाए आए जूथप जूथ ।

नाना बरन अतुल बल बानर भालु बरूथ ॥ ३४ ॥

dōhā.

kapipati bēgi bōlā'ē ā'ē jūthapa jūtha.

nānā barana atula bala bānara bhālu barūtha. 34.

The lord of the Kapis (i.e. Sugriv) immediately summoned all the commanders of the countless groups of monkey warriors in his realm.

These multitudes of warriors consisted of monkeys and bears (bānara - bhālu)¹ of myriad forms, belonging to different clans which had their own distinguishing characteristics such as colours of their skins and individual habits, but one thing was common to them all, and that was they were all gallant, and were matchless in strength, bravery, valour and courage. (Doha no. 34)

[Note—¹One thing is very clear from this Doha—that the army of Lord Ram consisted of both the ‘monkeys’ as well as the ‘bears’. Though the word ‘Kapi’ literally means a monkey, and this word is liberally used to refer to the Lord’s army as well as to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Kishkindha, but it is only because the population of the monkeys in this forested kingdom was in the majority, while the community of bears was in a minority, and that was all. The phrase ‘army of Kapis’ therefore does not mean that all its warriors were ‘monkeys’ alone, for there were a large numbers of ‘bears’ too who had participated in the Lord’s campaign of Lanka.

This fact will be clear when we come to the narration of the war where we shall read that both the monkeys and bears were equal partners in the battles, and fought shoulder-to-shoulder alongside each other. In this context it is also to be noted that one of Sugriv’s chief advisors and confidante was a bear named Jamvant. It was Jamvant who had inspired Hanuman to go across the ocean to search Sita in Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 30.

Refer also to Chaupai line nos. 1-3, 8 and 10 herein below.]

चौ०. प्रभु पद पंकज नावहिं सीसा । गर्जहिं भालु महाबल कीसा ॥ १ ॥
देखी राम सकल कपि सेना । चितइ कृपा करि राजिव नैना ॥ २ ॥
राम कृपा बल पाइ कपिंदा । भए पच्छजुत मनहुं गिरिंदा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pada pañkaja nāvahiṃ sīsā. garjahiṃ bhālu mahābala kīsā. 1.
dēkhī rāma sakala kapi sēnā. cita'i kṛpā kari rājiva nainā. 2.
rāma kṛpā bala pā'i kapindā. bha'ē pacchajuta manahuṃ girindā. 3.

All the assembled monkey and bear warriors came and bowed their heads before the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram. They were all extremely valiant, powerful and strong, and they roared and thundered vigorously (waiting for instructions, and eager for departure on the campaign trail). (1)

Lord Ram surveyed the whole army of Kapis (monkeys and bears) as they paraded before him, and he cast his compassionate glances graciously over the whole assembly of troops. (2)

When the Kapis observed that the Lord is casting his graceful and benevolent glances upon all of them, they were all highly encouraged and motivated, and their enthusiasm was so great that they felt as if they had wings that would enable them to fly like birds just like the mythological mountains that grew wings and could fly at will (bha'ē pacchajuta manahuṃ girindā)¹. (3)

[Note—¹The troops were highly excited and thrilled at the prospect of an adventure that was to their liking. They were roaring and raring to go, and felt so enthusiastic that made them feel they would virtually fly like huge mountains and fall en-masse upon the enemy to crush it to smithereens.

Of course, when Lord Ram observed this committed and motivated army he too felt encouraged and sure of success as the army’s high morale was crucial for

attaining success in such a hazardous endeavour as the war against the ferocious demons known for their strength and daring.]

हरषि राम तब कीन्ह पयाना । सगुन भए सुंदर सुभ नाना ॥ ४ ॥
जासु सकल मंगलमय कीती । तासु पयान सगुन यह नीती ॥ ५ ॥

haraṣi rāma taba kīnha payānā. saguna bha'e sundara subha nānā. 4.
jāsu sakala maṅgalamaya kīṭī. tāsu payāna saguna yaha nīṭī. 5.

Then Lord Ram cheerfully made his departure to launch the campaign; at that time all sorts of auspicious omens occurred to indicate that things would turn out favourably. (4)

Forsooth and without gainsay indeed, he (Lord Ram) whose marvelous glory is unquestionably auspicious and beautiful, when he decides to start on a journey (to undertake an enterprise that would fulfill his mission on earth¹) then there is no question of anything other than auspicious and favourable happening! (5)

[Note—¹The mission of Lord Ram was to eliminate the terror of demons, and he had made this promise to the gods and mother earth on a previous occasion. Further, a chaste woman (Sita) had been wrongfully abducted and imprisoned by an evil creature (the demon king Ravana), and this crime had to be punished. Therefore, this mission itself was for the general good of all living beings on earth as it involved the elimination of the cruel demons, as well as for restoring the honour of a faultless woman, Sita, who was kidnapped forcibly by Ravana, so it was undoubtedly for a noble cause, and anything done for the good of others and in pursuit of a noble cause is deemed to be auspicious, holy and beautiful. This was one primary reason why there was all round enthusiasm and cheerfulness in Lord Ram's camp.

It was not going to be a war for the sake of a war such as for the purpose of usurping some great king's prosperous kingdom out of jealousy and avarice by another king of a capricious and expansionist nature, but it was to be a holy war for a righteous cause and with a noble aim. It was to be a war of good against the evil; a war that was thrust upon Lord Ram and not one in which he willingly got involved just for the pleasure of fighting. It was not like a sport of hunting that kings found as a past time that resulted in senseless killing of innocent animals, but it was a necessary war that was required to eliminate 'cruel, blood-thirsty animals' symbolised by the demons who had terrorized innocent creatures in this world, plundering and killing at their free will, so that peace, happiness, freedom, fearlessness and rule of law can once again be restored on earth.]

प्रभु पयान जाना बैदेहीं । फरकि बाम अँग जनु कहि देहीं ॥ ६ ॥
जोड़ जोड़ सगुन जानकिहि होई । असगुन भयउ रावनहि सोई ॥ ७ ॥

prabhu payāna jānā baidēhīm. pharaki bāma aṅga janu kahi dēhīm. 6.
jō'i jō'i saguna jānakihi hō'ī. asaguna bhaya'u rāvanahi sō'ī. 7.

Vaidehi (Sita) got the hint that Lord Ram has made his departure (to start the campaign to free her) because the left side of her body began to flutter¹—as if to tell her that good tidings were soon to come. (6)

Whatever positive omens occurred to Sita, the opposite of those occurred to Ravana (hinting to him that some severe calamity is in the offing)². (7)

[Note—¹It is believed that when the left side of a woman's body flutters it is a good sign for her. So when Sita's muscles on her left began fluttering, she got a hint that something good was about to happen. And the only good that could happen to her was freedom from captivity in Lanka, and if that was to actually happen it meant that Lord Ram is on his way. This is also what Hanuman had promised her when he took leave for going back to Lord Ram.

²What is good for a female as far as signs and omens are concerned, it is bad for a male. So if fluttering of the left side of the body was good for Sita, the same kind of fluttering of muscles was a bad sign for Ravana.

Hence, the omens indicated that what cheered Sita would dismay Ravana. So, if the omens meant Sita would find joy by way of meeting Lord Ram and finding herself delivered, the same omens meant that Ravana would be devastated.]

चला कटकु को बरनै पारा । गर्जहि बानर भालु अपारा ॥ ८ ॥
नख आयुध गिरि पादपधारी । चले गगन महि इच्छाचारी ॥ ९ ॥
केहरिनाद भालु कपि करहीं । ढगमगाहि दिग्गज चिक्करहीं ॥ १० ॥

calā kaṭaku kō baranair̥ pārā. garjahim̥ bānara bhālu apārā. 8.
nakha āyudha giri pādapadhārī. calē gagana mahi icchācārī. 9.
kēharināda bhālu kapi karahīm̥. ḍagamagāhīm̥ diggaja cikkarahīm̥. 10.

The army made its departure and marched towards its destination. Say, who can ever describe it (both the army and the way it marched)? Uncountable numbers of the monkeys and bears were roaring and thundering violently, and there was no measurement of the army's strength and extent. (8)

The warriors had large piercing nails (which they would use as knives, daggers and swords), and all were armed with huge rocks and boulders as well as trees. They moved in the way that suited them—some walked on foot and others took the path of the sky¹. (9)

The monkeys and bears were roaring like lions, and this caused the legendary Diggajas (“diggaja”; the elephants said to support the earth from below in its eight cardinal points or directions²) to shake and trumpet loudly in great alarm.

[To wit, as the army of Lord Ram moved ahead, there was a great tumult on the surface of the earth; the energetic activity of the marching army, the uproarious shouts of the warriors and the angry stamping of their feet made the earth shake and tremble as if an earthquake was taking place.] (10)

[Note—¹So there was no wonder if Hanuman could fly across the ocean to go and come back from Lanka.

²The ‘Diggajas’ support the earth at four corners—north, east, south and west, as well as the four angles of north-east, south-east, south-west and north-west. When the army of Lord Ram moved, the earth shook, giving the impression that these eight strong elephants had begun to tremble and squirm.]

छं०. चिक्करहिं दिग्गज डोल महि गिरि लोल सागर खरभरे । १ ।
 मन हरष सभ गंधर्ब सुर मुनि नाग किंनर दुख टरे ॥ २ ॥
 कटकटहिं मर्कट बिकट भट बहु कोटि कोटिन्ह धावहीं । ३ ।
 जय राम प्रबल प्रताप कोसलनाथ गुन गन गावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

cikkarahim diggaja ḍōla mahi giri lōla sāgara kharabharē. 1.
 mana haraṣa sabha gandharba sura muni nāga kinnara dukha ṭarē. 2.
 kaṭakaṭahim markāṭa bikāṭa bhaṭa bahu kōṭi kōṭinha dhāvahim. 3.
 jaya rāma prabala pratāpa kōsalanātha guna gana gāvahim. 4.

The Diggajas (the eight elephants supporting the earth at the eight cardinal points) trumpeted wildly; the earth shook violently; the mountains rumbled and rocked; the water of the ocean began churning and heaving massively (producing huge waves). (Chanda line no. 1)

The Sun-God, the Moon-God and all other Gods, the sages, the ascetics and other pious souls, the Naagas (serpents and all other reptiles), and the Kinnars (the dancers in heaven; a sort of demi-god)—all of them felt exhilarated and elated in their minds and hearts (“Mana”) because this event marked the beginning of the end of their sufferings and miseries (caused to them by the ferocious demons)¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Fierce and redoubtable monkey warriors gnashed and ground their teeth in anger even as they rushed forward in countless multitudes, in a bellicose mood. (Chanda line no. 3)

They were hailing the glory of Lord Ram in a thunderous voice, calling out in a shrill cry, ‘Glory to Lord Ram who is extremely powerful, strong and valiant, and who is the king of Kaushal (the kingdom of Ayodhya)!’ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹All the gods and the holy men were suffering intensely under the reign of horror and terror unleashed by the demons under their merciless king Ravana. When Lord Ram marched with his formidable army on his mission to take on these cruel demons head on and eliminate them, it was definitely something to celebrate for those who suffered immensely under the demons. How ruthless and cruel the demons were, and the sort of horrors they had spread everywhere has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 179—to Chaupai line

no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 184. We have already read about it in Chapter no. 3 of our Book.

Fed up by a life full of sorrows, the gods and mother earth, the latter representing all the creatures that dwelt on earth, had made a fervent appeal to the Supreme Being to intervene on their behalf and restore law and order in this world. The Lord had then promised them that he would personally come down in the form of Lord Ram and eliminate the scourge of the demons. We have also read about it in Chapter no. 4 of our Book which narrates this episode as it is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

That moment has arrived, so definitely it was the time to rejoice. The physical tumult caused by the marching of Lord Ram's army as narrated in these verses may have momentarily terrified all living beings as they may have thought that the doomsday has finally arrived, but the gods and the learned sages and ascetics who were privy to the actual cause of this tumult were very happy.]

सहि सक न भार उदार अहिपति बार बारहिं मोहई । ५ ।

गह दसन पुनि पुनि कमठ पृष्ठ कठोर सो किमि सोहई ॥ ६ ॥

रघुबीर रुचिर प्रयान प्रस्थिति जानि परम सुहावनी । ७ ।

जनु कमठ खर्पर सर्पराज सो लिखत अबिचल पावनी ॥ ८ ॥

sahi saka na bhāra udāra ahipati bāra bārahim mōha'ī. 5.

gaha dasana puni puni kamaṭha pṛṣṭa kaṭhōra sō kimi sōha'ī. 6.

raghubīra rucira prayāna prasthiti jāni parama suhāvanī. 7.

janu kamaṭha kharpara sarparāja sō likhata abicala pāvanī. 8.

Lord Seshnath (the legendary serpent-king with a thousand-hoods; the celestial serpent who is said to hold the world aloft on his hoods) could not cope with the excessive heavy weight exerted by the marching army on his head (because the weight of hundreds and thousands of monkey and bear warriors was now concentrated on a limited area of the surface of the earth, thereby exerting excess pressure at some selected points on his hood), and so he began to reel and feel dizzy and uneasy due to the excessive burden put on his head by the belligerent army, inspite of his being very magnanimous and forgiving because he had never complained about the weight of the earth that he carried on his hoods since eternity.

[To wit, perhaps it was the first time in creation when Seshnath felt that he is unable to bear this heavy weight of the army of Lord Ram, so massive and extensive it was.] (Chaupai line no. 5)

Feeling that he would collapse and sink if he did not find a support, Seshnath sought help from the legendary Tortoise (who also supports the earth on the back of his hard shell) by grasping the sharp protuberances on the rough outer surface of the latter's shell by the means of his sharp teeth.

[To wit, when Seshnath felt a sort of vertigo overtaking him, he hooked his teeth around the sharp spike-like extensions on the back of the Tortoise's shell in order to tether himself to them and avoid a disaster.] (Chaupai line no. 6)

It appears that this wonderful development of Lord Ram, the brave warrior of king Raghu's line, making his departure to accomplish the great mission for which he had come down to earth was so momentous, singular and glorious one that Lord Seshnath wished to immortalize it by writing it down for posterity. So he decided to carve this marvelous story by etching it on the hard shell of the Tortoise by scratching with his teeth, and it is for this purpose that he had clung himself on the back of the shell of the Tortoise so that he can write down Lord Ram's feat and leave it for posterity by scratching the shell by his sharp teeth as he moved backward and forward on it, apparently to maintain his balance.

[Seshnath had sharp teeth, and the shell of the Tortoise was hard as rock. So therefore, just as ancient people left edicts and carvings on rocks to make them permanent, Seshnath decided to immortalize this glorious story of Lord Ram by carving it on the back of the shell of the Tortoise by scratching on it with his teeth even as he had to toss and turn by the shifting of weight by the movement of the Lord's army.] (Chaupai line nos. 7-8)

दो०. एहि बिधि जाइ कृपानिधि उतरे सागर तीर ।

जहँ तहँ लागे खान फल भालु बिपुल कपि बीर ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi jā'i kṛpānidhi utarē sāgara tīra.

jahaṁ tahaṁ lāgē khāna phala bhālu bipula kapi bīra. 35.

In this fascinating manner Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace (kṛpānidhi), reached the shore of the ocean and pitched his camp.

Once there, the multitudes of brave monkeys and bears began refreshing themselves by eating fruits¹. (Doha no. 35)

[Note—¹After leaving Kishkindha, the army had not halted even for a brief break; it marched relentlessly ahead, without any stop—apropos: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 40; and (ii) Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 71-72.

Naturally the soldiers were hungry. So now, when their progress was halted by the ocean, they found some time to refresh themselves, while their commanders and Lord Ram would hold a conference to decide how to overcome this barrier symbolized by the endless stretch of water of the ocean—apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 102-105.

When the ocean was finally crossed by the means of a bridge built across it, and the army landed on the shores of Lanka, once again some time was needed to plan the future strategy. So once again Lord Ram ordered the monkeys and bears to go and eat fruit to refresh themselves—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 5.]

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Section 8.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

{Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 1.}

Now we shall read about this part of the Story—of Lord Ram's departure from Kishkindha together with his formidable army of brave monkeys and bears, till the time he reached the shore of the ocean—from Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 1.

॥ अध्यात्मरामायणे युद्धकाण्डम् ॥

॥ प्रथमः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

यथावद्भाषितं वाक्यं श्रुत्वा रामो हनूमतः ।

उवाचानन्तरं वाक्यं हर्षेण महतावृतः ॥ १॥

कार्यं कृतं हनुमता देवैरपि सुदुष्करम् ।

मनसापि यदन्येन स्मर्तुं शक्यं न भूतले ॥ २॥

॥ adhyātmārāmāyaṇe yuddhakāṇḍam ॥

॥ prathamah sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

yathāvadbhāṣitaṃ vākyaṃ śrutvā rāmo hanūmataḥ ।

uvācānantaraṃ vākyaṃ harṣeṇa mahatāvṛtaḥ ॥ 1॥

kāryaṃ kṛtaṃ hanumatā devairapi suduṣkaram ।

manasāpi yadanyena smartuṃ śakyaṃ na bhūtale ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Hearing the words of Hanuman (who had narrated verbatim what Sita had said), Lord Ram was all praise for him. He said most cheerfully (1), 'Whatever work Hanuman has done is difficult and daunting even for the Gods to do. Verily, on the surface of the earth, no one can even dare to imagine or think about (doing) it (2).

शतयोजनविस्तीर्णं लङ्घयेत्कः पयोनिधिम् ।

लङ्कां च रक्षसैर्गुप्तां को वा धर्षयितुं क्षमः ॥ ३॥

भृत्यकार्यं हनुमता कृतं सर्वमशेषतः ।

सुग्रीवस्येदृशो लोके न भूतो न भविष्यति ॥ ४॥

śatayojanavistīrṇaṃ laṅghayetkaḥ payonidhim ।
 laṅkāṃ ca rākṣasairguptāṃ ko vā dharṣayituṃ kṣamaḥ ॥ 3॥
 bhr̥tyakāryaṃ hanumatā kṛtaṃ sarvamaśeṣataḥ ।
 sugrīvasyedṛśo loke na bhūto na bhaviṣyati ॥ 4॥

3-4. Say, who is capable of crossing the hundred Yojan (800 miles) wide ocean and demolish Lanka which is protected by the demons? (3).

Hanuman has proficiently lived up to the expectations of a loyal, faithful and diligent servant (and subordinate) of Sugriv. There has been none in the past and shall never be in the future anyone such as him in this world (4).

अहं च सद्युवंशश्च लक्ष्मणश्च कपीश्वरः ।
 जानक्या दर्शनेनाद्य रक्षिताः स्मो हनूमता ॥ ५॥
 सर्वथा सुकृतं कार्यं जानक्याः परिमार्गणम् ।
 समुद्रं मनसा स्मृत्वा सीदतीव मनो मम ॥ ६॥

ahaṃ ca raghuvaṃśaśca lakṣmaṇaśca kapīśvaraḥ ।
 jānakyā darśanenādya rakṣitāḥ smo hanūmatā ॥ 5॥
 sarvathā sukṛtaṃ kāryaṃ jānakyāḥ parimārgaṇam ।
 samudraṃ manasā smṛtvā sīdatīva mano mama ॥ 6॥

5-6. By seeing (and bringing the news of) Janki (Sita), Hanuman has saved me and others of the family of the great legendary king by the name of Raghu, such as (my younger brother) Laxman; he has also saved Sugriv and others as well¹ (5).

The job of ascertaining the whereabouts of Sita has been done, but my heart and mind gets a little alarmed and I feel a bit dismayed when I think of the ocean that intervenes, and which acts as a formidable barrier between us and the success of the whole mission² (6)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram says that the whole family of king Raghu has been saved by Hanuman by bringing the news of Sita being alive he means that if there was some bad news, or no news at all, he would have ended his life, and Laxman would have followed suit. When the news reached Ayodhya, or when he did not turn up in the city after the expiry of the 14 year exile period, it was sure that Bharat, his other brother, would have ended his life too, and he will be followed by Shatrughan. With the father already dead and there being no off-spring of any of the brothers yet, the chain would break and there would be no one left to carry forward the family title and legacy.

This is the reason why Lord Ram has expressed great gratitude for Hanuman. In Ram Charit Manas the Lord has even gone further to say that he would forever remain indebted to Hanuman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no.32.

²Everything was in place—Sita had been traced, and the army was ready. But now the vexed question was: ‘how to overcome the barrier of the mighty ocean; how to cross it to reach Lanka?’]

कथं नक्रजषाकीर्णं समुद्रं शतयोजनम् ।
 लङ्घयित्वा रिपुं हन्यां कथं द्रक्ष्यामि जानकीम् ॥ ७॥
 श्रुत्वा तु रामवचनं सुग्रीवः प्राह राघवम् ।
 समुद्रं लङ्घयिष्यामो महानक्रजषाकुलम् ॥ ८॥
 लङ्कां च विधमिष्यामो हनिष्यामोऽद्य रावणम् ।
 चिन्तां त्यज रघुश्रेष्ठ चिन्ता कार्यविनाशिनी ॥ ९॥

katham nakrajhaṣākīrṇaṁ samudraṁ śatayojanam ।
 laṅghayitvā ripuṁ hanyāṁ katham drakṣyāmi jānakīm ॥ 7॥
 śrutvā tu rāmavacanam sugrīvaḥ prāha rāghavam ।
 samudraṁ laṅghayiṣyāmo mahānakrajhaṣākulam ॥ 8॥
 laṅkāṁ ca vidhamiṣyāmo haniṣyāmo'dya rāvaṇam ।
 cintāṁ tyaja raghuśreṣṭha cintā kāryavināśinī ॥ 9॥

7-9. How will I eliminate the enemy by crossing the 100 Yojan wide ocean full of countless obstacles, such as alligators and other ferocious marine animals? And how will I see Janki?' (7).

Hearing these seemingly helpless words that gave the impression that Lord Ram was utterly dismayed, distraught and confounded, Sugriv stepped in to reassure him, to encourage him and lift his sagging spirits. So Sugriv said, 'Oh Lord, we shall leap across the ocean which seems so impossible to cross as it consists of insurmountable barriers (such as whirlpools, huge waves, reefs, mountains etc.), and formidable obstacles such as huge fishes (viz. alligators, crocodiles, sharks, whales etc.) (8).

Then we shall quickly destroy Lanka and wrench control of it, killing the lowly and wicked Ravana. Oh the best in king Raghu's race ("raghuśreṣṭha"; Lord Ram)! You must stop worrying, for worry ruins the task at hand (9).

एतान् पश्य महासत्त्वान् शूरान् वानरपुङ्गवान् ।
 त्वत्प्रियार्थं समुद्युक्तान् प्रवेष्टुमपि पावकम् ॥ १०॥
 समुद्रतरणे बुद्धिं कुरुष्व प्रथमं ततः ।
 दृष्ट्वा लङ्कां दशग्रीवो हत इत्येव मन्महे ॥ ११॥

etān paśya mahāsattvān śūrān vānarapuṅgavān ।
 tvatpriyārthaṁ samudyuktān praveṣṭumapi pāvakam ॥ 10॥
 samudratarāṇe buddhiṁ kuruṣva prathamam tataḥ ।
 drṣṭvā laṅkāṁ daśagrīvo hata ityeva manmahe ॥ 11॥

10-11. Have a look at those brilliant monkeys; they are ace warriors, the best in their race for their gallantry, skill, valour, invincibility, bravery and courage. They are ready even to enter the fire in order to do what is good and is pleasing to you.

[To wit, why do you feel so disheartened and dismayed. We are all ready to serve you with our lives. What makes me sad is that you feel so helpless inspite of our being by your side. Why, don't you see that these monkeys are raring to sacrifice their

lives for you; and do you doubt their ability to successfully accomplish this mission? Oh Lord, abandon such negative thoughts. You will witness our courage and strength as soon as the war begins. Have faith on us, and trust my words that I give you upon my honour.] (10).

Lets first think about crossing the ocean, for that is the main physical problem that faces us. Lanka is no problem, for as soon as we see its shore and land there, we regard Ravana as good as dead.

[To wit, once we are across, the demons are no problem for us, for we can easily overcome them and crush the enemy. So let us concentrate our energy first in finding out a way to cross this ocean. As for the demons, what does it matter that they are strong, powerful, ferocious and wild. You have already heard what a single individual amongst us, I refer to Hanuman, has done to these seemingly invincible demons, so you can well imagine what will be the score when we unleash our combined wrath upon them. Truly, oh Lord, all hell would break upon the demons, and the fate that looms over the horizon of Lanka is worse than the final day of doom that is the destiny of all things in this mortal world.] (11).

नहि पश्याम्यहं कञ्चित्त्रिषु लोकेषु राघव ।
गृहीतधनुषो यस्ते तिष्ठेदभिमुखो रणे ॥ १२॥
सर्वथा नो जयो राम भविष्यति न संशयः ।
निमित्तानि च पश्यामि तथा भूतानि सर्वशः ॥ १३॥

nahi paśyāmyahaṃ kañcittriṣu lokeṣu rāghava ।
gr̥hītaḥ dhanuṣo yaste tiṣṭhedabhimukho raṇe ॥ 12॥
sarvathā no jayo rāma bhaviṣyati na saṃśayaḥ ।
nimittāni ca paśyāmi tathā bhūtāni sarvaśaḥ ॥ 13॥

12-13. Oh Raghav (Sri Ram)! I do not see (or imagine) that any warrior would be able to stand his ground in the battle-field once you face him and raise you brow at him. [To wit, no warrior, no matter who he is, would be a match for you in the battle-field. As soon as you look at your opponent angrily, he would shiver and tremble in fear of death. I don't believe that anyone would stand before you and manage to subdue you in a battle.] (12).

Oh Lord Ram! There is not the slightest of doubts that victory will be ours because I can see relevant omens everywhere that indicate our victory ' (13).

सुग्रीववचनं श्रुत्वा भक्तिवीर्यसमन्वितम् ।
अङ्गीकृत्याब्रवीद्रामो हनूमन्तं पुरःस्थितम् ॥ १४॥
येन केन प्रकारेण लङ्घयामो महार्णवम् ।
लङ्कास्वरूपं मे ब्रूहि दुःसाध्यं देवदानवैः ॥ १५॥

sugrīvavacanam śrutvā bhaktivīryasamanvitam ।
aṅgīkṛtyābravīdrāmo hanūmantam puraḥsthitam ॥ 14॥
yena kena prakāreṇa laṅghayāmo mahārṇavam ।
laṅkāśvarūpaṃ me brūhi duḥśādhyam devadānavaiḥ ॥ 15॥

14-15. Hearing these reassuring words of Sugriv, which were full of devotion, loyalty, encouragement, valour and manliness, Lord Ram accepted his advice. [To wit, after hearing Sugriv's council, Lord Ram determined that he was correct. So, instead of wasting time in brooding and inviting negative thoughts that would serve no purpose, it would be wiser to think positively and constructively. Yes, the Lord agreed with Sugriv, that the priority now was to plan how to cross the ocean. The rest can wait.]

So the Lord said to Hanuman (14), 'We shall first cross the ocean somehow. But do tell us about the general lay-out of Lanka; give us a general description of the place. It is said (and heard) that it is a very difficult and daunting prospect to win (and overcome) this city even for the Gods and other demons (who are not friendly with Ravana and do not have any treaty of allegiance with him, and who may think, to their own peril, of trying to capture Lanka by force).

[To wit, it is well known that it is almost impossible to take Lanka. You have already been there, and you have a personal experience of its security apparatus, as well as of its strength and weaknesses. You have successfully overcome all obstacles. And not only that, for you have successfully fought and defeated its army to a great extent, and have also burnt the city, something that is simply out of the imagination. So you are the proper person to advise us about Lanka, and how to penetrate and overcome it.] (15).

ज्ञात्वा तस्य प्रतीकारं करिष्यामि कपीश्वर ।
श्रुत्वा रामस्य वचनं हनूमान् विनयान्वितः ॥ १६॥
उवाच प्राञ्जलिर्देव यथा दृष्टं ब्रवीमि ते ।
लङ्का दिव्या पुरी देव त्रिकूटशिखरे स्थिता ॥ १७॥

jñātvā tasya pratikāraṃ kariṣyāmi kapīśvara ।
śrutvā rāmasya vacanaṃ hanūmān vinayānvitaḥ ॥ 16॥
uvāca prāñjalirdeva yathā dr̥ṣṭaṃ bravīmi te ।
laṅkā divyā purī deva trikūṭaśikhare sthitā ॥ 17॥

16-17. Oh the lord of monkeys (Hanuman)! Once I come to know about its design and layout, I shall think of and devise some way to overcome it'.

Hearing these words of Lord Ram, Hanuman joined his hands together in respect, and said politely (16), 'I shall submit before you whatever I have seen at Lanka. The majestic city is established on the summit of Mt. Trikoot (17).

स्वर्णप्राकारसहिता स्वर्णाट्टालकसंयुता ।
परिखाभिः परिवृता पूर्णाभिर्निर्मलोदकैः ॥ १८॥
नानोपवनशोभाद्या दिव्यवापीभिरावृता ।
गृहैर्विचित्रशोभाद्यैर्मणिस्तम्भमयैः शुभैः ॥ १९॥

svaṇapṛākārasahitā svaṇaṭṭālakasaṃyutā ।
parikhābhiḥ parivṛtā pūrṇābhirnirmalodakaiḥ ॥ 18॥

nānopavanaśobhāḍhyā divyavāpībhīrāvṛtā ।
grhairvicitraśobhāḍhyairmaṇistambhamayaiḥ śubhaiḥ ॥ 19॥

18-19. It has golden parapets and boundary walls; its tall buildings are also made of gold. It is surrounded on all the sides by deep moats and trenches full of clean water (18).

It looks very magnificent and grand due to the presence of many gardens, groves and orchards that sprinkle the city. They have numerous ponds and other water bodies located here and there. The buildings are adorned by pillars that are liberally studded with gems, crystals and other sorts of priceless jewels (19).

पश्चिमद्वारमासाद्य गजवाहाः सहस्रशः ।
उत्तरे द्वारि तिष्ठन्ति साश्ववाहाः सप्ततयः ॥ २०॥
तिष्ठन्त्यर्बुदसङ्ख्याकाः प्राच्यामपि तथैव च ।
रक्षिणो रक्षसा वीरा द्वारं दक्षिणमाश्रिताः ॥ २१॥

paścimadvāramāsādyā gajavāhāḥ sahasraśaḥ ।
uttare dvāri tiṣṭhanti sāśvavāhāḥ sapattayaḥ ॥ 20॥
tiṣṭhantyarbudasaṅkhyākāḥ prācyāmapī tathaiḥ ca ।
rakṣiṇo rākṣasā vīrā dvāraṁ dakṣiṇamāśritāḥ ॥ 21॥

20-21. Stationed near its western gate, there are thousands of war elephants; at the northern gate there is infantry as well as cavalry; at the eastern gate there are a thousand-million demon warriors, while the southern gate is protected by equal number of brave and courageous warriors (20-21).

मध्यकक्षेऽप्यसङ्ख्याता गजाश्वरथपत्तयः ।
रक्षयन्ति सदा लङ्कां नानास्तृकुशलाः प्रभो ॥ २२॥
सङ्क्रमैर्विविधैर्लङ्का शतघ्नीभिश्च संयुता ।
एवं स्थितेऽपि देवेश शृणु मे तत् चेष्टितम् ॥ २३॥

madhyakakṣe'pyasaṅkhyātā gajāśvarathapattayaḥ ।
rakṣayanti sadā laṅkāṁ nānāstrakuśalāḥ prabho ॥ 22॥
saṅkramairvividhairlaṅkā śataghñibhiśca saṁyutā ।
evaṁ sthite'pi deveśa śṛṇu me tatra ceṣṭitam ॥ 23॥

22-23. In the centre of the city there is a huge army consisting of countless numbers of elephants, horses, chariots and infantry troops tasked to constantly protect the city. All of them (the troops) are experts in using various types of arms and armaments (22).

The entrance to the city is protected by different types of tunnels and cannons. [These cannons were placed at the mouth of these tunnels so that in case of an attack by an enemy, when the main entrances are closed, the defending demon army can come out from these tunnels quietly to attack from the rear of the enemy, while the

cannons are blazing fire and plummeting the enemy lines with mortar shells and fire balls to keep it at bay as well as to afford a covering fire for the troops who pour out of the tunnels.]

But oh Lord! In spite of the presence of all these formidable and insurmountable hurdles, hear what I have done (23).

दशाननबलौघस्य चतुर्थांशो मया हतः ।
 दग्ध्वा लङ्कां पुरीं स्वर्णप्रासादो धर्षितो मया ॥ २४॥
 शतघ्न्यः सङ्क्रमाश्चैव नाशिता मे रघूत्तम ।
 देव त्वद्दर्शनादेव लङ्का भस्मीकृता भवेत् ॥ २५॥
 प्रस्थानं कुरु देवेश गच्छामो लवणाम्बुधेः ।
 तीरं सह महावीरैर्वानरैर्यैः समन्ततः ॥ २६॥

daśānanabalaughasya caturthāṃśo mayā hataḥ ।
 dagdhvā laṅkāṃ purīm svarṇaprāsādo dharṣito mayā ॥ 24॥
 śataghnyaḥ saṅkramāścaiva nāśitā me raghūttama ।
 deva tvaddarśanādeva laṅkā bhasmīkṛtā bhavet ॥ 25॥
 prasthānaṃ kuru deveśa gacchāmo lavaṇāmbudheḥ ।
 tīraṃ saha mahāvīrairvānaraughaiḥ samantataḥ ॥ 26॥

24-26. I have destroyed (killed) one fourth of Ravana's army, have burnt Lanka, and have ruined (demolished) his golden palace (24).

Oh the most exalted in the family of king Raghu (Lord Ram)! I have destroyed the tunnels and cannons as well. Oh Lord! It is my belief that Lanka would be easily reduced to rubble as soon as your sight falls on it. [To wit, you can very easily conquer it.] (25).

Oh the Lord of Gods (deveśa)! Now you must make preparations to go there forthwith. We must collect our army of brave, courageous and strong monkey warriors from all the sides¹, and approach the shores of the great salty ocean' (26).

[Note—¹This conversation is taking place at Kishkindha, precisely on Mt. Prabarshan, where Lord Ram was waiting for Hanuman to come back. It was here that Hanuman had gone to report to Lord Ram about his successful mission to Lanka.

When the Lord learnt of the ocean, he was a wee whit worried. Sugriv had assured the Lord that it is useless to worry about a problem till we actually came face to face with it. Hanuman too endorses this view, and says that the top priority now should be to summon all the monkeys and bears and move to the shore of the ocean. No worthwhile purpose would be served in procrastination and brooding over matters that are still in the distant future. “We will cross the ocean when the time comes; but first let us go there” was the unanimous advice of Sugriv and Hanuman.]

श्रुत्वा हनूमतो वाक्यमुवाच रघुनन्दनः ।
 सुग्रीव सैनिकान् सर्वान् प्रस्थानायाभिनीदय ॥ २७॥
 इदानीमेव विजयो मुहुर्तः परिवर्तते ।
 अस्मिन्मुहुर्ते गत्वाहं लङ्कां राक्षससङ्कुलाम् ॥ २८॥

संप्रकारं सुदुर्धर्षां नाशयामि सरावणाम् ।
आनेष्यामि च सीतां मे दक्षिणाक्षि स्फुरत्यधः ॥ २९॥

śrutvā hanūmato vākyamuvāca raghunandanaḥ ।
sugrīva sainikān sarvān prasthānāyābhinodaya ॥ 27॥
idānīmeva vijayo muhurtaḥ parivartate ।
asminmuhurte gatvāhaṁ laṅkāṁ rākṣasasaṅkulām ॥ 28॥
saprākārāṁ sudurdharṣāṁ nāśayāmi sarāvaṇām ।
āneṣyāmi ca sītāṁ me dakṣiṇākṣi sphuratyadhaḥ ॥ 29॥

27-29. Hearing the words of Hanuman, Raghunandan (Lord Sri Ram) said, 'Oh Sugriv! Order all your troops (monkeys and bears) to set out immediately (27), because the auspicious time indicating victory exists at present. I shall go on the mission to Lanka which is full of demons (to liberate Sita and kill Ravana) during the currency of this very auspicious time (and I don't want to delay it) (28).

Lanka is very impregnable and virtually invincible as it is surrounded and well-protected by a huge fort with strong walls. I shall however destroy it along with its king Ravana, and bring Sita back. At this moment, the lower lid of my right eye is fluttering (which is considered a very good omen)¹ (29).

[Note—¹When the right part of a man's body flutters, such as the eyelids of Lord Ram in this case, it is considered as a good omen for him. For a woman the opposite applies—i.e. fluttering of the left side of her body is regarded good for her, as it happened in the case of Sita (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35).]

प्रयातु वाहिनी सर्वा वानराणां तरस्विनाम् ।
रक्षन्तु यूथपाः सेनामग्रे पृष्ठे च पार्श्वयोः ॥ ३०॥
हनूमन्तमथारुह्य गच्छाम्यग्रेऽङ्गदं ततः ।
आरुह्य लक्ष्मणो यातु सुग्रीव त्वं मया सह ॥ ३१॥

prayātu vāhinī sarvā vānarāṇāṁ tarasvinām ।
rakṣantu yūthapāḥ senāmagre prṣṭhe ca pārśvayoḥ ॥ 30॥
hanūmantamathāruhya gacchāmyagre'ṅgadaṁ tataḥ ।
āruhya lakṣmaṇo yātu sugrīva tvaṁ mayā saha ॥ 31॥

30-31. Let the full army of brave and strong monkeys make its departure from here immediately. Those who are chieftains and commanders of the various army battalions and brigades, they should guard and protect the company under their command and charge from all the directions—from the front and the rear, and from the sides¹ (30).

Meanwhile, I shall ride on the shoulders of Hanuman right in the front (the vanguard) of the army, and Laxman shall follow me on the shoulders of Angad². And you, Sugriv, will accompany me (31).

[Note—¹Lord Ram instructed Sugriv to order his commanders and chieftains to be vigilant, and properly regulate the soldiers under their individual command and charge. They ought to move in the front, at the rear and on the sides of the column of troops to guide them and see that none of the monkey and bear warriors break discipline. The army must march in a formed and disciplined way, and not like a boisterous and haphazard crowd going for a picnic.

This precaution was necessary because Lord Ram had noticed by the behaviour of the monkeys and bears till this time that they were not accustomed to discipline and observing order. It was not their fault however, because they were forest dwellers, and were unregulated tribes not trained in accordance to the laws of conduct that were observed by city dwellers.

²Why did Lord Ram and Laxman ride on the backs of Hanuman and Angad respectively? The answer is that Lord Ram and Laxman were, after all, in the form of human beings, while the rest of the army consisted of monkeys and bears. The speed and agility of movement of humans cannot match with that of monkeys and bears across a wild terrain from Kishkindha to the northern shores of the ocean, which was, for the most part, thickly forested and mountainous. So it became expedient for the two brothers to ride on the shoulders of Hanuman and Angad.

And how did Sugriv march? He marched like all others, on foot.]

गजो गवाक्षो गवयो मैन्दो द्विविद एव च ।
नलो नीलः सुषेणश्च जाम्बवांश्च तथापरे ॥ ३२॥
सर्वे गच्छन्तु सर्वत्र सेनायाः शत्रुघातिनः ।
इत्याज्ञाप्य हरीन् रामः प्रतस्थे सहलक्ष्मणः ॥ ३३॥

gajo gavākṣo gavayo maindo dvivida eva ca ।
nalo nīlaḥ suṣeṇāśca jāmbavāṃśca tathāpare ॥ 32॥
sarve gacchantu sarvatra senāyāḥ śatrughātināḥ ।
ityājñāpya harīn rāmaḥ pratasthe sahalakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 33॥

32-33. Guja, Gawaksha, Gawayo, Mainda, Dwivid, Nal, Neel, Sushen and Jamvant, as well as all other commanders who are skilled and proficient in destroying the enemy, should follow the army from its outer flanks (in order to maintain order as well as to guard the huge army from going off course, and to maintain control and discipline in its ranks).¹

Having thus instructed the monkeys, Lord Ram embarked on his mission, accompanied by Laxman at his side (32-33).

[Note—¹The reader should note from verse nos. 30-33 how Lord Ram and Laxman led the army, and how it was organised.]

सुग्रीवसहितो हर्षात्सेनामध्यगतो विभुः ।
वारणेन्द्रनिभाः सर्वे वानराः कामरूपिणः ॥ ३४॥
क्ष्वेलन्तः परिगर्जन्तो जग्मुस्ते दक्षिणां दिशम् ।
भक्षयन्तो ययुः सर्वे फलानि च मधूनि च ॥ ३५॥

sugrīvasahito harṣātsenāmadhyagato vibhuḥ ।
 vāraṇendranibhāḥ sarve vānarāḥ kāmārūpiṇaḥ ॥ 34॥
 kṣvelantaḥ parigarjanto jagmuste dakṣiṇām diśam ।
 bhakṣayanto yayuḥ sarve phalāni ca madhūni ca ॥ 35॥

34-35. The ‘Vibhu’ (an epithet used for Lord Vishnu, meaning the Lord who is omnipresent, all-pervading, almighty, eternal and majestic; here referring obviously to Lord Ram) was moving ahead very cheerfully in the centre of the army, and Laxman was by his side¹. All the monkeys were huge in form as if they were all ‘king of elephants’ themselves, and all of them knew the magical tricks by which they could assume any form they wished (34).

All of them leapt, pranced, skipped, jumped and bounced aggressively as they moved along; they roared wildly, ate fruits and drank honey while moving swiftly in the south direction (towards the seashore) (35).

[Note—¹In verse no. 31, Lord Ram had said he will go in the front of the army while verse no. 34 now says that he was in the middle of the army. Well, here centre or middle does not mean the actual, physical, geometrical center of the army. It simply indicates that though he was leading the multitudes of soldiers from the front, there were so many excited and cheerful monkeys and bears walking in front of him, behind him and on his sides that he appeared to be in the virtual centre of the army as he was completely surrounded by his soldiers. And the Lord of course did not object as he was, by his very nature, very lovable, kind, gracious and accommodating; he noticed that the monkeys and bears found great satisfaction by being at his side, that they were so attached to him and adored him so much that they loved mobbing him rather than caring for observing the niceties of military discipline.

The Lord thought to himself at length: “How can I be stern enough to tell them to move back and walk in a regular file when they are so enthusiastic and emotionally attached to me, and find excess of joy by being at my side. I must remember that I owe my gratitude to them for helping me, that it is not a regular army of paid soldiers who are bound to serve their king for fear of punishment if they refuse, but that it is pure love and devotion and adoration that binds them to me, and which has motivated them to sacrifice their lives for me. I must reciprocate their sentiments and let them feel that I love them all as much as they love me, that there is no distance between them and me, that I treat them all as my own, and therefore they all have a right to claim closeness with me. If I become too rigid in observing protocol and good manners like one expects between an army and its commander-in-chief, I would emotionally alienate them, and that would be detrimental to my own interests. If these monkeys and bears treat me as one of them, as their close friend and dearest leader, then I too must forge a closer bond with them and let them feel easy with me, as it would make this army more and more committed to me, be faithful and loyal to me, and devoted to the success of my mission.

Verily, a wise king wins over his subjects and gains their loyalty and devotion more by his affectionate attitude and welcoming behaviour towards them than by trying to enforce his orders by stern measures and the fear of punishment. So, since the victory over the demons depends entirely on these monkeys and bears, I must cultivate an excellent rapport with them, I must endear them and motivate them at the personal and emotional level by making them feel that I too enjoy their company as

much as they do mine. It is prudent for me to understand that an informal relationship will work better for me in the case with monkeys and bears.”]

ब्रुवन्तो राघवस्याग्रे हनिष्यामोऽद्य रावणम् ।
 एवं ते वानरश्रेष्ठा गच्छन्त्यतुलविक्रमाः ॥ ३६॥
 हरिभ्यामुह्यमानौ तौ शुशुभाते रघूत्तमौ ।
 नक्षत्रैः सेवितौ यद्वच्चन्द्रसूर्याविवाम्बरे ॥ ३७॥

bruvanto rāghavasyāgre haniṣyāmo'dya rāvaṇam ।
 evaṃ te vānaraśreṣṭhā gacchantyatulavikramāḥ ॥ 36॥
 haribhyāmuhyamānau tau śuśubhāte raghūttamau ।
 nakṣatraiḥ sevitaṃ yadvaccandrasūryāvivāmbare ॥ 37॥

36-37. In this way, the matchless army of valiant and mighty monkeys (and bears) moved along with Lord Raghav (Lord Ram), crying for vengeance and shouting in a shrill voice that they would kill Ravana the same day that they see him (36).

The two most exalted ones in the clan of Raghu (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) looked so glorious, so adorable and so magnificent while moving ahead, riding as they were on the shoulders of Hanuman and Angad respectively, that they resembled the Sun and the Moon which look so majestic in the sky as they move along the firmament surrounded by countless stars and other heavenly bodies that dot the sky¹ (37).

[Note—¹Here Lord Ram and Laxman are compared to the Sun and the Moon to signify how majestic they looked as they moved ahead with their army, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of monkey and bears. The Sun and the Moon are the most prominent and splendorous entities in the sky even though there are countless other heavenly glittering bodies surrounding them. Similarly, though the brave monkey and bear warriors were all remarkable and glorious in their own right, but Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman stood out prominently in their midst.]

आवृत्य पृथिवीं कृत्स्नां जगाम महती चमूः ।
 प्रस्फोटयन्तः पुच्छाग्रानुद्वहन्तश्च पादपान् ॥ ३८॥
 शैलानारोहयन्तश्च जग्मुर्मरुतवेगतः ।
 असङ्ख्याताश्च सर्वत्र वानराः परिपूरिताः ॥ ३९॥
 हृष्टास्ते जग्मुस्त्यर्थं रामेण परिपालिताः ।
 गता चमूर्दिवारात्रं क्वचिन्नासज्जत क्षणम् ॥ ४०॥

āvṛtya pṛthivīm kṛtsnāṃ jagāma mahatī camūḥ ।
 prasphoṭayantaḥ pucchāgrānudvahantaśca pādapān ॥ 38॥
 śailānārohayantaśca jagmurmārutavegataḥ ।
 asaṅkhyātāśca sarvatra vānarāḥ paripūrītāḥ ॥ 39॥
 hrṣṭāste jagmurateyartham rāmeṇa paripālītāḥ ।
 gatā camūrdivārātram kvacinnaśajjata kṣaṇam ॥ 40॥

38-40. That huge army almost covered the earth from end to end as it moved ahead (i.e. it stretched as far as the eyes could see). The monkeys shook, twirled, whirled, jerked, swayed, twisted and thrashed their tails; they uprooted trees, jumped and hopped on mountains and hills en-route, and moved swiftly with the speed of wind. At that time, uncountable numbers of monkeys could be visible in all the directions (38-39).

Being protected by Lord Ram (and being assured that they are safe and sound with Lord Ram with them as their supreme commander), they were cheerfully moving ahead with great agility and speed (without fear and doubt). That formidable monkey army moved day and night, without stopping even for a moment (40).

काननानि विचित्राणि पश्यन्मलयसह्ययोः ।
ते सह्यं समतिक्रम्य मलयं च तथा गिरिम् ॥ ४१॥
आयुश्चानुपूर्व्येण समुद्रं भीमनिःस्वनम् ।
अवतीर्य हनूमन्तं रामः सुग्रीवसंयुतः ॥ ४२॥
सलिलाभ्याशमासाद्य रामो वचनमब्रवीत् ।
आगताः स्मो वयं सर्वे समुद्रं मकरालयम् ॥ ४३॥
इतो गन्तुमशक्यं नो निरुपायेन वानराः ।
अत्र सेनानिवेशोऽस्तु मन्त्रायामोऽस्य तारणे ॥ ४४॥

kānanāni vicitrāṇi paśyanmalayasahyayoḥ ।
te sahyaṃ samatikramya malayaṃ ca tathā girim ॥ 41॥
āyauścānupūrvyeṇa samudraṃ bhīmaniḥsvanam ।
avatīrya hanūmantam rāmaḥ sugrīvasaṃyutaḥ ॥ 42॥
salilābhyāśamāsādya rāmo vacanamabravīt ।
āgatāḥ smo vayaṃ sarve samudraṃ makarālayam ॥ 43॥
ito gantumaśakyaṃ no nirupāyena vānarāḥ ।
atra senāniveśo'stu mantrayāmo'sya tāraṇe ॥ 44॥

41-44. At last, seeing the magnificent but strange forest between Malayachal and Sahayadri mountains (i.e. the valley between these two mountains), they crossed it, and finally the army reached the shores of the vast ocean which was roaring most fiercely. Then Lord Ram got off the shoulders of Hanuman, and, accompanied by Sugriv (41-42) —

—He approached the water of the ocean. As the Lord stood on its shore, he observed, 'We have come to the shore of the ocean which is full of ferocious alligators and other deadly marine creatures (43). We cannot go across it without adopting some special strategy; it has become imperative for us now to somehow find a mean by which to cross this barrier. So pitch a camp for the army here. Once the army is settled, we shall then discuss amongst ourselves how to cross the ocean.' (44).

श्रुत्वा रामस्य वचनं सुग्रीवः सागरान्तिके ।
सेनां न्यवेशयत् क्षिप्रं रक्षितां कपिकुञ्जरैः ॥ ४५॥

ते पश्यन्तो विषेदुस्तं सागरं भीमदर्शनम् ।
महोन्नततरङ्गाद्यं भीमनक्रभयङ्करम् ॥ ४६॥

śrutvā rāmasya vacanaṃ sugrīvaḥ sāgarāntike ।
senāṃ nyaveśayat kṣipraṃ rakṣitāṃ kapikuñjaraiḥ ॥ 45॥
te paśyanto viṣedustaṃ sāgaraṃ bhīmadarśanam ।
mahonnatatarāṅgādhyam bhīmanakrabhayaṅkaram ॥ 46॥

45-46. Hearing the words of Lord Ram, Sugriv ordered the army to pitch its camp near the ocean. The chief warriors amongst them began to maintain a strict vigil over the army from all sides, to ensure that the soldiers maintained discipline and order (45).

Seeing the dreadful, ferocious and turbulent nature of the ocean which was full of huge surging waves as well as other obstructions that seemed virtually insurmountable, very daunting and formidable, all of them were extremely baffled; their minds and hearts despaired, and they all felt suddenly dejected by the difficulty of the task at hand¹ (46).

[Note—¹When the army reached the ocean they were confronted by a frightening sight that sapped all their energy and enthusiasm. There stretched before them, as far as the horizon, a frightful mass of water that roared and heaved menacingly. It was easy for the army to walk on solid ground, and till now the warriors were full of hope and energy as they moved rapidly across forests and mountains and valleys, but when they saw the massive ocean suddenly blocking their way, they became totally dejected and hopeless. What to do now, they wondered in bewilderment.]

अगाधं गगनाकारं सागरं वीक्ष्य दुःखिताः ।
तरिष्यामः कथं घोरं सागरं वरुणालयम् ॥ ४७॥
हन्तव्योऽस्माभिरद्यैव रावणो राक्षसाधमः ।
इति चिन्ताकुलाः सर्वे रामपार्श्वे व्यवस्थिताः ॥ ४८॥

agādham gaganākāraṃ sāgaraṃ vīkṣya duḥkhitāḥ ।
tariṣyāmaḥ katham ghoram sāgaraṃ varuṇālayam ॥ 47॥
hantavyo'smābhiradyaiva rāvaṇo rākṣasādhamah ।
iti cintākulāḥ sarve rāmapārśve vyavasthitāḥ ॥ 48॥

47-48. They felt extremely remorseful, hapless, helpless and gloomy on seeing that ocean which was as fathomless and without an end as the sky. They were extremely baffled and dumbstruck, and began to wonder, 'How shall we cross this vast abode (or a huge receptacle) of water (i.e. the ocean)? (47). We have to kill (overcome and get rid of) the evil, lowly and wicked demon Ravana today itself (but what can we do now, how shall we reach him when this ocean is obstructing our way?)'.

Gravely worrying, brooding gloomily and feeling confounded thus, all of them sat besides Lord Ram (to hold a conference, discuss the matter, and find a resolution of this vexing problem) (48).

रामः सीतामनुस्मृत्य दुःखेन महतावृतः ।
 विलाप्य जानकीं सीतां बहुधा कार्यमानुषः ॥ ४९॥
 अद्वितीयश्चिदात्मैकः परमात्मा सनातनः ।
 यस्तु जानाति रामस्य स्वरूपं तत्त्वतो जनः ॥ ५०॥
 तं न स्पृशति दुःखादि किमुतानन्दमव्ययम् ।
 दुःखहर्षभयक्रोधलोभमोहमदादयः ॥ ५१॥
 अज्ञानलिङ्गान्येतानि कुतः सन्ति विदात्मनि ।
 देहाभिमानिनो दुःखं न देहस्य विदात्मनः ॥ ५२॥

rāmaḥ sītāmanusmṛtya duḥkhena mahatāvṛtaḥ ।
 vilapya jānakīm sītāṃ bahudhā kāryamānuṣaḥ ॥ 49॥
 advitiyaścidātmaikaḥ paramātmā sanātanaḥ ।
 yastu jānāti rāmasya svarūpaṃ tattvato janaḥ ॥ 50॥
 taṃ na spr̥śati duḥkhādi kimutānandamavyayam ।
 duḥkhaharṣabhayakrodhalobhamohamadādayaḥ ॥ 51॥
 ajñānalingānyetāni kutaḥ santi cidātmani ।
 dehābhimānino duḥkhaṃ na dehasya cidātmanaḥ ॥ 52॥

49-52. Lord Ram was already in a gloomy mood as he remembered his separation from Sita and brooded over the prospects of ever seeing her again, especially when he was confronted by the mighty ocean that stood as a formidable challenge for him.

Though the Lord is the one without a second, as he is eternal and the enlightened Parmatma (the Supreme Being) himself personified, still he wailed and lamented for Sita in various ways because he had assumed the form of a human being to complete an assignment (of the Gods)¹.

Verily indeed, if even those persons who know or are aware of the real, essential and truthful form and nature of Lord Sri Ram as being the almighty and eternal Supreme Being (49-50) –

– Are freed from all sorrows and miseries associated with life in this world, then how can the Lord himself feel sorrowful and miserable?

Forsooth and without gainsay, the feeling of sorrow, misery, pain and grief, of happiness and joy, of anger and wrath, of wants and longings, of greed and rapacity, of attractions and attachments, of ego, arrogance and haughtiness, et al,--all are founded on ignorance and delusions so characteristic of this gross mundane world. Say, how can Lord Ram, the enlightened and wise supreme Soul, the pure Consciousness, the Supreme Being, ever be accused of having these negative thoughts and worldly emotions?

[To wit, Lord Ram is free from all such worldly traits, but he had to play his role of a human being to complete perfection with the noble aim of eliminating the demons, so he was obliged to behave like a man who has lost his wife and faces a formidable obstacle that may prevent him from finding and rescuing her.] (51-52)

[Note—¹The assignment was to kill the demons on behalf of the Gods and free the earth of its burden, and for this purpose strict secrecy was to be maintained because Ravana had got a boon that only a human being would be able to kill him, and only monkeys would be able to subdue his might. If the secret leaked out that Lord Ram

was not a human being, and these monkeys and bears were the many gods in their forms, then Ravana would get a ground to invoke the conditions of the boon and evade being killed. If this unfortunately happens, then the whole purpose of Lord Ram taking the trouble of coming to Lanka with his army of monkeys and bears would be defeated.

Hence, it was imperative for Lord Ram to behave exactly like a human being would behave in any given set of circumstances. That is why he let it appear that this ocean is too much for him, although he was the almighty Supreme Being himself, and as such he could have very easily tamed the ocean by the simple measure of drying it up or ordering it to part in the middle just like the red sea parted for Moses in the story of the Holy Bible in the Old Testament.]

सम्प्राप्ते दयाभावात्सुखमात्रं हि दृश्यते ।
बुद्ध्याद्यभावात्संशुद्धे दुःखं तत्र न दृश्यते ।
अतो दुःखादिकं सर्वं बुद्धेरेव न संशयः ॥ ५३॥

samprasāde dvayābhāvātsukhamātram hi drśyate ।
buddhyādyabhāvātsaṁśuddhe duḥkham tatra na drśyate ।
ato duḥkhādikaṁ sarvaṁ buddhereva na saṁśayaḥ ॥ 53॥

53. In the state of ‘Samadhi’ (a meditative trance-like state), there is total absence of duality. In this state of higher spiritual existence, the mind with all its inherent fickleness and worldly desires too ceases to exist. Hence, during this state of existence one experiences nothing but pure bliss and happiness. Therefore, it goes without saying that all feelings of miseries, pain and grief arise due to the mind with its focus on a gross world, but they cease to matter when the mind is de-linked from this gross physical world.

[To wit, in higher states of meditation all distinction between the mortal world and the immortal world is removed because the former cease to exist and only the latter prevails. This world of immortality is represented by pure consciousness. This world of consciousness is full of bliss and beatitude; there is no trace of sorrow or misery here.] (53)

रामः परात्मा पुरुषः पुराणो नित्योदितो नित्यसुखो निरीहः ।
तथापि मायागुणसङ्गतोऽसौ सुखीव दुःखीव विभाव्यतेऽबुधैः ॥ ५४॥

rāmaḥ parātmā puruṣaḥ purāṇo nityodito nityasukho nirīhaḥ ।
tathāpi māyāguṇasaṅgato'sau sukhīva duḥkhīva vibhāvyate'budhaiḥ ॥ 54॥

54. Lord Ram is verily the Parmatma (the Supreme Soul, the Supreme Being) (rāmaḥ parātmā); he is the Puran Purush (“puruṣaḥ purāṇo”; one who is most ancient, one who is mentioned and extolled by the Purans, the ancient scriptures); he is self-illuminated and an embodiment of eternal light (representing wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment—“nityodito”); he is an image and an embodiment of eternal and truthful bliss, happiness, joy and delight (nityasukho); and he is

disinterested, unattached, unaffected and not influenced by anything pertaining to this gross mundane world of artificiality (nirīhaḥ).

But ignorant and foolish people regard or consider him (Lord Sri Ram) to be either happy or sorrowful by the virtue of the characteristic features of delusions which envelop the mind-intellect apparatus of the creature.

[To wit, those who are not wise and enlightened think Lord Ram as an ordinary human being who is subjected to all emotions so characteristic of ordinary mortal creatures in this world. This mis-belief arises out of delusions that overwhelm all living beings in this mortal world, except a few who are self-realised, wise and enlightened, as the latter are free from the influence of Maya.] (54).

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
प्रथमः सर्गः ॥ १॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
prathamah sargaḥ ॥ 1॥

Thus ends Canto 1 of Yuddha Kand (Lanka Kand) of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and his divine consort Uma.

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Section 8.3: Geetawali Ramayan

{Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 22.}

Tulsidas' classic "Geetawali Ramayan" also briefly describes the departure of Lord Ram's army from Kishkindha and its arrival on the shore of the ocean in Sundar Kand, verse no. 22. Since it covers the entire episode in a single verse it is a sort of a recapitulation of the event in brief. Now let us read it:-

वानरसेनाकी लंकायात्रा
राग मारु

(5 / 22)

जब रघुबीर पयानो कीन्हों।
छुभित सिंधु, डगमगत महीधर, सजि सारंग कर लीन्हों॥ 1॥
सुनि कठोर टंकोर घोर अति चौंके बिधि-त्रिपुरारि।
जटापटल ते चली सुरसरी सकत न संभु सँभारि॥ 2॥
भए बिकल दिगपाल सकल, भय भरे भुवन दस चारि।
खरभर लंक, ससंक दसानन, गरभ स्रवहिं अरि-नारि॥ 3॥
कटकटात भट भालु, बिकट मरकट करि केहरि-नाद।

कूदत करि रघुनाथ—सपथ उपरी—उपरा बदि बाद॥ 4॥
 गिरि—तरुधर, नख मुख कराल, रद कालहु करत बिषाद।
 चले दस दिसि रिस भरि 'धरु घरु' कहि, 'को बराक मनुजाद'?॥ 5॥
 पवन पंगु पावक—पतंग—ससि दुरि गए, थके बिमान।
 जाचत सुर निमेष, सुरनायक नयन—भार अकुलान॥ 6॥
 गए पूरि सर धूरि, भूरि भय अग थल जलधि समान।
 नभ—निसान, हनुमान—हाँक सुनि समुझत कोउ न अपान॥ 7॥
 दिग्गज—कमठ—कोल—सहसानन धरत धरनि धरि धीर।
 बारहि बार अमरषत, करषत, करकैं परीं सरीर॥ 8॥
 चली चमू, चहु ओर सोर, कछु बनै न बरने भीर।
 किलकिलात, कसमसत, कोलाहल होत नीरनिधि—तीर॥ 9॥
 जातुधानपति जानि कालबस मिले बिभीषन आइ।
 सरनागत—पालक कृपालु कियो तिलक लियो अपनाइ॥ 10॥
 कौतुकही बारिधि बँधाइ उतरे सुबेल—तट जाइ।
 तुलसिदास गढ़ देखि फिरे कपि, प्रभु—आगमन सुनाइ॥ 11॥

vānarasēnākī laṅkāyātrā
 rāga mārū

(5/22)

jaba raghubīra payānō kīnhōm.
 chubhita sindhu, ḍagamagata mahīdhara, saji sārāṅga kara līnhōm.. 1..
 suni kaṭhōra ṭaṅkōra ghōra ati cauṅkē bidhi-tripurāri.
 jāṭapaṭala tē calī surasarī sakata na sambhu saṁbhāri.. 2..
 bha'e bikala digapāla sakala, bhaya bharē bhuvana dasa cāri.
 kharabhara laṅka, sasaṅka dasānana, garabha sravahim ari-nāri.. 3..
 kaṭakaṭāta bhaṭa bhālu, bikaṭa marakaṭa kari kēhari-nāda.
 kūdata kari raghunātha-sapatha uparī-uparā badi bāda.. 4..
 giri-tarudhara, nakha mukha karāla, rada kālahu karata biṣāda.
 calē dasa disi risa bhari 'dharu gharu' kahi, 'kō barāka manujāda'?..5..
 pavana paṅgu pāvaka-pataṅga-sasi duri ga'e, thakē bimāna.
 jācata sura nimēṣa, suranāyaka nayana-bhāra akulāna.. 6..
 ga'e pūri sara dhūri, bhūri bhaya aga thala jaladhi samāna.
 nabha-nisāna, hanumāna-hāṁka suni samujhata kō'u na apāna.. 7..
 diggaja-kamaṭha-kōla-sahasānana dharata dharani dhari dhīra.
 bārahi bāra amaraṣata, karaṣata, karakaim parim sarīra.. 8..
 calī camū, cahu ōra sōra, kachu banai na baranē bhīra.
 kilakilāta, kasamasata, kōlāhala hōta nīranidhi-tīra.. 9..
 jātudhānapati jāni kālabasa milē bibhīṣana ā'i.
 saranāgata-pālaka kṛpālu kiyo tilaka liyo apanā'i..10..
 kautukahī bāridhi baṁdhā'i utarē subēla-taṭa jā'i.
 tulasidāsa gaṛha dēkhi phirē kapi, prabhu-āgamana sunā'i..11..

Verse no. 5/22—[A huge army of brave and valiant monkeys and bears who were war veterans was immediately assembled and it departed from Kishkindha for Lanka. The following verse describe this army and how it wended its way to the shores of Lanka. Ravana's younger brother too joined hands with Lord Ram after he was insulted by his brother in open court.

The narration of these events are described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, (i) Doha no. 35 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 8-19 and Chanda line nos. 1-8; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; (iii) Doha no. 57—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60; and (b) Lanka Kand, (iv) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2; (v) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Doha no. 5; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 11.]

At the time of Lord Ram's departure (with his army), the ocean became turbulent and mountains trembled. [There was a great tumult in the world as the earth shook and the oceans heaved and the mountains rocked as if a great earth-quake was occurring.]

Presently, Lord Ram took his bow in his hands (as he got ready for departure from Kishkindha) (1).

The Lord twanged his formidable bow to announce the departure of his army, whereat even Brahma (the creator) Mahadeo (Lord Shiva, the concluder) and other exalted Gods were startled and stunned at its fierce sound that resembled the sound of the thunderbolt (as it is heard at the time of dooms-day).

River Ganges slipped (in shock) from Lord Shiva's matted hairs, and he could not control her (i.e. there were floods) (2).

All the guardians of the world became uneasy and alarmed; all the fourteen directions of the world were filled with fear.

Meanwhile, there was turmoil in Lanka. Ravana's ears stood on alert, and wives of the demons miscarried (3).

The bears and monkeys began to grind their teeth, and invoking Lord Ram and taking oath in his name, they jumped one on top of the other in excitement (4).

They had trees and mountains in their raised hands. Even the God of death feared their ferocious-looking sharp nails, claws and teeth.

Shouting 'catch him, catch him (with reference to Ravana, the demon king)—what is that demon in front of us'—they enthusiastically soared and moved in all the directions (like the dark clouds that cover the sky on the dooms-day) (5).

So much dust was raised by the movement of the Lord's army that the Wind God got paralysed (i.e. he was unable to move due to the weight of dust particles; the atmosphere was suffocative and dust got suspended thickly in the air).

The sun, the moon and the fire were eclipsed; the chariots of Gods lost their way (in darkness); and since the Gods don't blink their eyes, they got choked with dust so much so that Indra's (king of God's) eyelids became heavy and swollen, and all the other Gods prayed so that this turmoil ends quickly (6).

Many ponds and lakes got filled with the kicked-up dust, and the hollow formed when mountains were uprooted and shifted or toppled over were filled with huge ocean-like water bodies.

No one could hear even himself due to the din and noise created by God's drums in the sky and the roaring of Hanuman on the ground (7).

The brave 'Kurma' (the Tortoise), Varaaha (the Boar) and Shesh Nath (the Serpent God) had somehow managed to hold the earth somehow, with courage and great difficulty, and prevent it from toppling over on its side. Their bones creaked due to fatigue and weight of the army, so they had to repeatedly stretch in weariness to ease their tired bones and muscles (8).

In this way, when the army of monkeys started on their mission, there was phenomenal turbulence, turmoil, uproar and upheaval everywhere on this earth.

It is not possible to describe the immensity and the huge proportion of the crowd: the monkeys were jeering, yelling and cheering, and they were so large in number that they jam-packed the path elbow to elbow. There was a loud and uproarious noise near the ocean's shore (9).

At this moment, Vibhishan came to meet Lord Ram because he had recognised the fact that the demons had subjugated themselves to God of Death and Destruction (Kaal).

Lord Ram, who is naturally benevolent and merciful to refugees who have come to seek refuge at his holy feet, anointed him (as the king of Lanka), and accepted him¹ (10).

[¹It so happened that Vibhishan had tried to make Ravana see sense and avoid a ruinous war for the sake of a woman, a cause of war that made no sense. But death was facing Ravana in his face and had corrupted his wisdom. He publicly insulted Vibhishan and taunted him to leave his kingdom and go join Ram if he is so favourably inclined to him, forcing the latter to abandon Lanka and go to seek refuge with Lord Ram. The Lord immediately accepted him, and by way of showing his appreciation as well as a military strategy he anointed Vibhishan the future king of Lanka. This the Lord did to motivate Vibhishan to remain royal to him with the hope that if the Lord wins the war he would be made the king of Lanka.

These developments are narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 49.]

Then, they constructed a bridge across the ocean² as if it was a mere play for them, crossed it, and landed on the other side, and set up camp near Mt. Subel³.

Tulsidas says that the scouts among the monkeys went ahead, surveyed the fort, and leaving the message of Lord Ram's arrival at Lanka, came back to the camp⁴ (11).

[²Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

³Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 11.

⁴Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 5.]

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Chapter 9

Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, joins Lord Ram

In this Chapter no. 9 we read how and why Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, had come to seek refuge with Lord Ram, and join him in his campaign against Ravana and the rest of the demons. Lord Ram warmly welcomed Vibhishan, showed great affection by embracing him, and treated him as an equal while accepting him in his camp. Not only this, the Lord was so glad that Vibhishan came to join him that he wished to reward him, and so he forthwith anointed Vibhishan as the next king of Lanka.

This Chapter has four sections as follows:

Section 9.1—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Section 9.2—Kavitawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 32.

Section 9.3—Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto no. 2 (full)—to Canto 3, verse nos. 1-47.

Section 9.4—Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 23-45.

Section 9.1: Ram Charit Manas

{Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.}

चौ०. उहाँ निसाचर रहहिं ससंका । जब तें जारि गयउ कपि लंका ॥ १ ॥
 निज निज गृहं सब करहिं बिचारा । नहिं निसिचर कुल केर उबारा ॥ २ ॥
 जासु दूत बल बरनि न जाई । तेहि आएँ पुर कवन भलाई ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

uhāṁ nisācara rahahim sasaṅkā. jaba tēm jāri gaya'u kapi laṅkā. 1.
 nija nija grhaṁ saba karahim bicārā. nahim niscara kula kēra ubārā. 2.
 jāsu dūta bala barani na jāī. tēhi ā'ēṁ pura kavana bhalāī. 3.

[Now, let us leave Lord Ram and his army on the shore of the ocean, and divert our attention to learn about the developments in Lanka where a lot of turmoil ensued in the wake of Hanuman burning the city, thrashing and killing its army mercilessly, and then fearlessly left the city, without any opposition or resistance, to go back to Kishkindha to report to Lord Ram. This clearly implied that the demons were sore affright and terrified of him, as not a single demon warrior dared to challenge him as he was leaving the city on his way home.]

Ever since the Kapi (Hanuman) burnt Lanka and went away, there was a heavy atmosphere of gloom and dismay in the city. The demons (who were not accustomed

to such a severe beating and shame inflicted upon them by a lonely intruder in the form of a humble monkey) were extremely terrorized and bewildered; they lived in a perpetual environment of great fear, uncertainty and consternation. (1)

They gathered together in small groups in their homes, and discussed the developments. The unanimous view was that the demon race was now doomed, and that there seemed no chances of escape from the calamity that stares blankly in their faces. (2)

The general thread of conversation amongst the distraught and terrified demon citizens was this: “He¹ whose mere messenger is so powerful, strong and devastating (and who has caused such havoc single handedly, with no one daring to stop him), say what will happen when he himself arrives here with the full force of his army, and unleashes the fury of his anger!” (3)

[Note—¹The demons were well aware that Hanuman was simply a messenger of Lord Ram whose wife Sita was kidnapped and brought to the city of Lanka by their king Ravana. So they mean Lord Ram here. The citizens’ homes were burnt, and countless demon warriors were either killed or severely wounded in confrontation with Hanuman. All these developments left the inhabitants of Lanka dazed and befuddled.]

दूतिन्ह सन सुनि पुरजन बानी । मंदोदरी अधिक अकुलानी ॥ ४ ॥
 रहसि जोरि कर पति पग लागी । बोली बचन नीति रस पागी ॥ ५ ॥
 कंत करष हरि सन परिहरहू । मोर कहा अति हित हियँ धरहू ॥ ६ ॥

dūtinha sana suni purajana bānī. mandōdarī adhika akulānī. 4.
 rahasi jōri kara pati paga lāgī. bōlī bacana nīti rasa pāgī. 5.
 kanta karaṣa hari sana pariharahū. mōra kahā ati hita hiyaṁ dharahū. 6.

When Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, heard of what the citizens were saying through the medium of spies and informers, she was extremely agitated and worried¹. (4)

When she found her husband alone in the palace, she fell down at his feet, and clasping them in supplication, she pleaded with him using sweet words which were wise and full of prudence. (5)

Mandodari said, ‘My dear husband (**kanta**)! Please abandon animosity with Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu who was in the form of Lord Ram). Understand that what I say is for your own profound good, and with this view pay heed to my salutary words of wisdom and keep them in your heart.

[To wit, don’t take me in the wrong sense, don’t think that I am disloyal to you by pointing out your faults and misdemeanours. Listen to my advice as it is for your own good, and pay attention to me. Understand that your welfare is intrinsically linked to my own welfare as I am your wife; and so I can never say anything that will be harmful for you.] (6)

[Note—¹Mandodari came to learn about the gloomy developments and the demoralizing impact they had on the morale of the city when her confidantes informed her about them. She knew the evil, sinful, stubborn and haughty nature of her husband Ravana more than anyone else, and so she feared for the worst. But nevertheless she decided to try and make her husband see the light of reason, and hoped that good sense would somehow prevail upon him.

The question arises that if Mandodari could learn from spies about the things the citizens were saying, why no such information was received by Ravana? The reason lies in Ravana's nature—he was so wrathful and short-tempered, so haughty, arrogant and egoist that he was unwilling to hear anything that did not suit him or that he did not want to hear, that anyone who dared to inform him about the rumblings in the city would not only bear the brunt of his anger, and immediately put to death himself, but would certainly also cause those whom he report to be subjected to a merciless death. So, Ravana's nature went against him as he was kept in the dark about the fact that the city was mentally revolting against him, that the demon army was demoralized, and that tremors of mutiny were rumbling right under his very nose.

During the course of our reading we shall discover this feature in Ravana's character—that he was egoist, stubborn and arrogant to the extreme, and that he would pay no attention to any advice by anyone about anything, no matter how good that advice was, once he had decided on a course of action.

Though it can be argued that it is a good sign for a king to be determined and resolute in his decisions and actions, but at the same time it is expected of a good king that he keeps his mind open to wise council and good advice of his close confidantes such as his own ministers and advisors, and is able to take into account the changes in situations to modify his responses to them. Stubbornness and haughtiness of mind that does not want to accommodate views of others, and thinks that what it thinks is correct and what others think is wrong, without even bothering to weigh the pros and the cons of the various options, would surely ruin the king and would be detrimental for the welfare of his kingdom.]

समुझत जासु दूत कइ करनी । स्रवहिं गर्भ रजनीचर घरनी ॥ ७ ॥

तासु नारि निज सचिव बोलाई । पठवहु कंत जो चहहु भलाई ॥ ८ ॥

samujhata jāsu dūta ka'i karanī. sravahim garbha rajanīcara gharanī. 7.
tāsu nāri nija saciva bōlāī. paṭhavahu kanta jō cahahu bhalāī. 8.

As soon as the wives of the demons hear and recall the fearsome deeds of the messenger, they become so horrified with terror that they miscarry. (7)

Oh my lord (kanta)! If you want your own good (and welfare of the kingdom) then summon your minister and send back the wife of that Lord whose messenger had instilled such great fear in the demons. (8)

तव कुल कमल बिपिन दुखदाई । सीता सीत निसा सम आई ॥ ९ ॥

सुनहु नाथ सीता बिनु दीन्हें । हित न तुम्हार संभु अज कीन्हें ॥ १० ॥

tava kula kamala bipina dukhadā'ī. sītā sīta nisā sama ā'ī. 9.
sunahu nātha sītā binu dīnhēm. hita na tumhāra sambhu aja kīnhēm. 10.

Sita has become a symbol of doom for the entire race of demons who were hitherto living peacefully in the city of Lanka. She is like that frosty night that spells doom for a bed of lotuses that otherwise bloom in a pond.

[To wit, even as a frosty night destroys a bed of lotuses that otherwise bloom in a pond during ordinary nights, Sita too has become ruinous for the demon race which lived happily in Lanka till now. Just as the lotuses bloom in a pond but wither during frost, the demons have become distressed and gloomy ever since Sita came here.]¹ (9)

Listen my lord; without giving Sita back you can never expect any good for yourself. Even Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma themselves won't be able to help you at all.

[To wit, if you think that you have nothing to fear because you worship Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, and that they would protect you, then listen, even they won't come to your aid if you do not return Sita to her rightful Lord (Ram). Lords Shiva and Brahma cannot side with you and neglect your evil deeds, for these gods cannot condone sins, impropriety and unrighteousness. You are deceiving yourself if you harbour such false beliefs; they are misconceptions that would drive you to your own grave.] (10)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Sita is like the symbolic frosty night that causes the lotus flowers to shrink; the demon race is like the lotus flower, and Lanka is like the pond in which the lotus flowers bloomed prior to being struck by frost. The city was prosperous and the demons lived happily, but since Sita came here everything turned gloomy and uncertain.]

दो०. राम बान अहि गन सरिस निकर निसाचर भेक ।
जब लगि ग्रसत न तब लगि जतनु करहु तजि टेक ॥ ३६ ॥
dōhā.

rāma bāna ahi gana sarisa nikara nisācara bhēka.
jaba lagi grasata na taba lagi jatanu karahu taji tēka. 36.

The arrows of Lord Ram are like fierce serpents, and the demon hordes are like mere frogs in their comparison.

So therefore, till the time those serpents (arrows) do not devour (kill) the frogs (demons), you still have time in your hands to put things in order. Abandon stubbornness and haughtiness, and find a way to save the demons from doom while still there is time with you.' (Doha no. 36)

चौ०. श्रवन सुनी सठ ता करि बानी । बिहसा जगत बिदित अभिमानी ॥ १ ॥
सभय सुभाउ नारि कर साचा । मंगल महुँ भय मन अति काचा ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

śravana sunī saṭha tā kari bānī. bihasā jagata bidita abhimānī. 1.
sabhaya subhā'u nāri kara sākā. maṅgala mahuṁ bhaya mana ati kākā. 2.

When that stupid fellow (Ravana) who was renowned in the world as being exceedingly haughty, arrogant and egoist, heard her (Mandodari's) words that he took as admonishment, he roared with laughter defiantly. (1)

He haughtily retorted, 'Truly it is said that a woman's is timid by nature and she is easily overcome by fear. Even in the event when auspicious things are about to happen¹ she harbours doubt, fear and consternation, looking at the darker side of every situation, because she has a weak, fickle and irresolute mind. (2)

[Note—¹This observation of Ravana that "auspicious things are about to happen" is to be marked. No one knew the secret that was in his mind and heart. He had abducted Sita with a clear understanding that it is through her that he can hope to find redemption for his soul, because he felt that his life had been so sinful and his deeds so bad that there is no scope for his soul to find deliverance and emancipation ever. This resolution is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23.

It was not possible for him to do any righteous, auspicious, holy and virtuous thing now at this late stage in life that could at least neutralize the huge burden of sins and evil deeds that he had accumulated on his head. His soul was crying for redemption and yearning for salvation; he wanted internal peace and bliss for himself, but it eluded him. He knew that he cannot successfully practice any of the means prescribed in the scriptures by which a creature can atone for his past sins and misdeeds; he knew that he can't find deliverance, emancipation and salvation by doing Tapa (penance and austerity), Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), Daan (charity), Yagya (religious sacrifices), Daya (showing mercy and compassion), Tirtha (going on a pilgrimage), Prayaschita (penitence and repentance for sins and evil life), Sewa (serving the lowly and humble), or any other means prescribed by the scriptures.

His only chance, he determined for himself, was to get rid of his evil body of a demon by getting killed in a battle at the hands of the Supreme Being, who he firmly believed had come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram. Fighting and waging a cruel war was something that suited his nature and temperament, as he was not inclined to be pious and compassionate.

But to achieve this noble aim—to die at the hands of the Supreme Being personified as Lord Ram—he would have to do something very unconventional and extremely nasty so as to sufficiently provoke the Lord, who is otherwise so merciful and forgiving that he would most probably spare Ravana if there was any scope of forgiving him, that he would be compelled to come to him and kill him in a face-to-face battle. This occurrence would serve a dual purpose—one, it will free Ravana's soul from the cage of the evil body of a demon in which it was trapped, and help it attain deliverance, salvation, emancipation, and two, it will afford Ravana a rare chance to have a 'Darshan', a holy sight of the Supreme Lord, without having to make great spiritual efforts and undertake rigorous religious performances in order to achieve this rarest of rare privilege that all living beings yearn for but rarely get; it would be a singular achievement that would grant him eternal bliss, beatitude and joy.

He had another noble aim in his mind and heart. Suppose he decided to abandon his sinful life and devote himself entirely to a righteous and holy way of life,

and do whatever was necessary to atone for and seek forgiveness for his past sins, and also suppose he would succeed in his efforts at penitence and attained his desired spiritual goal of liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation, of obtaining eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity—but it would be restricted to him alone; he alone would be the beneficiary of all such spiritual practices. But it would be too selfish for him to reap this largesse while the rest of his demon companions, his kith and kin, his soldiers and commanders et al, who had faithfully and loyally been serving him for such a long time, were allowed to suffer hell and remain toiling under the horrible yoke of a demon life, with no redemption in sight. Perhaps some of these demons were doing evil deeds that they did not out of their own free will but under obligation to carry out Ravana's orders, as he was their king. So therefore it was obligatory upon him to assume responsibility for the consequences of what they did, and so if he wished for his own spiritual welfare he must also keep their concerns in mind.

Hence, thought Ravana, he must devise a device that would ensure “collective deliverance and emancipation” of all the demons who took instructions from him and served him loyally throughout his life; he cannot abandon them when seeking good destiny for his own self. To attain this noble objective, the only practical way open for Ravana was to start a war with Lord Ram as it would automatically ensure that these poor demons would die one by one in the battles that take place, and consequently each one of them would find liberation and deliverance for his soul; not only this, all the demons would, like himself, also have a chance to have a holy glimpse of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram, which would grant them eternal bliss and beatitude the way he expects for himself!

If these demons had become sinful and carried out countless evil deeds on the orders of Ravana, and in the process had shared his doomed destiny, they would now be able to share the spiritual reward of ‘Mukti’ (liberation, deliverance) alongside Ravana. A great and noble king is one who shares with his subjects both fortunes as well as misfortunes.

Indeed and forsooth, if we see things from a corrective perspective we would conclude that Ravana was a truly great king who thought for others, who was concerned for his entire generation who had all along sacrificed its life for him and his cause, who decided that if his demon race was ready to share a doomed destiny with him by committing horrible sins on his orders, they have an equal and moral right to enjoy liberation and deliverance if their king had the good fortune to have it.

This is the primary and the only reason why Ravana did not listen to anyone who suggested to him to return Sita to Lord Ram, because if he did so then all his secret planning for the redemption of his soul and that of other demons would be undone.]

जौं आवड़ मर्कट कटकाई । जिअहिं बिचारे निसिचर खाई ॥ ३ ॥

कंपहिं लोकप जाकीं त्रासा । तासु नारि सभित बड़ि हासा ॥ ४ ॥

अस कहि बिहसि ताहि उर लाई । चलेउ सभाँ ममता अधिकाई ॥ ५ ॥

मंदोदरी हृदयँ कर चिंता । भयउ कंत पर बिधि बिपरीता ॥ ६ ॥

jaum āva'i markṭa kaṭakāī. ji'ahim bicārē nīsicara khāī. 3.

kampahim lōkapa jākīm trāsā. tāsu nāri sabhīta baḍi hāsā. 4.

asa kahi bihasi tāhi ura lā'ī. calē'u sabhāṃ mamatā adhikā'ī. 5.
mandōdarī hr̥dayaṃ kara cintā. bhaya'u kanta para bidhi biparītā. 6.

What is there to fear from the army of monkeys? In case they do come here then our demons would feed upon those poor fellows in order to satisfy their hunger and for their sustenance¹. (3)

It is such an irony and a matter to laugh at because it is nothing better than a joke that he (i.e. Ravana) from whom even the Lokpals (the gods responsible for protection of the world) tremble out of fear, his wife should feel so frightened!² (4)

Saying this, Ravana laughed once again and affectionately embraced her (Mandodari). Exhibiting great fondness for her by his demeanours³, he went haughtily to his royal court. (5)

Meanwhile, when Mandodari observed that her husband was not willing to listen to any advice and had become blind to obvious signs of impending disaster, she was highly worried for him and feared for the worst. She thought to herself that the Creator has indeed turned hostile towards her husband because the latter refuses to pay heed to common sense.

[To wit, when the Creator becomes opposed to anyone, the first thing he does is to corrupt the mind of that person so much that he becomes deluded and acts in a way that is detrimental to his own interests. The Creator creates such a situation that the person pushes himself over a cliff and jumps into a deep and dark abyss of self-invited and self-inflicted disaster for which he cannot blame anyone else but his own self. Mandodari came round to the view that this is exactly what has happened with her husband.] (6)

[Note—¹The demons ate flesh of living creatures. So Ravana says that in case the army of monkeys (and bears) comes to Lanka, then he will order his demon army to catch the enemy's soldiers and make a good meal out of them. Imagine what Ravana had planned—he would close all his military canteens and food outlets, forcing the demon army to suffer from hunger, so that when the monkeys arrive in Lanka these famished demons would pounce upon them from all sides, killing the monkeys and bears for their meals if they wished to eat cooked meat, or even eating them alive if they wished so.

²All the gods were scared of Ravana. So he cites this to stress upon his wife Mandodari that he was so mighty and powerful that even the gods fear him, and therefore it is very surprising that his own wife should feel afraid of humble creatures such as human beings and monkeys, a reference to Lord Ram and his army of monkeys and bears. It is a laughable matter as this fear of hers carries no weight and merits no attention.

³So we see why Ravana did not punish Mandodari for admonishing him, not only here but later on too when the war actually commenced. All her entreaties and remonstrations with Ravana gave the impression that she was taking the side of Lord Ram, her husband's enemy, and literally belittling her own husband. No man would tolerate such an attitude of his wife—that she praises his enemy openly and repeatedly while undermining the self-respect and dignity of her husband. But Ravana only smiled at her and excused her for her irreverent behaviour towards him, and the

reason is given here—that he loved her very dearly, and was so fond of her that he tolerated all that she said against him, which ordinarily he would have regarded as grave provocation and overt insinuation, almost bordering on treason and disloyalty which is punishable by death.

Another reason for his overlooking Mandodari's recriminating words was that he knew that she is not in the know of the secret of his heart, that he sees Sita as a means by which he and the rest of the demons will find their deliverance from the unholy body of a demon, and when they are killed by Lord Ram in battle they will attain emancipation and salvation for their souls. In pursuit of this grand objective he decided to neglect her.

Instead of getting irritated and angry at Mandodari, Ravana actually felt glad and appreciated her stand—because her intense worry for him proved that she loved him immensely so much so that she did not fear his wrath in trying to stop him from engaging himself in a disastrous war with Lord Ram by even going to the length of praising her husband's enemy if it could somehow dissuade him from entering into a war.

As for Mandodari, her worry was understandable and justified, because as a chaste and loyal wife her fate was directly linked with the fate of her husband Ravana; if Ravana was doomed it was her moral duty to do her best to pull him out of the pit. Actually, if she had not tried to persuade Ravana to abandon his bellicose attitude, she would have failed in her duty as a wife.

We can compare Ravana's responses to Mandodari's advice with that of his own brother Vibhishan's. While he neglected Mandodari chiding him, even embracing her and smiling at her to show how fond he was of her, when Vibhishan advised him almost a similar thing, to give Sita back to Lord Ram and make peace with the Lord, Ravana lost his temper, vehemently kicking Vibhishan in front of full court, and telling him to leave his kingdom forthwith—apropos: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41. We shall be reading these verses in detail shortly.]

बैठेउ सभाँ खबरि असि पाई । सिंधु पार सेना सब आई ॥ ७ ॥
 बूझेसि सचिव उचित मत कहहू । ते सब हँसे मष्ट करि रहहू ॥ ८ ॥
 जितेहु सुरासुर तब श्रम नाहीं । नर बानर केहि लेखे माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

baiṭhē'u sabhāṁ khabari asi pā'ī. sindhu pāra sēnā saba ā'ī. 7.
 būjhēsi saciva ucita mata kahahū. tē saba haṁsē maṣṭa kari rahahū. 8.
 jītēhu surāsura taba śrama nāhīm. nara bānara kēhi lēkhē māhīm. 9.

When he (Ravana) sat down on his throne in the court, he got the information that the whole army (of Lord Ram) has arrived on the shore of the ocean on the other side of Lanka. (7)

He asked his ministers to give whatever advice they think was proper and fit concerning the new development. All the ministers laughed in unison as if it was no issue at all, saying, 'Sit quietly and be at ease (for there is nothing to worry). (8)

When we had vanquished the gods and the demons earlier we faced no difficulty, so what do these humble men and monkeys matter for us?

[To wit, when we could easily defeat and conquer the so-called mighty gods as well as the demons who had dared to challenge us, why should we unduly tax our brains and become anxious concerning these wretched monkeys and bears, and their leader (Lord Ram) who is only a human being? Oh king Ravana, sit comfortably and stop worrying.]¹ (9)

[Note—¹The biggest proof that Ravana was under great delusion about his strength and ability is that he relied on this ill-thought advice of his ministers. He should have questioned their wisdom and asked them what were they and their army of so-called invincible demons doing when a single Kapi called Hanuman had ravaged Lanka with impunity, killing his own son Akshayakumar a great number of demon soldiers, and then had burnt the city, with no one to stop him. Where was their strength and daredevilry then? Their bluster and haughty talk deserve no merit in the view of what Hanuman did to Lanka only a short while ago.

But once again, the fact is that Destiny and Providence had other plans for Ravana and his compatriots. The fiat of fate was so strong that it pulled the plug from Ravana's own sense of wisdom, and plunged his intellect into a dark gloomy night of delusions in which he saw phantoms of victory that enticed him to follow them blindly and fall in a trap of death and destruction, and unfortunate as he was, those upon whom he relied for good and sane advice in times of uncertainties and impending disasters, those who could have actually turned the tide in his favour by pulling him away from the precipice, proved to be the ones who actually pushed him over this precipice instead of pulling him away to safety.

Why had this happened? One reason of course was that the Creator was angry with Ravana's deeds and he had devised things that would bring an end of Ravana. The other reason is that all his subordinates and confidantes, all his courtiers and ministers, all his army commanders and lieutenants, were either sycophants bending over their backs to please him, or were too terrified of him to speak things he did not want to hear. Either way, no one wished to annoy Ravana and invite his wrath. They were all aware of his nature that he was egoist, haughty and arrogant, and was not accustomed to hearing things that were not to his liking.

The following Doha no. 37 tells us the perils of a situation where a king surrounds himself with advisors who speak what the king likes to hear, instead of what is truly good for him.]

दो०. सचिव बैद गुर तीनि जौं प्रिय बोलहिं भय आस ।

राज धर्म तन तीनि कर होइ बेगिहीं नास ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

saciva baida gura tīni jauri priya bōlahiṁ bhaya āsa.

rāja dharma tana tīni kara hō'i bēgihīṁ nāsa. 37.

If a minister (or an advisor), a medicine man (a doctor), and a guru (teacher, guide and moral preceptor)—if these three speak, out of fear, things that their patron wishes to hear, then it is certain that the king's kingdom, the patient's body, and the correct path of righteousness that a person is expected to follow are seriously compromised, leading to their quick ruin. (Doha no. 37)

[Note—If a king's minister or his advisor is so scared of punishment that he would speak only such things as the king likes to hear, then the kingdom is ruined sooner than later.

Similarly, if a doctor is so afraid of his patient that he desists from giving him correct advice and speaking the truth about his illness and precautions that are to be taken, they obviously the patient is the one who suffers, and he may even eventually die.

Likewise, if a Guru is reluctant to give correct advice to his disciple out of fear of inviting the latter's wrath should he tell him certain things he does not like, then the disciple's future is ruined.

In all these three cases, both parties suffer. The king is ruined and the blame goes to his minister who cannot absolve himself of his moral responsibility and duty to give correct advice to his king, and prevent his ruin by being proactive in this matter. The doctor can't be excused if he does not live up to his professional credentials by not giving proper advice to his patient and treating his illness properly. The guru can't excuse himself if the fate of his disciple is periled due to his negligence.

To wit, while the king, the patient and the disciple of course have to suffer directly, the minister, the doctor and the guru too suffer immensely by way of gaining infamy and scorn in the world for being instrumental in the fall and ruin of their principals who relied upon them for their good advice and all round support. It amounts to betrayal of trust, dishonesty, disloyalty, un-professional and dishonourable behaviour on part of the minister, the doctor and the guru towards the king, the patient and the disciple respectively.]

चौ०. सोइ रावन कहूँ बनी सहाई । अस्तुति करहिं सुनाइ सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

अवसर जानि बिभीषनु आवा । भ्राता चरन सीसु तेहिं नावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sō'i rāvana kahuṁ banī sahā'ī. astuti karahim sunā'i sunā'ī. 1.

avasara jāni bibhīṣanu āvā. bhrātā carana sīsu tēhim nāvā. 2.

Unfortunately, however, a circumstance that is surely ruinous for an individual and detrimental for his welfare (as outlined in Doha no. 37 herein above) presented itself before Ravana, for the sycophant ministers and courtiers, ever eager to please him, falsely extolled his glories and heaped unnecessary praises on him¹. (1)

Seeing that the opportunity was ripe, Vibhishan (Ravana's younger brother) came to the court. He bowed his head reverentially before the feet of his elder brother. (2)

[Note—¹A doomed fate had, alas, deluded Ravana so much that he was very glad to hear his ministers and courtiers praising him falsely. He could not even see that they were simply trying to please him; that they were merely appeasing him to keep him in good humour. His natural wisdom and intelligence had got so highly corrupted by false praises and a sense of illusionary grandeur and majesty that he could not see the reality that was staring in his face, and believed boisterous claims that were obviously contrary to all available evidence.

Had it been otherwise, the simple question he could have asked his stupid ministers to call their bluff is this: “Hurrah for all of you. Congratulations! Indeed we must have no fear for we are so strong and invincible. But I have a query. Well, can anyone of you tell me what were you doing, and where were you, when that single Kapi named Hanuman had gone on a rampage in Lanka with impunity only a short while ago, when he killed my son Akshayakumar and so many of my demon warriors, and then set Lanka ablaze? Of course it is true that I had conquered the gods and the demons with the least effort, and in all those campaigns you had been by my side and share equal glory for success. But can you tell me what happened to your valour and gallantry with respect to that single Kapi? Why did you allow our golden city to turn black? And if you couldn’t handle one fellow, please just tell me how you plan to tackle thousands of such Kapis when the army of our adversary (i.e. of Lord Ram) comes and attacks us? Now you are so loud in praising our combined strength and powers, but why were you all silent during the time the city was being ravaged by Hanuman?”

But no, Providence had eclipsed Ravana’s wisdom and judgment, and he saw day when it was actually night.

There is another way in which we can view Ravana’s attitude. When he observed that his chief ministers and the commanders of the demon army were, for some inexplicable reason, showing no signs of alarm at what had happened in Lanka, and inspite of all available evidence that portend doom and ruin for the whole demon race they are still talking so haughtily about victory over the enemy, it would be wiser to keep quiet for now, and to not remind them on their failure to protect the city from Hanuman’s wrath, because that might ruffle their self-pride and rub their ego on the wrong side. They may feel insulted and take Ravana’s chiding as personal affront, and secretly turn against him for publicly humiliating and taunting them. Should it happen then it would be disastrous for Ravana, because when the war actually breaks out he would need the support of these same ministers and commanders, and to unnecessarily provoke them now by sarcastic remarks would make them hostile towards him, a situation that no king would like to develop.

Therefore, inspite of realizing that his ministers are simply boasting of bluster, he decided to neglect them. Besides this, it also suited his own planning—for it was the secret desire of his heart to die at the hands of Lord Ram so that he can deliver his soul from the cage of his demonic body, and help it to attain emancipation and salvation.]

पुनि सिरु नाइ बैठ निज आसन । बोला बचन पाइ अनुसासन ॥ ३ ॥
जौ कृपाल पूँछिहु मोहि बाता । मति अनुरूप कहउँ हित ताता ॥ ४ ॥

puni siru nā'i baiṭha nija āsana. bōlā bacana pā'i anusāsana. 3.
jau kṛpāla pūṁchihu mōhi bātā. mati anurūpa kaha'uṁ hita tātā. 4.

Before he sat down on his seat, Vibhishan bowed once again at the feet of his brother (in order to show great respect to him). When he got permission to speak (and give his advice on the matter being currently discussed in the assembly), he said—(3)

‘My dear brother (tātā)! Since your gracious Majesty has been kind to ask me for my views, I shall humbly tell you what I think is the best for you and for your all round welfare. (4)

जो आपन चाहै कल्याना । सुजसु सुमति सुभ गति सुख नाना ॥ ५ ॥
सो परनारि लिलार गोसाईं । तजउ चउथि के चंद कि नाई ॥ ६ ॥

jō āpana cāhai kalyānā. sujasu sumati subha gati sukha nānā. 5.
sō paranāri lilāra gōsā'īm. taja'u ca'uthi kē canda ki nā'īm. 6.

If you wish to have an auspicious future and a happy fate, if you wish to have good fame and glory, if you wish to well advised and lauded in the world as a wise individual, if you desire to have an auspicious destiny for yourself, and if you want happiness and joy of all kind in your life (both present and future)—(5)

--Then oh lord (gōsā'īm) it is better for you not to look at (taja'u) the face of another person's wife (paranāri lilāra) like one would shun looking at the face of moon of the fourth night of its two phases (ca'uthi kē canda) (as it is believed to be a bad omen that brings ruin and suffering to the person who happens to look at it)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The moon has two phases, viz. the waxing and the waning phase. According to popular belief, it is inauspicious to view the moon on the fourth of each phase. So here Vibhishan cites this tradition to implore Ravana to discard Sita and shun looking at her as it would bring nothing but ruin for him.]

चौदह भुवन एक पति होई । भूतद्रोह तिष्ठइ नहिं सोई ॥ ७ ॥
गुन सागर नागर नर जोऊ । अलप लोभ भल कहइ न कोऊ ॥ ८ ॥

caudaha bhuvana ēka pati hō'ī. bhūtadrōha tiṣṭai nahim sō'ī. 7.
guna sāgara nāgara nara jō'ū. alapa lōbha bhala kaha'i na kō'ū. 8.

Even if a man is so powerful and majestic that he rules over all the fourteen divisions of this world, yet if he turns hostile to living beings and causes suffering to them he would certainly fall down from his exalted stature.

[To wit, no matter how powerful and mighty a king might be, but if he makes ordinary creatures suffer under his rule then no one can prevent his ruin, as he invites the curse of their suffering soul, and this curse is so potent and effective that it neutralizes the benefit of any boon that the king may have.]¹ (7)

Likewise, though a man may possess a lot of virtues and is a treasury of wisdom, but if he harbours even a trace of the negative trait of greed and avarice then no one calls him noble and honourable.

[To wit, the small dark trait of greed and avarice neutralizes all the other good traits of a man, giving him a bad name though he is otherwise noble and honourable in all other respects. His wisdom and virtues take a back seat in front of one single negative character that destroys his entire reputation.]² (8)

[Note—¹What is Vibhishan hinting at? He means that though Ravana is so powerful that even the gods of heaven are terrified of him and pay their tributes to him, but he has been making all living beings suffer horribly by creating a reign of terror on this earth. He may have subdued the gods and the demons on the strength of his powerful arms, but he forgets that the cry of the humble soul of the ordinary creature that suffers due to him would prove to be like the last straw that broke the camel's back. The curse from all those who have suffered under him would be the nail in his coffin, and may be he has successfully made the mighty gods bow before him but he would have to bow himself before this curse.

Presently, this curse comes from the soul of Sita because she is suffering immensely in his captivity. This curse would determine his destiny if he lets it persist and does not make amends while there is time.

²Vibhishan says that he does not deny that Ravana was a learned demon king. 'Learned'? Yes surely, because Ravana was well versed in the scriptures. He was also a great devotee of Lord Shiva, and he had performed several rounds of Tapa (penances and sacrifices) to gain boons from Brahma, the creator. But once he acquired power and strength he became excessively greedy; he was not satisfied with his kingdom of Lanka but wished to conquer the whole creation. Further, he was not satisfied with his own wife and the large number of mistresses he had in his harem, and now he eyed Sita, the chaste and loyal wife of Lord Ram. He has crossed the red line and has done what he should not have done.

So therefore, inspite of his being wise and learned he has acted like a big fool, digging his own grave, and inviting ruin for himself as well as for the entire demon race by his reckless deeds.]

दो०. काम क्रोध मद लोभ सब नाथ नरक के पंथ ।

सब परिहरि रघुबीरहि भजहु भजहिं जेहि संत ॥ ३८ ॥

dōhā.

kāma krōdha mada lōbha saba nātha naraka kē pantha.
saba parihari raghubīrahi bhajahu bhajahim jēhi santa. 38.

Oh Lord! Passions (kāma), anger (krōdha), haughtiness (mada), greed (lōbha) etc.—all are paths leading to hell.

Abandon all such things (as they are detrimental for your welfare), and instead you must worship and adore Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) who is worshipped and adored by all saints and pious people. (Doha no. 38)

[Note—Vibhishan's advice is in sharp contrast with what other ministers and courtiers had told Ravana. While others had pampered Ravana's ego and catered to his self-pride, speaking words that he wished to hear, Vibhishan spoke to the contrary. Naturally, a person who is as haughty and egoist as Ravana was would not like to hear what Vibhishan had to say to him. Had Vibhishan said this in a private audience, may be Ravana would have overlooked it like the way he had overlooked Mandodari's entreaties (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37).

But this was full court, and if he neglected Vibhishan's stern words said publicly he would become a laughing stock for his other courtiers. In future some of them would also gather courage to speak on his face, which no king would ever tolerate.

So, as we will read below, Ravana took exception to Vibhishan's sane advice, and finally kicked him out of his kingdom (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 41).]

चौ०. तात राम नहिं नर भूपाला । भुवनेस्वर कालहु कर काला ॥ १ ॥
 ब्रह्म अनामय अज भगवंता । व्यापक अजित अनादि अनंता ॥ २ ॥
 गो द्विज धेनु देव हितकारी । कृपा सिंधु मानुष तनुधारी ॥ ३ ॥
 जन रंजन भंजन खल ब्राता । बेद धर्म रच्छक सुनु भ्राता ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tāta rāma nahim nara bhūpālā. bhuvanēsvara kālahu kara kālā. 1.
 brahma anāmaya aja bhagavantā. byāpaka ajita anādi anantā. 2.
 gō dvija dhēnu dēva hitakārī. krpā sindhu mānuṣa tanudhārī. 3.
 jana rañjana bhañjana khala brātā. bēda dharma racchaka sunu bhrātā. 4.

My dear brother (tāta)! 'Ram' is not an ordinary human prince. In all sooth and without gainsay, he is the Supreme Lord of the entire creation, of the whole world with all its many divisions. He is indeed the Lord who supersedes even the god of death known as Kaal, who causes death of even the 'Death God'. (1)

Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm (the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness); he is free from all the taints and maladies associated with Avidya (ignorance leading to delusions) (because 'Consciousness' is eternally enlightened, wise and self-realised); he has no birth as he is eternal and infinite (because he is 'unborn' as the cosmic Consciousness neither dies nor takes birth); he is indeed 'Bhagvan' (the Lord of the world who possesses all the excellent virtues and characters that exist in this creation).

Indeed, he is all-pervading and omnipresent; he is invincible; he is without a beginning; and he has no end either as he is infinite and eternal.¹ (2)

The Lord is the supreme well-wisher and protector of humble and meek creatures represented by a 'cow', holy and pious men represented by 'Brahmins', the 'earth' that is like the mother who sustains and nourishes all living beings, and the different 'gods' who protect and support the entire creation.

The Lord, being an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness, magnanimity, benevolence and grace, assumed the form of a human being as 'Ram' in order to fulfill his above obligations.*²

[*This verse can be read as follows also: "Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, is the Supreme Being who is the best well-wisher and protector of the entire creation and all its living beings, such as the cows who represent meek and humble creatures, the Brahmins who represent men who are holy and pious, the earth that is the crucible of life, and the many gods who protect and

support this entire creation. Verily indeed, it is the same Supreme Being who has manifested himself in the form of a human being known as Lord Ram.”³ (3)

Listen my brother (sunu bhrātā)! The Lord (Ram) grants happiness and joy to all living beings—because on the one hand he is the destroyer or eliminator of all those who are wicked, crooked, vile and evil, and on the other hand he is a protector of the Vedas (scriptures and their spiritual principles) and Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and goodness). (4)

[Note—¹It will be remarked here that Vibhishan has made out the case of Lord Ram as a personified form of the Supreme Being himself. An exactly similar case will be made out in favour of Lord Ram by Mandodari, Ravana’s wife, later on when the war is in full swing when she tells Ravana that Lord Ram is no a human prince whom he thinks he will vanquish with the might of his arms, because the Lord is the all-pervading and almighty Supreme Being known as Brahm himself, and therefore Ravana would do good to himself as well as the entire demon clan by abandoning his stubbornness and surrendering himself before the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15. This was Mandodari’s third attempt to persuade Ravana to call off the war.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 187 where we read that Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of Brahm and one of the Trinity Gods, has himself said that he will take a birth as a human being in order to eliminate the demons and restore peace on earth when the gods and mother earth had fervently prayed to the Lord to protect them from the terror of the demons led by their king Ravana.

³Lord Shiva, the most enlightened of all the gods, has repeatedly reiterated the fact that Lord Ram was none but the Supreme Being himself, the Lord who is eager to do whatever is necessary in order to make all the living beings happy and joyful—some examples are Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 120; (v) Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

ताहि बयरु तजि नाइअ माथा । प्रनतारति भंजन रघुनाथा ॥ ५ ॥

देहु नाथ प्रभु कहूँ बैदेही । भजहु राम बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥ ६ ॥

सरन गएँ प्रभु ताहु न त्यागा । बिस्व द्रोह कृत अघ जेहि लागा ॥ ७ ॥

जासु नाम त्रय ताप नसावन । सोइ प्रभु प्रगट समुझु जियँ रावन ॥ ८ ॥

tāhi bayaru taji nā'i'a māthā. pranatārati bhañjana raghunāthā. 5.
dēhu nātha prabhu kahuṁ baidēhī. bhajahu rāma binu hētu sanēhī. 6.
sarana ga'eṁ prabhu tāhu na tyāgā. bisva drōha kṛta agha jēhi lāgā. 7.
jāsu nāma traya tāpa nasāvana. sō'i prabhu pragaṭa samujhu jiyāṁ rāvana. 8.

You must abandon all animosity and hostility with that Lord, and instead bow your head before him. Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram) is the one who removes all the sorrows and worries of those who seek shelter with him, and who surrender themselves before him.

[To wit, you need not worry about the sort of reception you may get when you approach Lord Ram with the intention to surrender and beg forgiveness. I assure you that you will be welcomed most warmly, and all your past imprudence and evil deeds would be instantly forgotten. Don't be afraid that you will be insulted or punished by the Lord; on the contrary, you will find him most amiable and affable by nature.] (5)

Oh my lord (nātha), I beseech you to give Vaidehi (Sita) back to the Lord (prabhu; Lord Ram), and worship him who has selfless affection for one and all, who loves everyone without there being any vested interest in doing so.¹ (6)

[Note—¹A similar fervent plea is made by Ravana's wife Mandodari in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 7.

But unfortunately, Ravana listened neither to Vibhishan nor to Mandodari.]

दो०. बार बार पद लागउँ बिनय करउँ दससीस ।
परिहरि मान मोह मद भजहु कोसलाधीस ॥ ३९ (क) ॥
मुनि पुलस्ति निज सिष्य सन कहि पठई यह बात ।
तुरत सो मैं प्रभु सन कही पाइ सुअवसरु तात ॥ ३९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra pada lāga'um̐ binaya kara'um̐ dasasīsa.
parihari māna mōha mada bhajahu kōsalādhīsa. 39 (a).
muni pulasti nija siṣya sana kahi paṭha'ī yaha bāta.
turata sō mair̐ prabhu sana kahī pā'i su'avasaru tāta. 39 (b).

Oh my ten-headed brother (dasasīsa)! I repeatedly bow my head at your feet and plead most earnestly with you that you ought to give up your sense of false pride and ego, you ought to abandon your delusions arising out of ignorance of the reality, and you ought to shun haughtiness and stubbornness. Instead, you ought to worship and adore the Lord of Kaushal, i.e. Lord Ram. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

My dear brother (tāta)! Sage Pulastya has sent this message for you through one of his disciples, and as soon as I found an opportune moment I have conveyed it to you.¹ (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹This remark by Vibhishan clearly implies that he was visited by two gentleman—one was Hanuman (refer—Sundar Kand, Doha no. 6 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it), and the other was sage Pulastya's disciple.

Since he now says that the messenger of Pulastya had come just ahead of his coming to the court to deliver the message to Ravana, it means that when sage Pulastya heard of the developments in Lanka, i.e. about Ravana bringing Sita and the subsequent arrival of Hanuman and his destruction of Lanka by burning it, he was

extremely alarmed as he feared for the worst for his own descendants, because Ravana was his grandson.

What is that “opportune moment” that Vibhishan is talking about? Ravana has summoned all his courtiers and commanders, seeking their opinion regarding the course of action that he should take in the view that the army of Lord Ram has come near, and an assault on Lanka was imminent. All his advisors were giving their opinions; and so this was the time when Vibhishan could convey Pulsatya’s message to Ravana.]

चौ०. माल्यवंत अति सचिव सयाना । तासु बचन सुनि अति सुख माना ॥ १ ॥

तात अनुज तव नीति बिभूषन । सो उर धरहु जो कहत बिभीषन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mālyavanta ati saciva sayānā. tāsu bacana suni ati sukha mānā. 1.

tāta anuja tava nīti bibhūṣana. sō ura dharahu jō kahata bibhīṣana. 2.

Malyawant, who was a very wise and sagacious minister of Ravana, felt very pleased and happy when he heard the words of Vibhishan. (1)

Endorsing his views fully, he advised Ravana, ‘My dear (tāta)! Your younger brother is an epitome of wisdom, sagacity and prudence. So I advise you to give credence to what Vibhishan has told you, pay serious attention to what he had said, and enshrine his advice in your heart as something that is extremely good for you; don’t be befuddled by delusions and be so arrogant as to overlook the truth.’ (2)

रिपु उत्तरकष कहत सठ दोऊ । दूरि न करहु इहाँ हड़ कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥

माल्यवंत गृह गयउ बहोरी । कहइ बिभीषनु पुनि कर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

ripu utakaraṣa kahata saṭha dō'ū. dūri na karahu ihāñ ha'i kō'ū. 3.

mālyavanta gr̥ha gaya'u bahōrī. kaha'i bibhīṣanu puni kara jōrī. 4.

Ravana took Malyawant’s advice as an open affront to his self-respect, dignity and majesty, so he became very angry and retorted, ‘These two fellows (Malyawant and Vibhishan) are (shamelessly) extolling the virtues of my enemy and praising him. Is there no one here (in the court) who can take them away from my presence?’ (3)

Malyawant went home, but Visbhishan stayed back to make another attempt to persuade Ravana to mend his ways. Vibhishan joined his hands in submission and said most politely -- (4)

सुमति कुमति सब कें उर रहहीं । नाथ पुरान निगम अस कहहीं ॥ ५ ॥

जहाँ सुमति तहँ संपति नाना । जहाँ कुमति तहँ बिपति निदाना ॥ ६ ॥

तव उर कुमति बसी बिपरीता । हित अनहित मानहु रिपु प्रीता ॥ ७ ॥

कालराति निसिचर कुल केरी । तेहि सीता पर प्रीति घनेरी ॥ ८ ॥

sumati kumati saba kēm ura rahahīm. nātha purāna nigama asa kahahīm. 5.
jahām sumati tahaṁ sampati nānā. jahām kumati tahaṁ bipati nidānā. 6.
tava ura kumati basī biparītā. hita anahita mānahu ripu prītā. 7.
kālarāti niscara kula kēri. tēhi sītā para prīti ghanērī. 8.

‘Oh Lord (nātha)! The Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures) say that every living being harbours two types of qualities in his heart—one is good and another is bad. It is a natural process of creation and there is nothing unusual about it¹. (5)

Where there is wisdom and auspiciousness in one’s thoughts and emotions then access to all sorts of prosperity and happiness is available to him, while doom and gloom is the destiny of those whose wisdom is corrupted and thoughts and emotions are dark and evil. (6)

Unfortunately, your heart has become so deluded by evil emotions and corrupted wisdom that you have started seeing things in the wrong light. That is why you are misled to regard as bad what actually is good for you and your future, and you treat those who actually are your well-wishers and true friends as being your enemy and opponents². (7)

Alas! You have, most regrettably, begin to harbour great affection for Sita who actually represents the dark foreboding cloud of the night of the doomsday that hovers over the demon race, without realizing the peril in which your ill-thoughts are leading you to³. (8)

[Note—¹All living beings in this world have two types of thoughts and emotions—one type that is positive and constructive, and the other type that is negative and destructive. The character of an individual and the course his fate takes depends on the net effect that these two types of thoughts and emotional qualities produce on him. How an individual’s thoughts and emotions affect him decides his actions and the course his life takes, which in turn decides his destiny. If good and auspicious thoughts, refined wisdom and right emotions play a dominant role in his life and its deeds, the person’s character shines like the sun and he attains an exalted destiny, while the reverse happens if his thoughts and emotions are bad and negative.

²Vibhishan means that Ravana is so deluded by his ill-fated destiny that he regards Malyawant and Vibhishan, who are his true well-wishers, as his enemies who are criticizing him and finding faults with him, while treating the other courtiers, who are actually ill-witted and self-serving sycophants and flattering yes-men who only say things which Ravana wishes to hear in order to keep him in good humour, as his friends and faithful advisors.

A king, or for that matter any person, who lends his ears to those who speak falsehood just to keep him happy and pleased, is sure to come to ruin.

³Vibhishan sternly scolds Ravana, and clearly tells him that Sita will become the last nail in his coffin, that Providence has brought her here so that the time-tested and irrevocable Law of Nature that “what takes birth must die one day” applies to Ravana

and his demon race too, though he had been granted immunity from death by the virtue of various boons he had extracted from Brahma, the creator, by doing severe Tapa (penances and austerities).

This Providence had first corrupted his mind and intellect, making him haughty and arrogant in the false sense invincibility and the superiority of his power, strength and majesty, making him believe that there is no power in creation that is greater than his, and he can do whatever he likes with impunity, for an eternity. The circle seems to have completed its full cycle, and to solder its two ends together, Providence prevailed upon Ravana to bring Sita to Lanka so that the final act of the epic drama of “creation and destruction” can be played on the stage and his final end can be brought about.

That is why he cannot think correctly and in the right direction; that is why he lends his ears to wrong advice and neglects good advice. But alas, what can be done, for it is the fiat of fate and the call of his destiny.]

दो०. तात चरन गहि मागउँ राखहु मोर दुलार ।
सीता देहु राम कहूँ अहित न होइ तुम्हार ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

tāta carana gahi māga'uṁ rākhahu mōra dulāra.
sītā dēhu rāma kahuṁ ahita na hō'i tumhāra. 40.

My dear brother (tāta)! I hold your feet and beg you to remind you of your natural affection for me¹. [Brother, I know you love me, and that is why I have mustered courage to speak you so boldly. I wish for your good and welfare as it is directly linked to the fate of the whole demon race. Please don't take me in the wrong light, and pay heed to my advice. I am your well-wisher and have confidence that you repose trust in me, that you believe I cannot say anything that would put you in peril. So therefore, I have this to say to you ---]

Please give Sita back to Lord Ram, and be assured that by doing this no harm shall come to you, and no interests of yours will be compromised.' (Doha no. 40)

[Note—¹Vibhishan publicly acknowledges that Ravana had affection for him. This was a fact and it will become obvious when we take into consideration that Vibhishan openly practiced his religious views and had signs of Lord Hari, such as a Tulsi plant (basil plant) and the name of the Lord, displayed in the front of his home in the center of Lanka, without Ravana once objecting to it. Vibhishan used to pronounce loudly Lord Ram's holy name the first thing in the morning, loud enough for it to be heard outside his home and over a large part of the neighbour, and we have already read that this practice of his had enabled Hanuman to recognize him as someone who would be friendly at the time when he (Hanuman) was searching for Sita (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 6).

This has a corollary though. It implies that Ravana tolerated the presence of a saintly soul in Lanka, that he was not totally allergic to the name of Lord God and opposed to religious practices.

We have also read that when he brought Sita he had determined for himself that since he was very sinful the only way he can find deliverance for his soul and attain emancipation and salvation was to get himself killed by Lord Ram, and to do so

it was necessary to bring Sita to Lanka, as it would force the Lord to come and kill him in order to free her. And in case Lord Ram was not the Supreme Being but an ordinary human prince, then also Ravana had nothing to lose—for then he would keep Sita as one of his countless mistresses. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.)

To wit, if we take a holistic view of what was going in the mind of Ravana during those crucial moments of his life, we would come to the conclusion that his stubbornness in keeping Sita as a captive, and refusing to do otherwise, was a well-thought out and planned decision.

But a person's destiny, though said to be pre-determined even at the time of his birth, is subject to profound alterations and changes in course, either for good or for bad, during his present life, because the actual destination for a living being is determined more by his own thoughts and deeds during the course of his present life than by what he has brought with him at the time of birth as a baggage from his previous life.

So therefore, a person is responsible for his own fate, and there is no purpose served by blaming either Providence or Destiny for one's doom or elevation in life. A good birth and upbringing and all sorts of positive opportunities in life are no insurance for an assured good destiny if the person concerned is not conscientious enough to decide what is good and what is bad for him. If he chooses to lead a sinful and pervert life because worldly temptations and sensual pleasures of the material world appeal more to his mind than observing the principles of self-control, righteousness, probity and propriety, if he allows delusions and temptations to overcome his wisdom and have the better of him, then he is surely destined to be doomed, and no one can save him.

In the present case of Ravana the same principle applies. He was born in a family of great sages, was a Brahmin by birth, was highly learned in the scriptures, was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, had done remarkable Tapa (penances and austerity), and had immense strength which he could have properly utilized for the welfare of his demon race and expansion of his kingdom, but he misused all the facilities available to him in order to satisfy his personal lust and passion, and his greed for power and gratification of his sensual desires.

This is evident here for he had great love for Vibhishan and had allowed the latter to pursue his religious beliefs and way of life unhindered till now. But when he was asked by the same Vibhishan to give Sita back to Lord Ram, Ravana lost his cool and exploded in anger as will be clear when we read the verses herein below. He not only will sternly rebuke Vibhishan using harsh words of recrimination, virtually accusing him of treason, betrayal and disloyalty, he will also kick him in full court and tell him to quit his kingdom.]

चौ०. बुध पुरान श्रुति संमत बानी । कही बिभीषन नीति बखानी ॥ १ ॥

सुनत दसानन उठा रिसाई । खल तोहि निकट मृत्यु अब आई ॥ २ ॥

जिअसि सदा सठ मोर जिआवा । रिपु कर पच्छ मूढ़ तोहि भावा ॥ ३ ॥

कहसि न खल अस को जग माहीं । भुज बल जाहि जिता मैं नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

मम पुर बसि तपसिन्ह पर प्रीती । सठ मिलु जाइ तिन्हहि कहु नीती ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

budha purāna śruti sammata bānī. kahī bibhīṣana nīti bakhānī. 1.
 sunata dasānana uṭhā risā'ī. khala tōhi nikāṭa mṛtyu aba ā'ī. 2.
 ji'asi sadā saṭha mōra ji'āvā. ripu kara paccha mūrha tōhi bhāvā. 3.
 kahasi na khala asa kō jaga māmīm. bhuja bala jāhi jītā maim nāmīm. 4.
 mama pura basi tapasinha para prītī. saṭha milu jā'i tinhahi kahu nītī. 5.

What Vibhishan had said was wise and prudent, and was in accordance with the principles of good conduct, righteousness, propriety and probity as laid down by the Purans and Vedas (scriptures). (1)

But unfortunately the 10-headed Ravana took his advice in the wrong light, and when he heard what Vibhishan said to him (as narrated in the previous verses), he got up angrily and scolded him harshly¹, saying vehemently, 'Oh you wretched and ugly fellow; it seems your death has come calling you, and it is apparently imminent. (2)

Fie, oh you fool! You have been sustained by me and have lived under my patronage. In spite of that, oh you ungrateful and disgraceful fellow, you choose to favour my enemy and plead his cause as if you were his advocate². (3)

Oh you wretch and unfaithful fellow! Tell me who is strong and powerful enough in this world whom I have not been able to vanquish relying solely on the strength and power of my own arms? (4)

You live in my city (Lanka) under my protection and patronage, but you dare to prefer to take sides with my enemy by showing affection for that ascetic (Lord Ram). Fie to you, you stupid fellow.

Well, let it be as you wish. Go away from me and meet that ascetic to give you advice to him; go and preach him wisdom regarding the laws and rules concerning what is good and righteous.³ (5)

[Note—¹As Ravana was doomed, he could not think rightly. As a result of this, instead of heeding Vibhishan's advice and taking it in the right spirit, he took it as a personal affront to his majesty and authority as well as a challenge to his wisdom and intellect. He became extremely peeved and angry, and lost control over himself.

²To wit, I allowed you to follow your own religious practices and did not cause any obstacles in your path. I treated you kindly and with a soft corner in my heart. I protected you from harm from any of my demons. But you have betrayed me and my trust in you. You secretly harbour animosity for me, and favour my enemy instead. You are very ungrateful and disloyal. While you preach me wisdom and good manners by saying that it is improper to keep another person's wife, but you yourself have no compunctions in betraying your own brother and neglecting his love for you; you do not even value how much he has allowed you freedom and how he has been favouring you throughout your life. Oh you ungrateful wretch! And now you prefer to take sides with my enemy as if he was your best well-wisher and grand patron, and as if your own brother is your enemy!

³Well then, if this is the case you are most welcome. Leave me alone to face my destiny, and go and join him whom you think is your well-wisher! Get out of my sight this very instant; I do not wish to see your face even for a moment.]

अस कहि कीन्हैसि चरन प्रहारा । अनुज गहे पद बारहिं बारा ॥ ६ ॥
 उमा संत कइ इहइ बड़ाई । मंद करत जो करइ भलाई ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह पितु सरिस भलेहिं मोहि मारा । रामु भजें हित नाथ तुम्हारा ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi kīnhēsī carana prahārā. anuja gahē pada bārahīm bārā. 6.
 umā santa ka'i iha'i barā'ī. manda karata jō kara'i bhalā'ī. 7.
 tumha pitu sarisa bhalēhīm mōhi mārā. rāmu bhajēm hita nātha tumhārā. 8.

Thus scolding Vibhishan harshly, Ravana vehemently kicked him. Vibhishan on his part fell at Ravana's feet repeatedly and respectfully clasped them in his hands (to show his due regard for his elder brother)¹. (6)

Lord Shiva (the primary narrator of this epic tale) said to his divine consort Uma, 'Oh Uma! This is a unique quality of a saint—that he always thinks of the other person's welfare and good even if that person causes him harm and suffering². (7)

Vibhishan told Ravana, 'You are like my father (being my elder brother). So indeed it is for my own good that you have hit (kicked) me³. But oh lord, I beg to repeat it once again that your good and welfare lies in worshipping Lord Ram and having devotion for him (by surrendering yourself and sending Sita back as a token of this).' (8)

[Note—¹We note here that Ravana has “kicked” Vibhishan but the latter showed no sign of anger or ill-will towards him. Instead of cursing or abusing Ravana, Vibhishan had fell at his feet and respectfully held them in his hands to show due respect to him as his elder brother.

Viewed from a different perspective, Vibhishan thought that it was prudent and wise for him to suppress his anger for the present as he was surrounded by Ravana's soldiers, and if Ravana wished he would have him arrested and killed instantly. So it was imperative to maintain his cool so that he can get out of the court and escape from Lanka. He ought to show utmost caution at present, and not do anything to precipitate disaster. So therefore, he bowed at the feet of Ravana to calm him down and not aggravate matters further.

A little later in the story we will read that Ravana had kicked another of his close associate to express his anger and disgust when advised to call-off his confrontationist attitude towards Lord Ram and send the Lord's wife Sita back to him. His name is Suk, and he was sent by Ravana to spy on Vibhishan after he left the kingdom of Lanka and went to seek refuge with Lord Ram. Suk was so extremely impressed by the warm and affectionate reception that Vibhishan was given by the Lord that he himself decided to leave his sinful and evil master Ravana, and instead seek shelter with the Lord. So when he went back to Lanka and gave his report to Ravana, highly lauding Lord Ram's graceful and kind nature, and advising Ravana to give Sita back to him, the demon king lost his cool. Peeved and exasperated beyond tolerance, Ravana kicked him, giving Suk an excuse to quit Lanka and go surrender before Lord Ram. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57. Refer especially to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 where we read about Ravana kicking Suk.

²Lord Shiva stresses that this is one of the many grand qualities of true saints—that they always think good of others even if they are made to suffer themselves due to the evil nature of those whose good such saints think of.

³If a father scolds and hits his son whom he loves dearly, it is because he wishes for his son's good, and not because he hates his own son. So Vibhishan says that if Ravana thought it fit to admonish and kick him, then surely it is for his long-term good. He welcomes it instead of taking it as an insult.

What was for Vibhishan's good? Ravana loved him and wished that he survives the war to carry forward the name of his family. He did not want that when the war actually breaks out he would have to force Vibhishan to join it on his side and fight with Lord Ram, and probably get killed in battle. In the course of the war, as we shall read in due course, all kith and kin of Ravana were killed, one by one, except Vibhishan. When the war ended, Lord Ram put Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka as its next king, thus continuing the line of Ravana's own family. But if Ravana had not kicked Vibhishan out, then in all probability the latter would have been compelled to join the battle and consequently get killed. Who then would have ascended the throne of Lanka, and how then would the family line of Ravana continue?

When a father feels that a calamity is looming on the horizon from which there is no escape, his first thought is to put one of his dearest sons to safety so that in case the things go in the wrong direction and all the rest of the family are annihilated, at least there would be one member to carry on the family name and tree to the next generation.

This is exactly what Ravana secretly thought vis-à-vis Vibhishan. Internally Ravana was frustrated with the evil life of a demon, and he wished that the next generation should be pious and devout and not like himself. Vibhishan was the only family member who could fit the bill and fulfill this secret desire of his heart. But to ensure it, it was necessary to put Vibhishan out of danger's reach, and the only way to do it was to send him out of Lanka.

And the best way to ensure that Vibhishan is crowned the next king of Lanka was to force him to join Lord Ram's camp—for Ravana, wise and far-thinking as he was, could predict this happening in the near future, and it was a premonition that he felt would definitely come true.

Later on in the story we shall read that his other brother, Kumbhakarna, too has lauded Vibhishan and praised him as the torch-bearer of his family's good name and fame when the former was forced by Ravana to join battle against Lord Ram. Kumbhakarna had met Vibhishan in the battle-field. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

We will also read that Kumbhakarna too had chided Ravana for picking up a war with Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 63.]

सचिव संग लै नभ पथ गयऊ । सबहि सुनाइ कहत अस भयऊ ॥ ९ ॥

saciva saṅga lai nabha patha gaya'ū. sabahi sunā'i kahata asa bhaya'ū. 9.

Meanwhile, Vibhishan took his trusted minister with him and went up in the sky. [Obviously, Vibhishan had an air plane at his disposal on which he ascended to the sky along with his trusted aide.]

Once there (in safety), he declared aloud so that all (who watched him from the ground) could hear him. (9)

दो०. रामु सत्यसंकल्प प्रभु सभा कालबस तोरि ।
मैं रघुबीर सरन अब जाऊँ देहु जनि खोरि ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu satyasaṅkalpa prabhu sabhā kālabasa tōri.
maiṁ raghubīra sarana aba jā'uṁ dēhu jani khōri. 41.

Vibhishan addressed Ravana from the sky and declared, 'Lord Ram is true to his vows and commitments¹. He is all-able, strong and powerful. On the other hand, your council of ministers is doomed by ill-fated destiny (because they fail to show you the right path, and instead are leading you by the hand to your doom).

Now I am going to take shelter at the feet of Lord Raghubir (Lord Sri Ram) and surrender myself before him; don't blame me any more². ' (Doha no. 41)

[Note—¹What was Lord Ram's commitment? He, in his primary form as Lord Vishnu, had promise the gods and mother earth that he would personally eliminate the demons and slay Ravana to free the world from their horrors. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

Once again, Lord Ram, while passing through the forest, had also promised the sages and ascetics residing there that he will surely kill the demons who had been causing them a lot of trouble. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

So now the time has come for the Lord to fulfill these vows, and no one can stop him.

²Ravana has himself told Vibhishan to go and join Lord Ram—apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes this Doha no. 41 herein above.]

चौ०. अस कहि चला बिभीषनु जबहीं । आयूहीन भए सब तबहीं ॥ १ ॥
साधु अवग्या तुरत भवानी । कर कल्यान अखिल कैहानी ॥ २ ॥
रावन जबहिं बिभीषन त्यागा । भयउ बिभव बिनु तबहिं अभागा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi calā bibhīṣanu jabahīm. āyūhīna bha'e saba tabahīm. 1.
sādhu avagyā turata bhavānī. kara kalyāna akhila kai hānī. 2.
rāvana jabahīm bibhīṣana tyāgā. bhaya'u bibhava binu tabahīm abhāgā. 3.

No sooner had Vibhishan left the city after strongly admonishing Ravana than the doom of the demon race was sealed. (1)

[Lord Shiva told his divine consort Parvati, also known by the name of Bhavani—] ‘Oh Bhavani! An insult or disrespect shown to a saint invites immediate repercussions, as it instantly neutralizes all blessings in its wake and paves the way for strong punishment of the offender. (2)

The moment Ravana abandoned Vibhishan, all his hopes for a happy life and a good fate vanished; his glory was lost, his future was assuredly doomed, and he became luckless. (3)

चलेउ हरषि रघुनायक पाहीं । करत मनोरथ बहु मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 देखिहउँ जाइ चरन जलजाता । अरुन मृदुल सेवक सुखदाता ॥ ५ ॥
 जे पद परसि तरी रिषिनारी । दंडक कानन पावनकारी ॥ ६ ॥
 जे पद जनकसुताँ उर लाए । कपट कुरंग संग धर धाए ॥ ७ ॥
 हर उर सर सरोज पद जेई । अहोभाग्य मैं देखिहउँ तेई ॥ ८ ॥

calē'u haraṣi raghunāyaka pāhīm. karata manōratha bahu mana māhīm. 4.
 dēkhiha'uṃ jā'i carana jalajātā. aruna mṛdula sēvaka sukhadātā. 5.
 jē pada parasi tarī riṣinārī. daṇḍaka kānana pāvanakārī. 6.
 jē pada janakasutāṃ ura lā'ē. kapaṭa kuraṅga saṅga dhara dhā'ē. 7.
 hara ura sara sarōja pada jēī. ahōbhāgya maim dēkhiha'uṃ tēī. 8.

Meanwhile, Vibhishan felt himself exceedingly fortunate; he was very glad and his heart was exhilarated as he proceeded to meet Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram).

On the way he was thinking of so many fortunate circumstances, and had so many happy expectations¹ for himself in the days to come that his joy knew no bounds. (4)

“Now I shall go and have a divine glimpse of the sole of the holy lotus like feet of the Lord that are like a red lotus flower, are soft to touch, and are providers of joy and comfort to devotees. (5)

These are the same holy feet of Lord Ram the touch of which not only liberated the wife of the sage from her curse², but also purified the cursed Dandakaranya forest when the Lord passed through it³. (6)

These are the same holy feet of Lord Ram which the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita) reverentially enshrines in her heart⁴, and which ran behind the decoy golden deer to deliver his soul from the evil body of a demon⁵. (7)

For sooth, how extremely fortunate I am that today I would be able to have a divine glimpse of those holy lotus like feet of Lord Ram that bloom so reverentially in the lake-like shrine of Lord Shiva's heart⁶. (8)

[Note—¹What were Vibhishan's great expectations; why was he so happy? They are wonderfully enumerated in Tulsidas' classic “Geetawali Ramayan”, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 29 and 30. We shall be reading them in detail in this Chapter no. 9, Section no. 9.3 of our Book.

²This incidence refers to the liberation of Ahilya, the wife of sage Guatam, when Lord Ram touched her by his feet. Ahilya was cursed by the sage to become a stone due to some misunderstanding. But when the sage realized that she was not at fault, he blessed her that one day when Lord Ram would pass that way and touch her with his holy feet, she would find deliverance from her curse and come back to him in the heaven. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211.

³The Dandakaranya forest too was cursed. Sage Agastya advised Lord Ram to make it pure by walking through its inhospitable terrain. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13.

⁴Sita had enshrined in her heart an image of Lord Ram that she last saw of him as he went behind the golden deer; she meditated on this image and focused her mind on the holy feet of Lord Ram throughout her stay in captivity in Lanka. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29-b; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 30.

⁵This alludes to the event when Lord Ram had gone behind the demon Marich who was forced by Ravana to disguise himself as a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted by the latter (Ravana). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25; Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede Doha no. 27.

⁶Lord Shiva is renowned to be the greatest devotee of Lord Ram. The very memory of Lord Ram thrills Shiva; he constantly meditates on the holy name of Lord Ram. In fact, the divine story of the Ramayan was first conceived in the mind and heart of Shiva while he was meditating. There are numerous instances of Shiva's unparalleled and singular devotion for Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (iv) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; and (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

दो०. जिन्ह पायन्ह के पादुकन्हि भरतु रहे मन लाइ ।

ते पद आजु बिलोकिहउँ इन्ह नयनन्हि अब जाइ ॥ ४२ ॥

dōhā.

jinha pāyanha kē pādukanhi bharatu rahē mana lā'i.
tē pada āju bilōkiha'um̐ inha nayananhi aba jā'i. 42.

How indeed lucky am I that today I shall be able to go and see with my own eyes those holy feet whose wooden sandals were accepted by Bharat with such affection and reverence, and which have become a center of his devotion now, for he worships them with great faith and love^{1*}.” (Doha no. 42)

[Note—¹Bharat was the younger brother of Lord Ram. He was not present in Ayodhya when the Lord was sent to forest exile; so as soon as he came to know of this sad development he immediately decided to go to the forest and bring Lord Ram

back. However, Lord Ram had to fulfill his mandate of eliminating the demons, and therefore it was imperative for him to stay in the forest and take necessary actions to successfully accomplish this task.

So, when the Lord persuaded Bharat to go back from the forest and wait for him in Ayodhya, Bharat requested him for some token that he could use as a symbolic presence of the Lord. Then Lord Ram had given Bharat his wooden sandals, which the latter accepted with the greatest reverence, and upon his arrival back in Ayodhya Bharat put those sandals on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya to represent Lord Ram, and himself went to live like an ascetic at a nearby place.

These developments are the main topics in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. However, the following verses can be cited specifically with reference to the wooden sandals of Lord Ram and how Bharat worshipped them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 316; and Doha no. 323—to Doha no. 325.

*It is to be noted here that the “present tense” has been used by Vibhishan. This is because while these events were unfolding in the forest, from Sita’s abduction till the time the army of Lord Ram pitched camp on the shore of the ocean, and even beyond till the time of the end of the war of Lanka, Bharat was worshipping the sandals of Lord Ram back in Ayodhya.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि करत सप्रेम बिचारा । आयउ सपदि सिंधु एहिं पारा ॥ १ ॥
कपिन्ह बिभीषनु आवत देखा । जाना कोउ रिपु दूत बिसेषा ॥ २ ॥
ताहि राखि कपीस पहिं आए । समाचार सब ताहि सुनाए ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi karata saprēma bicārā. āya'u sapadi sindhu ēhiṁ pārā. 1.
kapinha bibhīṣanu āvata dēkhā. jānā kō'u ripu dūta bisēṣā. 2.
tāhi rākhi kapīsa pahīṁ ā'ē. samācāra saba tāhi sunā'ē. 3.

In this way, harbouring many happy thoughts and glad tidings in his heart, he (Vibhishan) lost no time to arrive on the shore of the ocean (where Lord Ram had pitched his camp with his army). (1)

When the Kapis (the monkey warriors of Lord Ram’s army) who were on duty as look-outs saw Vibhishan come, they thought that he was a special messenger of their enemy (Ravana). (2)

They stopped him and told him to wait, and then went to their king (Sugriv) to inform the latter of the whole matter. (3)

कह सुग्रीव सुनहु रघुराई । आवा मिलन दसानन भाई ॥ ४ ॥
कह प्रभु सखा बूझिऐ काहा । कहइ कपीस सुनहु नरनाहा ॥ ५ ॥
जानि न जाइ निसाचर माया । कामरूप केहि कारन आया ॥ ६ ॥
भेद हमार लेन सठ आवा । राखिअ बाँधि मोहि अस भावा ॥ ७ ॥

kaha sugrīva sunahu raghurā'ī. āvā milana dasānana bhā'ī. 4.
 kaha prabhu sakhā būjhi'ai kāhā. kaha'i kapīsa sunahu naranāhā. 5.
 jāni na jā'i nisācara māyā. kāmārūpa kēhi kārana āyā. 6.
 bhēda hamāra lēna saṭha āvā. rākhi'a bāmdhi mōhi asa bhāvā. 7.

Upon hearing the news of the arrival of Vibhishan, Sugriv approached Lord Ram and said, 'Listen oh the Lord of the Raghus (Lord Ram)! The brother of the ten-headed Ravana has come to meet you. [What should we do in this matter?]' (4)

The Lord (prabhu) replied by asking Sugriv, 'Oh my friend (sakhā)! What is your opinion in this matter?'

The king of the Kapis (Sugriv) said, 'Oh King (naranāhā), listen; I'll tell you what I think. (5)

No one can know what kind of deceit and dirty trick the demons have. They are very cunning and pretentious, and assume any form that suits them. It is therefore very difficult to say for what real purpose he has come here.

[To wit, he may pretend to be very friendly towards us, he may act as if he is our well-wisher, but actually he may have come with some ulterior motive, and we can never know what his real intentions are.] (6)

I think that this rascal has come to spy upon us and gather intelligence about our secrets (such as about our military strength and strategy). Therefore I feel that it would be wiser for us to tie him up and keep him captive. [This will also help us to interrogate him to extract some useful information about the demon army's strength and its preparedness, as well as to use him as a bargain tool in case we need to engage in some sort of negotiation in the due course.]¹ (7)

[Note—¹In Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 7-8, we read that Sugriv has suggested a similar thing to Lord Ram. Militarily it was a prudent advice because by letting an enemy's brother inside the camp may prove very dangerous for Lord Ram's army as it would be made vulnerable to spying from within. All the chinks in the defense lines of Lord Ram's army, all its shortcomings and strengths, all its preparedness and war strategies would be susceptible to leakage as they would be known to Vibhishan once he is allowed to join the camp, and it will then be so much the easier for Ravana to out-manuever the Lord's army and strike from the behind. Hence, it was a dangerous proposition to allow Vibhishan to join the monkey army, because if he has come with the intention of espionage then this situation would be like digging one's own grave.

But as we shall read in the following verses, Lord Ram had other plans in his mind. The Lord asserts that though what Sugriv suggests is prudent, practical and wise militarily, but he has his own reputation to maintain and vows to keep, which makes it obligatory upon the Lord not to turn back anyone who is distressed and has come to seek the Lord's protection, to surrender to the Lord and seek his refuge and blessings, in which case the Lord must grant that person's wishes and make him fearless from torments that had motivated him to come seeking the Lord's refuge and protection. Besides this, if Vibhishan happens to be the Lord's devotee, which indeed he was, then the case is made all the more stronger in his favour, and there is no reason why Vibhishan should not be warmly welcomed.]

सखा नीति तुम्ह नीकि बिचारी । मम पन सरनागत भयहारी ॥ ८ ॥
 सुनि प्रभु बचन हरष हनुमाना । सरनागत बच्छल भगवाना ॥ ९ ॥

sakhā nīti tumha nīki bicārī. mama pana saranāgata bhayahārī. 8.
 suni prabhu bacana haraṣa hanumānā. saranāgata bacchala bhagavānā. 9.

Lord Ram replied to Sugriv, ‘My friend (sakhā)! What you said is truly wise, but I am committed to protect anyone who comes humbly to surrender himself before me and seek shelter at my feet.

[To wit, I agree with your contention that the visitor being a demon no one can correctly predict what he has in his mind. But I have made a vow that whosoever comes to me in distress, seeking my help and protection, I will not turn him away. It’s a reputation that I must uphold.]’¹ (8)

When Hanuman heard the words of Lord Ram he felt exhilarated in his heart, because now it was evident that the Lord was truly the one who loves those who come to seek shelter with him and surrender themselves at his feet². (9)

[Note—¹When Sugriv expressed his grave reservations in accepting Vibhishan, an enemy’s brother, as a member of Lord Ram’s group as it is a dangerous thing to do from military point of view because this person may be an enemy’s spy pretending to be the Lord’s devotee, the Lord assuaged his fears and said—“Friend, you have given me an advice which is wise and prudent (from strategic, defense and military point of view). But I have taken a vow to remove the fears of those who have come to seek shelter in my feet.”

Lord Ram makes two observations here. One is that he addresses Sugriv as his ‘friend’, and the other is that he says ‘that Sugriv has given a wise advice’. Well, a good friend is indeed one who gives a wise advice that is to the best of his intelligence and thinking. To accept an enemy’s brother as a member of the army is never advisable—and so Sugriv made it clear that he does not agree with the view of accepting Vibhishan in their midst. Lord Ram acknowledged this fact by addressing Sugriv as his ‘friend’.

But then Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince who is driven merely by worldly considerations; he is the Supreme Lord of creation in a personified form, and therefore has many things to consider before taking any decision. Militarily and from strategic defense point of view what Sugriv suggested was very wise and prudent—that it is not advisable to keep an enemy’s brother amongst them. But the Lord is supposed to be giver of protection to all those who are distressed in this world, and therefore he is bound to take this factor into consideration before deciding whether or not to accept Vibhishan as a refugee. Hence the Lord declared that ‘he is determined to remove the ‘fear of those who come to seek shelter with him’.

When we examine the situation on the ground we find that there are to armies having a stand-off, one is that of Ravana of Lanka, the demon kingdom, and the other is that of Lord Ram and his companion Sugriv of the monkey kingdom. In this situation if Vibhishan has come to seek refuge with the Lord then obviously there is something very serious that has compelled him to take this drastic step, as it is extremely dangerous to become a traitor and go openly to join an enemy’s camp prior

to a war. Vibhishan will be summarily tried for treason, hounded by his all-powerful demon brother Ravana, hunted down, tortured and killed instantly if the Lord now refused him permission to remain with him. Vibhishan has taken an extremely risky step, and above all he is the Lord's devotee. So there was no question of denying him refuge.

Vibhishan was humiliated and kicked out by Ravana because he was giving him sane and rational advice that was in accordance to the principles of common sense, ethics and probity—that one should not kidnap someone's loyal wife, and then unnecessary get entangled in a bloody and ruinous war for the sake of a single woman. After being sternly rebuked by Ravana and declared as a virtual traitor for advocating the cause of Ravana's enemy, i.e. Lord Ram, it was clearly suicidal for Vibhishan to remain within Lanka for one moment more. He had no other option but to escape before it was too late. He was scared for his life, and if the Lord now refused him protection it would be against the declared principle of the Lord and would undermine the Lord's glorious virtue that he is a merciful and benevolent protector of refugees, and he cheerfully accepts anyone who comes to seek genuine refuge in his holy feet no matter what the sins of the other person are.

Lord Ram is the King of Ayodhya from the temporal perspective, and the Supreme Lord Emperor of the whole world from the perspective of creation. Each action of his will become a law, a precedent and an example that would be followed by others in the world. Thus, from now onwards it would become an established principle of statehood that a king is obliged to grant refuge to refugees if they are distressed, terrified and fear for their lives, and have come seeking asylum with the king. Of course it is now obligatory on the part of the refuge-seeker to be loyal and faithful to the person who has granted him refuge and protection, and any betrayal will be a horrendous sin more intense than treason.

To the credit of Vibhishan, he lived faithful and loyal to Lord Ram for the rest of his life.

²Hanuman could not counter Sugriv as he was the king of the monkeys as well as the commander-in-chief of the army, but internally Hanuman did not like the idea of turning Vibhishan away as he had personally known the latter to be a great devotee of the Lord and the one who had been of a lot of help in showing where Sita was confined in Lanka when Hanuman had gone there in search for her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6, till Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8.

Besides this, refusal to accept Vibhishan as a refugee would harm Lord Ram's reputation as the most compassionate and merciful Lord of creation who extends protection to all those who are his devotees and are in distress, and it would also put Hanuman in a bad light and make him out to be a liar because he had lauded the excellent virtues of the Lord when he met Vibhishan in Lanka (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8), and if Vibhishan is not accepted and warmly welcomed now then all his assertions about the good nature of Lord Ram would be nothing but mere bluff and bluster.

Therefore, when the Lord declared that he will accept Vibhishan inspite of everything else, it was Hanuman who felt the most happy of the lot.]

दो०. सरनागत कहूँ जे तजहिं निज अनहित अनुमानि ।

ते नर पावँर पापमय तिन्हहि बिलोकत हानि ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

saranāgata kahuṁ jē tajahim nija anahita anumāni.
tē nara pāvaṁra pāpamaya tinhahi bilōkata hāni. 43.

Lord Ram declared—‘He who refuses to give shelter to someone who comes seeking it in great distress, apprehending some harm from him, is a very sinful and despicable man. It is abominable and repulsive to even look at such an immoral person. (Doha no. 43)

[Note—The implication of this edict of the Lord is that those who accept refugees irrespective of all other considerations are righteous men, and it is a lawful duty not to turn away someone who has surrendered himself, is in grave distress, and has come seeking unequivocal protection.

When someone comes to another person seeking protection it implies that the former is sure that the latter is able and strong enough to protect him. If it is within the means of the second person then he must never refuse the first person protection, as this will be tantamount to betrayal of trust and faith that the refuge-seeker has in the person to whom he has come seeking shelter. This will also not be good thing from the view of the reputation of the stronger person; it will give the signal that he is selfish and biased.

Lord Ram signaled to Sugriv that if he refused to accept Vibhishan out of any fear, then he will face such ignominy in this world that he would not be able to show his face to anyone later on, chiefly when the people regard him as an incarnate Supreme Being.]

चौ०. कोटि बिप्र बध लागहिं जाहू । आएँ सरन तजउँ नहिं ताहू ॥ १ ॥

सनमुख होइ जीव मोहि जबहीं । जन्म कोटि अघ नासहिं तबहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kōṭi bipra badha lāgahim jāhū. ā'ēṁ sarana taja'uṁ nahim tāhū. 1.

sanamukha hō'i jīva mōhi jabahim. janma kōṭi agha nāсахim tabahim. 2.

Even if the refuge-seeker is accused of killing countless Vipras (Brahmins), I do not abandon him if he comes sincerely and terrified to seek my refuge, shelter and protection. (1)

[In this verse, the Lord answers the natural question that arises in one's mind—how can the Lord accept someone as sinful as the one who has harmed Brahmins?]

As soon as a Jiva (a creature; a living being) faces me or comes near me, all his sins, faults, corruptions, moral turpitudes and vices that have been accumulated over many countless births are eliminated instantly. (2)

[Note—¹This is said by the Lord to emphasise his determination to accept all those who come to seek the Lord's protection, shelter and refuge. Lord Ram wishes to tell the world that one should not fear harsh treatment and humiliation at his hands just because one is a sinner and has committed some grave error at the time of going to

seek shelter with the Lord, as he is ready to pardon him. The fact is that the Lord is extremely merciful and forgiving, and once one surrenders himself before the Lord he has no more to fear from anything. This was the advice given to Ravana by his wife Mandodari on three separate occasions in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6, till Doha no. 7; (ii) (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14, till Doha no. 15; and (iii) Doha no. 35 Kha, till Doha no. 37.

Malyawan, an old and wise demon who was one of the chief advisors of Ravana, also advised him the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48, till Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49. And finally, Ravana's own brother Vibhishan had advocated the same thing, and had even assured Ravana that he need not have any fear of retribution or vengeance from Lord Ram should he decide to surrender before the Lord as the latter is extremely forgiving and accepting—refer Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.

But the irony is that those who are sinful and innately pervert do not desire to go to the Lord in the first place—this has been clearly stated by Lord Ram himself in the following Chaupai line nos. 3-5.

²From the perspective of metaphysics and the Upanishads, the phrase 'the Jiva facing the Supreme Being' means a creature becoming self-realised and enlightened. Such a creature realises that his true 'self' is the pure conscious Atma and not the gross body that is involved in doing so many deeds, sinful or not, and therefore 'he'—the 'truthful identity of the Jiva'—is not to be blamed or accused for the acts and deeds of the body. Hence, no punishment accrues to 'him'—i.e. to his true self, the Atma. This Atma is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the super Consciousness.

This super Consciousness, the true 'self' of the Jiva, is like the brilliant sun shining in the sky; no taints can ever tarnish its image. Appearance of clouds may give the impression that the sun's brilliance has faded, but wise ones know that it is not the truth. Similarly, the countless faults and sins of the world are limited to the body, and they have no bearing on the holiness and purity of the Atma, the true self of the Jiva.

This is what the Lord implies here. Once one has witnessed the truth of his inner-self, once one has experienced the brilliance of the consciousness residing in one's inner-self, all worldly taints known as sins and vices fade into oblivion like the cloud that does not affect the brilliance of the sun's disc.

Now, a controversy is raised. How is it possible for great sinners to attain the Lord who is most holy and divine? This is answered in the next line—that a sinner cannot think of having devotion and affection for Lord Ram. To be sinful and be a devotee of the Lord at the same time is an impossible proposition much like day and night existing together. If one comes to the Lord then it is deemed that he has overcome his sins.

Another connotation is that if a person had committed some mistake in the past but now realises that he had done a grave wrong, then he must be given all opportunities to reform himself, as to err is in human nature, and sincere repentance must be given cognizance. The Supreme Being has taken the trouble to come down to earth and himself suffer as a human being because he is merciful and wishes to provide the world a chance at redemption. Had it been that he simply wished to punish and reward all according to their actions and deeds, there was no need to take this trouble, for he

could have easily done it sitting in heaven—rewarding the righteous ones with their desired fruits, and condemning to hell the sinful ones. But that is not the wish of the Supreme Father—he loves all his children alike, and if some of them have gone astray he tries his best to give them a chance for reforming themselves and bring them back to the mainstream of righteous way of life known as Dharma.]

पापवंत कर सहज सुभाऊ । भजनु मोर तेहि भाव न काऊ ॥ ३ ॥

जाँ पै दुष्टहृदय सोइ होई । मोरें सनमुख आव कि सोई ॥ ४ ॥

निर्मल मन जन सो मोहि पावा । मोहि कपट छल छिद्र न भावा ॥ ५ ॥

pāpavanta kara sahaja subhā'ū. bhajanu mōra tēhi bhāva na kā'ū. 3.

jauṁ pai duṣṭahrdaya sō'i hō'ī. mōrēṁ sanamukha āva ki sō'ī. 4.

nirmala mana jana sō mōhi pāvā. mōhi kapaṭa chala chidra na bhāvā. 5.

A person who is sinful and pervert, a person who is corrupt and has vices in him, is by nature averse to having devotion for me and worshipping me.

[To wit, persons with a tainted heart and mind cannot even think of worshipping me or having devotion for me—because there darkness and light cannot go together.]¹ (3)

If he (Vibhishan) has any trace of wickedness or deceit in his heart, then can he ever come to me and face me, surely not!

[Lord Ram is making a general statement here. He says that a person with a wicked heart and mind cannot dare to come before the Lord, he cannot even think of facing the Lord. So, in case someone has approached the Lord then it sure that his heart and mind are un-corrupt, or at least ready to mend their way. This is corroborated by the verse below.]² (4)

Only those Jivas (creatures; living beings) who have a purified, uncorrupt and taintless Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) can ever expect or hope to attain me or come near me—as I do not like wickedness, vices, deceit, conceit, pretensions, duplicity and perversions that act like moral cracks, crevices and holes for a person.³ (5)

[Note—¹This is the reason why the Lord will willingly accept anyone who comes seeking refuge and shelter with him. We can understand this by a simple example. The fire has a natural tendency to burn impurities, but it does not burn the pure metal. When impure god is required to be purified, it is put in fire where all the impurities are burnt and pure metal remains.

Similarly, when a Jiva faces the Lord all his sins, vices and perversions, which are like the impurity of the gold, get burnt instantly, and what emerges is the purified Atma which is like pure sample of gold.

²This line is an extension of verse no. 3, and completes the reason given by the Lord for accepting even the sinful ones as his refugees. He goes on to clarify the matter further in the next line no. 5.

³This is a stern warning from Lord Ram. When a person decides to approach the Lord with a petition for surrender and seeking refuge, he must keep this in mind. Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient; nothing is hidden from him. No one can cheat him by pretensions and sweet talk. And above all, the Lord is almighty and all-powerful. So there is no joking with him like there is no joking when dealing with a king or emperor. Should the king become annoyed by any remote chance at the petitioner, the latter's fate is too obvious to narrate—he will be at the best thrown in the prison for life if not viciously thrashed instantly and hanged outright.

So we see that after showing his kind side, the Lord now warns cunning people that his gracious nature must not be played fools around with. 'Be warned' he wishes to say; if a wicked man tries to play smart with the Lord, then he had it!]

भेद लेन पठवा दससीसा । तबहुँ न कछु भय हानि कपीसा ॥ ६ ॥
जग महुँ सखा निसाचर जेते । लछिमनु हनइ निमिष महुँ तेते ॥ ७ ॥
जौं सभीत आवा सरनाई । रखिहउँ ताहि प्रान की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

bhēda lēna paṭhavā dasasīsā. tabahuṁ na kachu bhaya hāni kapīsā. 6.
jaga mahuṁ sakhā nisācara jētē. lachimanu hana'i nimiṣa mahuṁ tētē. 7.
jauṁ sabhīta āvā saranā'īm. rakhiha'uṁ tāhi prāna kī nā'īm. 8.

After making his intentions clear, Lord Ram turned to Sugriv and assured him not to fear for anything because of the Lord not accepting his advice to keep Vibhishan in captivity. He reassured Sugriv and said—'Even if the ten-headed Ravana has sent him (Vibhishan) to spy upon us, oh king of monkeys (Sugriv), there is still nothing to fear about at all. [Why? This is answered in the next line no. 7.] (6)

Oh friend! Laxman (Lord Ram's younger brother) is strong and able enough to kill in a short time all the demons who live in this world¹. (7)

On the other hand, if he (Vibhishan) is distressed and has come to seek my shelter out of fear of persecution and punishment, then verily I declare that I will protect him with my life; I will protect him like one protects one's own life². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, even if Vibhishan is a spy and causes sabotage from within our ranks any time in future, something that you fear the most, there is no cause of alarm—because my brother Laxman can single-handedly eliminate all the demons who exist in this world.

Here, Lord Ram is praising Laxman and his valour to send out the signal that he is not alone here to face the enemy, but has a very powerful brother with him. So not only Vibhishan but anyone else amongst the monkey-and-bear army who tries to act smart with them any time during the war should be warned.

Another reason for praising Laxman in public is to give him honour for all the personal sacrifices he has done for the Lord's cause—he left the comfort of the kingdom to accompany Lord Ram to the forest, looked after the Lord and his wife Sita during the course of their long exile period in the forest, and was the Lord's only companion and comrade-in-arm when the Lord was passing through a rough patch in his life. Strategically also it was a clever devise by the Lord—it helped to boost Laxman's morale and standing in the hierarchy of the army; it acknowledged the

Lord's faith and reliance upon him. The Lord made it clear that he was the second-in-command.

Lord Ram wished to express his solidarity with his younger brother and thank him for his seminal courage and exemplary loyalty. It would not look good if he had directly praised Laxman in private, so the Lord took the indirect method of praising Laxman's abilities as an able and invincible warrior in public while he was also present to hear the praise.

It ought to be noted that this statement by Lord Ram must not be construed as boastful and bombastic because one may argue that if what Lord Ram asserts is the true case then why couldn't Laxman alone defeat the demon army, and why he was wounded in the battle-field? Well, the answer is that not only did Lord Ram wish to praise his comrade-in-arm and a faithful companion who had been at his side through thick and thin but he also wished to boost the morale of the monkey army that they have a powerful commander to lead them.

In sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-11, Lord Ram expresses almost similar views, but with a little difference. He says here that should Vibhishan play any dirty tricks against them then he is capable of taking care of him all by himself, as he is that Supreme Lord of the world who can annihilate the entire creation if he so wishes. Compare this to our present chaupai line no. 7 in Ram Charit Manas where Lord Ram points to his younger brother and says Laxman can take care of the eventuality of Vibhishan betraying them because he (Laxman) is capable of killing all the demon forces single-handedly if the situation so demands.

²Lord Ram has placed on the table both the options to make Sugriv overcome his fears. One is that if Vibhishan has come to spy upon them, no harm will be caused—because if he tries to create mischief, then Laxman is competent to take care of him by killing him instantly. The other option is that if he is terrified and has come to seek genuine refuge, then the Lord is duty-bound and obliged to give him full protection.

So under both the circumstances, Sugriv must bring Vibhishan before the Lord without any sort of fear or reservations.]

दो०. उभय भँति तेहि आनहु हँसि कह कृपानिकेत ।

जय कृपाल कहि कपि चले अंगद हनू समेत ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

ubhaya bhāṁti tēhi ānahu haṁsi kaha krpānikēta.
jaya krpāla kahi kapi calē aṅgada hanū samēta. 44.

The merciful Lord smiled and ordered—‘So, bring him to me under both the circumstances. [To wit, whether he is come as a friend or as a foe, there is nothing to worry at all. Bring him to me and then we shall see.]¹

The monkeys applauded the Lord and exclaimed happily in unison, ‘Glory to the merciful Lord’. Then accompanied by Hanuman, they went to bring him (Vibhishan) to the Lord. (Doha no. 44)

[Note—¹Vibhishan came seeking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram. Sugriv, who was the commanders of the Lord's army and the chief of the monkeys, had serious

doubts about his intentions. He felt that Vibhishan should be tied and held as captive—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 43.

Lord Ram then assured them that they have nothing to fear, and that the Lord will accept Vibhishan in all circumstances as it is a principle of Dharma (morality and righteous conduct) on the part of the Lord not to refuse a request from a distressed person seeking refuge in his holy feet.

Essentially the Lord says that he is determined to accept anyone who is truly distressed and comes to seek sincere refuge and protection from the Lord without having any kind of deceit, pretensions and falsehood in his heart. To refuse permission to such a person, to deny refuge to a person who has come to surrender himself before the Lord is an unthinkable thing for the Lord as he is renowned to be the provider of refuge to the helpless and the hapless, to the distressed and the miserable, to those who have no other succour and solace in this world except the Lord himself.

One very important reason why Lord Ram was sure that Vibhishan had no ill intentions is this: When Hanuman came back from his successful mission to Lanka and briefed the Lord about the details of his adventures, he must have surely told him about his brief meeting with Vibhishan, and how the latter had helped him on two occasions—one by telling him where to find Sita, and on the second occasion by protecting his life when he prevailed upon the mad demons, who were bent on attacking and killing Hanuman in the court of Ravana, to spare his life and instead humiliate him by branding any part of his body, at which they wrapped cloth around his tail and set it on fire. This obviously hinted to the Lord that Vibhishan was favourably inclined towards him.]

चौ०. सादर तेहि आगें करि बानर । चले जहाँ रघुपति करुनाकर ॥ १ ॥

दूरिहि ते देखे द्वौ भ्राता । नयनानंद दान के दाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sādara tēhi āgēm kari bānara. calē jahāñ raghupati karunākara. 1.

dūrihi tē dēkhē dvau bhrātā. nayanānanda dāna kē dātā. 2.

[The messengers went quickly to where they had kept Vibhishan waiting on the outskirts of the camp. They informed him that Lord Ram has instructed that he be respectfully brought in his presence. So they invited Vibhishan to accompany them to the place where the Lord was waiting to receive him.]

Keeping him (Vibhishan) very respectfully ahead of themselves, the troop of monkeys proceeded to the place where Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram), the Lord who is all-merciful and compassionate, was waiting for them to return. (1)

He (Vibhishan) saw the two brothers (Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) from a distance. Their sight was universally so magnificent and singular in its majesty and beauty that it granted immense joy to the eyes of the beholder as if it was a largesse given out by the two brothers for free to all those who come to visit them¹.

(2)

[Note—¹This was the first time in his life that Vibhishan was seeing the two brothers, and he was overwhelmed by the magnificence and beauty of the sight. For a few moments he stood mesmerized, losing all awareness of himself and his surroundings. He had heard that the Lord was beautiful to behold, but he had never imagined ‘how’ great that beauty was. And there is nothing unusual or wondrous about it, for Lord Ram was a personified form of the Supreme Being whose other visible form is Mother Nature; and who does not know how beautiful, how amazing, how magnificent and how majestic is Nature!]

बहुरि राम छबिधाम बिलोकी । रहेउ ठटुकि एकटक पल रोकी ॥ ३ ॥

भुज प्रलंब कंजारुन लोचन । स्यामल गात प्रनत भय मोचन ॥ ४ ॥

सिंघ कंध आयत उर सोहा । आनन अमित मदन मन मोहा ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri rāma chabidhāma bilōkī. rahē'u ṭhaṭuki ēkaṭaka pala rōkī. 3.
bhuja pralamba kañjārūna lōcana. syāmala gāta pranata bhaya mōcana. 4.
siṅgha kandha āyata ura sōhā. ānana amita madana mana mōhā. 5.

After the initial amazement that the combined beautiful view of the two brothers had caused to Vibhishan, he turned his attention especially to Lord Ram whom he had come to meet.

The sight of the Lord was singularly unique in its charm and beauty so much so that when Vibhishan focused his attention on the Lord he was so overwhelmed for some time that he stood motionless as if in a daze; he could neither blink his eyes nor could he move his legs. (3)

The Lord's arms were long (implying that his reach was far and wide); his eyes were like red-hued lotus flowers (indicating that they were beautiful and his sight was pure as the lotus); and his body had a dark complexion (like that of the ocean or the sky, indicating that the Lord had no end).

This form of the Lord removed or destroyed the fears of all those who came to surrender themselves before him (pranata bhaya mōcana). [It is because this form of Lord Ram represented the Supreme Being who is the almighty Lord of the world.] (4)

The Lord's shoulders were muscular and broad like that of a lion (indicating that the Lord was strong enough to extend his support and protection to his dependants and followers); and his chest (bosom) was wide (indicating that the Lord had a ‘large, magnanimous, benevolent heart’ that welcomed everyone; that he cheerfully embraced one and all). (5)

नयन नीर पुलकित अति गाता । मन धरि धीर कही मृदु बाता ॥ ६ ॥

नाथ दसानन कर मैं भ्राता । निसिचर बंस जनम सुरत्राता ॥ ७ ॥

सहज पापप्रिय तामस देहा । जथा उलूकहि तम पर नेहा ॥ ८ ॥

nayana nīra pulakita ati gātā. mana dhari dhīra kahī mṛdu bātā. 6.
nātha dasānana kara maiṁ bhrātā. nīcara bansa janama suratrātā. 7.
sahaja pāpapiya tāmāsa dēhā. jathā ulūkahi tama para nēhā. 8.

Vibhishan had become highly emotional at the bewitching sight of Lord Ram; his eyes were filled with tears and his body was thrilled. He, however, soon recovered himself and gathered his wits together, and addressed Lord Ram with sweet and polite words --- (6)

[Vibhishan said to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord (nātha)! I am a brother of the ten-headed Ravana. Oh the Lord who is a protector of the gods (suratrātā)! I am born in the demon race (which, on the other hand, has been always tormenting the gods)¹. (7)

I have an evil body (of a demon) which is inclined to be naturally sinful (i.e. being a demon by birth it is my nature to be sinful), just like an owl that has a natural affinity for darkness of the night.² (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan means that while Lord Ram is a protector of the gods, he himself is born in the demon race that has traditionally been tormenting the gods.

²Why is Vibhishan outlining all his negative-ness before Lord Ram while introducing himself? He wishes to convey to the Lord that he is humble and unpretentious as he fully understands his background. He is not pretending to be a nice demon who qualifies to be accepted by Lord Ram as a righteous person who deserves respect. But inspite of all the shortcomings and drawbacks he has inherited by the virtue of his birth, over which he had no control, he nevertheless has come to surrender before the Lord as he had heard about the Lord’s greatness and reputation that he gladly welcomes everyone if they are honest and sincere, irrespective of their backgrounds. This is clear in the following Doha no. 45.

Vibhishan decided that it would be absolutely wrong to try to act smart with Lord Ram, and it would be better to point out his negative aspects first and foremost so that when the Lord accepts him in his camp no one would accuse him that he had misled the Lord about himself by not divulging the truth. He wanted to be accepted by Lord Ram the way he was, whether he was bad or good, and not in a way that was artificial and made-up. Relationship that is based on truth and honesty would be lasting and strong for both the parties, for Lord Ram as well as Vibhishan. They would be able to trust each other better when they know that neither of them will speak falsehood to impress the other.]

दो०. श्रवन सुजसु सुनि आयउँ प्रभु भंजन भव भीर ।
त्राहि त्राहि आरति हरन सरन सुखद रघुबीर ॥ ४५ ॥
dōhā.

śravana sujasu suni āya'uṁ prabhu bhañjana bhava bhīra.
trāhi trāhi ārati harana sarana sukhada raghubīra. 45.

I have come to seek refuge with you after having heard about your great reputation and goodwill that you are an able Lord who can eliminate or destroy the fears arising

from the great horrors of this gross mundane world, which is like a vast intractable ocean of endless grief, miseries and torments (prabhu bhañjana bhava bhīra).

Oh Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram)! You remove the suffering of those who have surrendered themselves unconditionally at your holy feet (ārati harana). I repeatedly beseech and beg of you to protect me and save me (trāhi trāhi) by granting me a place at your feet as it would give me a lot of peace, comfort and happiness (sarana sukhada).’ (Doha no. 45)

चौ०. अस कहि करत दंडवत देखा । तुरत उठे प्रभु हरष बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥

दीन बचन सुनि प्रभु मन भावा । भुज बिसाल गहि हृदयँ लगावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi karata daṇḍavata dēkhā. turata uṭhē prabhu haraṣa bisēṣā. 1.
dīna bacana suni prabhu mana bhāvā. bhuja bisāla gahi hṛdayaṁ lagāvā. 2.

Saying so, Vibhishan prostrated himself reverentially before Lord Ram. When the Lord observed that Vibhishan has fallen at his feet, he got up immediately with cheer in his heart. (10)

Vibhishan’s words of humility impressed Lord Ram’s compassionate heart a lot. So the Lord instantly got up and extended his long arms to lift Vibhishan from the ground, and then he affectionately embraced him tightly to his bosom. (2)

अनुज सहित मिलि ढिग बैठारी । बोले बचन भगत भयहारी ॥ ३ ॥

कहु लंकेस सहित परिवारा । कुसल कुठाहर बास तुम्हारा ॥ ४ ॥

anuja sahita mili ḍhiga baiṭhārī. bōlē bacana bhagata bhayahārī. 3.
kahu laṅkēsa sahita parivārā. kusala kuṭhāhara bāsa tumhārā. 4.

Both Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman met Vibhishan very affectionately. Then making Vibhishan sit near him, the Lord said polite and reassuring words that remove all fears of his devotees¹. (3)

Lord Ram addressed Vibhishan affectionately and asked of his welfare, saying, ‘Oh the king of Lanka (laṅkēsa)²! Tell me about your welfare along with that of your family. Indeed it is unfortunate that you reside at a place (a reference to Lanka) which is very inhospitable for you. (4)

[Note—¹Vibhishan was very scared and in a dire state; his condition was very precarious. On one side his own brother had become his arch enemy and would kill him if he went back to Lanka; on the other side he was in an enemy camp and uncertain how he would be treated by their king, in this case Lord Ram. He was nervous and terrified. So when Lord Ram and Laxman met him affectionately and welcomed him, and then the Lord made him sit next to him, speaking to him politely, Vibhishan felt he has got a new lease of life. Those few moments must have been

very nerve-wrecking and torturing for Vibhishan; and the warmth of Lord Ram's reception immediately lifted the veil of gloom that had engulfed him from all sides.

Although Vibhishan was sure that he would not be turned away, yet he was not expecting the warmth by which he was welcomed by Lord Ram and Laxman. So he was overcome with intense gratitude, and vowed to himself that as long as he lived he will not forget that he owed his life and honour to Lord Ram. The allegiance to Lord Ram that sprouted thus in Vibhishan's heart at that time was profound, natural and honest and spontaneous.

²By addressing Vibhishan as “*laṅkāśa*”, the ‘king of Lanka’, Lord Ram has predicted the future—that one day Vibhishan would actually be the ruler of the kingdom of Lanka. This epithet was meant to tell Vibhishan that the Lord would treat him with the same respect that he would show to another king, that Lord Ram would not humiliate him or show disrespect to him before his courtiers, and that the Lord would treat him as an equal. This attitude of the Lord had a profound emotional and psychological effect on Vibhishan; he immediately became loyal and faithful towards Lord Ram.

He compared the Lord's loving behavior towards him with that of his own brother Ravana who treated him with utter scorn, disdain and contempt, and the gulf was too evidently deep and wide for him. Mentally Vibhishan became a virtual ‘slave’ of Lord Ram as he found in the Lord someone who was more loving and caring than his own father. Truly, what would a person, who has lost all hopes of succour and solace, who stares at a bleak future of doom and misery, want more?]

खल मंडलीं बसहु दिनु राती । सखा धरम निबहइ केहि भाँती ॥ ५ ॥
मैं जानउँ तुम्हारि सब रीती । अति नय निपुन न भाव अनीती ॥ ६ ॥

khala maṇḍalīm basahu dinu rātī. sakhā dharama nibaha'i kēhi bhāṁtī. 5.
mair̥ jāna'uṁ tumhāri saba rītī. ati naya nipuna na bhāva anītī. 6.

You live surrounded day and night by a vicious and wicked company (of demons at Lanka). In this situation I wonder how you manage to keep your piety and good conduct. (5)

I am amazed because I am aware that you are righteous by your very nature, that you do not like anything that is improper and wrong. [So I wonder how you manage to live and uphold your principles in the midst of the demons who are inherently opposed to the way of life you are accustomed to.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram's assertion that he knows that Vibhishan is pious and righteous by nature is in answer to what Vibhishan had said earlier—that he was sinful, a demon, etc. (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 45 herein above).

Lord Ram wishes to reassure Vibhishan that he need not fear anything from the Lord, because the Lord knows everything about him. If the Lord can welcome even a sinful creature, then how much the better it is if that creature is pious and righteous?]

बरु भल बास नरक कर ताता । दुष्ट संग जनि देइ बिधाता ॥ ७ ॥
अब पद देखि कुसल रघुराया । जौं तुम्ह कीन्हि जानि जन दाया ॥ ८ ॥

baru bhala bāsa naraka kara tātā. duṣṭa saṅga jani dē'i bidhātā. 7.
aba pada dēkhi kusala raghurāyā. jaum̐ tumha kīnhi jāni jana dāyā. 8.

Oh my dear (tātā)! It is better to live in hell, but let the Creator not let anyone live amongst wicked people (as it causes more torment, misery and grief than what is experienced in hell).' (7)

Vibhishan replied, 'Oh Lord of the Raghus ("raghurāyā"; Lord Ram)! Now that I have had an opportunity to see your holy feet, and have been fortunate enough that you have decided to show mercy to me and accept me as one of your servants (or as your subordinate, follower and devotee), everything has turned auspicious and fortunate for me.' (8)

दो०. तब लगि कुसल न जीव कहूँ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।
जब लगि भजत न राम कहूँ सोक धाम तजि काम ॥ ४६ ॥
dōhā.

taba lagi kusala na jīva kahūṁ sapanēhuṁ mana biśrāma.
jaba lagi bhajata na rāma kahūṁ sōka dhāma taji kāma. 46.

[Vibhishan said—] 'Verily indeed, a creature cannot expect even in his dreams to have an auspicious future nor can his mind and heart ever find peace and rest until the time he abandons all worldly desires and passions, that are harbingers of grief, misery and pain, and devote himself instead to worshipping Lord Ram.

[To wit, a living being cannot expect, even in his dream, to have any kind of peace and happiness in his mind or heart, or expect to have any kind of welfare or good for himself, till the time he does not do Bhajan of Lord Ram, i.e. till the time he does not remember the Lord with great love and devotion, after having distanced himself from all worldly attachments and desires which are nothing but a treasury of sorrows and miseries for him.]' (Doha no. 46)

चौ०. तब लगि हृदयँ बसत खल नाना । लोभ मोह मच्छर मद माना ॥ १ ॥
जब लगि उर न बसत रघुनाथा । धरें चाप सायक कटि भाथा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

taba lagi hṛdayaṁ basata khala nānā. lōbha mōha macchara mada mānā. 1.
jaba lagi ura na basata raghunāthā. dharēm̐ cāpa sāyaka kaṭi bhāthā. 2.

[Vibhishan continued with his submission. He said—] 'The various kinds of negative traits that make a creature wicked and vile—such as 'Lobha' (greed, avarice, rapacity), 'Moha' (delusions, attachments, attractions), 'Matsar' (jealousy, envy and ill-will), 'Mada' (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, vanity etc.) et al— [1] live in the

creature's heart only till the time Lord Ram, who holds a bow and arrow in his hands, does not live there [2]¹. (1-2)

[Note—¹Wicked miscreants can enter and live inside a person's home only if there is no one to guard it against them. These wicked people, once they find entry inside the house, would ruin the house as well as its owner, imparting their bad habits on the occupants of the house and giving the whole family a bad name in the neighbourhood. But if the owner is wise and prudent, he will appoint an armed guard to protect his home from such miscreants.

In the present verse, such an armed guard is Lord Ram, and he is armed with a bow and arrow to protect his devotee from the evil-doings of miscreants represented by such negative traits as Lobha, Moha, Matsar, Mada etc. With the presence of Lord Ram in the heart of the devotee, these miscreants would not dare to peep inside.

It is significant to note that the Lord is shown as holding the bow and arrow here—it signifies the Lord's readiness to destroy these negativities from the heart of his true devotees.]

ममता तरुन तमी अँधिआरी । राग द्वेष उलूक सुखकारी ॥ ३ ॥

तब लगि बसति जीव मन माहीं । जब लगि प्रभु प्रताप रबि नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

mamatā taruna tamī aṁdhi'ārī. rāga dvēṣa ulūka sukhakārī. 3.

taba lagi basati jīva mana māhīm. jaba lagi prabhu pratāpa rabi nāhīm. 4.

Similarly, 'Mamta' (infatuation; passion and affection for material world) is like a dark night which is very pleasing for the owls represented by the two opposing emotions of 'Raag and Dwesh' (attachment for something and repulsion with another). (3)

These negativities (Raag and Dwesh) reside in the heart of a living being only till the time there is darkness (Mamta) in it, but as soon as the light of the sun symbolized by the awareness of the splendorous glory and holiness of Lord Ram dawns in a person's inner being, the darkness vanishes and these owls hide themselves. (4)

[Note—Infatuation and lust for a thing create a longing for it; a person becomes blind in its pursuit. This in its wake creates biases in favour of certain entities and against other entities. For instance, if a man is attached to his money (i.e. has 'Mamta' for money), then anyone who helps him increase it would be his greatest friend, and the man begins to love such persons (i.e. develops 'Raag' for him), even if those persons have vested selfish interests in helping him acquire more and more money. On the other hand, if someone becomes a hindrance in his pursuit of money, he becomes his enemy, he becomes jealous of such a person (i.e. he develops 'Dwesh' with him) inspite of his being the man's well-wisher and helping him in many other ways.

But if a man is wise and develops devotion and affection for Lord Ram, he is able to rid himself of such selfish and capricious nature; he becomes steady in his mind, because now he has the Lord to support and guide him, because the Lord becomes his best well-wisher and friend, and because worldly attachments do not matter to him any longer.]

अब मैं कुसल मिटे भय भारे । देखि राम पद कमल तुम्हारे ॥ ५ ॥
तुम्ह कृपाल जा पर अनुकूला । ताहि न व्याप त्रिबिध भव सूला ॥ ६ ॥

aba mair̥ kusala miṭē bhaya bhārē. dēkhi rāma pada kamala tumhārē. 5.
tumha kṛpāla jā para anukūlā. tāhi na byāpa tribidha bhava sūlā. 6.

Oh Lord, now that I have had the opportunity and the privilege of having a divine sight of your holy feet, all of my greatest of fears have been dispelled, and I am feeling absolutely blessed with all sorts of welfare and well-being. (5)

When you become kind and show your grace upon someone, none of the three types of horrible torments of the world can affect him¹. So therefore, I am free from all fears. (6)

[Note—¹The three torments are the following—(i) Daivik—that related to malignant gods and stars, (ii) Daihik—that related to the body, such as old age related problems and so many diseases, and (iii) Bhautik—that related to the existential problems in this world, or problems created by other creatures.]

मैं निसिचर अति अधम सुभाऊ । सुभ आचरनु कीन्ह नहिं काऊ ॥ ७ ॥
जासु रूप मुनि ध्यान न आवा । तेहिं प्रभु हरषि हृदयँ मोहि लावा ॥ ८ ॥

mair̥ niscara ati adhama subhā'ū. subha ācaranu kīnha nahir̥ kā'ū. 7.
jāsu rūpa muni dhyāna na āvā. tēhir̥ prabhu haraṣi hṛdayaṁ mōhi lāvā. 8.

I am born as a demon who inherently have a very lowly character and sinful nature. As such I cannot claim to ever have done anything that can be said to be truly meritorious. (7)

How exceptionally fortunate and lucky I am therefore that the Lord—whose divine vision is virtually inaccessible for even the great sages and ascetics who make diligent effort to have it during their meditation sessions—has been so kind and graceful that he has embraced and clasped me to his bosom most affectionately! (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan has clearly indicated here that he knows that Lord Ram is not a human being when he refers to the great sages and ascetics meditating on the Lord's form. These sages and ascetics meditate upon the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and it is the same Brahm who has manifested himself as Lord Ram.

Realising this, Vibhishan is overwhelmed with gratitude and devotion for Lord Ram.]

दो०. अहोभाग्य मम अमित अति राम कृपा सुख पुंज ।
देखेउँ नयन बिरंचि सिव सेव्य जुगल पद कंज ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

ahōbhāgya mama amita ati rāma kṛpā sukha puñja.
dēkhē'uṁ nayana birañci siva sēbya jugala pada kañja. 47.

Oh Lord Ram! I am indeed exceptionally fortunate and cannot imagine the greatness of my luck that today I have been meet the Lord who is a fountainhead of mercy, grace, kindness and compassion, and see his holy lotus-like feet that are served, adored and worshipped by the creator Brahma, as well as by Lord Shiva, the concluder of creation. (Doha no. 47)

चौ०. सुनुहु सखा निज कहउँ सुभाऊ । जान भुसुंङि संभु गिरिजाऊ ॥ १ ॥
जौं नर होइ चराचर द्रोही । आवै सभय सरन तकि मोही ॥ २ ॥
तजि मद मोह कपट छल नाना । करउँ सद्य तेहि साधु समाना ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

sunahu sakhā nija kaha'uṁ subhā'ū. jāna bhusuṇḍi sambhu girijā'ū. 1.
jauṁ nara hō'i carācara drōhī. āvai sabhaya sarana taki mōhī. 2.
taji mada mōha kapaṭa chala nānā. kara'uṁ sadya tēhi sādhu samānā. 3.

[When Vibhishan has bowed his head at the holy feet of Lord Ram and expressed his earnest desire to take his refuge, the Lord welcomed him and assured Vibhishan of his total acceptance. It was then the Lord gave him the reason for accepting him without reservations. It acts a welcome invitation to all the creatures to come to the Lord who is waiting for them with an open arm to give them freedom from all their miseries, torments, vexations, fears and consternations.]

Lord Ram told Vibhishan—‘Listen friend! I will tell you my innate nature and temperament. It is well-known to Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, Lord Shiva (Shambu) and Girija (Uma or Parvati, the divine Mother and the holy consort of Shiva)¹. (1)

Even if a person is considered inimical towards the whole world which consists of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, even if he has created animosity all around himself, but still if, stricken with terror and overcome with mortal fear, comes to me to seek refuge in my holy feet [2] after having abandoned or discarding all Mada (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness), Moha (delusions, attractions, infatuations and attachments), Kapat and Chal (deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, trickery)—then I verily say I transform him into a saintly figure [3]². (2-3)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that the Lord has addressed Vibhishan with the word ‘friend’. He had addressed Sugriv with the same word when the two met at the Rishyamook mountain. The glorious virtues of a true friend has already been extolled by the Lord in Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 7 when he met Sugriv.

The Lord now reiterates his stand and assures Vibhishan that once the latter has come to surrender himself before the Lord with a sincere heart, he need not worry

or fear from anything any more as it has now become the Lord's responsibility to ensure his welfare and safety.

We will read in the Lord's final statement in line no. 8 that he compares Vibhishan with a 'saint' and says that 'saints like you are very dear to me'. Therefore we may also deduce that 'saints' and 'friends' are equally dear to Lord Ram, that all saints are friends of Lord Ram whether they are openly declared so or not, that the auspicious, the righteous, the holy and the glorious characters of all saints make them endeared to the Lord as if they were all his friends, and therefore all of them can be assured of the Lord's unstinted support, protection, care and reciprocal affection even if they expressly request for such blessing from the Lord or not. It also simply means that all saintly people are friends of the Lord, and therefore the Lord is duty-bound to protect and look for their welfare according to his own self-declared policy.

In his worldly play, the Supreme Being had addressed three persons as his friend—(i) one was Nishad, the chief of the boatman community—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 88; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 151; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193 etc., (ii) the second is Sugriv, the chief of the monkey race—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10, 23 that precede Doha no. 7; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43 etc.; and (iii) the third is Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 80; Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Kha etc.

Lord Ram has cited three persons here who know his nature in right earnest—they are Kaagbhusund, Lord Shiva and Parvati.

(a) Kaagbhusund was well-steeped in devotion for Lord Ram and his spiritual enlightenment and level of wisdom was of such a high standard that Lord Shiva had selected him to preach Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, when the latter wished to learn about the true nature of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 85.

The entire episode is narrated in full as the second half of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, extending from Doha no. 54 right upto to the end of the holy book in Doha no. 125.

(b) Lord Shiva is the main narrator of this divine and holy story of Lord Ram; it was conceived in his heart and mind when he was meditating upon the holy form and name of Lord Ram. Shiva had revealed it first to his divine consort Parvati or Uma, and therefore, like Kaagbhusund, she was the only one who had a first hand knowledge of this divine story and its secrets. It was on her request that Shiva had told this story in the first instance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30; Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 127, till Doha no. 129.

Tulsidas has clearly said that the story he is narrating is none of his own creation; it is the same story that was narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 130.

²It must be noted that the Lord first converts him into a 'saintly figure' before accepting him. Or we can say that as soon as the person coming to seek Lord's grace has this thought in his mind that he will go and surrender before the Lord by throwing off his dirty cloak symbolised by these negative traits as Mada, Moha, Kapat and Chal, he has automatically converted himself into a saintly person—which implies that his Atma, his 'true self' has shed its baggage of worldly taints and emerged fresh

and cleaned in its original form. It is this pristine form of the Jiva, the living being, which is eligible to attain the Lord. This process of conversion from a tainted Jiva to a holy and saintly Jiva is as automatic and natural as the chasing away of the darkness of night with the arrival of dawn.

When we read elsewhere in the preaching of Lord Ram in relation with the virtues of saints we find that the taints that are listed here in line no. 3 are the first signs that are to be eliminated from the mental horizon of anyone if he ever hopes to be classified as a saint and pious person.

Earlier, Vibhishan had unilaterally declared this virtue of Lord Ram, that the Lord does not turn away even if a person is so sinful as to have made the whole world his enemy due to his misdeeds, when he was advising his brother Ravana to surrender before the Lord, return Sita to him and avoid unnecessary confrontation with the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.]

जननी जनक बंधु सुत दारा । तनु धनु भवन सुहृद परिवारा ॥ ४ ॥
सब कै ममता ताग बटोरी । मम पद मनहि बाँध बरि डोरी ॥ ५ ॥
समदरसी इच्छा कछु नाहीं । हरष सोक भय नहिं मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

jananī janaka bandhu suta dārā. tanu dhanu bhavana suhr̥da parivārā. 4.
saba kai mamatā tāga baṭōrī. mama pada manahi bāṁdha bari ḍōrī. 5.
samadarasī icchā kachu nāhīm. haraṣa sōka bhaya nahiṁ mana māhīm. 6.

[Now, Lord Ram goes on to describe the glorious virtues of saints which make them dear to him—]

Mother, father, brother, son, wife, body, wealth, home, friends, compatriots and other kith and kin, as well as the family [4]—a person who breaks off all his attachments and infatuations with them, who binds them all in a single rope of dispassion and detachment (i.e. who turns his mind away from them; who is no longer infatuated with them or think of them), and instead tie his Mana (i.e. his heart, mind and sub-conscious) in my holy feet [5] --- (4-5)

--- Who has developed exemplary equanimity and evenness of mind and views, who treats all equally and without any bias, who has no desires, hopes, aspirations and yearnings of any kind, who neither feels excited and elated nor sorrowful and depressed (simply because he practices renunciation, detachment, dispassion, self-restraint and equanimity of the highest degree), who has no fear of any kind (because he has surrendered himself to me who am the supreme Protector, and therefore he has faith that no harm can come to him from any quarter) --- (6)

अस सज्जन मम उर बस कैसें । लोभी हृदयँ बसइ धनु जैसे ॥ ७ ॥
तुम्ह सारिखे संत प्रिय मोरें । धरउँ देह नहिं आन निहोरें ॥ ८ ॥

asa sajjana mama ura basa kaisēm. lōbhī hrdayaṁ basa'i dhanu jaisēm. 7.
tumha sārīkhē santa priya mōrēm. dhara'uṁ dēha nahim āna nihōrēm. 8.

--- Verily I say that such a gentleman finds a place in my heart like worldly wealth has in the heart of a greedy man!¹ (7)

Saintly persons and pure souls like you are very dear to me. It is for them that I (Lord Vishnu) have assumed a form of a human being (as Lord Ram)². (8)

[Note—¹A wise person is one who has broken off all his attachments with these worldly entities as these relationships are temporary and unsustainable. They act like fetters for the Atma, tying it down to the gross world that revolves around and recognizes relationships that treat the gross body of the creature as his true identity instead of the Atma. The problem in this sort of relationship is that the very basis of it is gross and temporary—because both the world and the body of the creature are mortal and perishable. Such relationships are bound to break one day, and this will lead to the agony of separation. Besides this, such relationships act as a deep bog, ensnaring the creature for generations after generations.

The only way out of this dilemma and quandary is to recognize that the Atma is one's truthful self, and that Lord Ram is the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is the truthful kith and kin of the individual Atma. The Lord is the real and truthful Father of all the living beings, their true friend and companion. The Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma who is the cosmic supreme Consciousness. This entity is eternal and imperishable—and therefore any relationship that is established between the two, i.e. between the Atma of the individual creature and the Parmatma, will have an eternal and sustainable dimension to it.

A greedy person thinks of nothing but money and wealth; he will go to any extent in acquiring it and protecting it; he is virtually infatuated with it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, stanza no. 1 of Doha no. 130 Kha.

Likewise, Lord Ram is always on the look-out for such persons who have saintly qualities in them, and then goes all out to welcome them and afford all his protection and benevolence to them.

²This stanza clearly establishes that the Supreme Being has come down to earth for the benefit of saints and saintly people.

Lord Ram has taught Sabari about the nine virtues that a devotee of the Lord must possess in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36. Then again, Lord Ram has told Kaagbhusund that if a creature has devotion for him and has abandoned all deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks, then even if his most lowly the Lord accept him willingly—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 85, till Doha no. 86.

A remarkable thing emerges if we have a close look at all the characters in the story whom Lord Ram addresses as 'friends' or 'saints' or 'devotees' whom he has cheerfully accepted in his fold. All of them are of low birth and are sinful by their bodies. (i) Nishad is a boatman who eats fish as a staple diet. (ii) Sabari is of a low caste. (iii) Sugriv is a monkey by birth, and so is (iv) Hanuman whom the Lord heaps praises with, going to the extent of saying that he will never be able to repay his debts (Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32). (v) Vibhishan is born in the demon race. And (vi) Kaagbhusund is a crow.

This list highlights that the Lord has come down to earth to give redemption to the fallen and provide salvation to the humblest and the meekest. A healthy person does not need the care of an expert doctor or nurse; it is the sick who need it. The Lord is that spiritual doctor and nurse!]

दो०. सगुन उपासक परहित निरत नीति दृढ़ नेम ।

ते नर प्रान समान मम जिन्ह कें द्विज पद प्रेम ॥ ४८ ॥

dōhā.

saguna upāsaka parahita nirata nīti dṛṛha nēma.

tē nara prāna samāna mama jinha kēm dvija pada prēma. 48.

Those who worship my (i.e. the Supreme Being's) Saguna form (i.e. form that is visible and has attributes) {that is, those who worship Lord Ram as being an incarnation of the Supreme Being}¹, those who remain engaged in the welfare of others (instead of causing them pain and miseries)², those who are steady in observing sacraments and other religious duties along with being diligent in following the path of righteousness, propriety, morality and ethical conduct inspite of all provocations and temptations³, and those who have affection (respect) for the holy feet of Dwijis (Brahmins; elderly and learned people)⁴—verily I say that such people are as dear to me as my own life. (Doha no.48)

[Note—¹The difference between the Saguna form of the Lord and his Nirguna form (one without any specific attributes; the cosmic invisible and all-incorporating form) have been elucidated in detail by Lord Ram to preach Bharat, Hanuman and the rest in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 41.

²The virtue of striving for the welfare of others is lauded elsewhere also—for instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 121 it is asserted that “the natural character of saints is that they endeavour or strive to do good of others and care for their welfare by employing their mind, heart and words to the best of their abilities; suffering for the good, happiness and welfare of others is a character of saints, while being the cause of pain, misery and unhappiness of others is an innate nature of non-saints.” This is the principle of a saint taught by Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu.

³To be steadfast in following the correct path inspite of all provocations is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46 (Lord Ram teaches Narad); Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram teaches Bharat and others); and Lanka Kand, Doha no. 34 Kha (Angad tells Ravana).

⁴Having respect for Brahmins is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16 (when Lord Ram has preached Laxman); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram taught Bharat and others); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45 (Lord Ram preaches the citizens of Ayodhya).

In these verses, Lord Ram tells Vibhishan that he treats with great respect a person who might have the world as his enemy but has come to seek refuge with the Lord after abandoning all arrogance, attachments, deceit, cunning and pretensions, after having snapped all his relations with the world and its wealth, after renouncing his household and his near and dear ones such as his wife, his son, parents, kith and kin, friends, etc., if he has no desires and treats everything equally and with stoic neutrality, if he has no fear, and if he is not affected by the sense of worldly happiness or sorrow—if such a man surrenders to the Lord and ties himself irrevocably to the holy feet of the Lord with a thread of devotion, love and affection, without any expectations whatsoever, the Lord promises to take care of him, whatever may come.

Those people who worship my Saguna form (i.e. my form as it appears in my incarnation), those who think of the good of others (i.e. are not selfish), those who diligently follow the rules of proper conduct and ethical behaviour as laid down in the scriptures, those who are steadfast in carrying out their duties with due sincerity, and those who love Dwij (elders and learned people)—verily, such persons are very dear to the Lord's heart.

These verses can be read as follows also—"Lord Ram advised Vibhishan: Those who detach themselves from all worldly relationships and abandon all affection for them and attachment with them, such as with one's mother, father, friend, son, wife, body, material wealth, homestead, kith and kin, compatriots and all other dear and near ones, and instead bind their Mana (mind and heart) to my holy feet (i.e. surrender before me unconditionally and completely, and treat me as their only relation in this world), those who have developed the grand virtue of equanimity and forbearance, who treat everything and everyone alike, who have no desires or expectations whatsoever, those who remain unruffled and unmoved by either happiness or sorrows, those who have no fear of any kind in their heart (obviously because they have me, the Supreme Lord, as their protector and saviour)—verily I say that such persons (devotees) are very close to my heart and dear to me much like material wealth is very dear and close to the heart of a greedy and selfish man."

The extent to which Lord Ram loves his devotees is expressed clearly in the aforesaid verses by the Lord himself to Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, when he came to seek refuge with the Lord.]

चौ०. सुनु लंकेस सकल गुन तोरें । तातें तुम्ह अतिसय प्रिय मोरें ॥ १ ॥

राम बचन सुनि बानर जूथा । सकल कहहिं जय कृपा बरूथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu laṅkēsa sakala guna tōrēm. tātēm tumha atisaya priya mōrēm. 1.

rāma bacana suni bānara jūthā. sakala kahahim jaya kṛpā barūthā. 2.

Lord Ram told Vibhishan, 'Listen oh king of Lanka (sunu laṅkēsa)!¹ You possess all the noble virtues (of a true devotee). That is why you are extremely dear to me.' (1)

When the huge gathering of monkeys heard these words of Lord Ram, they cheered him enthusiastically and exclaimed, 'Glory to Lord Ram who is a font of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion.'² (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has earlier too addressed Vibhishan as ‘the king of Lanka’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

²The monkeys were surprised at the magnanimity of Lord Ram and his graceful nature that inspite of Vibhishan himself repeatedly saying that he is sinful, the Lord praised his good virtues while neglecting his negativities.]

सुनत बिभीषनु प्रभु कै बानी । नहिं अघात श्रवनामृत जानी ॥ ३ ॥
पद अंबुज गहि बारहिं बारा । हृदयँ समात न प्रेमु अपारा ॥ ४ ॥

sunata bibhīṣanu prabhu kai bānī. nahim̐ aghāta śravanāmṛta jānī. 3.
pada ambuja gahi bārahim̐ bārā. hr̥dayaṁ samāta na prēmu apārā. 4.

When Vibhishan heard the pleasing words of Lord Ram that were as sweet as nectar for him, he felt so exceedingly glad that he could not have enough of it¹. (3)

So emotionally overwhelmed did Vibhishan become that he repeatedly clasped the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram even as his heart could not contain the surging waves of affection and gratitude towards the Lord Ram that heaved inside his bosom and brimmed over. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, Vibhishan had not expected, even in his dreams, that he would be so warmly welcomed by Lord Ram and shown so much affection by him. It was for him a fountain of nectar from which the more he drank the more he wanted to drink.]

सुनहु देव सचराचर स्वामी । प्रनतपाल उर अंतरजामी ॥ ५ ॥
उर कछु प्रथम बासना रही । प्रभु पद प्रीति सरित सो बही ॥ ६ ॥

sunahu dēva sacarācara svāmī. pranatapāla ura antarajāmī. 5.
ura kachu prathama bāsanā rahī. prabhu pada prīti sarita sō bahī. 6.

Vibhishan said, ‘Listen oh Lord (sunahu dēva)! You are the supreme Lord of the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of this creation (sacarācara svāmī). You are the Lord who protects all those who surrender themselves at your feet (pranatapāla). And you are the Lord who knows the innermost feelings and thoughts of all living beings (ura antarajāmī). (5)

I honestly acknowledge that my heart earlier had some Vasana (passions and desires pertaining to the sense objects of the world; a desire for self-gratification) present inside it, but now all of them have been washed away in the river symbolized by affection for your holy feet that has sprouted inside my heart¹. (6)

[Note—¹Vibhishan accepts that his heart had worldly desires earlier, but not now, because all negativities in his heart have been washed away once he has developed affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram. In this context, refer to Chaupai line no. 5 that

precedes Doha no. 48 herein above. Vibhishan says that now his heart has been purified of all negative traits.]

अब कृपाल निज भगति पावनी । देहु सदा सिव मन भावनी ॥ ७ ॥

एवमस्तु कहि प्रभु रनधीरा । मागा तुरत सिंधु कर नीरा ॥ ८ ॥

aba krpāla nija bhagati pāvanī. dēhu sadā siva mana bhāvanī. 7.
ēvamastu kahi prabhu ranadhīrā. māgā turata sindhu kara nīrā. 8.

Oh Lord, be kind enough to grant me an abiding devotion for you, a devotion that is pure itself and purifies those who are blessed by it, a devotion that is eternally loved by Lord Shiva and pleases his heart.¹ (7)

Saying ‘so be it’, the Lord who is steadfast in the battle-field (i.e. who keeps his words and never turns back inspite of the greatest adversities) asked for some water from the ocean (because no other water was available). [Why did Lord Ram ask for water is answered in the verses that follow below.] (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram does not want any kind of tribute from his devotees except devotion. Anyone who asks the Lord for the grant of devotion (Bhakti) endears himself to the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 85; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 86.]

जदपि सखा तव इच्छा नाहीं । मोर दरसु अमोघ जग माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

अस कहि राम तिलक तेहि सारा । सुमन बृष्टि नभ भई अपारा ॥ १० ॥

jadapi sakhā tava icchā nāhīm. mōra darasu amōgha jaga māhīm. 9.
asa kahi rāma tilaka tēhi sārā. sumana br̥ṣṭi nabha bha'ī apārā. 10.

He said to Vibhishan, ‘Friend (sakhā), though you have no desire, but meeting me and asking for my blessings never goes in vain.

[To wit, although you don’t want anything, yet I have a vow to keep, which is that anyone who comes to me seeking my shelter and protection can’t remain unfulfilled. You were an heir to the throne of Lanka at the time you came to me. So shall it be—you will get your rights back. And secondly, you wish to be my devotee because you ask for my devotion, so that also would be true.]’ (9)

Saying this, Lord Ram anointed Vibhishan (by sprinkling the water of the ocean that he had asked for) to fulfill his vows as stated above.

Observing this wonderful development, the gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven)¹. (10)

[Note—¹Why did the gods shower flowers upon Lord Ram as well as Vibhishan? The gods wished to celebrate this happy occasion when Lord Ram accepted Vibhishan as

his devotee, and at the same time anointed him as the next king of Lanka, thereby sealing the fate of Ravana. This was what the gods were waiting for. They felt exceedingly glad, and rained flowers to express their thanks and show their happiness to Lord Ram.

The gods were full of praise for Lord Ram because the Lord had willingly suffered so much for their cause. They were full of praise for Vibhishan because in spite of being born as a demon he had shown such high degree of spiritualism and purity of heart that the Lord himself praised him.]

दो०. रावन क्रोध अनल निज स्वास समीर प्रचंड ।
जगत बिभीषणु राखेउ दीन्हैउ राजु अखंड ॥ ४९ (क) ॥
जो संपति सिव रावनहि दीन्हि दिऐँ दस माथ ।
सोइ संपदा बिभीषणहि सकुचि दीन्हि रघुनाथ ॥ ४९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

rāvana krōdha anala nija svāsa samīra pracaṇḍa.
jarata bibhīṣanu rākhē'u dīnhē'u rāju akhaṇḍa. 49 (a).
jō sampati siva rāvanahi dīnhi di'ēṁ dasa mātha.
sō'i sampadā bibhīṣanahi sakuci dīnhi raghunātha. 49 (b).

Ravana's anger was like a fiercely raging fire, and the breath of Vibhishan was like the hot wind that fanned this fire on its own. [To wit, the anger of Ravana could not be calmed down as long as Vibhishan would be alive.]

Vibhishan was being scorched by this fire of Ravana (i.e. he was tormented by fear of Ravana's wrath). Lord Ram extended his protection to him so that he escaped being scorched from that fire. Not only this, the Lord rewarded Vibhishan by anointing him as the next king of Lanka. (Doha no. 49-a)

That immense fortune which was granted to Ravana by Lord Shiva in lieu of the ten heads the former had offered to the Lord as a sacrifice while doing severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to please the latter, the whole of this fortune and the majesty of the kingdom of Lanka was transferred or conferred by Lord Ram to Vibhishan in a hesitant manner¹. (Doha no. 49-b)

[Note—¹Why was Lord Ram feeling so shy, hesitant and reluctant while conferring to Vibhishan the kingship of Lanka and transferring the entire wealth of the kingdom to him? There are four prominent reasons for this as follows:-

One is that the outcome of the impending war was not yet certain, and so to confer the throne of Lanka to Vibhishan at this time seemed a little premature, based on presumptions and conjectures, and a bit too optimistic and far-fetched.

The second reason is that the city which Vibhishan would inherit as a boon from Lord Ram would have been devastated by the end of the war; it was already in a shambles after Hanuman burnt it. So Lord Ram felt very reluctant while granting this boon as it was not a proper reward that was given to Vibhishan. But under the prevailing circumstances, there was nothing better that could be given to him.

The third reason is that by rewarding Vibhishan, Lord Ram was rewarding someone who had betrayed his own brother. This made the Lord hesitant as it was not

a proper thing to reward someone who had committed treason. But it was the time of war, and during wars rules change. What is treason for one party is a welcome move for the other party; what is martyrdom for one is the killing of an enemy for another; what is defeat for one is a victory for the other. So it was acceptable.

And the fourth reason was military strategy. By accepting Vibhishan in his camp with a warm show of welcome and affection, and then anointing him as the next sovereign of Lanka, Lord Ram ensured his unflinching loyalty and allegiance towards himself. The Lord's friendly attitude and affectionate gestures had a profound positive impact on Vibhishan's psyche, as he was emotionally traumatized and mentally in an extremely distressed state after the rough treatment that was meted out to him at Ravana's court a short while ago. By making Vibhishan, who knew all the secrets of Lanka and its army, a faithful and loyal ally, Lord Ram had staged a virtual coup against his enemy Ravana as would be proved during the course of the epic war. We shall be reading, in due course, how Vibhishan had played a crucial role in Lord Ram's victory over Ravana by helping him with vital information about Lanka and its army, advising on proper strategies by which breach could be made in the demons' defenses, even alerting the Lord when Ravana was performing a sacrifice, which, if successfully done, would have made him immune to death, and in the final hours of the epic battle by divulging to Lord Ram the location of the secret receptacle of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity, that kept Ravana alive, a vital clue that enabled the Lord to kill him by drying up this nectar by a volley of hot arrows.

To wit, if there is an impending war, and the brother of a king against whom a rival king has launched an assault comes voluntarily to join the latter, no prudent king would refuse to welcome him; rather, the latter king would see it as a golden god-sent opportunity that ought to be grasped with both hands!]

चौ०. अस प्रभु छाड़ि भजहिं जे आना । ते नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषाना ॥ १ ॥

निज जन जानि ताहि अपनावा । प्रभु सुभाव कपि कुल मन भावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa prabhu chāḍi bhajahiṁ jē ānā. tē nara pasu binu pūṁcha biṣānā. 1.
nija jana jāni tāhi apanāvā. prabhu subhāva kapi kula mana bhāvā. 2.

[Lord Shiva observed—] ‘Anyone who abandons such a (magnanimous, benevolent, kind, obliging and gracious) Lord as Sri Ram, and instead worships and adores some other Lord, such people are indeed like animals that have no horns and tails¹. (1)

All the Kapis (monkeys) warmly welcomed and appreciated this grand and noble nature of Lord Ram that he cheerfully accepted anyone who came to seek refuge with him, for the Lord not only gave him shelter but also treated the new comer with great affection and care as if he was an old acquaintance of his, someone who was not a stranger but one of his own close devotees and followers.² (2)

[Note—¹To wit, those who do not worship and adore Lord Ram and seek shelter with him, instead preferring some other Lord to whom they are devoted and offer their allegiance, such people are indeed extremely foolish and unfortunate. They are born as humans but are no better than animals who lack wisdom and intelligence, for they do not know what is good or bad for them.

²This noble character of Lord Ram—which made him so loved by and endeared to his devotees—answered one unasked question that had been lingering in the minds of the monkey chieftains ever since Lord Ram took the side of Sugriv and crowned him as the king of Kishkindha after eliminating Sugriv’s brother Baali. The question was this: Why did Lord Ram decided to favour Sugriv vis-à-vis Baali? The monkeys got their answer now—that it was in the nature of Lord Ram, it was an integral character of his that he would invariably extend his helping hand to those who seek his help, especially when the Lord feels that injustice has been done to them. The Lord cannot turn away those who ask for his grace and blessings, especially when the seeker is distressed and feeling helpless.

In the case of Sugriv the Lord felt grave injustice has been done to him by his elder brother Baali who first beat him mercilessly and then threw him out of the kingdom, kept his wife as a mistress, and even after inflicting this humiliation was always baying for Sugriv’s blood, being on the lookout for a chance to kill him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 7; and Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 9.}

It was reminiscent of what has happened in the present case of Vibhishan—he was kicked and humiliated by his elder brother Ravana and thrown out of the kingdom, and if Lord Ram refused to provide protection to Vibhishan it was sure that Ravana would have killed him at the first opportunity.

So when the monkey chieftains observed this nature of Lord Ram, they felt very happy; now they knew why the Lord had sided with Sugriv.]

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Section 9.2: Kavitawali Ramayan

{Kavitawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 32.}

We have read in the concluding verses of Section 9.1 above (i.e. of Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 and Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it) how Lord Ram had anointed Vibhishan as the future king of Lanka.

A similar narration is found in ‘Kavitawali Ramayan’ of Tulsidas, in its Sundar Kand, verse no. 32.

Now let us quickly read what ‘Kavitawali Ramayan’ has to say on the subject before moving ahead to the next section:

नगरु कुबेरको सुमेरुकी बराबरी,
 बिरंचि-बुद्धिको बिलासु लंक निरमान भो ।
 ईसहि चढ़ाइ सीस बीसबाहु बीर तहाँ,
 रावनु सो राजा रज-तेजको निधानु भो ॥
 ‘तुलसी’ तिलोककी समृद्धि, सौंज, संपदा
 सकेलि चाकि राखी, रासि, जाँगरु जहानु भो ।
 तीसरें उपास बनबास सिंधु पास सो
 समाजु महाराजजू को एक दिन दानु भो ॥32॥

32. nagaru kubērakō sumērukī barābarī,
 birañci-bud'dhikō bilāsu lañka niramāna bhō.
 īsahi caṛhā'i sīsa bīsabāhu bīra tahāñ,
 rāvanu sō rājā raja-tējako nidhānu bhō..
 'tulasī' tilōkakī samṛd'dhi, sauēñja, sampadā
 sakēli cāki rākhī, rāsi, jāṁgaru jahānu bhō.
 tīsarēm upāsa banabāsa sindhu pāsa sō
 samāju mahārājajū kō ēka dina dānu bhō..32..

Verse no. 5/32—Lanka was called the city of Kuber (who was the God of wealth and treasurer for the Gods). Being made of gold, it is like Sumeru (a mythological golden Mountain); it is so wonderful that it symbolises the excellent creative prowess of Brahma in a personified form (1). There, Ravana, the 20-armed demon, became a king after offering his head as sacrifice to Lord Shiva (2).

Tulsidas says that all the wealth of this world has been concentrated within its boundaries (walls), as it were, and the rest of the world was filled with the residue (3). All this wealth was given (to Vibhishan) by Lord Ram as if it were charitable alms given by the forest-bound-mendicant Lord Ram after doing austerities for three days on the shore of the ocean¹ (4).

[Note—¹Lord Ram had camped on the ocean's shore for three days, requesting the ocean to give him passage. There the Lord had also consecrated a Shiva Lingam, which is a symbol of Lord Shiva. It was called 'Rameshwaram'—literally meaning the Lord of Ram. The word has a dual meaning—for it also means 'Shiva, whose Lord (Ish) is known as Ram'. Anyway, the Lord had performed a religious sacrifice here before he would start on the campaign for conquering Lanka. When any religious event takes place, giving charity and making alms is a part of the ritual. So, Tulsidas uses this tradition as a metaphor to indicate that Lord Ram had voluntarily donated the entire kingdom of Lanka, which he is poised to conquer soon, to Vibhishan.

From the point of military strategy, this was a very clever step of Lord Ram. By anointing Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka even before the campaign had got off the ground and the outcome of the war was still unknown, the Lord extended to Vibhishan a bait to ensure his loyalty. Now Vibhishan had all the reasons to support Ram, because if Ravana is killed then not only will Vibhishan be able to avenge his insult but also get the trophy in the form of kingdom of Lanka. This single act of Lord Ram also meant to convey to everyone around that they should not doubt victory as it is a foregone conclusion. It also subtly warned the monkeys that they should not eye the kingdom of Lanka after victory over it because it is given to Vibhishan, and that the Lord himself had no intention of staying there once Sita was recovered. Lord Ram clearly indicated that he is not there to grab someone's property and wealth like conquerors usually do.

This episode which relates to Lord Ram giving the crown of Lanka to Vibhishan in a token manner by anointing him, and thereby granting him the richest largesse of the time has been documented in (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 39 and 43; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 8-10; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 42-47.]

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Section 9.3: Adhyatma Ramayan

{Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 2—to—Canto 3, verse nos. 1-48.}

Let us now rewind a bit and see how ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of Veda Vyas narrates this episode of Ravana insulting his brother Vibhishan, kicking him, and ordering him to quit his kingdom, after which Vibhishan came to seek refuge with Lord Ram, who not only welcomed him warmly but also guaranteed him protection and a respectable place amongst his ministers.

These developments are described in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand (known as Yuddha Kand), Canto 2 full, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-48.

Now, let us start reading:-

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-46:

॥द्वितीयः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

लङ्कायां रावणो दृष्ट्वा कृतं कर्म हनूमता ।
दुष्करं दैवतैर्वाऽपि ह्रिया किञ्चिदवाङ्मुखः ॥ १॥
आहूय मन्त्रिणः सर्वानिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।
हनूमता कृतं कर्म भवद्विदृष्टमेव तत् ॥ २॥

॥dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

laṅkāyāṃ rāvaṇo dr̥ṣṭvā kṛtaṃ karma hanūmatā ।
duṣkaraṃ daivatairvā'pi hriyā kiñcidavāṇmukhaḥ ॥ 1॥
āhūya mantriṇaḥ sarvānidaṃ vacanamabravīt ।
hanūmatā kṛtaṃ karma bhavadbhirdr̥ṣṭameva tat ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Meanwhile in Lanka, seeing the deeds of Hanuman¹ which were difficult even for the gods to do (or ever think of doing them), Ravana summoned his ministers, and lowering his head in shame before them, he said with sarcasm in his voice, 'All of you have witnessed all the deeds done by Hanuman! (1-2).

[Note—¹The “deeds of Hanuman” refer to his killing a large number of demon warriors, ransacking the Ashoka garden, and then burning Lanka. These have already been narrated in Section no. 7.2, sub-sections 7.2.1—7.2.5 of our Book.]

प्रविश्य लङ्कां दुर्धर्षा दृष्ट्वा सीतां दुरासदाम् ।
हत्वा च राक्षसान् वीरानक्षं मन्दोदरीसुतम् ॥ ३॥

दग्ध्वा लङ्कामशेषेण लङ्घयित्वा च सागरम् ।
युष्मान् सर्वानतिक्रम्य स्वस्थोऽगात्पुनरेव सः ॥ ४॥

praviśya laṅkāṃ durdharṣāṃ drṣṭvā sītāṃ durāsadām ।
hatvā ca rākṣasān vīrānakṣaṃ mandodarīsutam ॥ 3॥
dagdhvā laṅkāmaśeṣeṇa laṅghayitvā ca sāgaram ।
yuṣmān sarvānatikramya svastho'gātpunareva saḥ ॥ 4॥

3-4. He (Hanuman) entered Lanka which is deemed to be inaccessible for any intruder or trespasser, met Sita, which is also an impossible think to do (as she is guarded round the clock and lives inside a garden that is well protected from outsiders), then he killed many demons along with Mandodari's son (Akshay Kumar), burnt the whole city of Lanka, humiliated all of you brave and strong warriors, and then he successfully crossed the ocean to return safely! (3-4).

किं कर्तव्यमितोऽस्माभिर्युयं मन्त्रविशारदाः ।
मन्त्रयध्वं प्रयत्नेन यत्कृतं मे हितं भवेत् ॥ ५॥
रावणस्य वचः श्रुत्वा रक्षसास्तमथाब्रुवन् ।
देव शङ्का कुतो रामात्तव लोकजितो रणे ॥ ६॥

kiṃ kartavyamito'smābhiryūyaṃ mantraviśārādāḥ ।
mantrayadhvaṃ prayatnena yatkṛtaṃ me hitaṃ bhavet ॥ 5॥
rāvaṇasya vacaḥ śrutvā rākṣasāstamathābruvan ।
deva śaṅkā kuto rāmāttava lokajito raṇe ॥ 6॥

5-6. All of you are wise and prudent, and experts in politics, military strategy, laws of diplomacy, etc. Hence, tell me what should we do now; what course of action should we adopt, what will be practical, prudent and apt in the present circumstances, and what will be in our best of interests? Ponder over it diligently, take into consideration all the pros and the cons, and then advise me' (5).

Hearing the words of Ravana, the demons (ministers, advisors and councilors) said, 'Oh Lord! What fear (literally doubt or suspicion) do you have from Lord Sri Ram? You have won all the different worlds in the many wars that you have fought till now (so how do you doubt about your victory over one human prince known as 'Ram')?'

[To wit, we don't understand why are so worried; winning the gods and the rest of the world was a virtual cake-walk for you, so why are you so concerned about this single warrior who is called Ram? Surely and certainly he stands no chance before your majesty!]¹ (6).

[Note—¹The absurdity of the situation is glaring. Ravana has just reminded them himself of the havoc Hanuman had caused in Lanka, and these same haughty and loud-mouthed boosters could do nothing about it. Now they say that there is nothing to fear from Lord Ram inspite of being aware that Hanuman was his messenger. The very fact that Ravana lent them his ears and believed in their boastful talk of bluster

proves that his ill-fated destiny had cast a dark shadow of death upon his mind and corrupted his wisdom so much that he could not see the truth and think rationally.]

इन्द्रस्तु बद्ध्वा निक्षिप्तः पुत्रेण तव पतने ।
जित्वा कुबेरमानीय पुष्पकं भुज्यते त्वया ॥ ७॥
यमो जितः कालदण्डाद्भयं नाभूतव प्रभो ।
वरुणो ह्रुङ्कृतेनैव जितः सर्वेऽपि राक्षसाः ॥ ८॥

indrastu baddhvā nikṣiptaḥ putreṇa tava pattane ।
jitvā kuberamāniya puṣpakam bhujoyate tvayā ॥ 7॥
yamo jitaḥ kāladaṇḍādbhayaṁ nābhūttava prabho ।
varuṇo hruṅkṛtenaiva jitaḥ sarve'pi rākṣasāḥ ॥ 8॥

7-8. Your son (Meghnad) had tied Indra and brought him to our capital, bound in shackles. You yourself have won over Kuber (the treasurer of gods) and enjoy his air plane called 'Pushpak' (7).

Oh Lord! You have conquered even Yam (the god of death and hell); you weren't afraid of his 'Kaal Dand' (Yam's the baton of death). You had vanquished Varuna (the patron god of water) as well as the entire demon race who surrendered to you as soon as they heard your roar and shrill cry. [To wit, when they heard your roar and realized that you are coming to attack them, they were so sore affright that they surrendered immediately without a fight.] (8).

[Note—Ravana's exploits are described in detail in Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 33-60. Further, these verses also show how flatterers and sycophants can misguide and ruin a great king.]

मयो महासुरो भीत्या कन्यां दत्त्वा स्वयं तव ।
त्वद्वशे वर्ततेऽद्यापि किमुतान्ये महासुराः ॥ ९॥
हनूमद्वर्षणं यत्तु तदवज्ञाकृतं च नः ।
वानरोऽयं किमस्माकमस्मिन् पौरुषदर्शने ॥ १०॥

mayo mahāsuro bhītyā kanyāṁ dattvā svayaṁ tava ।
tvadvāśe vartate'dyāpi kimutānye mahāsuraḥ ॥ 9॥
hanūmadvarṣaṇaṁ yattu tadavajñākṛtaṁ ca naḥ ।
vānaro'yaṁ kiasmākamasmin pauruṣadarśane ॥ 10॥

9-10. What to talk of other great demons, even the greatest of them, the demon named Mayasur, had been so afraid of you that he gave his daughter to you and remains your vassal even till this day.

[To wit, Mayasur not only offered his daughter to you but also undertook to be under your control as one of your vassals. He has, since that time, remained subservient to you.] (9).

The insult and humiliation that Hanuman had subjected you as well as us to was due to our own carelessness, ineptitude and inertia. We thought that he is a mere

monkey, so what is the great idea in showing strength and valour against such a humble creature as him. Therefore we neglected him, and as a result we were caught unawares and suffered. Otherwise, how dare could he oppose us and show disdain or contempt for us.

[To wit, we ourselves are to be blamed for what Hanuman did to Lanka. We took him lightly; we thought him to be a mere monkey who can cause no real harm; we took him for a jester. We are indeed sorry that we did not realize the gravity of the situation while there was time, and when we did realize that things were serious and going out of hand, it was too late by then. Oh king, what to say, for we are very sorry and regretful for what happened to us and our city of Lanka at the hands of Hanuman, but it was not because we are weak or incompetent or afraid of him, but unfortunately it was because we were very complacent and took things too lightly, which we now regret greatly, and understand that it shouldn't have been the case.] (10).

इत्युपेक्षितमस्माभिर्धर्षणं तेन किं भवेत् ।
 वयं प्रमत्ताः किं तेन वञ्चिताः स्मो हनूमाता ॥ ११॥
 जानीमो यदि तं सर्वे कथं जीवन् गमिष्यति ।
 आज्ञापय जगत्कृत्स्नमवानरममानुषम् ॥ १२॥
 कृत्वायास्यामहे सर्वे प्रत्येकं वा नियोजय ।
 कुम्भकर्णस्तदा प्राह रावणं राक्षसेश्वरम् ॥ १३॥

ityupekṣitamasmābhirḍharṣaṇaṃ tena kiṃ bhavet ।
 vayaṃ pramattāḥ kiṃ tena vañcitāḥ smo hanūmatā ॥ 11॥
 jānīmo yadi taṃ sarve kathaṃ jīvan gamiṣyati ।
 ājñāpaya jagatkṛtsnamavānaramamānuṣam ॥ 12॥
 kṛtvāyāsyāmahe sarve pratyekaṃ vā niyojaya ।
 kumbhakarnaṣṭadā prāha rāvaṇaṃ rākṣaseśvaram ॥ 13॥

11-13. Hence, if Hanuman could cheat or trick us (and inflict such humiliation upon us by killing our men and burning the city) because of our own negligence, inertia or carelessness, so what happened; how does it matter? If we had known who he was (or what strength he had, what he was up to, what damage he would or could do) (11)—how could have he gone back alive? You give us your orders—we shall forthwith make the earth free from all the monkeys and humans. [If you so wish then just command us to eliminate all monkeys and humans from the world, and your orders would be carried out instantly.] (12).

Or else, you can appoint single individuals amongst us to do this job.' [To wit, you can either order us as a group to do what you wish, or select some individual from amongst us to carry out your orders. Your command would be implemented. Just say, and we can get rid of the enemy's army single handedly. We do not need any support, for we are fully capable of doing it.]

Then, Kumbhakarn¹ said to Ravana, the king of demons (13)—

[Note—¹Ravana had two brothers, one was Vibhishan, and the other was Kumbhakarn.]

आरब्धं यत्त्वया कर्म स्वात्मनाशाय केवलम् ।
 न दृष्टोऽसि तदा भाग्यात्त्वं रामेण महात्मना ॥ १४॥
 यदि पश्यति रामस्त्वां जीवन्नायासि रावण ।
 रामो न मानुषो देवः साक्षान्नारायणोऽव्ययः ॥ १५॥

ārabdham yattvayā karma svātmanāśāya kevalam ।
 na dr̥ṣṭo'si tadā bhāgyāttvaṃ rāmeṇa mahātmanā ॥ 14॥
 yadi paśyati rāmastvāṃ jīvannāyāsi rāvaṇa ।
 rāmo na mānuṣo devaḥ sāksānnārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ ॥ 15॥

14-15. 'The course of action (or the plan) on which you have started working will only lead to your ruin. It was due to your good luck that the great Lord Ram did not see you while you were stealing Sita from his hermitage (at Panchavati). [My dear brother, you were exceptionally lucky that Lord Ram did not see you while you were abducting Sita. Do you know what would have happened had he seen you?] (14).

Oh Ravana! If Lord Sri Ram had seen you at that time, you wouldn't have returned alive. Remember, Lord Ram is no ordinary man. He is Lord Narayan himself, the Supreme Lord of the world, the Lord who is eternal, imperishable and unchanging (devaḥ sāksānnārāyaṇo'vyayaḥ) (15).

सीता भगवती लक्ष्मी रामपत्नी यशस्विनी ।
 राक्षसानां विनाशाय त्वयानीता सुमध्यमा ॥ १६॥
 विषपिण्डमिवागीर्य महामीनो यथा तथा ।
 आनीता जानकी पश्चात्त्वया किं वा भविष्यति ॥ १७॥

sītā bhagavatī lakṣmī rāmapatnī yaśasvinī ।
 rākṣasānāṃ vināśāya tvayānītā sumadhyamā ॥ 16॥
 viṣapiṇḍamivāgīrya mahāmīno yathā tathā ।
 ānītā jānakī paścāttvayā kiṃ vā bhaviṣyati ॥ 17॥

16-17. The wife of Lord Ram, the famed Sita, is Bhagwati Laxmi herself personified. He has brought her to be a medium in the destruction of the demons (16).

Just as a large fish calls its own doom by gulping down a morsel of poisonous bait, you have (driven by your doomed fate) brought Janki (Sita) here. No one knows what will happen in future!

[To wit, a greedy fish quickly bites the bait and gets killed, so have you too bitten the bait by bringing Sita to Lanka. Why, you have willingly invited your own doom, and no one else should be blamed for it, just as no one had forced the fish to bite the poisonous bait that would kill it but its own greediness motivated by its doomed fate.] (17).

यद्यप्यनुचितं कर्म त्वया कृतमजानता ।
 सर्वं समं करिष्यामि स्वस्थचित्तो भव प्रभो ॥ १८॥

कुम्भकर्णवचः श्रुत्वा वाक्यमिन्द्रजिदब्रवीत् ।
 देहि देव ममानुज्ञां हत्वा रामं सलक्ष्मणम् ।
 सुग्रीवं वानरंश्चैव पुनर्यास्यामि तेऽन्तिकम् ॥ १९॥

yadyapyanucitaṃ karma tvayā kṛtamajānatā ।
 sarvaṃ samaṃ kariṣyāmi svasthacitto bhava prabho ॥ 18॥
 kumbhakarnaṇavacaḥ śrutvā vākyamindrajidabravīt ।
 dehi deva mamānujñāṃ hatvā rāmaṃ salakṣmaṇam ।
 sugrīvaṃ vānarāṃścaiva punaryāsyāmi te'ntikam ॥ 19॥

18-19. Though you have done a very inappropriate and unrighteousness thing by mistake or out of ignorance, but now be quiet and take it easy. Oh Lord! I shall set it right¹ (18).

Hearing Kumbhakarn's word, Indrajeet (Meghnad, the son of Ravana) said (to his father), 'Oh Lord! Give me your permission. I shall immediately kill Laxman along with Lord Ram, Sugriv and all other monkeys, and come back to you soon with the news of success' (19).

[Note—¹In this context Canto 7, verse nos. 51-70 of Adhyatma Ramayan are very relevant. We shall read these verses in due course while describing the war.

Had Ravana paid heed to Kumbhakarn's sane advice now, the calamitous events leading to the horrible war, bloodshed, and complete rout of the demon clan would have been avoided.

So, what did Kumbhakarn mean by saying “I shall set things in order”? He meant that he would go to Lord Ram as an emissary of the demon king Ravana, tell the Lord that his elder brother had done wrong by bringing Sita, and that now he wishes to repent and give her back to him with full honour. Kumbhakarn was so confident of himself that his mission would be successful, as he knew the forgiving and merciful nature of Lord Ram.

But the fiat of fate wished to steer Ravana's destiny on a different and tangential course of collision rather than of compromise and peace, because immediately Meghnad intervened and countered his uncle's proposals, whereby he had proposed of striking a peace deal with Lord Ram, by boasting that he would go and kill all the enemies if his father, Ravana, orders him to do so.]

तत्रागतो भागवतप्रधानो विभीषणो बुद्धिमतां वरिष्ठः ।
 श्रीरामपादद्वय एकतानः । प्रणम्य देवारिमुपोपविष्टः ॥ २०॥

tatrāgato bhāgavatapradhāno vibhīṣaṇo buddhimatāṃ variṣṭhaḥ ।
 śrīrāmapādadvaya ekatānaḥ । praṇamya devārimupopaviṣṭaḥ ॥ 20॥

20. Just at that time, Vibhishan¹—who was one amongst the chief devotees of Lord Ram, and was erudite, sagacious and wise—came there.

He was singularly devoted to Lord Ram, and all aspects of his inner being, such as his inner thoughts and feelings as well as his sub-conscious mind were

inclined towards the Lord. He bowed before Ravana², the enemy of the gods, and sat down near him (20).

[Note—¹Vibhishan was the youngest brother of Ravana.

²Vibhishan bowed before Ravana as the latter was his elder brother. So, inspite of his being pervert and sinful he still deserved respect due to one's elder brother. This shows Vibhishan had no ill-will against Ravana, and it also shows that Vibhishan was courteous and followed rules of conduct. He had come to meet Ravana in full court, and so it was obligatory for him that he adhere to court courtesies.]

विलोक्य कुम्भश्रवणादिदैत्यान् मत्प्रमत्तानतिविस्मयेन ।
विलोक्य कामातुरमप्रमत्तो दशाननं प्राह विशुद्धबुद्धिः ॥ २१॥

vilokya kumbhaśravaṇādidaityān mattapramattānavismayena ।
vilokya kāmāturamapramatto daśānanaṃ prāha viśuddhabuddhiḥ ॥ 21॥

21. Settling down in his seat, Vibhishan cast a rapid glance at all the great demons, including his elder brother Kumbhakarn, who were sitting around him in the court. All of them seemed intoxicated with arrogance and pride, and this attitude of the courtiers much astonished Vibhishan; he felt bewildered and appalled by their folly and stupidity¹. He also observed that Ravana too was overcome with lust, and was driven mad with passions (and because of it, he will listen to no one).

But since Vibhishan had a pure mind that was free from worldly corruptions (because he was a devotee of Lord Ram that ensured that his inner-self remained free from all worldly taints and negativities that had overwhelmed all his peers), he felt that it was his moral duty to give sane advice to his brother.

Thinking thus, Vibhishan said to the 10-headed Ravana (21)—

[Note—¹Why was Vibhishan confused and utterly confounded by the attitude of the demon courtiers? He could not understand their behaviour in the light of what had happened a little while ago in Lanka when Hanuman had slayed a good many demon warriors, killed Ravana's son Akshaya Kumar, and then burned the glorious city of Lanka to a dark hulk of smouldering buildings and smoking public squares. Yet these courtiers pretended as if nothing had happened at all; it shocked Vibhishan, and he was stunned at their utter disregard for reality.

He felt very sorry for the entire demon race as a whole, and especially for his brother Ravana who was now so isolated from the truth and reality, reveling in his imaginary world of invincibility and eternity, that he seemed to live in a fool's paradise that was conjured up by his deluded mind that chose to obstruct Ravana's wisdom, rationality and prudence, and instead impelled him towards his doom by making him have trust and faith in those who were out to ruin him completely.

To wit, Vibhishan felt very pity for Ravana, and he determined that he would do his honest best to pull the latter out of the dark well of grief and destruction into which he was sliding rapidly.]

न कुम्भकर्णेन्द्रजितौ च राजन् तथा महापार्श्वमहोदरौ तौ ।

निकुम्भकुम्भौ च तथातिकायः स्थातुं न शक्ता युधि राघवस्य ॥ २२॥

na kumbhakarnendrajitau ca rājan-tathā mahāpārśvamahodarau tau ।
nikumbhakumbhau ca tathātikāyaḥ sthātum na śaktā yudhi rāghavasya ॥ 22॥

22. 'Oh king (rājan)! Kumbhakarn, Indrajeet (Meghanad), Mahaparshva, Mahodar, Nikumbh, Kumbh, Atikai etc.—none of them can stand their ground in front of Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) in the battle-field during the war¹. (22)

[Note—¹To wit, when the war actually breaks out, none of these warriors, who pretend so haughtily now that they can crush Lord Ram and his army, would be able to hold their grounds. My dear brother Ravana, they are boasting to bluff you, but I pray that you pay heed to my advice and be wary of their loud-mouthed bluster. It is easy to claim big things, declare imaginary triumph, and glorify oneself while sitting cozily in a secure court, guarded by armed soldiers, and it is quite a different thing when actually facing a powerful enemy in the open field of battle. What has happened to your wisdom? Can you not ask these pretentious boasters what they were doing or where had they been when a humble monkey named Hanuman went on a rampage in our city, ravaging it, and causing untold destruction and havoc in it at his own pleasure, unopposed, unchallenged and unstopped?

Is it not sufficient a warning signal to you of what ill fate stares at our faces in the wake of the developments that have occurred a short while ago with respect to what Hanuman did to us, and our response to him? Oh king, please wake up while there is still time to make amends, for it is better to be late in taking corrective measures than to regret forever by neglecting tell-tale signs of an impending horror and disaster.]

सीताभिधानेन महाग्रहेण ग्रस्तोऽसि राजन् न च ते विमोक्षः ।
तामेव सत्कृत्य महाधनेन दत्त्वाभिरामाय सुखी भव त्वम् ॥ २३॥

sītābhidhānena mahāgrahaṇa grasto'si rājan na ca te vimokṣaḥ ।
tāmeva satkṛtya mahādhanena dattvābhirāmāya sukhī bhava tvam ॥ 23॥

23. Oh king! 'Sita' represents a dreadfully dangerous and terrible destiny that seems to have clasped you firmly in its vice-like grip. You cannot get rid of it and free yourself so easily in this way—i.e. in the way you are being advised by your ministers. [They are foolishly advising you to adopt a confrontationist and belligerent attitude towards Lord Ram, with an imaginary hope that you will vanquish him in the battle-field. You are literally digging your own grave by relying on these stupid and dumb-witted courtiers.]

You ought to return her to Lord Sri Ram with full honours; you should also send along with her a lot of precious gifts for Lord Ram. Thereafter, you will be free from all fears, and consequently feel happy and carefree (23).

यावन्न रामस्य शिताः शिलीमुखा लङ्कामभिव्याप्य शिरांसि रक्षसाम् ।
छिन्दन्ति तावद्गुणायकस्य भोस्तां जानकीं त्वं प्रतिदातुमर्हसि ॥ २४॥

yāvanna rāmasya śītāḥ śīlīmukhā laṅkāabhivyāpya śīrāṃsi rakṣasām ।
chindanti tāvdraghunāyakasya bhostāṃ jānakīm tvam pratidātumarhasi ॥
24॥

24. Before Lord Ram's sharp and powerful arrows spread over Lanka and pierce through the heads of the demons, impaling them and severing them from their torsos, it is prudent, wise and advisable that you surrender her to him.

[To wit, before death and destruction descends upon Lanka and devours all the demons, it is prudent and advisable for you to give Sita back to Lord Ram with full honours. By doing this, you will save the demon race from sure and certain annihilation.] (24).

यावन्नगाभाः कपयो महाबला हरीन्द्रतुल्या नखदंष्ट्रयोधिनः ।
लङ्कां समाक्रम्य विनाशयन्ति ते तावदुतं देहि रघूत्तमाय ताम् ॥ २५॥

yāvannagābhāḥ kapayo mahābalā harīndratulyā nakhadaṃṣṭrayodhinaḥ ।
laṅkāṃ samākramya vināśayanti te tāvaddrutam dehi raghūttamāya tām ॥
25॥

25. Before the time those colossus, mountain-like monkeys—who fight with their nails and jaws using them as their arms and armaments, and who are exceptionally strong, powerful, dreadful and ferocious as if they are living lions—invade Lanka, spread through it and go berserk all over the city, you should hand Sita over to the Lord, who is the most illustrious king in the family of Raghu (i.e. Lord Sri Ram), as soon as possible (25).

जीवन्न रामेण विमोक्ष्यसे त्वं गुप्तः सुरेन्द्रैरपि शङ्करेण ।
न देवराजाङ्कगतो न मृत्योः पाताललोकानपि सम्प्रविष्टः ॥ २६॥

jīvanna rāmeṇa vimokṣyase tvam guptaḥ surendrairapi śaṅkareṇa ।
na devarājāṅkagato na mṛtyoḥ pātālalokānapi sampraviṣṭaḥ ॥ 26॥

26. Otherwise (i.e. if you do not return Sita and make peace with Lord Ram), even if Indra (the king of gods) and Lord Shiva (the third god of the Trinity) attempt to shield you, or if Indra and the god of death (Yama) try to protect you by lifting you in their laps, or even if you enter and hide yourself in the Patal Loka (i.e. the subterranean world) in the vane hope of escaping Lord Ram's wrath—remember that nothing will succeed, and you cannot hope to survive from the wrath of Lord Ram.' (26).

शुभं हितं पवित् च विभीषणवचः खलः ।
प्रतिजग्राह नैवासौ म्रियमाण इवौषधम् ॥ २७॥
कालेन नोदितो दैत्यो विभीषणमथाब्रवीत् ।

मदत्तभोगैः पुष्टाङ्गो मत्समीपे वसन्नपि ॥ २८॥
 प्रतीपमाचरत्येष ममैव हितकारिणः ।
 मित्रभावेन शत्रुर्मे जातो नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥ २९॥

śubhaṃ hitaṃ pavitraṃ ca vibhīṣaṇavacaḥ khalah ।
 pratijagrāha naivāsau mriyamāṇa iva uṣadham ॥ 27॥
 kālena nodito daityo vibhīṣaṇamathābravīt ।
 maddattabhogaṇi puṣṭāṅgo matsamīpe vasannapi ॥ 28॥
 pratīpamācaratyēṣa mamaiva hitakāriṇaḥ ।
 mitrabhāvena śatrurme jāto nāstyatra saṃśayaḥ ॥ 29॥

27-29. The words of sane advice given by Vibhishan, words that were truly auspicious, well-intentioned and meant for the all-round good and welfare of the demon race in general and of Ravana in particular, words that were wise, prudent, pure, unbiased and selfless, were, unfortunately, not received well by Ravana.

The wicked and pervert Ravana did not accept Vibhishan's advice just like a person who is in the throes of death, and being destined to die he would not accept proper medicines prescribed by an expert doctor. Forsooth and without gainsay it is indeed truly said of a doomed creature that "When the evil Spirit has once taken hold of the heart and the mind of a man, it urges him on without letting him stop".

As a consequence of being shackled by death and impelled by a doomed destiny, that rascal of a demon (Ravana) took affront of Vibhishan's good advice, and retorted disdainfully, 'This fellow has been enjoying privileges and comforts due to my magnanimity and blessing upon him. He is nourished and sustained by me as he lives in my city and has a close proximity with me (because he is my sibling, my younger brother).

But alas, he now has the temerity and the audacity to think it proper to talk in the favour of my enemy while deriding me and speaking against me who has been his benefactor and well-wisher all his life! How incredulous and unbelievable it is! In all sooth and without gainsay, definitely he is born as my enemy in the disguise of being my friend (and brother) (29).

अनार्येण कृतघ्नेन सङ्गतिर्मे न युज्यते ।
 विनाशमभिकाङ्क्षन्ति ज्ञातीनां ज्ञातयः सदा ॥ ३०॥
 योऽन्यस्त्वेवंविधं ब्रूयाद्वाक्यमेकं निशाचरः ।
 हन्मि तस्मिन् क्षणे एव धिक् त्वां रक्षःकुलाधमम् ॥ ३१॥

anāryeṇa kṛtaghnena saṅgatirme na yujyate ।
 vināśamabhikāṅkṣanti jñātīnāṃ jñātayaḥ sadā ॥ 30॥
 yo'nyastvevaṃvidhaṃ brūyādvākyaamekaṃ niśācaraḥ ।
 hanmi tasmin kṣaṇe eva dhik tvāṃ rakṣaḥkulādhamaṃ ॥ 31॥

30-31. [Continuing his angry diatribe against Vibhishan, Ravana said spitefully—] This 'non-Arya' ("anāryeṇa"; meaning one who is of a low birth and pedigree) and

thankless, ungrateful, disloyal fellow (kṛtaghnena) should not stay with me—it will be improper for me to give him shelter any longer.

It is usually seen that people belonging to a particular caste, race, class, clan, vocation or profession always (sadā) wish for the destruction (vināśa) of their own brethrens, compatriots, comrades or peers (mabhikāṅkṣanti jñātīnāṃ jñātayaḥ) (30).

If some other demon had said what he (Vibhishan) has said publicly, or even quietly uttered such words in private, I would have slayed him instantly, without blinking an eye.

Oh you unfaithful wretch; shame to you (dhik tvām)! You are indeed most lowly, contemptible, detestable, loathsome, vile and reprehensible in the demon clan (rakṣaḥkulādhamam)!' (31).

रावणेनैवमुक्तः सन् परुषं स विभीषणः ।
उत्पपात सभामध्याद्गदापाणिर्महाबलः ॥ ३२॥
चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिभिः सार्धं गगनस्थोऽब्रवीद्दत्तः ।
क्रोधेन महताविष्टो रावणं दशकन्धरम् ।
मा विनाशमुपैहि त्वं प्रियवादिनमेव माम् ॥ ३३॥
धिवकरोषि तथापि त्वं ज्येष्ठो भ्राता पितुः समः ।
कालो राघवरूपेण जातो दशरथालये ॥ ३४॥

rāvaṇenaivamuktaḥ san parūṣaṃ sa vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
utpapāta sabhāmadhyādgadāpaṇiṃmahābalaḥ ॥ 32॥
caturbhirmantribhiḥ sārddhaṃ gaganastho'bravīdvacaḥ ।
krodhena mahatāviṣṭo rāvaṇaṃ daśakandharam ।
mā vināśamupaihi tvam priyavādinameva mām ॥ 33॥
dhikkaroṣi tathāpi tvam jyeṣṭho bhrātā pituḥ samaḥ ।
kālo rāghavarūpeṇa jāto daśarathālaye ॥ 34॥

32-34. When Ravana had said such scornful and outrageous words full of reproach and rancour, the most strong and valorous Vibhishan (felt indignant and embarrassed, so he) took his baton (the mace or the club that demons normally held while appearing in public) and flew (to the sky) from the court¹ (32).

He was accompanied by his four ministers (who were his close aides and companions). Once he was safe high up in the sky (being out of reach of his opponents in the court as they were on the ground), he addressed the 10-headed Ravana angrily from there, as he was filled with disgust and was extremely dismayed at the response Ravana gave him for his good-intentioned advice (33)—'You put me to shame; you scold me most reproachfully even though I wish to tell you about your own welfare and good. In spite of it, I still wish that you are not ruined because you are my elder brother, and hence you are like a father to me. But unfortunately, your death has manifested itself in the form of Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) who is born in the household of Dasrath (the king of Ayodhya) (34).

[Note—¹Vibhishan was so disgusted and dismayed at Ravana's attitude and response that he decided to quit the court immediately to forestall further humiliation. So he

came out of the court and ascended to the sky. How? Well, in the ancient period of time, long-long back ago, during which our story is unfolding, it was possible for creatures to lift themselves from the ground and become air-borne like birds. Surely humans could not do so, but ‘non-humans’ could certainly achieve this feat. We have here the example of Hanuman of the monkey race and Vibhishan of the demon race.

Later on, as we progress with the story, we shall have instances of other monkeys flying in the sky, as they did while crossing the ocean, and some of the demons too being able to fly in the sky as they did during the battles that followed, an example of which is Meghnad, the son of Ravana, who did it many times during the course of his battles.]

काली सीताभिधानेन जाता जनकनन्दिनी ।
तावुभावागतावत् भूर्मेभारापनुतये ॥ ३५॥
तेनैव प्रेरितस्त्वं तु न शृणोषि हितं मम ।
श्रीरामः प्रकृतेः साक्षात्परस्तात्सर्वदा स्थितः ॥ ३६॥
बहिरन्तश्च भूतानां समः सर्वत्र संस्थितः ।
नामरूपादिभेदेन ततन्मय इवामलः ॥ ३७॥

kālī sītābhidhānena jātā janakanandinī ।
tāvubhāvāgatāvatra bhūrmebhārāpanuttaye ॥ 35॥
tenaiva preritastvaṃ tu na śṛṇoṣi hitaṃ mama ।
śrīrāmaḥ prakṛteḥ sāksātparastātsarvadā sthitaḥ ॥ 36॥
bahirantaśca bhūtānāṃ samaḥ sarvatra saṁsthitaḥ ।
nāmarūpādibhedena tattanmaya ivāmalah ॥ 37॥

35-37. The cosmic destructive power of Nature is called ‘Kaali’, and it has revealed itself in the form of Sita, the daughter of Janak. Both of them (i.e. Lord Sri Ram and Sita) have come here to remove the burden of the world¹ (35).

It is due to their delusion-creating powers that you have been inspired not pay heed to my words of sane advice which I speak for your own well-being and welfare².

Lord Ram is beyond the comprehension, the grasp or the influence of ‘Prakriti’ (cosmic aspect of Nature) (36).

He is indeed the cosmic Consciousness that is universally present inside and outside all living beings in equal measure much like the ‘sky or the space element’ that exists both within and without the body of the creature. Indeed also, Lord Ram is eternally pure and steady in his form and nature, though he exhibits certain character traits peculiar to the form he assumes in order to carry out his obligations as the Supreme Lord of this world³. (37)

[Note—¹What is the “burden of the world that Lord Ram and Sita wish to remove”? The cruelty and horrors of the demons who symbolized sinful and evil forces of creation was the ‘burden’ which was breaking the back of the world, for they terrorized all living beings, tortured them, and generally upset the cart of rule-of-law in the world. Under their influence and patronage, negativities of all sorts had become ascendant forces, while goodness and positive forces were forced to go on the decline, almost to the point of complete oblivion.

The almighty and the supreme Lord of this creation tolerated their mischief to a certain point, giving the demons a lot of rope in the hope they would remain within their limits, but beyond that point he had to intervene to restore order and calm in his realm and to restore the world's confidence in him, because it was his moral duty as the Lord Emperor of this world that his innocent subjects, the humble and harmless creatures who were subjected to immense suffering under the rule of the demons, were given protection, and their sufferings brought to an end.

So therefore, the Supreme Being decided to put things in order himself. But for this he had to come down as a human being to overcome certain conditions that granted immunity from death and were an integral part of the slew of boons which the king of the demons, Ravana, had extracted from the creator Brahma. One such incredulous boon was that he would be killed by none but a human being or no one else except a monkey would be able to defeat him in battle! This compelled the Supreme Being to come down as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demons. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2.}

But who was Sita? She represented 'Kaali', the Mother Goddess who is tasked by the Lord to eliminate evil forces in this creation. She represents the cosmic Shakti, the cosmic powers of Nature that is responsible for maintaining balance of the various forces in creation. To wit, if the scale is tilted towards the side of evil forces at the cost of causing immense suffering to the creatures who are unable to restore the balance themselves, then this Mother Goddess is obliged to intervene on behalf of her suffering off-springs. It is just like the case of an ordinary mother who loves all her children equally, but in case if one or two of them become a nuisance for the entire family and the neighbourhood then any conscientious mother would herself take steps to punish such son who had become evil and offending. So therefore, Sita represented this 'Kaali'.

²To wit, since the Supreme Being has decided to get rid of you, he has invoked his delusion-creating powers to benumb your wisdom so that you fail to see what is good for you. It is a tool that the Lord uses to prepare the offender before the final strike to eliminate him just like a surgeon would first use a dose of anesthesia to numb the part of the patient's body he wishes to operate upon so that the patient does not feel the pain of the operation.

³Lord Ram represents the supreme Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that is uniform and non-dual in its essence. But this 'consciousness' appears to adopt different characteristics in line with the different role it plays in this creation. It is like the case of the 'sky' that is uniform and unchangeable, but it appears to have different shades of colours, and appears to be dark or sun-light due to many extraneous factors that are not its essential nature but are nevertheless a part of it. So likewise, though the Supreme Being who is known as Brahm is essentially invisible, formless and without specific attributes, yet when the same Brahm assumes a form, in this case of a human being known by the name of 'Ram', he is obliged to adhere to the norms, traits and characteristics applicable to the form that he had voluntarily decided to assume—i.e. that of a human being.

So he has a wife, he grieves for her when she is stolen, he collects an army to defeat the evil king who has stolen his wife in order to recover her, and he fights a war and even gets wounded in the battles. All these things create a smoke-screen of illusions, making it appear that Lord Ram was one of the many great princes and kings the world history has witnessed. But for an enlightened and realized man, the

fact is different, for he sees behind this smoke-screen to know the truth; he knows who Lord Ram actually was, why Sita was abducted, and why the war of Lanka was fought. To wit, he understands that Lord Ram was actually a personified form of Brahm, that Sita was his Shakti or cosmic powers, that the Lord had to eliminate the demons who were terrorizing the world, and for this purpose he had to maneuver things in such a way that the purpose of his coming down to earth could be fulfilled—so he got Sita abducted by Ravana, corrupted his wisdom so much that he would never see reason, and then eliminated the cruel demons using a war to rescue Sita as an excuse.]

यथा नानाप्रकारेषु वृक्षेष्वेको महानलः ।
ततदाकृतिभेदेन भिद्यतेऽज्ञानचक्षुषाम् ॥ ३८॥
पञ्चकोशादिभेदेन ततन्मय इवाबभौ ।
नीलपीतादियोगेन निर्मलः स्फटिको यथा ॥ ३९॥

yathā nānāprakāreṣu vṛkṣeṣveko mahānalaḥ ।
tattadākṛtibhedena bhidyate'jñānacakṣuṣām ॥ 38॥
pañcakośādibhedena tattanmaya ivābabhau ।
nīlapītādiyogena nirmalaḥ sphaṭiko yathā ॥ 39॥

38-39. Just like the same great life-giving primary force of Nature that manifests itself in the form of the latent 'fire' (heat) that lends warmth to this world and enables all living things, such as the many different forms of plants, to survive in myriads of climates and habitats, and just like a primarily colourless crystal seems to have so many colours in it because of the myriads of colours present in its surroundings, so is the case with the Atma, the essential 'true self' of all living beings.

This Atma is pure Consciousness which has a cosmic presence; it is a subtle and sublime entity that is formless, invisible, constant, unchanging and universal, a unique entity that has no attributes specific to it. But when this same formless Atma assumes a 'form' by entering a physical body, making this body its habitat, it allows itself to be surrounded by the characteristics of its new habitat, the physical body, which however is constituted of the 'five Koshas' or the five sheaths¹.

When this happens, it is natural and obvious that the essentially attributeless Atma assumes the attributes of the body in which it comes to abide, and as long as it tarries in this particular body it will continue to exhibit the characteristic of that body². (38-39).

[Note—¹The gross body of a creature consists of 'five sheaths', and these form concentric rings around the Atma that lives ensconced at the center. The result is that when an observer looks at the Atma and tries to understand its primary form and nature he is unable to see its reality, because he sees the Atma not directly but through the five layers that surround it, and consequentially the characteristics of these five layers or sheaths that enclose the Atma will collectively modify the view of the Atma as observed by the seer, and affect the primary nature of the Atma as understood by the observer.

To wit, the Atma becomes corrupted and tainted in direct proportion to the corruption and taints present in its surrounding sheaths. So therefore it follows that the

same Atma that lives in all living beings, the Atma that lends an identity to a creature, comes to acquire many different names and characteristics. Hence, one person is good and the other is bad; one man appears to be sinful and the other righteous. The fact is that it is their 'physical body' that is either good or bad, sinful or righteous, and not their primary 'self' that is represented by the Atma which is pure and uncorrupt consciousness.

In a similar fashion, it is the physical gross body that dies and takes birth, and not the Atma for it is eternal, immortal and imperishable, it neither dies nor takes birth. The Atma merely changes one location to migrate to another when the physical body dies; this explains why the creature takes repeated births.

Now, let us have a quick glance at these 'five Koshas' or the five sheaths that constitute a creature's gross body in which the Atma lives.

Atma—This is the pure-self, pure consciousness which is a microscopic reflection of the vast macrocosmic soul. The Atma provides life or consciousness to the inert layers of matter consisting of the five elements of air, water, space, fire and earth which crystallize to form the five coverings or sheaths around the pure Atma, and together (the Atma and the five sheaths) they create what we call the living being, whether plant, animal or humans.

The Panch Kosha or the five sheaths covering the Atma are as follows—(i) The food sheath; (ii) the vital air sheath; (iii) the mental sheath; (iv) the intellectual sheath; (v) and the bliss sheath.

The Food Sheath—It is the physical body and derives its name because it is nourished by the food eaten by the creature. It consists of 5 organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) and 5 organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, genitals, anus).

The Vital Air Sheath—It is the five-fold faculties of perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching), excretion (faeces, urine, sperm, sputum, sweat etc.), digestion (stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, appendix), circulation (blood stream, artery, vein, capillary, heart) and thinking (the power to entertain, absorb and assimilate new information and thought).

The Mental Sheath—It consists of the equipment which receives external stimuli through the sense organs and links it to the organs of action. Integrated response of body to the stimuli is done through the mind sheath. It is a continuous flow of thoughts.

The Intellect Sheath—It acts as a controlling mechanism over the mind; It regulates, filters and modifies the response to the various stimuli. It has the discriminatory power which the mind, left alone to itself, lacks.

The mental and intellect sheaths have no physical form. They are like the softwares of a computer vis-a-vis the food and vital sheaths which resemble the hardware paraphernalia of the entire system.

The Bliss Sheath—It is the innermost sheath surrounding the Atma/the soul. It consists of 'inherent tendencies' or 'Vasanas' before they are manifested into thoughts or actions. The intellect, mind etc. perform under the guidance and control of the bliss sheath. It is so-called because an individual experiences relative bliss, peace and tranquility when he is associated with it.

²The metaphors and similes used in these verses to represent the changing characteristics of the Atma are self-explanatory. There is so much variation and variety in the plant kingdom that it seems difficult to believe that in the beginning all

these myriads of plants are merely what is known as a ‘seed’. What mystery is hidden inside this seed that one produces a small blade of grass or a creeper and the other gigantic trees that seem to touch the sky. There are plants growing under the water, there are plants growing in the parched desert, there are plants growing on rocks of mountain sides, and there are plants growing on soft soil; there are plants growing in all sorts of climates and seasons, having so much variety in their forms and characteristics and life-cycles that an entire branch of science known as botany is dedicated to them. But the underlying live-infusing force that keeps all plants alive is the same.

The same principle applies to the member of the animal kingdom, the subjects of the zoological realm. No matter what their names and forms are, the same Atma lives inside the bodies of all living creatures. But depending on the form and other features, these creatures are known by different names and species. But for a wise and enlightened person, the universal form of all these creatures is one, and it is called the Atma.]

स एव नित्यमुक्तोऽपि स्वमायागुणबिम्बितः ।
 कालः प्रधानं पुरुषोऽव्यक्तं चेति चतुर्विधः ॥ ४०॥
 प्रधानपुरुषाभ्यां स जगत्कृत्स्नं सृजत्यजः ।
 कालरूपेण कलनां जगतः कुरुतेऽव्ययः ॥ ४१॥

sa eva nityamukto'pi svamāyāguṇabimbitaḥ ।
 kālaḥ pradhānaṁ puruṣo'vyaktaṁ ceti caturvidhaḥ ॥ 40॥
 pradhānapuruṣābhyāṁ sa jagatkṛtsnaṁ srjatyajah ।
 kālarūpeṇa kalanāṁ jagataḥ kurute'vyayaḥ ॥ 41॥

40-41. Therefore, the same Lord whose primary form is the cosmic Atma, which is nothing but pure Consciousness that is eternally free from all attributes associated with this gross world, appears to have the characteristics of a living being when the Lord decides to assume a form and acquire a gross physical body of a human being.

[To wit, when the Parmatma, the supreme Atma, reveals in the form of the Jiva Atma, the individual living being, the former has to play the role of the latter to perfection—because the Atma is perfect. So when the Supreme Being decided to become Lord Ram, a human being, he had to behave like a human being. He can't behave like the Supreme Being in his form as Lord Ram.]

Since the eternally uniform and unchanging Brahm has revealed himself in the form of this creation with its many facets and variations, changing from the subtlest to the grossest forms, he is also known by different names, such as Kaal (time, death, both of the gross world as well as the universe), Pradhan (the chief Lord of the world, both at the universal level and the individual level of a kingdom or any geographical realm), Purush (the primary male; the cosmic Male as well as the individual male) and Avyakta (one who cannot be described, who is beyond comprehension, one who invisible, one who is unquantifiable and beyond qualifications). (40)

Though Brahm himself does not take birth or dies, he presides over this creation, overseeing its birth and death, in his form as the Purush and the Kaal respectively.

[To wit, as the ‘Purush’ he is the Father of this world as he gives birth to it. As ‘Kaal’ he regulates the end of the same world that he has created as its Father.] (41)

कालरूपी स भगवान् रामरूपेण मायया ॥ ४२॥
 ब्रह्मणा प्रार्थितो देवस्त्वद्वधार्थमिहागतः ।
 तदन्यथा कथं कुर्यात्सत्यसङ्कल्प ईश्वरः ॥ ४३॥

kālarūpī sa bhagavān rāmarūpeṇa māyayā ॥ 42॥
 brahmaṇā prārthito devastvadvadhārthamihāgataḥ ।
 tadanyathā katham kuryātsatyasaṅkalpa īśvaraḥ ॥ 43॥

42-43. The same Lord who is ‘Kaal’ personified has come in the guise of Lord Sri Ram to kill you at the behest (i.e. on the prayers) of Brahma. The supreme Lord God is true to his words, so how can he forgo his promises that he had made to the Gods¹? (42-43).

[Note—¹The Lord God had promised the gods that he would personally come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the demons who had terrorized the gods and the earth. This being the case, it is certain that Ravana would be killed, for the Lord has to keep his words. This is the reason why Ravana’s wisdom won’t allow him to see the correct path, because if Ravana sees the correct path and returns Sita to Lord Ram then he would be spared death, and that would mean the Lord failed to keep his words.]

हनिष्यति त्वां रामस्तु सपुत्रबलवाहनम् ।
 हन्यमानं न शक्नोमि द्रष्टुं रामेण रावण ॥ ४४॥
 त्वां राक्षसकुलं कृत्स्नं ततो गच्छामि राघवम् ।
 मयि याते सुखीभूत्वा रामस्व भवने चिरम् ॥ ४५॥

haniṣyati tvāṃ rāmastu saputrabalavāhanam ।
 hanyamānaṃ na śaknōmi draṣṭuṃ rāmeṇa rāvaṇa ॥ 44॥
 tvāṃ rākṣasakulaṃ kṛtsnaṃ tato gacchāmi rāghavam ।
 mayi yāte sukhībhūtvā rāmasva bhavane ciraṃ ॥ 45॥

44-45. Therefore, it is for certain that Lord Ram will kill you along with all the soldiers and their sons, and decimate your army with all its war paraphernalia, such as its many war machines (chariots, catapults, battering rams, etc.).

Oh Ravana! I cannot afford to see the ruin and total annihilation of the entire demon race at the hands of Lord Ram; I can’t gather myself to become a witness of decimation of my race; I can’t stand the sight of Lanka crumbling to rubble. Hence, I am going to Raghav (Sri Ram)¹. After I go from here, you can enjoy life and its comforts for a long time in your palace.’ (44-45).

[Note—¹What does Vibhishan mean by this statement that seems he is contradicting himself, for on the one hand he says he would not like to see the demon race being

annihilated by Lord Ram, and then says he is going to join the Lord though he is certain that Lord Ram is sure to destroy the demons? Well, he means that he cannot remain in Lanka to become a mute spectator and witness of the destruction of the demon race. He would rather go behind the enemy lines of Lord Ram from where he would not be able to see the actual ruin taking place in Lanka, right before his eyes, for he would be far away from the spot of destruction. He does not want to repeat his bitter experience of watching Lanka being burnt by Hanuman and not being able to do anything about it.

Vibhishan is feeling very sad and distraught in his heart, but he has no choice. He can't prevent the war, and this means he would be forced to see a sure destruction of the city of Lanka and witness mass bloodshed that will follow in the wake of the war. So it is better for him to quit the sight of this bloody mayhem and retire to a place which will obstruct this macabre view from him.]

विभीषणो रावणवाक्यतः क्षणादिसृज्य सर्वं सपरिच्छदं गृहम् ।

जगाम रामस्य पदारविन्दयोः सेवाभिकाङ्क्षी परिपूर्णमानसः ॥ ४६॥

vibhīṣaṇo rāvaṇavākyaṭaḥ kṣaṇādisrjya sarvaṃ saparicchadaṃ gr̥ham ।

jagāma rāmasya padāravindayoḥ sevābhikāṅkṣī paripūrṇamānasaḥ ॥ 46॥

46. In this manner, Vibhishan left his household, abandoning all its material contents and renouncing all its comforts because he was publicly rebuked and humiliated by Ravana who scornfully reproached him. Thereafter, Vibhishan went to Lord Ram with total peace of mind, a contented heart and a clear conscience, to serve the lotus-like feet of the Lord (46).

[Note—The reason why Vibhishan has gone to join Lord Ram's camp obvious here. Firstly, he wished to save himself from almost certain death at the hands of Ravana or other demons if he now remained in Lanka because he has openly sided with Lord Ram who was considered as an arch enemy of the demons as is clear by his own words in verse nos. 44-45, 24-25 of this Canto, and verse no. 5 of Canto 3.

Secondly, he was publicly humiliated by his elder brother (Canto 3, verse nos. 3-5), and he did not like this rough treatment in the front of all the courtiers. Had Ravana scolded him in private then perhaps Vibhishan would not have minded it so much as he did when he was scorned at in full public view.

But the point to remark here is this: Vibhishan had not gone to join Lord Ram simply because he was highly devoted to him, but because circumstances forced him to do so. The fact is that he changed sides as a clever move to save himself from Ravana's wrath.

To wit, Vibhishan failed to remain loyal to the demon kingdom and his own brother Ravana; no other demon, whether he was an ordinary soldier or one who had special place in the hierarchy of the army and society, had deserted Ravana, though many of them had not agreed with him and had even at times openly chided him for his evil doings.

In spite of this apparent taint to his otherwise good character, credit should be given to Vibhishan that he did not wish to be a helpless witness to an unjust war that would lead to the calamitous destruction of the city of Lanka and cause untold misery for its inhabitants. It also goes to his credit that he did his best to try and make the

stubborn Ravana see reason and end his confrontationist approach to Lord Ram, although he failed in his attempt, even inviting personal humiliation in the process. Then he had shown due respect to his elder brother by bowing before the latter, both before and after the meeting. He had finally chosen to take the side of righteousness and probity rather than of sinfulness and evilness, though that would mean renouncing his own home and its comforts on the one hand, and going down in history as a betrayer of his own brother and committing treason on the other hand, because Vibhishan had played a crucial role in the war by divulging secrets of Lanka and the ways by which the chief demon commanders, including Ravana himself, could be killed as the war progressed.]

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे द्वितीयः
सर्गः ॥ २॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe dvitīyaḥ
sargaḥ ॥ 2॥

Thus ends Canto 2 of Yuddha Kand (Lanka Kand) of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and his divine consort Uma.

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-48:

॥तृतीयः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

विभीषणो महाभागश्चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिभिः सह ।
आगत्य गगने रामसम्मुखे समवस्थितः ॥ १॥
उच्चैरुवाच भोः स्वामिन् राम राजीवलोचन ।
यवणस्यानुजोऽहं ते दारहर्तुर्विभीषणः ॥ २॥
नाम्ना भ्रात्रा निरस्तोऽहं त्वामेव शरणं गतः ।
हितमुक्तं मया देव तस्य चाविदितात्मनः ॥ ३॥

॥trtīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

vibhīṣaṇo mahābhāgaścaturbhirmantribhiḥ saha ।
āgatya gagane rāmasammukhe samavasthitaḥ ॥ 1॥
uccairuvāca bhoḥ svāmin rāma rājīvalocana ।
rāvaṇasyānujo'haṁ te dāraharturvibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 2॥
nāmnā bhrātrā nirasto'haṁ tvāmeva śaraṇaṁ gataḥ ।
hitamuktaṁ mayā deva tasya cāviditātmanaḥ ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Thereafter, the fortunate Vibhishan, accompanied by his four ministers, came and stood in the sky in front of Lord Ram (1).

Vibhishan raised his voice loud enough to enable the Lord to hear him clearly. He said, 'Oh Lord, the lotus-eyed Sri Ram! I am the younger brother of Ravana who has abducted your wife (2).

My name is Vibhishan. I have been thrown out of the kingdom by my own brother after being rebuked, insulted and publicly humiliated by him. That is why I have come to seek shelter and refuge in your feet. Oh Lord! I had spoken for the welfare of that ignorant fellow (Ravana) [but instead of heeding me he chose to scold me and kick me out]. (3).

[Note—(i) Verse no. 3 above and 5 below clearly tell us the reason for Vibhishan joining Lord Ram's camp. After being subjected to public scorn and humiliation by Ravana in open court, Vibhishan had no choice except to protect his dignity and self respect by turning away from Ravana. Please also see Canto 2, verse no. 46.

(ii) The way Vibhishan has come to meet Lord Ram here in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' is very different from the way he is mentioned to do so in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas'. Here he has come directly by the sky path and presented himself before Lord Ram, but Tulsidas' version says that he had stopped outside the camp, a messenger was sent to the Lord to inform him of Vibhishan's arrival, and then he was called to present himself and his credentials before the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 43; and Doha no. 44 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

सीतां रामाय वैदेहीं प्रेषयेति पुनः पुनः ।

उक्तोऽपि न शृणोत्येव कालपाशवशं गतः ॥ ४॥

हन्तुं मां खड्गमादाय प्राद्रवद्राक्षसाधमः ।

ततोऽचिरेण सचिवैश्चतुर्भिः सहितो भयात् ॥ ५॥

त्वामेव भवमोक्षाय मुमुक्षुः शरणं गतः ।

विभीषणवचः श्रुत्वा सुग्रीवो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ६॥

sītāṃ rāmāya vaidehīm preṣayeti punaḥ punaḥ ।

ukto'pi na śṛṇotyeva kālapāśavaśaṃ gataḥ ॥ 4॥

hantuṃ māṃ khaḍgamādāya prādravadrākṣasādhamah ।

tato'cireṇa sacivaiścaturbhiḥ sahito bhayāt ॥ 5॥

tvāmeva bhavamokṣāya mumukṣuḥ śaraṇaṃ gataḥ ।

vibhiṣaṇavacaḥ śrutvā sugrīvo vākyamabravīt ॥ 6॥

4-6. I have told (advised) Ravana repeatedly “you should send Vaidehi (Sita) to Lord Ram”, but being under the spell of impending death, he wouldn't listen to any sane and rationale advice (4).

Presently the wretched and lowly demon rushed to kill me with a sword. Then, out of fear, I took four of my ministers with me (5), and in order to free myself from the shackles of this mundane existence, I renounced every worldly attachment that I

had with my family and home, and decided to finally come to seek shelter and refuge in your feet.’

Hearing these words of Vibhishan, Sugriv said to the Lord (6)—

[Note—Verse no. 6 gives another reason for Vibhishan coming to Lord Ram. It highlights the fact that a creature seeks the shelter of the Lord and wants to take refuge with him when it is scorned, rebuked, insulted, castigated and humiliated by the world, by those whom the creature had hitherto called his own kith and kin. This selfish scorn and reproach fills the creature with indignation and grief, which motivates him towards the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion. The creature finally turns towards the Lord, seeking protection and succour from his miseries.

Such events had turned the cruel robber Valmiki into becoming a great sage, and made prince Dhruv into a great devotee of the Lord.]

विश्वासाहो न ते राम मायावी राक्षसाधमः ।
सीताहर्तुर्विशेषेण रावणस्यानुजो बली ॥ ७॥
मन्त्रिभिः सायुधैरस्मान् विवरे निहनिष्यति ।
तदाज्ञापय मे देव वानरैर्हन्यतामयम् ॥ ८॥

viśvāsārho na te rāma māyāvī rākṣasādhamah ।
sītāharturviśeṣeṇa rāvaṇasyānujo balī ॥ 7॥
mantribhiḥ sāyudhairasmān vivare nihanīṣyati ।
tadājñāpaya me deva vānarairhanyatāmayam ॥ 8॥

7-8. Sugriv said to Lord Ram—'Oh Lord Ram! We should not believe (or rely upon) this imposter and wicked demon who may have come here with some malefic intentions, because demons are by birth very deceitful, cunning, and full of dirty tricks.

(If he had been somebody else, it would have been a different case, but—) He is the younger brother of the abductor of Sita i.e. Ravana. Moreover, he looks strong and powerful (i.e. he does not appear to be someone in great distress, someone who had been suffering under the tyrannical rule of the demon king Ravana, for he looks well-fed, healthy and strong) (7).

He is accompanied by armed ministers. I have strong doubts about his intentions and integrity; I apprehend that he will kill us whenever he finds us alone and gets a chance. So, oh Lord, if you give me your permission I shall get him killed by the monkeys¹ (8).

[Note—¹Expressing his great uneasiness and dread of Vibhishan, Sugriv, the king of the monkey army and a close aide of Lord Ram, advised the Lord to be very wary of him as he was, firstly, a demon by birth, and demons are by their nature very cunning, selfish, ruthless and untrustworthy; secondly, he was the brother of Ravana who had abducted Sita, the Lord's wife, and so can't be trusted; and thirdly, he was accompanied by armed ministers who could strike and kill them once they manage enter the camp of the Lord's army by some stratagem.

Sugriv is of the view that it would be very dangerous and almost suicidal to allow Vibhishan, who happens to be a brother of their arch enemy Ravana, to come and join their ranks, because if he has come with malefic intentions to spy then his entry into the Lord's army would make it very vulnerable. All the secrets and strategies of the Lord's army would be susceptible to leakage as they would be known by the demon camp, as Ravana will have his own spy right in their midst. This would like digging one's own grave.

So it would be wiser to either imprison Vibhishan, or kill him for being a spy of the enemy, the demon king Ravana.]

ममैवं भाति मे राम बुद्ध्या किं निश्चितं वद ।
 श्रुत्वा सुग्रीववचनं रामः सस्मितमब्रवीत् ॥ ९॥
 यदीच्छामि कपिश्रेष्ठ लोकान् सर्वान् सहेश्वरान् ।
 निमिषार्धेन संहन्यां सृजामि निमिषार्धतः ॥ १०॥
 अतो मयाऽभयं दत्तं शीघ्रमानय राक्षसम् ॥ ११॥

mamaivaṃ bhāti me rāma buddhyā kiṃ niścitaṃ vada ।
 śrutvā sugrīvavacanam rāmaḥ sasmitamabravīt ॥ 9॥
 yadīcchāmi kapiśreṣṭha lokān sarvān saheśvarān ।
 nimiṣārdhena saṃhanyāṃ sṛjāmi nimiṣārdhataḥ ॥ 10॥
 ato mayā'bhayam dattaṃ śīghramānaya rākṣasam ॥ 11॥

9-11. Oh Lord Ram! I think this will be a proper and wise course of action. What is your decision in this connection? Do tell us'.

Hearing these words of Sugriv, Lord Ram smiled and replied politely (9), 'Oh the best amongst the monkeys (kapiśreṣṭha)! If I wish, I can destroy the entire world along with its Lokpals (patron gods and guardians of the world) in half a second (nimiṣārdhena saṃhanyāṃ), and I can create them equally easily in another half a second (sṛjāmi nimiṣārdhataḥ)¹. Hence, you should not worry at all. I am giving this demon 'freedom from fear' as a blessing. So go and bring him here soon (10-11).

[Note—¹There is no wonder in this claim of Lord Ram as he was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being who has the actual power and the real ability to do what he claims here he could do. What Lord Ram means is that Sugriv need not have any fear of Vibhishan, for if the latter tries to play any dirty tricks against anyone in the Lord's camp then he would be punished immediately, and the Lord alone is able to carry out this punishment should the need arise at any point of time. But, on the other hand, if Vibhishan has good intentions and has come to surrender himself before the Lord then it becomes obligatory for him to accept Vibhishan notwithstanding his birth as a demon and irrespective of the family to which he belongs.]

सकृदेव पूषन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
 अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्भूतं मम ॥ १२॥
 रामस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा सुग्रीवो हृष्टमानसः ।

विभीषणमथानास्य दर्शयामास राघवम् ॥ १३॥

sakṛdeva prapannāya tavāsmīti ca yācate ।
abhayaṃ sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmyetadvrataṃ mama ॥ 12॥
rāmasya vacanaṃ śrutvā sugrīvo hr̥ṣṭamānasaḥ ।
vibhīṣaṇamathānāyya darśayāmāsa rāghavam ॥ 13॥

12-13. It is my established tradition (it's my vow, it's a principle, a practice or rule of thumb that I always follow—"vrataṃ mama") that anyone who comes to me and says even once 'Lord, I am yours', and asks for freedom from fear, I make it sure that he is granted fearlessness from all the issues that worry him' (12).

Hearing these words of assurance from Lord Ram, Sugriv immediately brought Vibhishan, cheerfully and without having any more doubts in his mind, and introduced him to Raghav (Lord Ram) (13).

विभीषणस्तु साष्टाङ्गं प्रणिपत्य रघूत्तमम् ।
हर्षगद्गदया वाचा भक्त्या च परयान्वितः ॥ १४॥
रामं श्यामं विशालाक्षं प्रसन्नमुखपङ्कजम् ।
धनुर्बाणधरं शान्तं लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितम् ॥ १५॥
कृताञ्जलिपुटो भूत्वा स्तोतुं समुपचक्रमे ॥ १६॥

vibhīṣaṇastu sāṣṭāṅgaṃ praṇipatya raghūttamam ।
harṣagadgadayā vācā bhaktyā ca parayānvitaḥ ॥ 14॥
rāmaṃ śyāmaṃ viśālākṣaṃ prasannamukhapaṅkajam ।
dhanurbāṇadharaṃ śāntaṃ lakṣmaṇena samanvitaṃ ॥ 15॥
kṛtāñjalipuṭo bhūtvā stotuṃ samupacakrame ॥ 16॥

14-16. Vibhishan prostrated himself (sāṣṭāṅgaṃ praṇipatya) before Lord Ram, the Lord who was the most illustrious member of king Raghu's family (raghūttamam), to show his respects to the Lord even as he became delighted and overwhelmed with excess of joy and happiness (harṣagadgadayā vācā).

He began to say prayers with an emotionally choked throat and an overwhelmed heart which was full of devotion (for the Lord) (14).

Lord Ram had a dark complexion (śyāmaṃ), had broad eyes (viśālākṣaṃ), his lotus-like face was eternally benign and cheerful (prasannamukhapaṅkajam), he held a bow and an arrow in his hands (dhanurbāṇadharaṃ), and he was an image of peace, tranquility and serenity (śāntaṃ).

While saying his prayers, Vibhishan had folded his hands and joined his palms as a mark of submission and supplication (kṛtāñjalipuṭo bhūtvā stotuṃ) in honour of Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman who was sitting near the Lord (lakṣmaṇena samanvitaṃ) (15-16).

विभीषण उवाच ।

नमस्ते राम राजेन्द्र नमः सीतामनोरम ।

नमस्ते चण्डकोदण्ड नमस्ते भक्तवत्सल ॥ १७॥
 नमोऽनन्ताय शान्ताय समायामिततेजसे ।
 सुग्रीवमित्राय च ते रघूणां पतये नमः ॥ १८॥

vibhīṣaṇa uvāca ।
 namaste rāma rājendra namaḥ sītāmanorama ।
 namaste caṇḍakodaṇḍa namaste bhaktavatsala ॥ 17॥
 namo'nantāya śāntāya rāmāyāmitatejase ।
 sugrīvamitrāya ca te raghūṇāṃ pataye namaḥ ॥ 18॥

17-18. Vibhishan said, 'Oh the King of kings, Lord Ram! I bow before you (to pay my respects and honour). Oh the one who resides in the heart of Sita! I bow before you. Oh the invincible and formidable archer! I bow before you. Oh the one who is exemplarily compassionate, benevolent, munificent, endearing and a singular benefactor of his devotees! I bow before you (17).

I bow before Lord Ram who has no end and a beginning, who is an image of tranquility, peace and serenity, who is one of his only kind, who is unique and matchless in his splendour, radiance and brilliance as he glows in divine energy and his majestic cosmic powers, who is a friend of Sugriv, and who is the most illustrious Lord and a Leader of the great family of king Raghu (of Ayodhya) (18).

जगदुत्पत्तिनाशानां कारणाय महात्मने ।
 त्रैलोक्यगुरवेऽनादिग्रहस्थाय नमो नमः ॥ १९॥
 त्वमादिर्जगतां राम त्वमेव स्थितिकारणम् ।
 त्वमन्ते निधनस्थानं स्वेच्छाचारस्त्वमेव हि ॥ २०॥

jagadutpattināśānāṃ kāraṇāya mahātmane ।
 trailokyagurave'nādigr̥hasthāya namo namaḥ ॥ 19॥
 tvamādirjagatāṃ rāma tvameva sthitikāraṇam ।
 tvamante nidhanasthānaṃ svecchācāraṣṭvameva hi ॥ 20॥

19-20. I repeatedly bow before you who are a great and exalted Soul, who are the one who causes this creation to come into being as well as to come to an end, who is the great Guru (teacher, preceptor, guide or advisor of all the creatures in this world, the Lord who is most wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened) of the entire world consisting of three divisions (such as the subterranean, the terrestrial and the celestial worlds), and who is a householder since time immemorial¹ (19).

Oh Lord Ram! You are the cause of creation and existence of this world, and at the end you are the place where everything goes back². You move around as per your own wish (20).

[Note—¹The Lord has been called a “householder” (gr̥hasthāya) because he is the cosmic Father from whom this creation has come into being. So therefore, like any other father is, the Lord is visualized as the cosmic Father of a household called ‘creation’, the living world of which he is the guardian and caretaker like a normal

father is for his family. Brahm is associated with Nature which is the cosmic form of the ‘household’ of the Supreme Being. Being the Father of this creation, Brahm has been taking care of it since the beginning of the world; he looks after it as any householder would look after his family. In other words, the Lord sustains, nourishes and takes care of this world ever since its creation. In this cosmic role he is called Lord Vishnu, and it is Lord Vishnu who has manifested himself as Lord Ram. So the link is easy to establish—Lord Ram is Lord Vishnu, who in turn is Brahm, the cosmic Father who created and sustains this entire creation.

²To wit, this creation originates in you and at the end of its tenure it merges in you. It is because you represent the Absolute Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Truth of this creation. This ‘Truth’ exists before and after this visible world; it precedes and follows this world.

The best example to understand this phenomenon in this: The waves in the ocean rise from its surface, these waves then rise high into the sky, move for long distances, and when their energy is spent and time comes for rest the waves fall back into the same ocean from which they had risen, only to rise again after a time lapse. Likewise, this creation arises from Brahm, runs its course, and then collapses back into Brahm, only to remerge once again when sufficient energy is collected afresh.]

चराचराणां भूतानां बहिरन्तश्च राघव ।
व्याप्यव्यापकरूपेण भवान् भाति जगन्मयः ॥२१॥
त्वन्मायया हृतज्ञाना नष्टात्मानो विचेतसः ।
गतागतं प्रपद्यन्ते पापपुण्यवशात्सदा ॥ २२॥

carācarāṇāṃ bhūtānāṃ bahirantaśca rāghava ।
vyāpyavyāpakarūpeṇa bhavān bhāti jaganmayah ॥21॥
tvanmāyayā hṛtajñānā naṣṭātmāno vicetasah ।
gatāgataṃ prapadyante pāpapuṇyavaśātsadā ॥ 22॥

21-22. Oh Raghav (Lord Ram)! You pervade both inside and outside the whole creation consisting of the five elements (space, air, fire, water, earth). As a result, the whole universe appears to be a manifestation of your own self; it is an image of you¹ (21).

Those persons who are foolish, lowly, stupid and ignorant, those whose wisdom, intelligence and powers of discrimination have been eclipsed by delusions and the illusion-creating force called Maya, are constantly and repeatedly arriving and departing in this mortal gross world² (22).

[Note—¹To wit, you pervade uniformly in this creation; you are present both inside as well as outside this creation; there is nothing in this creation that escapes you. Since this creation is said to be constituted of the five basic elements known as space, air, fire, water and earth that form its building blocks, much like bricks are in any conventional building, it follows that these five elements are nothing but your five subtle forms via which you build each unit of this creation which has two aspects, viz. the invisible aspect and the visible aspect.

²Those persons who do not know the truth and reality of this creation, who do not know that the creation consists of nothing but these five elements operating in different ratios, with so many permutations and combinations that give rise to mind-boggling varieties of creatures, both animate and inanimate, in this world, think of themselves as somebody who has an independent existence, somebody having an identity and name of one's own. They forget that if they are subjected to fine analysis it would be found that they are a combination of these five elements, and nothing more. And, as has been stated herein above, these five elements are one or the other manifestations of the Lord's subtle forms.

This "Lord" refers to the cosmic Consciousness that lends the element of 'life' to this otherwise inane, inert and lifeless creation. This 'Consciousness' is a uniform entity; it neither takes birth nor dies. Hence, if one is self-realised and enlightened he would immediately understand that there is no question of a creature taking birth and dying. 'Birth' of creation at the macrocosmic level, and of the individual creature at the microcosmic level, happens when a particular set of circumstances bring together these five elements that interact and form bonds linking them together in different permutations and combinations. Likewise, 'death' occurs when, due to some reason, these bonds break and the elements fall apart.

So therefore, if a person becomes wise, self-realised and enlightened, he would understand that 'death' simply means that his 'true self', i.e. the pure consciousness that resides in his gross physical body consisting of the above mentioned five elements, has moved out from its present habitat, the gross physical body that 'dies', which means the bond between these five elements have broken and they have reverted to their original form, thereby freeing the consciousness from this cage. In the same manner, 'birth' means that the consciousness comes to live in a product produced by a combination of these five elements. That is all there is to it.]

तावत्सत्यं जगद्भाति शुक्तिकारजतं यथा ।
यावन्न ज्ञायते ज्ञानं चेतसानन्यगामिना ॥२३॥
त्वदज्ञानात्सदा युक्ताः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।
रमन्ते विषयान् सर्वानन्ते दुःखप्रदान् विभो ॥ २४॥

tāvatsatyam jagadbhāti śuktikārajataṁ yathā ।
yāvanna jñāyate jñānaṁ cetasānanyagāminā ॥23॥
tvadajñānātsadā yuktāḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu ।
ramante viṣayān sarvānante duḥkhapradān vibho ॥ 24॥

23-24. As long as (i.e. till the time) a person does not concentrate his faculties and realises your true form representing pure enlightenment, wisdom and truthful knowledge, as well as pure consciousness, it is only till then that he continues to regard this world as being true just like silver appears to line the inside of an oyster shell¹ (23).

Oh Vibho (i.e. the Lord who is omnipresent, almighty, all-pervading, magnanimous and eternal)! It is because the people are ignorant of you and your true form that they are engrossed in and infatuated or attached with their worldly relations such as sons, wives and their homestead etc. They mistakenly try to find happiness

and peace in the objects of this material world, which ultimately gives them sorrows and anguish that have no end² (24).

[Note—¹The moonlight reflects from the oyster shell's inner layer and it appears to simmer with a silvery light, giving the impression that the shell is lined by a film of silver on its inside. But it is only an optical illusion.

²To wit, the real reason why the living being suffers from so much misery and grief in this world is that he is attracted towards and attached to this gross material world. This creates a chain of desires, a sense of possession, of jealousy and greed, and of grief at its loss.]

त्वमिन्द्रोऽग्निर्यमो रक्षो वरुणश्च तथानिलः ।
 कुबेरश्च तथा रुद्रस्त्वमेव पुरुषोत्तम ॥ २५॥
 त्वमणोरप्यणीयांश्च स्थूलात् स्थूलतरः प्रभो ।
 त्वं पिता सर्वलोकानां माता धाता त्वमेव हि ॥ २६॥

tvamindro'gniriyamo rakṣo varuṇaśca tathānilaḥ ।
 kuberaśca tathā rudrastvameva puruṣottama ॥ 25॥
 tvamaṇorapyāṇīyāṃśca sthūlāt sthūlataṛaḥ prabho ।
 tvam pitā sarvalokānāṃ mātā dhātā tvameva hi ॥ 26॥

25-26. Oh 'Purshottam' (an address used for Lord Vishnu, the cosmic Male form of the Supreme Being; the Father of creation; literally meaning the Lord who is the most exalted and the best amongst all males)! You are Indra (the king of gods), the Agni (the patron god of fire), Yam (the patron god of death), Niruti (one of the many forms of Vishnu; the Lord who protects; the Lord of good luck), Varun (the patron god of water), Vayu (the wind god), Kuber (the treasurer of gods) and Rudra (one of the 11 forms of Shiva; the form of Shiva that brings an end of the existing world) (25).

Oh Lord! You are smaller than an atom, and larger than the greatest of universes. You are the Father and the Mother who not only nourishes this creation but who bears its burden too¹ (26).

[Note—¹It will be obvious that these present and preceding verses are describing the primary and cosmic form of Lord Ram, a form that is known as Brahm. This 'Brahm' is the supreme Consciousness that infuses or injects 'life' into this creation. Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, is the only entity that actually matters in this creation, because if this 'consciousness' is removed from the world, nothing remains in it except lifeless floating bodies of inert gases and hard rocks, which are of no consequence or of any worth. There would be no 'life' in this creation if there is no 'consciousness' in it. This 'consciousness' at the individual level of a creature is called a Jiva, the living being or the creature, and at the cosmic level it is called Brahm, the Supreme Being, the Parmatma.

When applied to Lord Ram it means that the Lord is a manifested form, at the microcosmic level of creation, of the un-manifested Brahm that exists at the macrocosmic level of the same creation.

Further, in order to carry out different functions of creation smoothly, the same Brahm has manifested himself in different forms known by different names, such as Indra, Agni, Varun, Vayu, Kuber, Niruti etc. All of them are singly and jointly responsible for running the affairs of this creation.

These chief gods and junior gods are like the many ministers and courtiers and magistrates working under a great King; they act in the name of the King and hold authority at the pleasure of the King. Since the King cannot personally look after all the myriad functions of a large and extended kingdom, he delegates his royal authority to these office bearers who are all answerable to the King. The main objective in this arrangement is to ensure smooth working of the affairs of the kingdom. Likewise, Brahm is the King of this creation, and these many gods are his ministers, courtiers and magistrates authorized to carry out the duties of Brahm on his behalf.]

आदिमध्यान्तरहितः परिपूर्णोऽच्युतोऽव्ययः ।
त्वं पाणिपादरहितश्चक्षुःश्रोत्रविवर्जितः ॥ २७॥
श्रोता द्रष्टा गृहीता च जवनस्त्वं खरान्तक ।
कोशेभ्यो व्यतिरिक्तस्त्वं निर्गुणो निरुपाश्रयः ॥ २८॥

ādimadhyāntarahitaḥ paripūrṇo'cyuto'vyayaḥ ।
tvaṃ pāṇipādarahitaścakṣuḥśrotravivarjitaḥ ॥ 27॥
śrotā draṣṭā grahītā ca javanastvaṃ kharāntaka ।
kośebhyo vyatiriktastvaṃ nirguṇo nirupāśrayaḥ ॥ 28॥

27-28. You are without a beginning, a middle or an end; you are changeless, uniform, complete, eternal, imperishable and limitless. You do not have a physical body with limbs and various organs (such as hands, legs, eyes, nose etc.). [This clearly alludes to the cosmic form of Brahm that is invisible and formless.] (27).

But still, oh the slayer of the demon Khar (*kharāntaka*), you are the one who hears all, sees all, accepts all, and are very swift in your movement¹.

You are free from the trapping of the physical gross body consisting of the '5-Koshas'².

You are Nirgun (formless, without any attributes, invisible and immeasurable), and therefore you have no physical abode³ (28).

[Note—¹To wit, though you don't have a visible ear yet you hear everything that is said; though you don't have a physical eye yet you see everything.

Similarly, though you don't have a visible hand yet you accept everything offered to you; though you don't have a physical leg yet you can go wherever you please.

²The '5-Koshas' or the five sheaths that constitute a creature's gross body have been explained earlier when we were reading Canto 2, verse no. 39 of Adhyatma Ramayan in this section.

³To wit, the Lord's primary form is known as Brahm whose subtle and sublime form is cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout this creation. On the other hand,

Brahm's less subtle form is manifested as the five elements, such as space, air, fire, water and earth. Since Brahm pervades in this creation uniformly by means of either of his many above mentioned forms, it cannot be said that he is present only in one specific place; Brahm is present everywhere uniformly, here and there; within and without.]

निर्विकल्पो निर्विकारो निराकारो निरीश्वरः ।
 षड्भावरहितोऽनादिः पुरुषः प्रकृतेः परः ॥ २९॥
 मायया गृह्यमाणस्त्वं मनुष्य इव भाव्यसे ।
 ज्ञात्वा त्वां निर्गुणमजं वैष्णवा मोक्षगामिनः ॥ ३०॥

nirvikalpo nirvikāro nirākāro nirīśvaraḥ ।
 ṣaḍbhāvarahito'nādiḥ puruṣaḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ ॥ 29॥
 māyayā gr̥hyamāṇastvaṃ manuṣya iva bhāvyase ।
 jñātvā tvāṃ nirguṇamajam vaiṣṇavā mokṣagāmināḥ ॥ 30॥

29-30. You have no parallel or alternative. You are eternal, limitless and faultless. You are without a form and attributes. You have no one who would order you to do anything, as you are the Supreme Lord of this creation. You are free from the so-called six emotions that the Consciousness gets associated with in this world¹. You are beyond Nature. And you are the eternal Purush² (29).

You appear to be an ordinary human because of the illusion created by your Maya (the delusion creating powers of the Lord). The Vaishnavs (those who worship Lord Vishnu and treat him as the supreme Lord who manifests in the form of various incarnations to rid the world of evil and vices) attain emancipation and salvation by worshipping you as the Lord who is Nirgun (without attributes) and who has no birth. [They worship the eternal Lord Vishnu who has no attributes.] (30).

[Note—¹ The 6 Vikaars or faults or shortcomings or imperfections of the body are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' can be classified in various ways as follows:-

Generally and broadly speaking, they are the (1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature.

These six Vikaars or faults can also be interpreted as the six emotions that cause a fault in the otherwise immaculate nature of the Consciousness. they are the following—(i) The concept of 'birth or origin': When the Consciousness thinks that it has taken a birth as a creature it is tainted by the first fault. This is because it is eternal and imperishable; hence it has no birth or origin. (ii) The concept of 'decay or end': This is directly related to the first concept, i.e. since the Consciousness is eternal and

infinite, there is no question of its end and decay. (iii) The concept of ‘development and growth’: Similarly, since Consciousness is uniform and unchanging, there is neither the question of its development or growth. (iv) The concept of ‘doing deeds’: Since the Consciousness has no physical body, it does no deeds. (v) The concept of ‘enjoying or suffering’: The Consciousness neither suffers nor enjoys anything as it is uniform and not attached to any sort of worldly emotions or material things. It also does not get involved in doing any deed, and consequentially it has nothing to feel elated or worry and feel sorry about the result of such deeds, good or bad. (vi) The concept of ‘I or Me or Mine’: Since Consciousness is different from the gross physical body of a creature that the world recognizes as the identity of a person, since this Consciousness is the true identity of an individual instead of his gross body, and since this Consciousness is detached from the gross physical world and its sense objects, a wise and enlightened person never says “I or Mine or Me”.

According to verse no. 18, Canto no. 3 of Maitreyu-panishad of Sam Veda, the 6 faults associated with a creature are—(i) birth and its attendant torments, (ii) existence and its accompanying problems, (iii) contradiction of the mind leading to unrest and perplexities, (iv) developments and their attendant problems, (v) decay, e.g., disease of the body, and (vi) destruction, e.g., death.

One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors. Refer Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 6-7 of Rig Veda tradition; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1 verse nos. 8-9 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition; the Naradparivrajak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 7, verse no. 1; and Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29.

The Rig Veda’s Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 6 enumerates the six great faults or flaws in the emotional setup of a creature—“(i) endearments; (ii) taking birth; (iii) to enhance, increase or develop; (iv) to change; (v) to decay, decompose, degenerate and become decrepit or to decline in stature, health, body, fame, development etc.; and (vi) destruction and annihilation (6).

The Rig Veda’s Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 7 enumerates the six great faults or flaws, known as the ‘Urmies’, that torment the creature and cause him endless miseries and pain—“The 6 ‘Urmies’ (pains, afflictions, agonies and sorrows) of the creature are the following— (i) hunger; (ii) thirst; (iii) misery/grief; (iv) Moha (attachment, infatuation, ignorance, delusion); (v) old age; and (vi) death.”

The Param Hans Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its paragraph no. 6 affirms that a self-realised and enlightened Sanyasi who has achieved the exalted stature of Param Hans is free from the six faults called Urmis and Vikars.

The Naradparivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 7, verse no. 1 describes that a Sanyasi (a renunciate monk or mendicant or hermit or friar) must overcome the six Vikaars of his mind and should not allow them to create any consternation for him.

According to the Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 8-9 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six faults or six Urmis associated with all those entities that take a birth and have a gross body. Now let us examine them:--

“verse no. 8 = All those things that take a birth (and therefore die or perish, and hence are mortal and non-eternal and transitory) have six inherent faults or shortcomings of perception in them.

These faults are the following—(i) That there is an ‘Asti’—i.e. to be in existence. [This is a major fault because whatever that exists in this world is an illusion created by the mind just like the existence of water seen in a desert mirage, ghost in the dark, a serpent in the rope, change in the moon’s surface during the lunar cycle, two or more suns when seen as an image in more than one mirror, the sun or moon being devoured by some imaginary demon during eclipses, the rising or setting of the moon or the sun, etc. There is another interpretation of the term ‘existence’—it is the existence of ‘duality’, the conception that there are two independent entities such as the Jiva or the living creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being, or the conception of ‘you’ and ‘me’, or ‘this’ and ‘that’. This is against the fundamental tenet of Vedanta which lays stress on ‘non-duality’ of everything which briefly states that whatever that exists is but one single non-dual Brahm revealed in that form. Therefore, the concept of ‘Asti’ has an erroneous, a fallacious and ill-conceived foundation. Anything founded on errors of perception or misjudgment is bound to be faulty, distorted, and away from the reality and truth.

(ii) That there is a ‘Jaati’—i.e. birth. This relates to the conception that there is a birth and that things are freshly born or reborn again. [This is a fault also because of two reasons. One, if anything does not exist as asserted by the first clause, then the question of its being born or dying does not arise. And two, even if we were to treat everything as Brahm personified—because it would be difficult to deny things physically seen and witnessed—then it is forgotten that Brahm does not take a birth, for it is eternal, infinite, imperishable and the ‘one without a birth’. Therefore this very conception of having a birth has no sound footing; it is faulty. It is an upshot of faulty perception of the reality of Brahm and Truth.]

(iii) That there is a ‘Vardhan’—i.e. there is increase, enhancement, expansion, growth. This relates to the conception that an entity increases, enhances, grows or develops. [This is a fault because for one, ‘truth’ never grows and develops, it is always constant, universal, uniform and never changing; and two, ‘Brahm’ also does not grow or enhance or develop or in any way change because it is the ultimate Truth in creation, and ‘Truth’ does not change.]

(iv) That there is a ‘Parinaam’—i.e. result or consequence or effect or sequel. This relates to the conception that there is a sequel, a consequence, an affect, an upshot, an outcome, a result, a follow up or a fruit of certain deed that was done in the past. [This arises out of the fundamental error that one is the doer of anything, that therefore there is a consequence, a result or sequel of that deed—either good or bad—which cannot be avoided and must be either enjoyed or suffered. This is a fundamental error of conception because one is not a doer of anything because all deeds are done by the physical body which is not the ‘self’ of the person, for this ‘self’ is the pure consciousness called the Atma that lives as a distinct entity inside the body as its resident. Further, since there is no truth in what is seen in this world, the question of there being a birth, development and an end does not arise, and consequentially the question of anything being a Parinaam of any deed done in the past life also does not arise.]

(v) That there is a ‘Kshaya/Kchaya’—i.e. decay and decline. This relates to the conception that there is a stage called the last stage when there is decay and decline. [This is an error arising out of the pervious errors because anything that is eternal, infinite, imperishable and truthful, for instance Brahm, never decays or declines, nor does anything that really does not exist, like this illusionary world, can ever decay or decline. It is all imaginary, delusory and false.]

(vi) That there is a ‘Naash’—i.e. destruction and ruin. This relates to the conception that there is finally destruction or termination. [This fault is a derivative of the earlier faults.] (8).

“verse no. 9 = The six Urmis or faults of the body are the following—(i) ‘Ashanaaye’ or hunger, the need to eat, and therefore the need for food (along with all the accompanying problems such as worrying about its production, safety, storage, procurement, cooking, proper digestion etc.); (ii) Pipaasa or thirst, and the desire to drink and therefore the need for liquids to quench the thirst (which create the same sort of problems that are associated with the need for food; (iii) Shoka or grief, distress and dismay (which have a profound negative impact on the overall mental, psychological and general metabolic health of the body); (iv) Moha or to have strong attractions or longing for anything or anyone, to be emotionally attached with anything, to be deluded, to be held under magical spell of anything or to be under its charm, to hallucinate as a result of these emotional faults (all of which makes a man a virtual serf of his emotions and tied down to the object of his adoration, thereby robbing him of his independence and peace, and more often than not becoming the cause of his interminable sufferings); (v) Jaraa or old age and its attendant decline of the body leading to its decrepit and weakened physical state when the body loses its strength, vigour and stamina, thereby becoming a burden on the person; and finally (vi) Mritu or death of the body. All these factors create an immense amount of discomfort and horrors to the person (i.e. to the Atma that is the true identity of the person) to whom this body belongs. [In other words, as long as the person continues to have the erroneous conception that this body is

Then there are six Koshas or coverings or structural features of the body. Now I shall tell you about them. [The Koshas are listed in verse no. 10.] (9).

There also other six faults that are considered as enemies of a man—Kaam (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearning), Krodha (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, vengeance, seeking retribution, leading to spite and ill temper), Lobha (greed and rapacity), Moha (ignorance based delusions, worldly infatuations, attractions and attachments), Mada (egoism, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice, anger and wrath)—refer Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition; and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 10 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

According to Mudgal Upanishad, 4/7 of the Rig Veda tradition, the six delusions, called ‘Urmi’, that create fear, sorrows, agonies, sufferings and pains to a creature are the following:--(1) hunger, (2) thirst, (3) grief, (4) Moha (worldly attachments, illusions, entrapments), (5) horrors of old age, and (6) death.

²Here the word “Purush” refers to the Viraat Purush, the cosmic Male, the Supreme Being who is known as the Father of creation. It also refers to Lord Vishnu, the

cosmic manifestation of Brahm, and the Lord who had revealed himself in a human form as Lord Ram.]

अहं त्वत्पादसद्भक्तिनिःश्रेणीं प्राप्य राघव ।
 इच्छामि ज्ञानयोगारूढ्यं सौधमारोढुमीश्वर ॥ ३१॥
 नमः सीतापते राम नमः कारुणिकोत्तम ।
 रावणारे नमस्तुभ्यं त्राहि मां भवसागरात् ॥ ३२॥
 ततः प्रसन्नः प्रोवाच श्रीरामो भक्तवत्सलः ।
 वरं वृणीष्व भद्रं ते वाञ्छितं वरदोऽस्म्यहम् ॥ ३३॥

aham tvatpādasadbhaktiniḥśreṇīm prāpya rāghava ।
 icchāmi jñānayogākhyam saudhamāroḍhumīśvara ॥ 31॥
 namaḥ sītāpate rāma namaḥ kāruṇikottama ।
 rāvaṇāre namastubhyaṁ trāhi mām bhavasāgarāt ॥ 32॥
 tataḥ prasannaḥ provāca śrīrāmo bhaktavatsalaḥ ।
 varam vṛṇīṣva bhadraṁ te vāñchitaṁ varado'smyaham ॥ 33॥

31-33. Oh Raghav (rāghava); oh Lord (īśvara)! I wish to climb up the stairs (or steps of the ladder) represented by having pure ‘Bhakti’ for your lotus-like holy feet so, that by-and-by, I can reach the pinnacle of the royal palace called ‘Gyan Yoga’.

[To wit, I wish to have pure devotion for your holy feet and worship you as a means of attaining a higher level of spiritual awareness that comes with enlightenment and self-realisation. This would help me to coordinate all my spiritual efforts for the final realization of blessedness, bliss and beatitude, which in turn would grant my soul eternity, and provide me with liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.] (31).

Oh the best among those who are merciful, munificent, benevolent and compassionate (kāruṇikottama)! Oh Sita's husband Lord Sri Ram (sītāpate rāma)! I repeatedly bow reverentially before you (namaḥ -- namaḥ). Oh the slayer and the vanquisher of Ravana (rāvaṇāre)! I bow before you and reverentially pray to you (namastubhyaṁ). I am suffering from the horrors and torments of this mundane world which is like an ocean difficult to cross; please save me from being drowned in this ocean (trāhi mām bhavasāgarāt) (32).’

Then Lord Sri Ram, who is endearing, munificent and benevolent towards his devotees and passionately loves them (śrīrāmo bhaktavatsalaḥ), felt very happy, and said to Vibhishan delightedly, 'Oh Vibhishan! You be blessed. I wish to give you a boon. So ask for whatever you desire' (33).

[Note—It has been clearly established in verse no. 31 that devotion and worship are merely steps to climb up the ladder leading up to Gyan—which is self realisation, enlightenment and wisdom as well as acquisition of true knowledge about the reality. Hence, the Bhakti is a means to attain Gyan, and not an end in itself.]

विभीषण उवाच ।

धन्योऽस्मि कृतकृत्योऽस्मि कृतकार्योऽस्मि राघव ।
 त्वत्पाददर्शनादेव विमुक्तोऽस्मि न संशयः ॥ ३४॥
 नास्ति मत्सदृशो धन्यो नास्ति मत्सदृशः शुचिः ।
 नास्ति मत्सदृशो लोके राम त्वन्मूर्तिदर्शनात् ॥ ३५॥

vibhīṣaṇa uvāca ।
 dhanyo'smi kṛtakṛtyo'smi kṛtakāryo'smi rāghava ।
 tvatpādadarśanādeva vimukto'smi na saṁśayaḥ ॥ 34॥
 nāsti matsadrśo dhanyo nāsti matsadrśaḥ śuciḥ ।
 nāsti matsadrśo loka rāma tvanmūrtidarśanāt ॥ 35॥

34-35. Vibhishan was overwhelmed with gratitude towards Lord Ram. He replied, 'Oh Raghav (Lord Ram)! I am indeed extremely blessed, privileged and fortunate; I have attained the rewards of all my good actions and virtuous deeds. Forsooth, I feel fully satisfied and contented, and whatever I had ever desired (or was destined to get) I have got them all. I have already become emancipated and liberated from the shackles of this mundane world by the virtue of having a 'Darshan' of your holy feet. [Oh Lord, since I have been blessed by the good fortune of being able to have a divine glimpse of your holy feet, I have had all that I desired for in my life. So therefore, there is nothing more left for me to desire.] There is no doubt about it (34).

Oh Lord Ram! There is no one more privileged, more fortunate and more blessed than me because I have had the Darshan of your beautiful, attractive, charming and magnificent image. Now there is no one in this world who can compare himself with me. [To wit, in all sooth and without gainsay, how fortunate and lucky I am indeed! Say, oh Lord, what would I want after this rarest of rare reward? Surely nothing!] (35).

कर्मबन्धविनाशाय त्वज्ज्ञानं भक्तिलक्षणम् ।
 त्वद्ध्यानं परमार्थं च देहि मे रघुनन्दन ॥ ३६॥
 न याचे राम राजेन्द्र सुखं विषयसम्भवम् ।
 त्वत्पादकमले सक्ता भक्तिरेव सदास्तु मे ॥ ३७॥

karmabandhavināśāya tvajjñānaṁ bhaktilakṣaṇam ।
 tvaddhyānaṁ paramārthaṁ ca dehi me raghunandana ॥ 36॥
 na yāce rāma rājendra sukhaṁ viṣayasambhavam ।
 tvatpādakamale saktā bhaktireva sadāstu me ॥ 37॥

36-37. [Now Vibhishan makes his request—] Oh Raghunandan (literally, the illustrious son in the family of king Raghu; i.e. Lord Ram)! In order to destroy the fetters that bind me to my deeds and actions in this world, give me, as a blessing or boon, your 'Bhakti' (the grand virtues of devotion, worship, dedication, adoration, reverence, fellowship and follower-ship) which can lead me to achieve enlightenment, wisdom and true knowledge about you as well as help me meditate/concentrate and focus my mind and its attention on your spiritual and non-worldly form (i.e. attain 'Gyan Yoga')¹ (36).

Oh the King of kings, Lord Sri Ram (*rāma rājendra*)! I do not desire any happiness or comfort arising out of the worldly sense objects that pertain to this mundane, materialistic world. My only desire is that I must have abiding love, devotion, affection, reverence, dedication, adoration and faith in your lotus-like feet.' (37).

[Note—¹In verse no. 31 herein above we have read that “Bhakti is a ladder that leads to Gyan Yoga”. This is what Vibhishan alludes to here.]

ओमित्युक्त्वा पुनः प्रीतो रामः प्रोवाच राक्षसम् ।
शृणु वक्ष्यामि ते भद्रं रहस्यं मम निश्चितम् ॥ ३८॥
मद्भक्तानां प्रशान्तानां योगिनां वीतरागिणाम् ।
हृदये सीतया नित्यं वसाम्यत्र न संशयः ॥ ३९॥

omityuktvā punaḥ prīto rāmaḥ provāca rākṣasam ।
śṛṇu vakṣyāmi te bhadraṁ rahasyaṁ mama niścitam ॥ 38॥
madbhaktānāṁ praśāntānāṁ yogināṁ vītarāgiṇām ।
hr̥daye sītayā nityaṁ vasāmyatra na saṁśayaḥ ॥ 39॥

38-39. Saying 'so be it (omityuktvā)¹', Lord Ram became pleased with that demon named Vibhishan, and said to him affectionately, 'Oh gentleman (*bhadraṁ*)! Listen. I shall tell you one of my most certain tenets, a secret principle known only to a blessed few (*rahasyaṁ mama niścitam*) (38).

There is no doubt that I, along with Sita, reside in the heart of my devotees who have a tranquil, placid, serene and calm mind (*madbhaktānāṁ praśāntānāṁ*), who are dispassionate and detached from this mundane and deluding world consisting of materialistic objects (*vītarāgiṇām*), and are deeply involved in practicing Yoga (meditation, contemplation and concentration on my true form and their own true self—“*yoginām*”) (39).

[Note—¹The monosyllabic word “Om” is used as a prefix to invoke the authority and power of Brahm, the Supreme Being, while blessing Vibhishan. It is because Om is a synonym for Brahm, and by invoking this word a seal of divine intervention is affixed on the blessing granted by Lord Ram to Vibhishan. It means that what the Lord says cannot be undone.]

तस्मात्त्वं सर्वदा शान्तः सर्वकल्मषवर्जितः ।
मां ध्यात्वा मोक्षयसे नित्यं घोरसंसारसागरात् ॥ ४०॥
स्तोत्रमेतत्पठेद्यस्तु लिखेद्यः शृणुयादपि ।
मत्प्रीतये ममाभीष्टं सारूप्यं समवाप्नुयात् ॥ ४१॥

tasmāttvaṁ sarvadā śāntaḥ sarvakalmaṣavarjitaḥ ।
māṁ dhyātvā mokṣyase nityaṁ ghorasaṁsārasāgarāt ॥ 40॥
stotrametatpaṭhedyastu likhedyah śṛṇuyādapi ।

matprīṭaye mamābhiṣṭaṃ sārūpyaṃ samavāpnuyāt ॥ 41॥

40-41. Hence, by remembering and concentrating on me, by always remaining peaceful, serene, calm, tranquil and placid, as well as being sinless and keeping away from vices, misdeeds, bad thoughts, misdemeanours and unrighteousness of all kinds, you will be able to cross this formidable world-like ocean, and attain emancipation and salvation (which is your desire—see verse nos. 31-32) (40).

Those persons who read, write or hear this Stotra (hymn or prayer of Vibhishan) to please me, attain the exalted stature of being one with me (i.e., they merged their soul with me)' (41).

इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणं प्राह श्रीरामो भक्तभक्तिमान् ।
 पश्यत्विदानीमेवैष मम सन्दर्शने फलम् ॥ ४२॥
 लङ्काराज्येऽभिषेक्ष्यामि जलमानय सागरात् ।
 यावत्त्वन्द्रश्च सूर्यश्च यावत्तिष्ठति मेदिनी ॥ ४३॥
 यावन्मम कथा लोके तावद्राज्यं करोत्वसौ ।
 इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणेनाम्बु ह्यानाय कलशेन तम् ॥ ४४॥
 लङ्काराज्याधिपत्यार्थमभिषेकं रमापतिः ।
 कारयामास सचिवैर्लक्ष्मणेन विशेषतः ॥ ४५॥

ityuktvā lakṣmaṇaṃ prāha śrīrāmo bhaktabhaktimān ।
 paśyatvidānīmevaiṣa mama sandarśane phalam ॥ 42॥
 laṅkārajye'bhiṣekṣyāmi jalamānaya sāgarāt ।
 yāvaccandraśca sūryaśca yāvattiṣṭhati medinī ॥ 43॥
 yāvanmama kathā loke tāvadrājyaṃ karotvasau ।
 ityuktvā lakṣmaṇenāmbu hyānāya kalaśena tam ॥ 44॥
 laṅkārajyādhityārthamabhiṣekaṃ ramāpatiḥ ।
 kārayāmāsa sacivairlakṣmaṇena viśeṣataḥ ॥ 45॥

42-45. Having said this to Vibhishan, Lord Ram told Laxman, 'Oh Laxman! Have you seen (observed) the fruit or the reward of having my Darshan? (42).

Bring some water from the ocean—I shall anoint Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka right now. As long as the sun, the moon and the earth exist, and as long as my stories are narrated in this world, he shall rule over the kingdom of Lanka!

Saying so, Ramapati (literally the 'husband of Laxmi'; i.e. Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Ram) had Laxman bring water of the ocean in a pitcher and got him (Vibhishan) anointed on the throne of Lanka by his ministers, and specially by Laxman (who was acting on the behalf of Lord Ram) (43-45).

[Note—It is to be remarked here that Lord Ram did not perform the anointment ceremony himself but got it done through Laxman who was acting on his behalf. At the time of Surgiv's anointment in Kishkindha, Sri Ram had found an excuse that he cannot go to a city for the remaining of the 14 year exile period. But there were no such constraints here at the ocean shore. He could have done the anointment himself. The plausible reasons are—(i) Since only a king is empowered to anoint someone

when he conquers another kingdom, Sri Ram could not do so for 14 years of exile period when he was not a king. (ii) He wanted Laxman to have importance in the hierarchy so that his orders are given due weight during the forthcoming conflict. (iii) To tell Laxman subtly that he gives him a lot of strategic importance besides love and affection.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 49 too we read that Lord Ram had anointed Vibhishan as the next king of Lanka.

Lord Ram did this to assure Vibhishan that he means what he says—i.e. he will surely restore his rights and dignity back to him by appointing him the next king of Lanka once the war is won, its incumbent king Ravana eliminated, and Sita was freed. From the point of view of military strategy too it was well-planned by Lord Ram to gain unflinching allegiance and solid loyalty of Vibhishan, because the latter saw his only hope if he remained loyal to Lord Ram during the war vis-à-vis his brother Ravana who had kicked him out of Lanka, insulting and totally disinheriting him. So, if Ravana survived, Vibhishan would be doomed; on the other hand if Lord Ram prevails, he would get back his lost honour and rights to the throne.

Therefore, what little uncertainty may have lingered in the mind of Vibhishan as to the side he should be loyal to, the matter was settled in favour of Lord Ram for good.]

साधु साध्विति ते सर्वे वानरास्तुष्टुवर्भृशम् ।
सुग्रीवोऽपि परिष्वज्य विभीषणमथाब्रवीत् ॥ ४६॥
विभीषण वयं सर्वे रामस्य परमात्मनः ।
किङ्करास्तत्र मुख्यस्त्वं भक्त्या रामपरिग्रहात् ।
रावणस्य विनाशे त्वं साहाय्यं कर्तुमर्हसि ॥ ४७॥

sādhū sādhwiti te sarve vānarāstuṣṭuvurbhṛśam ।
sugrīvo'pi pariṣvajya vibhīṣaṇamathābravīt ॥ 46॥
vibhīṣaṇa vayaṁ sarve rāmasya paramātmanah ।
kiṅkarāstatra mukhyastvaṁ bhaktyā rāmaparigrahāt ।
rāvaṇasya vināśe tvaṁ sāhāyyaṁ kartumarhasi ॥ 47॥

46-47. At that time, all the monkeys, who were witnessing the interaction between Lord Ram and Vibhishan, felt very happy and elated at this benevolent gesture and noble outlook of Lord Ram. They exclaimed unanimously, 'It is so great; it is indeed so noble and great for the Lord'!

Sugriv embraced Vibhishan and said (46), 'Oh Vibhishan! All of us are servants (devotees, followers, subordinates) of Lord Ram who is Parmatma (supreme Soul; the Lord God) personified. Still, you are the chief amongst us because you have taken his shelter and sought refuge with him out of your pure devotion for him (see verse nos. 31-32) (whereas I have sought his refuge due to my self interest)¹. Now, you should help us to destroy (i.e. kill or overcome) Ravana.' (47).

[Note—¹Though both Sugriv and Vibhishan had taken shelter or sought protection from Sri Ram because both were tormented by their respective brothers, but there is a slight difference. Sugriv had never given Baali a chance to see reason and surrender before Sri Ram. In fact, Sugriv wished to avenge Baali because he had thrown him

out of the kingdom and had kept his wife. On the other hand, Vibhishan had tried his best to make Ravana see reason and had tried to rationalise with him but was instead publicly rebuffed by Ravana.

Further, Ravana had treated Vibhishan's wife Sarma with due respect behooving her status as his sister-in-law, and this was not the reason for Vibhishan surrendering to Sri Ram. Though it is true that Sugriv had shown a lot of wisdom after Baali was slayed and had wished to renounce the kingdom, but that was after he had squared up his account with his brother. When both Sugriv and Vibhishan are put on the scale, it tends to tilt more in favour of the latter than the former in this particular aspect, though both were betrayers of their respective brothers. But their reasons for such betrayal were different.

Another point is this: Vibhishan was a noble soul from the very beginning and he had asked for 'wisdom and righteous thinking' as a boon from Brahma when he was pleased by the former's Tapa (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 18-19). Once again, he sought 'Bhakti and Gyan' as well as deliverance from this mundane world of transmigration as a boon from Lord Ram himself (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 31-32).

Sugriv's life has no such episode; he sought Lord Ram's support only to square up his personal account of revenge with his brother Baali (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 45-73, and Canto 2, verse nos. 2-7).

Hence, we conclude that Vibhishan was a better devotee of Lord Ram as compared to Sugriv.]

विभीषण उवाच ।

अहं कियान् सहायत्वे रामस्य परमात्मनः ।

किं तु दास्यं करिष्येऽहं भक्त्या शक्त्या ह्यमायया ॥ ४८॥

vibhīṣaṇa uvāca ।

ahaṃ kiyān sahāyatve rāmasya paramātmānaḥ ।

kiṃ tu dāsyam kariṣye'haṃ bhaktyā śaktyā hyamāyayā ॥ 48॥

48-49. Vibhishan joyously exclaimed, 'What, and how, can I be of any help to Lord Ram who is the supreme Soul (Parmatma, the Lord God himself)! Still I shall do my best to honestly serve the Lord and render whatever service I can for the Lord, without having any sort of deceit, conceit and craft in my mind and heart' (48).

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Section 9.4: Geetawali Ramayan

{Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 23-45.}

This episode of Vibhishan coming to surrender before Lord Ram and seeking refuge and shelter with the Lord, and the amiable way he was welcomed by Lord Ram and cheerfully accepted by him as one of his own ministers and devotees has been beautifully and poetically narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in his classic 'Geetawali Ramayan', in its Sundar Kand, verse nos. 23-45. As is the usual pattern adopted by

Tulsidas while writing Geetawali Ramayan, the focus here is on the depth of devotion which Vibhishan had for the Lord, and it being the sole reason why he was accepted by the Lord without asking any further questions.

Details of why Vibhishan was forced to leave Lanka and join Lord Ram's camp have been narrated in verse nos. 23-25; his state of mind as he quitted Lanka, full of hope of finding refuge and succour with Lord Ram, is described in verse nos. 26-30; his arrival at Lord Ram's camp and the discussions that were quickly held between the Lord and his advisors as to the wisdom and the prudence of admitting him, with the Lord deciding in Vibhishan's favour and welcoming him warmly is narrated in verse nos. 31-35; the actual meeting of the Lord with Vibhishan and how the latter was dumb-founded and emotionally exhilarated by the warmth and affection with which he was received by Lord Ram which made Vibhishan regard himself as the most fortunate being in this world is narrated in verse nos. 36-45.

So, now let us start reading Geetawali Ramayan and see how it describes this episode of Vibhishan being accepted by Lord Ram in his camp.

रावणकी मन्त्रणा
राग आसावरी

(5 / 23)

आए देखि दूत, सुनि सोच सठ—मनमैं।
बाहर बजावैं गाल, भालु कपि कालबस।
मोसो बीरसों चहत जीत्यो रारि रनमैं॥ 1॥
राम छाम, लरिका लषन, बालि—बालकहि,
घालिको गनत ? रीछ जल ज्यों न घनमैं।
काजको न कपिराज, कायर कपिसमाज,
मेरे अनुमान हनुमान हरिगनमैं॥ 2॥
समय सयानी मृदु बानी रानी कहै पिय !
पावक न होइ जातुधान बेनु—बनमैं।
तुलसी जानकी दिए, स्वामीसों, सनेह किये
कुसल, नतरु सब हैहै छार छनमैं॥ 3॥

rāvaṇakī mantraṇā

rāga āsāvarī

(5/23)

ā'e dēkhi dūta, suni sōca saṭha-manamaim̐.
bāhara bajāvaim̐ gāla, bhālu kapi kālabasa.
mōsō bīrasōm̐ cahata jītyō rāri ranamaim̐.. 1..
rāma chāma, larikā laṣana, bāli-bālakahi,
ghālikō ganata? rīcha jala jyōm̐ na ghanamaim̐.
kājakō na kapirāja, kāyara kapisamāja,

mērē anumāna hanumāna hariganamairṁ.. 2..
 samaya sayānī mṛdu bānī rānī kahai piya!
 pāvaka na hō'i jātudhāna bēnu-banamairṁ.
 tulasī jānakī di'ē, svāmīsōm, sanēha kiyē
 kusala, nataru saba hvaihai chāra chanamairṁ.. 3..

Ravana's Council-I

Verse no. 5/23—[When Lord Ram's formidable army landed on the soil of Lanka, Ravana summoned his ministers and sought their advice for the next course of action. All of them were flatterers and sycophants, telling Ravana what he wished to hear instead of giving him wise council. Then his wife Mandodari tried to dissuade him from entering into a bloody war for senseless cause, against a formidable enemy with which he has no chance to win.

These developments are also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

Ravana's spies had come back after seeing (during their reconnaissance mission) Sri Ram's army¹. Hearing their report, that hypocrite and wicked fellow was worried internally, but overtly he boasted, 'Ah! Impelled by death, these bears and monkeys want to get victory in battle over a brave and valorous one like me!² (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 56.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

Lord Sri Ram is emaciated (because of sorrows of Sita's separation); Laxman is still a boy; the son of Baali (Angad) is ruinous and fatal for his own clan (because he is taking sides with Sugriv, his uncle, who had got his father Baali killed): who bothers about him; Jamvant (the aged bear chief) is impotent or inconsequential like a rainless cloud (because of his old age); Sugriv has no stature (because he is a betrayer of his own brother and got him killed due to his greed for the crown); and the whole of the monkey community is coward.

Yes, in my opinion, there is only one monkey among them all who is really brave and full of valour—and that is Hanuman! (2).

Tulsidas says that at this opportunity, the most wise queen Mandodari spoke with a sweet voice, 'My dear! Do not become a fire in the forest of bamboo represented by the demons. [To wit, like a single spark of fire readily destroys a forest of bamboo trees, likewise your single stubbornness would destroy the entire demon race. Say, what sense is in it?]

It is wise to return Sita back to Sri Ram and make peace with him. Otherwise, everything would soon be ruined in a fraction of a moment.³ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

आपनी आपनी भाँति सब काहू कही है ।
 मंदोदरी, महोदर, मालवान महामति,
 राजनीति पहुँच जहाँलौं जाकी रही है ॥ 1 ॥
 महामद—अंध दसकंध न करत कान,
 मीचु—बस नीच हठि कुगहनि गही है ।
 हँसि कहै, सचिव सयाने मोसों यों कहत,
 चहै मेरु उड़न, बड़ी बयारि बही है ॥ 2 ॥
 भालु, नर बानर अहार निसिचरनिको,
 सोऊ नृप—बालकनि माँगि धारि लही है ।
 देखो कालकौतुक, पिपीलिकनि पंख लागो,
 भाग मेरे लोगनिके भई चित—चही है ॥ 3 ॥
 'तोसो न तिलोक आजु साहस, समाज—साजु,
 महाराज—आयसु भो जोई, सोई सही है' ।
 तुलसी प्रनामकै बिभीषन बिनती करै,
 'ख्याल बेधे ताल, कपि केलि लंका दही है' ॥ 4 ॥

(5/24)

āpanī āpanī bhāṁti saba kāhū kahī hai.
 mandōdarī, mahōdara, mālavāna mahāmati,
 rājanīti pahuṁca jahāṁlauṁ jākī rahī hai.. 1..
 mahāmada-andha dasakandha na karata kāna,
 mīcu-basa nīca haṭhi kugahani gahī hai.
 haṁsi kahai, saciva sayānē mōsōm yōm kahata,
 cahai mēru urāna, baṛī bayāri bahī hai.. 2..
 bhālu, nara bānara ahāra nisicaranikō,
 sō'ū nṛpa-bālakani māṁgi dhāri lahī hai.
 dēkhō kālakautuka, pipīlikani paṅkha lāgō,
 bhāga mērē lōganikē bha'ī cita-cahī hai.. 3..
 'tōsō na tilōka āju sāhasa, samāja-sāju,
 mahārāja-āyasu bhō jō'ī, sō'ī sahī hai'.
 tulasī pranāmakai bibhīṣana binatī karai,
 'khyāla bēdhē tāla, kapi kēli laṅkā dahī hai'.. 4..

Ravana's Council-II

Verse no. 5/24—Mandodari as well as Mahodar and the most wise Malyawan etc.¹ all tried to make Ravana see reason as well as they could, according to their best judgment and wisdom, and as far as they were proficient in the science of politics and persuasion. [But to no avail as Ravana rebuked them all.]¹ (1).

[¹Mandodari = Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that

precedes Doha no. 16; (iii) Doha no. 35 kha—to Doha no. 37; (b) Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/17—6/29.

Prahasta = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 10.

Malyawan = (a) Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40; (ii) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 49; (b) Kavitawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 5/21—5/22.]

But, blinded as he was by his haughtiness, ego, hypocrisy and vanity, Ravana did not listen (and pay heed) to any of their advice. That wicked rascal, being under the spell of imminent death (and impelled or instigated by it), willingly followed the path of unrighteousness (which would lead to his ruin and disaster for the whole demon race).

He laughed and said derisively, ‘Ah! Our clever ministers (advisors) appear to suggest that a strong wind (gale, storm) is blowing, and so the Sumeru mountain² can blow away by its force! (2).

[²Here, Ravana compares him to Mt. Sumeru, the huge mountain on earth where the Gods have their terrestrial abode. He means that just like it is impossible for a storm, no matter how strong it blows, to shift this mighty mountain, so it is also impossible for this seemingly huge army of Lord Ram to do any harm to him or his demon army.]

Indeed, monkeys and humans are staple food of the demons by nature. Besides this, these princes have a borrowed army³.

[³To wit, Ram’s army consists of monkeys and bears who owe their allegiance to Sugriv, the betrayer of his own brother. This army does not belong to Ayodhya whence I could have thought it to be loyal to its prince Sri Ram. How can this ‘borrowed army’ be loyal to the two brothers Ram and Laxman when they find that they are sure to be annihilated in the battle field, fighting someone else’s war? They are sure to run away fearing for their own safety and families. They are not fighting for their own sake or for their own king; after all, the two brothers are strangers for their kingdom. What serious interest would this army have in the battle?]

Look at the marvel of Kaal (death, time, circumstance) that even ants have got wings⁴!

[⁴Here, Ravana compares the monkeys and bears to the humble ants; when the time for the ants come to die they develop wings so that they rush to a flame only to burn themselves to death.]

It is due to my luck that the people (i.e. the demons who are my subjects; the citizens of Lanka) have got what they desired (i.e. now they can have a good meal by devouring monkeys, bears and these two princes and douse their fire of hunger).’ (3).

Tulsidas says that it was then that Vibhishan intervened, bowed his head reverentially and said, ‘Oh great king! Really it is true that there is no one like you in the three Lokas (i.e. the terrestrial, the subterranean and the celestial worlds) who has as much courage and strength, and a strong army as you have. It will be done as you order (or wish). But, please be practical and weigh the strength of the opposite side as well—for, he (Sri Ram) had pierced the seven (tall and robust) coconut trees by a mere wish (at the time preceding Baali’s death), and the monkey Hanuman had reduced Lanka to ashes almost playfully (i.e. without the least effort). [Therefore, the enemy is not easy to be overcome as you imagine him to be.]’⁴ (4).

[⁴Vibhishan's entreaty to Ravana is continued in the next verse no. 5/25.]

(5 / 25)

दूसरो न देखतु साहिब सम रामै ।
 बेदऊ पुरान, कबि-कोबिद बिरद-रत,
 जाको जसि सुनत गावत गुन-ग्रामै ॥ 1 ॥
 माया-जीव, जग-जाल, सुभाउ, करम-काल,
 सबको सासकु, सब मै, सब जामै ।
 बिधि-से करनिहार, हरि से पालनिहार,
 हर-से हरनिहार जपै जाके नामै ॥ 2 ॥
 सोइ नरबेष जानि, जनकी बिनती मानि,
 मतो नाथ सोई, जातें भलो परिनामै ।
 सुभट-सिरोमनि कुठारपानि सारिखेहू
 लखी औ लखाई, इहाँ किए सुभ सामै ॥ 3 ॥
 बचन-बिभूषन बिभीषन-बचन सुनि
 लागे दुख दूषन-से दाहिनेउ बामै ।
 तुलसी हुमकि हिये हन्यो लाता, 'भले तात',
 चलयो सुरतरु ताकि तजि घोर धामै ॥ 4 ॥

(5/25)

dūsarō na dēkhatā sāhiba sama rāma.
 bēda purāna, kabi-kōbida birada-rata,
 jākō jasi sunata gāvata guna-grāmai.. 1..
 māyā-jīva, jaga-jāla, subhā'u, karama-kāla,
 sabakō sāsaku, saba maim, saba jāmaim.
 bidhi-sē karanihāra, hari sē pālanihāra,
 hara-sē haranihāra japaim jākē nāmaim.. 2..
 sō'i narabēṣa jāni, janakī binatī māni,
 matō nātha sō'i, jātēm bhalō parināmaim.
 subhaṭa-sirōmani kuṭhārapāni sārīkhēhū
 lakhī au lakhā'i, ihāñ ki'ē subha sāmaim.. 3..
 bacana-bibhūṣana bibhīṣana-bacana suni
 lāgē dukha dūṣana-sē dāhinē'u bāmaim.
 tulasī humaki hiyē han'yō lātā, 'bhalē tāta',
 calyō surataru tāki taji ghōra dhāmaim.. 4..

Ravana's Council-III

Verse no. 5/25—[Vibhishan was the younger brother of Ravana, and as destiny would have it and as an example of paradoxes in creation, he was a pious soul and a devotee of Lord Vishnu, about whom he had got a wind that the Lord has manifested as Lord Ram, instead of his being cruel and inimical to Gods like the rest of his race. The

reason is that very long ago when the three demon brothers, Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan, had done severe Tapa (penances and austerities) to please Brahma, the creator, the latter appeared before them and asked them to seek a boon about whatever they desired. While Ravana sought invincible powers to rule the world, Kumbhakaran sought a ridiculous boon that he should enjoy sleeping for months on end, and finally Vibhishan sought unwavering devotion for Lord Vishnu so that when the time comes to leave this mortal body and die he can find emancipation and salvation for his soul and free it from the horrors of living in a demon's body. Brahma granted their will. This is how Vibhishan became an ardent devotee of Lord Ram whom he knew to be Lord Hari in a human form.

The origin of the three brothers and their subsequent Tapa and acquiring their desired wishes has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176—to Doha no. 177.

The fact that Vibhishan was a great devotee of Lord Ram is highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8 when Hanuman meets him during the search for Sita.

Now, Vibhishan did not want ruin to come to the whole family and the entire demon race because of the reckless and non-sensical behaviour of one individual, Ravana, especially when the cause of all mischief is highly sinful, degrading, unrighteous and unethical, such as kidnapping someone's wife and forcibly keeping her captive, and trying to force oneself on her. Hence, he tried his best to persuade his brother to come to his senses and return Sita to her husband to avoid the calamity that stares on the face of the entire demon race. But as Destiny had different plans already chalked out to get rid of the cruel demons, Ravana's intellect and wisdom went for a toss; he wouldn't listen to anyone, and anyone who talked of making peace with Lord Ram and return his wife to him was deemed to be a traitor by him, and charged with sedition that deserved severe punishment.

In the present verse no. 5/25 we read how Vibhishan tried to convince Ravana to make peace with Lord Ram.

The earnest request by Vibhishan to Ravana to make peace with Lord Ram was taken in the wrong light by Ravana who regarded this plea as high treason and sedition, and therefore he not only rejected it but vented his ire on his brother by kicking Vibhishan in the chest for taking sides with his enemy, whereat Vibhishan abandoned Lanka and took refuge with Lord Ram where he was warmly welcome. Besides the present book Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 5/25—5/46, these developments are also narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 49.]

[Vibhishan tried to plead with Ravana to make peace with Lord Ram. He prayed—]

‘There is no other more exalted Lord in sight than Lord Sri Ram anywhere in the world, the Lord whose great fame, immense glories, magnificent virtues, noble deeds and excellent characters are being incessantly sung by the Vedas, Purans (i.e. the ancient scriptures and histories), the Bards (scribes and other narrators of the landmark events of the past) and the Wise Ones (i.e. sages, hermits, seers, mystics etc.) (1).

He (Lord Ram) is the ruler (sovereign, controller, Lord) of *māyā* (worldly delusions), *jīva* (living beings; the creatures of this creation), *jaga-jāla* (the deluding and entrapping web of mundane existence in this mortal world), *subhā'u* (one's inherent

tendencies, habits, inclinations, nature), **karama** (all the deeds and actions undertaken by a creature) and **kāla** (factors of time, circumstance, death); he is all-pervading, omnipresent and all encompassing, being present in each individual unit of this creation (**saba mair̥m**, **saba jāmair̥m**); and his holy name is constantly chanted (repeated, remembered, recalled) by the most exalted Gods in this creation, such as the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the concluder Shiva¹---- (2).

[¹Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 39.]

----The same Lord (the Supreme Being; the Brahm; the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul of creation) has manifested himself as a human (in the body of Lord Ram), and you would be well advised to treat and recognise him as such.

And therefore my Lord (Ravana), please pay heed to this humble servant's pleadings, and do such things which have a pleasant ending. Look! Even sage Parashuram who wields a battle axe, is most brave, strong and valorous (and who is so furious and uncompromising by nature that he had mercilessly slayed all the kings of the Kshatriya clan repeatedly to wipe them off the surface of the earth)—even he had judged and weighed the pros and cons of antagonizing and confronting Lord Ram, and had come to the conclusion that it was wise and prudent for him to make peace and amends with the Lord (at the bow-breaking ceremony at Janakpur, whereat he surrendered before Lord Ram and even gave the Lord his own bow, and went away to the forest to resume his Tapa)² (3).'

[²This event is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

Hearing these words of Vibhishan, which were albeit so adorable and truthful as to be like being jewels among words and which were undoubtedly most beneficial for Ravana, the latter regarded them as most contemptible, exceedingly derogatory, very insinuating, highly treacherous, most painful and tormenting to hear, greatly corrupt and utterly blasphemous.

Hence (literally charging Vibhishan with high treason and sedition), he got up seething with wrath, and angrily kicked Vibhishan in the chest in a most contemptuous way.

Then, saying, 'Alright dear brother, what you did is for good' (**bhalē tāta**), Vibhishan abandoned the scorching heat (represented by Ravana), and started towards the Kalpa Tree (represented by Sri Ram) to seek its shelter/shade (which would give him peace, protection and comfort from the grave danger to his life that he now faced in Lanka if he still abided there after being so severely threatened, humiliated and kicked by its king Ravana)³ (4).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41.]

विभीषण—शरणागति

(5 / 26)

जाय माय पायँ परि कथा सो सुनाई है ।

समाधान करति बिभीषनको बार बार,
 ' कहा भयो तात ! लात मारे, बड़ो भाई है ॥ 1 ॥
 साहिब, पितु समान, जातुधानको तिलक,
 ताके अपमान तेरी बड़िए बड़ाई है '।
 गरत गलानि जानि, सनमानि सिख देति,
 'रोष किये दोष, सहें समुझें भलाई है ॥ 2 ॥
 इहाँतें बिमुख भये, रामकी सरन गए
 भलो नेकु, लोक राखे निपट निकाई है'।
 मातु—पग सीस नाइ, तुलसी असीस पाइ
 चले भले सगुन, कहत 'मन भाई' है ॥ 3 ॥

vibhīṣaṇa-śaraṇāgati

(5/26)

jāya māya pāyaṁ pari kathā sō sunā'ī hai.
 samādhāna karati bibhīṣanakō bāra bāra,
 'kahā bhayō tāta! lāta mārē, baṛō bhā'ī hai.. 1..
 sāhiba, pitu samāna, jātudhānakō tilaka,
 tākē apamāna tērī baḍiē baṛā'ī hai'.
 garata galāni jāni, sanamāni sikha dēti,
 'rōṣa kiye dōṣa, sahēm samujhēm bhalā'ī hai.. 2..
 ihāṁtēm bimukha bhayē, rāmakī sarana ga'e
 bhalō nēku, lōka rākhē nipaṭa nikā'ī hai'.
 mātu-paga sīsa nā'i, tulasī asīsa pā'i
 calē bhalē saguna, kahata 'mana bhā'ī' hai.. 3..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-I

Verse no. 5/26—[Insulted by his brother Ravana, Vibhishan decided to quit Lanka and join Lord Ram. It had been his long-standing desire to take refuge with the Lord as is clear from his conversation with Hanuman in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 7. But he did not want to do anything from his side that would seem like his deserting his family and his king for selfish reasons, to switch sides in favour of an enemy of the king (Ravana) in whose realm he lived. But when Ravana kicked him he decided that it was the right time to say good-bye.

Now, as it happened, many of Ravana's close family members had also advised him against confronting Lord Ram, such as his wife Mandodari, his own spies whom he had sent behind Vibhishan to report about the strength of the Lord's army, his son Prahasta, and his old uncle Malyawan (refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 5/23, stanza no. 3 and 5/24; Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/1), as well as by his brother Kumbhakaran (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 63 where we read that like Vibhishan, Kumbhakaran too had sternly admonished Ravana for all the mischief he has done for

a wrong cause, and on his part he felt happy that at last he would get an opportunity to find liberation and deliverance from the unholy body of a demon by being killed at the hands of Lord Ram).

In the following verse nos. 5/26—to 5/46 of Geetawali we shall read in detail how Vibhishan reached Lord Ram's camp, the way he was warmly welcomed and accepted by Lord Ram.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.]

Vibhishan went straight to his mother, fell at her feet and told her the entire episode. His mother tried to comfort him, saying, 'Son, what great harm is done by his (Ravana's) kicking you? After all, he is your elder brother (1).

Firstly, he is your king and lord of the kingdom in which you live and is sustained by him. Secondly, he is an elder brother equivalent to a father. And thirdly, he is the best in the demon clan.

His insulting you is no less than a favour for you. [How? To wit, firstly this has motivated you to seek refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram, and secondly you must remember that he is a 'demon' who pays little heed to civil manners and courteous behaviour. It is his nature to be rude and haughty, every time wanting to have his way on all matters, and never tolerating dissent or opposition. So therefore, you must take it lightly.]'

Seeing that Vibhishan was full of despair, very aggrieved and highly indignant at being publicly humiliated, she continued to try to placate his ruffled feelings, and said, 'Son, getting angry and revengeful at this point time is very unwise and futile, while being reasonable and tolerant will be most advisable and would provide for the well-being of all of us (because a calamitous war is looming over the city, and at this juncture everyone ought to keep his calm so that the enemy does not get a hint that there is some sort of revolt in the kingdom) (2).

Indeed, albeit it is better for you to turn away from here and take shelter with Lord Ram (because you have been publicly insulted and declared a traitor by your brother who happens to be a king of this place, and therefore it is highly dangerous for you to stay here any longer), yet I would suggest that it would be far more better for you if you are able to resist this temptation (to leave Lanka and join Lord Ram) and hold out here as it would look good in the eyes of the world that you forgave your brother at a time when he faces a war and that you didn't become a traitor by joining the enemy and being the cause of destruction of the family and kingdom to which you belong and which has sustained you till now.¹

[¹Clever use of words by Vibhishan's wise mother! She did not support treason; she could not openly support sending Vibhishan to Sri Ram knowing full well that it would be abetting revolt and speed-up the death of her elder son, Ravana. But, at the same time, there were three prominent factors at play in her mind to give a subtle and tacit approval for Vibhishan's decision to leave Ravana and join Sri Ram.

First and foremost was that she realised that Vibhishan had his mind made up, would not listen, especially after being publicly rebuked and insulted. Secondly, in the case of a complete route of the demons and their annihilation in the war, at least one of her sons would survive to carry forward the demon clan. And thirdly, she realised that what Vibhishan had decided was indeed the correct and wise path, for by this time she must have been herself disgusted by Ravana's evil ways and sinful

demeanours. As such, here she saw an opportunity of cleaning the demon race of all evil mongers and unrighteous characters, because as an elderly woman she could not consent to excesses of unrightful behaviour by her own sons.

Being by now certain that Ravana would not listen to anyone, and therefore decimation of the demon race was now a forgone conclusion, she preferred that Vibhishan join Lord Ram's camp to escape annihilation with the rest of the family, and thereby carry on the race to the next generation. It is every mother's wish that if destruction can't be avoided, then at least one of her sons must live to carry on the family line.]

Tulsidas says that hereat, Vibhishan bowed his head at the mother's feet, took her blessings, and left the place (for Sri Ram's camp). Seeing auspicious omens on the way, he thought—"I have got what I desired (i.e. my decision is correct)" (3).

(5 / 27)

‘भाइ को सो करौं, डरौं कठिन कुफेरै ।
 सुकृत-संकट पर्यो, जात गलानिन्ह गर्यो,
 कृपानिधिको मिलौं पै मिलिकै कुबेरै ॥ 1 ॥
 जाइ गह पाँय, धाइ धनद उठाइ भेट्यो,
 समाचार पाइ पोच सोचत सुमेरै ।
 तहँई मिले महेस, दियो हित उपदेस,
 रामकी सरन जाहि ‘सुदिनु न हेरै ॥ 2 ॥
 जाको नाम कुंभज कलेस-सिंधु सोखिबेको,
 मेरो कह्यो मानि, तात ! बाँधे जिनि बेरै ।
 तुलसी मुदित चले, पाये हैं सगुन भले,
 रंक लूटिबेको मानो मनगन-ढेरै ॥ 3 ॥

(5/27)

‘bhā'ira kō sō karaum, ḍaraum kaṭhina kuphērai.
 sukṛta-saṅkaṭa paryō, jāta galāninha garyō,
 kṛpānidhikō milaurṁ pai milikai kubērai'.. 1..
 jā'i gaha pām̐ya, dhā'i dhanada uṭhā'i bhētyō,
 samācāra pā'i pōca sōcata sumērai.
 tahaṁī milē mahēsa, diyō hita upadēsa,
 rāmakī sarana jāhi 'sudinū na hērai.. 2..
 jākō nāma kumbhaja kalēsa-sindhu sōkhibēkō,
 mērō kahyō māni, tāta! bāṁdhē jini bērai'.
 tulasī mudita calē, pāyē hairṁ saguna bhalē,
 raṅka lūṭibēkō mānō manigana-ḍhērai.. 3..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-II

Verse no. 5/27—[After his discussions with his mother as narrated in verse no. 5/26 herein above, Vibhishan thought to himself—] ‘I should respect my elder brother

(Ravana), but I have a big problem. (He has threatened my life, kicked me, publicly humiliated me, and has held me to be a spy of his enemy; so staying any longer is full of grave dangers).’

So, he decided to first meet his brother Kuber (the God's treasurer), and then decide on meeting Sri Ram (1).

So he went to Kuber and clasped his feet. Kuber rushed forward and embraced him. Hearing the entire episode, he (Kuber) stood on Mt. Sumeru and became thoughtful.

Meanwhile, Vibhishan met Lord Shiva there who gave him this advice: ‘Vibhishan! You go and seek refuge at the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram; you need not wait for an auspicious day or time for it (i.e. you need not take anyone's permission or discuss the matter with anyone to take their opinion) (2).

Oh dear! The Lord whose name is like sage Agastya for the purpose of drying up the ocean of sorrows, miseries and pains, there is no need to imagine any obstacles in going to take refuge at such a Lord's holy feet. Pay heed to this singular wise advice of mine, and you do not need to make preparations for it!’

Tulsidas says, hearing this, Vibhishan's doubts were removed, and he happily started for meeting Lord Sri Ram. On the way, he met many auspicious and good omens which made him all the more enthusiastic as if a pauper is thrilled while he is on his way with the prospect of looting a treasury of jewels (3).

राग केदारा

(5/28)

संकर—सिख आसिष पाइकै ।
 चले मनहि मन कहत बिभीषन सीस महेसहि नाइकै ॥ 1 ॥
 गये सोच, भए सगुन, सुमंगल दस दिसि देत देखाइकै ।
 सजल नयन, सानंद हृदय, तनु प्रेम—पुलक अधिकाइकै ॥ 2 ॥
 अंतहु भाव भलो भाईको, कियो अनभलो मनाइकौ ।
 भइ कूबरकी लात, बिधाता राखी बात बनाइकै ॥ 3 ॥
 नाहित क्यों कुबेर घर मिलि हर हितु कहते चित लाइकै ।
 जो सुनि सरन राम ताके मैं निज बामता बिहाइकै ॥ 4 ॥
 अनायास अनुकूल सूलधर मग मुदमूल जनाइकै ।
 कृपासिंधु सनमानि, जानि जन दीन लियो अपनाइकै ॥ 5 ॥
 स्वारथ—परमारथ करतलगत, श्रमपथ गयो सिराइकै ।
 सपने कै सौतुक, सुख—सस सुर सींचत देत निराइकै ॥ 6 ॥
 गुरु गौरीस, साँइ सीतापति, हित हनुमानहि जाइकै ।
 मिलिहौं, मोहि कहा कीबे अब, अभिमत, अवधि अघाइकै ॥ 7 ॥
 मरतो कहाँ जाइ, को जानै लटि लालची ललाइकै ।
 तुलसिदास भजिहौं रघुबीरहि अभय—निसान बजाइकै ॥ 8 ॥

rāga kēdārā

(5/28)

saṅkara-sikha āsiṣa pā'ikai.
 calē manahi mana kahata bibhīṣana sīsa mahēsaḥi nā'ikai.. 1..
 gayē sōca, bha'e saguna, sumaṅgala dasa disi dēta dēkhā'ikai.
 sajala nayana, sānanda hṛdaya, tanu prēma-pulaka adhikā'ikai.. 2..
 antahu bhāva bhalō bhā'ikō, kiyo anabhalō manā'ikau.
 bha'i kūbarakī lāta, bidhātā rākhī bāta banā'ikai.. 3..
 nāhita kyōm kubēra ghara mili hara hitu kahatē cita lā'ikai.
 jō suni sarana rāma tākē maim nija bāmatā bihā'ikai.. 4..
 anāyāsa anukūla sūladhara maga mudamūla janā'ikai.
 kṛpāsindhu sanamāni, jāni jana dīna liyō apanā'ikai.. 5..
 svāratha-paramāratha karatalagata, śramapatha gayō sirā'ikai.
 sapanē kai sautuka, sukha-sasa sura sīncata dēta nirā'ikai.. 6..
 guru gaurīsa, sāmī sītāpati, hita hanumānahi jā'ikai.
 milihaum, mōhi kahā kībē aba, abhimata, avadhi aghā'ikai.. 7..
 maratō kahām jā'i, kō jānai laṭi lālaci lalā'ikai.
 tulasidāsa bhajihauṁ raghubīrahi abhaya-nisāna bajā'ikai.. 8..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-III

Verse no. 5/28—Having received the wise advice and blessings of Lord Shiva (as narrated in verse no. 5/27 herein above), Vibhishan bowed his head to him and started forthwith for Sri Ram's camp, contemplating in his mind as follows—(1).

‘I can discern auspicious signs in all the ten directions (and therefore my journey will be fruitful and for my good).’ This observation caused all his sorrows, dilemmas, uncertainties and perplexities to be removed (eliminated instantly).

His eyes were filled with tears (of joy), his heart was overcome with exhilaration, and his body was highly thrilled with surge of affectionate emotions (for Lord Ram) (2).

[He muttered to himself—] ‘Indeed, the action of my brother proved to be my boon and well-being in disguise, albeit his intention was just the opposite (for, he had wanted to scornfully reproach and humiliate me).

The Creator has made me fortunate (for he has turned circumstances in my favour), because for me, Ravana's kicking has become akin to the kick that is administered on the haunched-back¹ (3).

[¹Even as a sprained back or bent back can be straightened by a violent kick, Ravana's kick has made me turn towards Lord Sri Ram by symbolically straightening my resolve to seek redemption with him and get rid of all moral deformities and spiritual taints I had naturally inherited by the virtue of my birth as a member of the demon. Further, Sri Ram would also have no reservations accepting me because I have been ousted by Ravana himself.

This stanza also shows that there is no rancour or bitterness in the mind of Vibhishan. The following stanzas also show that in fact he considers Ravana's kicking him and throwing him out of his court as a blessing in disguise.]

Had I not been so lucky and blessed, why then would Lord Shiva have met me at the palace of Kuber and advised me to do this (i.e. seek Sri Ram's shelter immediately without further procrastinations; refer verse 5/27 above), hearing which advice I have forsaken my wickedness, conceit and imposterings, and have decided to seek refuge in the holy feet of Sri Ram's? (4).

That bearer of the trident, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (i.e. Lord Shiva), has involuntarily and without any self or vested interest, shown me this path of joy and happiness.

The Lord (Shiva) has recognized me as one of his own humble and meek servants, and that is why he has accepted me (and has shown his benevolence and munificence on me by voluntarily advising me to go and take shelter with Lord Ram without any reservations) (5).

By his (Shiva's) grace and kindness, both my worldly self-interest (in this mundane world) as well as my soul's salvation and emancipation in the after life has been ensured, and I have been freed from my torments and travails.

I marvel with exceeding wonder—is it a dream that I see, or is it for real? For in all sooth it seems that the exalted Gods themselves appear to be watering my harvest of joy, delight, happiness and bliss (i.e. I am euphoric, exhilarated and ecstatic with immense joy that is only possible when the Gods are agreeable) (6).

Now, I shall go and meet my Guru, Lord Shiva, my Lord Sri Ram (the husband of Sita), and my benefactor and well-wisher Sri Hanuman. What more I have to do now (or what more good and fortunate circumstance can I ever want and expect).

I have got my fill of the best of fruits (i.e. highest of rewards that one can ever expect to get in this life) (7).

Who knows where otherwise I would have gone and died while pursuing, and at the same time being pursued by, the intense and huge delusions, greeds and infatuations created by this sensual, illusionary world of sense objects and their accompanying torments, anguish and sorrows?²

[²To wit, if I hadn't been kicked by Ravana, and not advised by Lord Shiva to seek redemption by surrendering before Lord Ram, who knows what my bad fate would have been. Like all other demons and creatures, I would have remained entangled in this world of sense objects, spending my entire life mired in delusions and pursuing gratifications for my sense organs. When finally my life would have come to an end, I would have died an ignominious death, faced with the horrible fate of having to bear the consequences of all the deeds that I would have done in my lifetime, none of which would have contributed to my peace and bliss. I would have suffered even after death. But now the tide has turned in my favour: for now my redemption and deliverance is certain.]

Quoting Vibhishan, Tulsidas says for himself that he too would now beat the kettle-drum of victory and fearlessness which comes when one surrenders one's self to Lord Ram and develops devotion for Lord Raghubir (Ram), worshipping him and adoring him with love and affection³.

[³Tulsidas cites the example of Vibhishan to express his own joyous sentiments that he is also lucky like him to have surrendered himself to Lord Ram and have developed devotion and affection for the Lord.] (8).

(5 / 29)

पदपदुम गरीबनिवाजके ।
 देखिहौं जाइ पाइ लोचन—फल हित सुर—साधु—समाजके ॥ 1 ॥
 गई बहोर, ओर निरबाहक, साजक बिगरे साजके ।
 सबरी सुखद, गीध—गतिदायक, समन सोक कपिराजके ॥ 2 ॥
 नाहिन मोहि और कतहूँ कछु, जैसे काग जहाजके ।
 आयो सरन सुखद पदपंकज चौथे रावन—बाजके ॥ 3 ॥
 आरतिहरन सरन, समरथ सब दिन अपनेकी लाजके ।
 तुलसी 'पाहि' कहत नत—पालक मोहुसे निपट निकाजके ॥ 4 ॥

(5/29)

padapaduma garībanivājakē.
 dēkhihaum̐ jā'i pā'i lōcana-phala hita sura-sādhu-samājakē.. 1..
 ga'ī bahōra, ōra nirabāhaka, sājaka bigarē sājakē.
 sabarī sukhada, gīdha-gatidāyaka, samana sōka kapidājakē.. 2..
 nāhina mōhi aura katahūṁ kachu, jaisē kāga jahājakē.
 āyō sarana sukhada padapaṅkaja cōnthē rāvana-bājakē.. 3..
 āratiharana sarana, samaratha saba dina apanēkī lājakē.
 tulasī 'pāhi' kahata nata-pālaka mōhusē nipaṭa nikājakē.. 4..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-IV

Verse no. 5/29—‘Ah! Now I shall go and have a look at the holy feet of the friend and sustainer of the poor, the meek, the underdog, the downtrodden and the wretched ones (i.e. the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram), and consequentially I shall get the fruit (reward) of my eyes by having the Lord’s divine sight.

These august feet (of Sri Ram) are the best benefactor of all, and they are a provider of all welfare to the Gods and the community of saints (1).

Lord Sri Ram can revive lapsed happiness and bliss; he is the protector till the end; and he is the one who can rectify or redo what has already been erred or undone¹.

He is the one who has provided comfort and solace to Sabari, has liberated (i.e., delivered from this cycle of birth and death) the vulture (Jatau) and has quelled the sorrows and anguish of Sugriv, the king of monkeys (2).

[¹Reviving lapsed happiness and redoing the undone means that he can pull one back from the quagmire and slush of delusions of ignorance, infatuations, avarice/greed, lust/passion, anger/malice, discord and hordes of evils, sins and misdemeanours that the creature indulges in, or is trapped in, which together are the cause of his spiritual miseries and downfall. And once the creature is pulled out of the slush and muck, the pristine purity of the soul re-emerges from under the thick layer of these vices, resulting in its reverting back into its inherent state of blissfulness, happiness and contentedness.]

Like the crow perching on the (mast of a) ship; I do not have any shelter or protection anywhere (because there is no land in sight nor shelter from the scorching sun, or anywhere to hide), and when tormented (attacked) by the falcon-like Ravana, my only succour is to take refuge in his (Sri Ram's) lotus-like holy feet (3).

He (Lord Ram) is always alert, eager and able to protect the dignity and esteem of his devotees, and is the remover (eliminator) of the sorrows and tribulations of his refugees (i.e. those who have taken protection of his holy feet).'

Tulsidas says that by merely pleading earnestly 'Save me²', he (Lord Sri Ram) becomes the protector of those persons who are the most worthless duds in the world like me (Tulsidas)³ (4).

[²Refer also to Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/43, stanza no. 5.

³Tulsidas praises the glory of Lord Ram as the most munificent and gracious Lord anyone can ever find. For, in all sooth, even the most worthless of creatures can be sure of Lord's attention and protection if he simply says "Lord, save me". It's as easy as this; what more would one wish to have from one's lord?

This fact is endorsed by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 44.]

(5 / 30)

महाराज रामपहँ जाउँगो ।
 सुख—स्वारथ परिहरि करिहौं सोइ, ज्यों साहिबहि सुहाउँगो ॥ 1 ॥
 सरनागत सुनि बेगि बोलि हैं, हौं निपटहि सकुचाउँगो ।
 राम गरीबनिवाज निवाजिहैं, जानिहैं, ठाकुर—ठाउँगो ॥ 2 ॥
 धरिहैं नाथ हाथ माथे, एहितें केहि लाभ अघाउँगो ।
 सपनो—सो अपनो न कछू लखि, लघु लालच न लोभाउँगो ॥ 3 ॥
 कहिहौं, बलि, रोटिहा रावरो, बिनु मोलही बिकाउँगो ।
 तुलसी पट ऊतरे ओढ़िहौं, उबरी जूठनि खाउँगो ॥ 4 ॥

(5/30)

mahārāja rāmapaham̐ jā'uṁgō.
 sukha-svāratha parihari karihaum̐ sō'i, jyauṁ sāhibahi suhā'uṁgō.. 1..
 saranāgata suni bēgi bōli haim̐, haur̐ nipṭahi sakucā'uṁgō.
 rāma garībanivāja nivājihaim̐, jānihaim̐, ṭhākura-ṭhā'uṁgō.. 2..
 dharihaim̐ nātha hātha māthē, ēhitēm̐ kēhi lābha aghā'uṁgō.
 sapanō-sō apanō na kachū lakhi, laghu lālaca na lōbhā'uṁgō.. 3..
 kahihaum̐, bali, rōṭihā rāvarō, binu mōlahī bikā'uṁgō.
 tulasī paṭa ūtarē oḍhihaum̐, ubarī jūṭhani khā'uṁgō.. 4..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-V

Verse no. 5/30—'Now that I will go to the Great King Sri Ram (mahārāja rāma), I shall forsake all my personal comforts and vested self-interests, and do all those things which would please the Lord (or, which would make the Lord pleased with me and treat me favourably) (1).

As soon as the Lord hears that I have come to seek his refuge he would immediately call me (i.e. accept me), but I will feel extremely hesitant. Then he, who is a friend of the poor, the meek, the humble, the underdog, the downtrodden, the lowly and the distressed ones, would protect me, realising the fact that I have no other patron Lord (over my head to act as my benefactor and protector other than Lord Ram), or that I have no other destination or standing except the Lord (i.e. I have no where else to go except at the holy feet of Lord Ram which are now my only destination and succour in life) (2).

Forsooth, the Lord would place his hands on my head! What greater benefit or profit there is than this privilege which would satisfy me?

This world is like an illusionary dream; I shall not henceforth regard any of its (illusionary, perishable) objects as mine, and I shall also not be enticed or tempted by any of the world's lowly tendencies such as avarice, greed, lust, passions and desires (3).

I shall say, 'Lord! I say honestly, I shall survive by eating your left-overs and shall sell my self without a price at your hands (i.e. I shall serve you like a faithful and loyal servant all my life). Also, I shall wear clothes discarded by you, and shall eat morsels of food from your plate that you leave on it or ask me to partake of them.'¹ (4).

[¹This is only a way of expressing Vibhishan's desire to surrender and submit himself before Lord Ram with a sincere spirit of humility and devotion for the Lord. It does not mean that he will actually eat the left-over food from Sri Ram's plate, or wear his clothes—its highly incongruous to think that Lord Ram would stoop so low as to allow it to happen. It's below the Lord's own dignity to allow his loyal, faithful and loving devotees to do so like arrogant masters demand from their serfs and slaves. The Lord is exceptionally gracious and nice, and he will never want his devotee to behave like a slave of his. In fact, it will hurt the Lord if this happens.

But when the devotee makes these statements it is because he wishes to express his sincere desire to surrender and submit before the Lord even as he knows that the Lord will not allow this to actually happen.]

(5/31)

आइ सचिव बिभीषनके कही ।
 कृपासिंधु! दसकंधबंधु लघु चरन—सरन आयो सही ॥ 1 ॥
 बिषम बिषाद—बारिनिधि बूझत थाह कपीस—कथा लही ।
 गये दुख—दोष देखि पदपंकज, अब न साध एकौ रही ॥ 2 ॥
 सिथिल—सनेह सराहत नख—सिख नीक निकाई निरबही ।
 तुलसी मुदित दूत भयो, मानहु अमिय—लाहु माँगत मही ॥ 3 ॥

(5/31)

ā'i saciva bibhīṣanakē kahī.
 kṛpāsindhu! dasakandhabandhu laghu carana-sarana āyō sahī.. 1..
 biṣama biṣāda-bārinidhi būrata thāha kapīsa-kathā lahī.
 gayē dukha-dōṣa dēkhi padapaṅkaja, aba na sādha ēkau rahī.. 2..
 sithila-sanēha sarāhata nakha-sikha nīka nikā'ī nirabahī.
 tulasī mudita dūta bhayō, mānahu amiya-lāhu māṁgata mahī.. 3..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-VI

Verse no. 5/31—When Vibhishan reached the camp of Lord Ram, his minister or the assistant who had accompanied him, came to the Lord and said, ‘Oh Lord who is an ocean of mercy and compassion (kṛpāsindhu)! The younger brother (i.e. Vibhishan) of he who has ten necks (i.e. Ravana; “dasakandhabandhu laghu”), has come to seek refuge at your feet without any trick and deceit in his heart¹ (1).

[¹When Vibhishan left Lanka, one of his trusted aides accompanied him, and when they reached the camp of Lord Ram, the monkeys immediately accosted them. Hanuman recognized Vibhishan who told him the reason of his coming. Hanuman was glad beyond measure, and he took the companion of Vibhishan and went to Lord Ram to report. This aide of Vibhishan was well aware of all the circumstances on both sides of the camps, i.e. Lord Ram’s side as well as Ravana’s side, and he was also privy to the thoughts of Vibhishan, his lord.

So, when the messenger was accompanied by Hanuman and other chief monkey warriors to convey the reason of Vibhishan coming to Lord Ram, and that he had come with a clean conscience and had no trick in his mind while coming to seek the Lord’s shelter, it convinced Lord Ram, even more so because Hanuman had already briefed the Lord about the way he found Sita at Lanka with the help of Vibhishan, and now Hanuman was there to identify that the demon who has come to seek the Lord’s refuge is indeed the same person as Vibhishan, and no imposter.]

He (Vibhishan) was almost drowned in the sea of distress and dismay, feeling helpless and hopeless, when the story of Sugriv² (as told to him by Hanuman by way of introducing himself at the time they met in Lanka when the latter had gone there in search of Sita) gave him hope and buoyed his spirits.

[Since then, Vibhishan was longing for a chance to escape from the cage he was finding himself trapped in, and now he has found a way out.] Oh Lord, now having reached your feet, all his woes, troubles and tribulations are over, and he has no other wishes left (except that you will accept him and give him your protection). Hence, will you please accept him? (2).’

[²When Hanuman had briefed Vibhishan about how Sugriv, who was being subjected to immense torment by his elder brother Baali, was assured protection by Lord Ram and ultimately made king of Kishkindha by slaying his inimical brother, Vibhishan immediately saw a ray of hope as his condition was almost similar. He too was subjected to immense miseries at the hands of his elder brother Ravana who was doing unrighteous things to which Vibhishan did not agree, and so upon hearing Sugriv’s story he too hoped that one day he would find his freedom.]

Lord Sri Ram’s countenance and attitude looked charming and welcoming, and the minister (or messenger of Vibhishan) felt relaxed in the Lord’s presence³.

[³The Lord's demeanours and expressions showed that he was not annoyed or angry upon learning that his enemy's brother has come; he had not become alarmed or suspicious. Rather his attitude was friendly, welcoming, amiable and gracious. This instilled confidence and hope in the heart and mind of Vibhishan's messenger.]

Tulsidas says that at that moment, the minister was so happy as if he got nectar while asking for mere butter-milk⁴.

[⁴To wit, the minister of Vibhishan had not expected such kind reception in an enemy's camp, so he was pleasantly surprised when Lord Ram welcomed him.] (3).

(5 / 32)

बिनती सुनि प्रभु प्रमुदित भए ।
रीछराज, कपिराज नील-नल बोलि बालिनंदन लए ॥ १ ॥
बूझिये कहा ? रजाइ पाय नय-धरम सहित ऊतर दए ।
बली बंधु ताको जेहि बिमोह-बस बैर-बीज बरबस बए ॥ २ ॥
बाँहपगार द्वार तेरे तैं सभय न कबहूँ फिरि गए ।
तुलसी असरन-सरन स्वामिके बिरद बिराजत नित नए ॥ ३ ॥

(5/32)

binatī suni prabhu pramudita bha'ē.
rīcharāja, kaporāja nīla-nala bōli bālinandana la'ē.. 1..
būjhiyē kahā? rajā'i pāya naya-dharama sahita ūtara da'ē.
balī bandhu tākō jēhi bimōha-basa baira-bīja barabasa ba'ē.. 2..
bāmhapagāra dvāra tērē taim sabhaya na kabahūṁ phiri ga'ē.
tulasī asarana-sarana svāmikē birada birājata nita na'ē.. 3..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-VII

Verse no. 5/32—The Lord (Sri Ram) felt very glad on hearing the prayers of the messenger.

He summoned the bear king (Jamvant), the king of monkeys (Sugriv), Neel, Nal (the architects and engineers) and the son of Baali (Angad) (1).

(He asked them—) 'What do you think (and advice) on this matter?'

Getting his permission, they answered according to established edicts and traditions of Dharma (noble conduct, probity, propriety, righteousness) and Law (of politics), 'He (Vibhishan) has great strength and is the brother of the person who has willingly and forcibly sowed the seeds of enmity and hatred with you. [Hence, it is advisable to be careful of him.]¹ (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 43.

Lord Ram's advisors were very apprehensive, sceptical and weary of Vibhishan. They feared that if he is allowed inside the camp, he would secretly pass on all strategic information to the demon enemy, for after all they reasoned that blood is thicker than any other relation. But they had forgotten one important point: and it

was that Vibhishan has been kicked out of Lanka in a most ignominious and insulting way, being branded a traitor and charged with treason, and so his chances of rapprochement with his brother Ravana were not at all practically feasible.]

But, Lord Ram's advisors continued, oh the one who protects the shelter-seekers by using your arms as a rock-solid wall of support for them (*bāṁhapagāra*).

In all sooth, no one who is frightened and tormented has ever returned empty handed (i.e. without assurance of your help) from your doorway!' [To wit, oh Lord you have a reputation that you never turn back anyone who is afraid and has come to your door seeking protection and refuge: *dvāra tērē tair̥ sabhaya na kabahūṁ phiri ga'ē*.]

Tulsidas avers that the Lord's fame as the one who gives shelter to those who are shelter-less (*asarana-sarana svāmikē birada*) is well established (and well known) everywhere, and every day some instance is found to affirm its truth (*birājata nita na'ē*) (3).

(5 / 33)

हिय बिहसि कहत हनुमानसों ।
 सुमति साधु सुचि सुहृद बिभीषन बूझि परत अनुमानसों ॥ 1 ॥
 'हौं बलि जाऊँ और को जानै ?' कही कपि कृपानिधानसों ।
 छली न होइ स्वामि सनमुख, ज्यों तिमिर सातहय—जानसों ॥ 2 ॥
 खोटो खरो सभीत पालिये सो, सनेह सनमानसों ।
 तुलसी प्रभु कीबो जो भलो, सोइ बूझि सरासन—बानसों ॥ 3 ॥

(5/33)

hiya bihasi kahata hanumānasōṁ.
 sumati sādhu suci suhṛda bibhīṣana būjhi parata anumānasōṁ.. 1..
 'hauṁ bali jā'uṁ aura kō jānai?' kahī kapi kṛpānidhānasōṁ.
 chalī na hō'i svāmi sanamukha, jyōṁ timira sātahaya-jānasōṁ.. 2..
 khōṭo kharo sabhīta pāliyē sō, sanēha sanamānasōṁ.
 tulasī prabhu kībō jō bhalō, sō'i būjhi sarāsana-bānasōṁ.. 3..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-VIII

Verse no. 5/33—Then he (Lord Sri Ram) smiled (feeling amused internally) and said to Hanuman, 'In my estimate (view, opinion, understanding), Vibhishan is of a righteous mind and noble thoughts, he is saintly at heart, pure and wise, and he has an uncorrupt intellect (*sumati sādhu suci*). Besides this, he seems to be favourably inclined and has a friendly disposition (*suhṛda*).' (1).

Hanuman (the “*kapi*”, literally the monkey) replied to the Lord who is an abode of kindness, grace and munificence (“*kṛpānidhāna*”; i.e. Lord Sri Ram), ‘I say truthfully, indeed, who can know better than you on this subject? Even as darkness

cannot exist in the presence of sunlight, so an imposter, someone who is crooked, cunning and deceitful in his heart and mind, a wicked person, cannot dare to come in front of the Lord¹ (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 44.]

He is frightened and tormented; so, notwithstanding whether he is good or bad, you should sustain (and protect) him with due affection and respect as is deserving of you (i.e. without showing any undue favour while respecting his dignity and self respect, and making him feel welcomed and at home)².

Or else, (if you are still unable to decide) ask your bow and arrows and do what is suitable in such a situation (because your bow and arrows are habitually and traditionally the protector of righteous and saintly people, and are the slayer of wicked and rascals, so they will be able to advice you)³, (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 43 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

³What Hanuman means here is this: If the Lord is doubtful about whether or not to accept Vibhishan and allow him access to the Lord's camp because he is an enemy's brother and there are chances that at the last moment he may turn a turncoat, a betrayer, then it would be proper for the Lord to judge him by weighing his own strength against Vibhishan's, so that in case the latter plays any dirty tricks and betrays the Lord then the Lord should be able to handle him alone, relying on his own strength, without depending upon any of the monkeys and bears, for who knows in which way the tide of war would turn.

Hence, if the Lord has this confidence that he would be easily able to tackle Vibhishan under all situations, then he should accept him, but if he thinks that in a one-to-one face-off his personal strength and valour may not be a match against Vibhishan in case he betrays, then it will be well to reject him now in the beginning before damage is done.

Another way of interpreting this stanza is this: Hanuman means that Sri Ram has a reputation of being the protector of refuge seekers, distressed and tormented ones as well as those who are righteous, upright and humble. He has drawn Sri Ram's attention to the bow and arrow with the subtle hint that this is one of your (Sri Ram's) duties, responsibilities and promises/vows, and for which purpose, as a Kshatriya lord, you bear a bow and arrows. Besides, you have nothing to fear—in case Vibhishan tries dirty tricks, you have potent arms with you. So, why worry? It must be noted that Hanuman has only hinted at these things, but he does not give a positive reply as to whether the demon should be accepted or not—the final decision is with the Lord.]

(5 / 34)

साँचेहु बिभीषन आइहै ?

बूझत बिहँसि कृपालु, लखन सुनि कहत सकुचि सिर नाइ है ॥ 1 ॥

ऐहै कहा, नाथ ? आयो ह्यौ, क्यों कहि जाति बनाइ है ।

रावन-रिपुहि राखि, रघुबर बिनु, को त्रिभुवन पति पाइहै ॥ 2 ॥

प्रभु प्रसन्न, सब सभा सराहति, दूत-बचन मन भाइहै ।

तुलसी, 'बोलिये बेगि', लषनसों भइ महाराज-रजाइ है ॥ 3 ॥

(5/34)

sāmcēhu bibhīṣana ā'ihai?

būjhata bihaṁsi kṛpālu, lakhana suni kahata sakuci sira nā'i hai.. 1..

aihai kahā, nātha? āyō hyāṁ, kyōm kahi jāti banā'i hai.

rāvana-ripuhi rākhi, raghubara binu, kō tribhuvana pati pā'ihai.. 2..

prabhu prasanna, saba sabhā sarāhati, dūta-bacana mana bhā'ihai.

tulasī, 'bōliyē bēgi', laṣanasōm bha'i mahārāja-rajā'i hai.. 3..

Vibhishan comes to seek refuge with Lord Ram-IX

Verse no. 5/34—The kind and gracious Lord (Sri Ram) laughed wonderingly (or smiled in amusement), and asked, 'Will Vibhishan really come here?'

Hearing his query, Laxman¹ bowed his head and said hesitantly..... (1).

[¹Getting feedback from all his advisors, Lord Ram turned to his younger brother Laxman and smiled at him with amusement in his countenance. He was like asking Laxman if he thought that Vibhishan really has the guts to come near them.]

'Lord! What to talk about 'whether he will come', for he has already come here. How can we (i.e. all the monkeys, bears and the rest of the group) dare to speak cunningly in front of you; how can we ever speak a lie or ambiguously, dubiously with you?

Indeed, by keeping the enemy of Ravana in his company, who can remain established in this world except Raghubar (Sri Ram)²?' (2).

[²Keeping Vibhishan is sure to antagonise Ravana exceedingly, and incur his wrath. Who will durst do it except the Lord who is all-powerful and omnipotent? Opposing such a fierce, ferocious and invincible enemy as Ravana by instigating him by giving refuge to a person hated by him is a sure invitation to incur his strongest of revenge. It is only Lord Sri Ram who can stand up and face this enemy up-front and accept the challenge, and emerge victorious in whatever follows.]

At this reply, the Lord was pleased (because Laxman hinted that he is agreeable), the whole assembly (council of ministers) praised it, and even the messenger (who had come with Vibhishan) liked the words in his heart.

Tulsidas says that Laxman received instructions from the Lord to bring him (Vibhishan) soon (immediately and speedily)³ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 44.]

(5 / 35)

चले लेन लषन—हनुमान हैं।

मिले मुदित बूझि कुसल परसपर—सकुचत करि सनमान हैं॥ 1॥

भयो रजायसु पाँउ धारिए, बोलत कृपानिधान हैं।

दूरितें दीनबंधु देखे, जनु देत अभय—बरदान हैं॥ 2॥

सील सहस हिमभानु, तेज सतकोटि भानुहूके भानु हैं।

भगतनिको हित कोटि मातु—पितु अरिन्हको कोटि कृसानु हैं॥ 3॥

जनगुन रज गिरि गनि, सकुचत निज गुन गिरि रज परमानु हैं।

बाँह—पगारु, बोलको अबिचल बेद करत गुनगान हैं॥ 4॥
 चारु चाप—तूनीर तामरस—करनि सुधारत बान हैं।
 चरचा चलति बिभीषनकी, सोइ सुनत सुचित दै कान हैं॥ 5॥
 हरषत सुर, बरषत प्रसून सुभ सगुन कहत कल्यान हैं।
 तुलसी ते कृतकृत्य, जे सुमिरत समय सुहावनो ध्यान हैं॥ 6॥

(5/35)

calē lēna laṣana-hanumāna hair̥m.
 milē mudita bījhi kusala parasapara-sakucata kari sanamāna hair̥m.. 1..
 bhayō rajāyasu pām̐u dhāri'ē, bōlata kṛpānidhāna hair̥m.
 dūritēṁ dīnabandhu dēkhē, janū dēta abhaya-baradāna hair̥m.. 2..
 sīla sahasa himabhānu, tēja satakōṭi bhānuhūkē bhānu hair̥m.
 bhagatanikō hita kōṭi mātu-pitu arinhakō kōṭi kṛsānu hair̥m.. 3..
 janaguna raja giri gani, sakucata nija guna giri raja paramānu hair̥m.
 bām̐ha-pagāru, bōlakō abicala bēda karata gunagāna hair̥m.. 4..
 cāru cāpa-tūnīra tāmarasa-karani sudhārata bāna hair̥m.
 caracā calati bibhīṣanakī, sō'i sunata sucita dai kāna hair̥m.. 5..
 haraṣata sura, baraṣata prasūna subha saguna kahata kalyāna hair̥m.
 tulasī tē kṛtakṛtya, jē sumirata samaya suhāvanō dhyāna hair̥m.. 6..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-I

Verse no. 5/35—[Vibhishan's meeting with Lord Ram has been described also in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Presently, in Geetawali, Sundar Kand, it is narrated in verse nos. 5/35—to 5/46 herein below.]

Getting instructions from Lord Ram to bring Vibhishan to him, Laxman and Hanuman started-off to bring the latter to meet the Lord.

They happily met Vibhishan, exchanged pleasantries, paid mutual respects and asked for his well-being, both the sides feeling hesitant and uneasy all the while (1)¹.

[¹This was very natural. Both, Vibhishan on one side, and Laxman and Hanuman of the other side, belonged to opposite camps. It was the first meeting between Vibhishan and Laxman, both being brothers of two principal enemies, viz. Ravana and Lord Ram respectively. There were hidden apprehensions and suspicions and doubts on both sides.

Vibhishan wondered if his decision to come to the enemy's camp was correct and wise: has he not escaped the devil to fall in the deep sea; would Lord Ram hold him captive and subject him to more torture than what he had to endure at Lanka. No one can say anything at this juncture.

Similar apprehensions were thick in the mind of Laxman. What if Vibhishan has been sent by Ravana to act as a spy, and all the story of his being kicked out was pre-planned and a mere stratagem so that he could be planted in the enemy's camp. What if he suddenly changes sides and betrays in the thick of battle, even holding him (Laxman) and the Lord hostage?

So the two, Laxman and Vibhishan, met with coldness in the air; it was by no means a cordial welcome to a known friend. The only person who was doubtless was Hanuman as he had had first hand knowledge of Vibhishan's condition and that he was speaking the truth when he said that he has come to seek the Lord's shelter without any deceit or conceit hidden in his heart.

Hanuman was also comfortable with Vibhishan on another count: the latter had seen the former's strength and valour when Lanka was burnt, and so he wouldn't dare play dirty tricks when Hanuman was around!]

They (Laxman and Hanuman) said to Vibhishan, 'Welcome and well come! The Lord has given his permission, and the merciful, gracious and kind one (Sri Ram) is calling you. So come along with us!'

Thereafter, Vibhishan saw the Lord (Sri Ram) who is a friend of the distressed, the wretched, the lowly and the humble ones (*dīnabandhu*), sitting in a posture which appeared to give a boon (blessing) of fearlessness to those who come to him (*janu dēta abhaya-baradāna hairṁ*) (2).

(Besides this, Sri Ram is) Peaceful, courteous and tranquil like thousands of moons (*sīla sahasa himabhānu*), is like millions of suns in splendour and radiance (*tēja satakōṭi bhānuhūkē bhānu hairṁ*), is a well-wisher, favourable and benevolent benefactor of devotees like crores of parents are towards their off-springs (*bhagatanikō hita kōṭi mātu-pitu*), and is like millions of fierce and ferocious fires as far as the enemies are concerned (*arinhakō kōṭi kṛsānu hairṁ*) (3).

He (Sri Ram) considers even a miniscule, dust-like petty (or tiny) virtues of his devotees as being large (great, huge, immense and potent) enough like a mountain (*janaguna raja giri gani*)²; and the Lord feels hesitant (in front of them) while regarding his own mountain-like virtues and glories as being negligent as a particle of dust (*sakucata nija guna giri raja paramānu hairṁ*)³.

The Lord protects his refugees by the strength of his arms; the Lord protects his protectees by holding their arms so that no harm comes to them (*bāṁha-pagāru*). The Lord is extremely steadfast in his vows and promises (i.e. he is true to his words; "bōlakō abicala").

Forsooth, this is how the Vedas (ancient scriptures) sing his glories and assert about him (*bēda karata gunagāna hairṁ*) (4).

[²To wit, the Lord always acknowledges whatever goodness his devotee has, even if it is a trifling, and tries to enhance this quality manifold for the devotee's benefit so that he can get maximum rewards from it.

³The Lord never allows his devotee to feel shy, hesitant, reluctant and afraid to present himself before the Lord's glorious, majestic and exalted presence. The Lord is never proud of his own virtues and glories, for after all he is a treasure of all the excellent virtues and glorious qualities that exist in this creation. He never allows his devotees to feel overly self-conscious and guilty of low virtues and qualities vis-à-vis the Lord's; on the contrary the Lord always tries to encourage his devotees and give them honour for whatever goodness they have.]

Presently, when Vibhishan approached Lord Ram, he was causally moving his hands over his bow, arrow and quiver (to indicate to Vibhishan that he is getting them ready

for any emergency; and also as a warning to Vibhishan not to try any dirty tricks with him).

The Lord was very intently listening to all that was being said and discussed about Vibhishan (in order to judge the general opinion, and to gather nuggets of valuable information about him from his monkey and bear advisors) (5).

The Gods are happily showering flowers (to celebrate the occasion). These good omens portend future auspiciousness and good tidings (for Vibhishan, and helped him to overcome his initial shyness, hesitation and reluctance).

Tulsidas says, “Those who recall and concentrate on that pleasant moment and circumstance, are most privileged and fortunate⁴.” (6).

[⁴To wit, this was a moment when the Lord is about to give refuge to a demon, and by extension, it is a general signal to all those who are unfortunate and low-born, with a sinful body and vile demeanours, but wish to become good by turning themselves over to the care of the Lord, that they are most welcome like Vibhishan was. It was an event of momentous importance for all the devotees of Lord Ram who have doubts whether or not the Lord would accept them due to their sins and lowly nature.]

(5 / 36)

रामहि करत प्रनाम निहारिकै।
 उठे उमंगि आनंद-प्रेम-परिपूरन बिरद बिचारिकै॥ 1॥
 भयो बिदेह बिभीषन उत, इत प्रभु अपनपौ बिसारिकै।
 भलीभाँति भावते भरत-ज्यों भेंट्यो भुजा पसारिकै॥ 2॥
 सादर सबहि मिलाइ समाजहि निपट निकट बैठारिकै।
 बूझत छेम-कुसल सप्रेम अपनाइ भरोसे भारिकै॥ 3॥
 नाथ! कुसल-कल्याण-सुमंगल बिधि सुख सकल सुधारिकै।
 देत-लेत जे नाम रावरो, बिनय करत मुख चारिकै॥ 4॥
 जो मूरति सपने न बिलोकत मुनि-महेस मन मारिकै।
 तुलसी तेहि हौं लियो अंक भरि, कहत कछू न सँवारिकै॥ 5॥

(5/36)

rāmahi karata pranāma nihārikai.
 uṭhē umaṅgi ānanda-prēma-paripūrana birada bicārikai.. 1..
 bhayō bidēha bibhīṣana uta, ita prabhu apanapau bisārikai.
 bhalībhāṁti bhāvatē bharata-jyōm bhēṅṭyō bhuajā pasārikai.. 2..
 sādara sabahi milā'i samājahi nipaṭa nikaṭa baiṭhārikai.
 būjhata chēma-kusala saprēma apanā'i bharōsē bhārikai.. 3..
 nātha! kusala-kalyāna-sumaṅgala bidhi sukha sakala sudhārikai.
 dēta-lēta jē nāma rāvarō, binaya karata mukha cārikai.. 4..
 jō mūrati sapanē na bilōkata muni-mahēsa mana mārikai.
 tulasī tēhi haum liyō aṅka bhari, kahata kachū na saṁvārikai.. 5..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-II

Verse no. 5/36—Seeing Lord Sri Ram, Vibhishan bowed his head most reverentially, remembering his nature of giving refuge to the distressed and being merciful to the sinful.

Lord Ram's heart overflowed with joy, and he rose to welcome him affectionately. At the moment, on the one hand Vibhishan had lost consciousness of his surroundings, so thrilled and overwhelmed with joy he was, and on the other hand Lord Ram, remembering his earlier meeting at Chitrakoot with brother Bharat, embraced Vibhishan with wide open arms, and clasped him most affectionately to his bosom¹(2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45 along with Chaupai line nos.1-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

The meeting between Lord Ram and Vibhishan was most cordial, warm and welcoming. Compare this with the way Laxman and Vibhishan had met in verse no. 5/35, stanza nos. 1-2. It was a formal meeting, but the way Lord Ram met Vibhishan was more informal and warm. Whatever misgivings Vibhishan may have harboured in his heart were immediately dispelled, and he felt that he is warmly accepted, without any reservations. This was a strategic move by Lord Ram: by a simple warm hug he had made Vibhishan feel comfortable and homely, and this first interaction helped to cement a tie that lasted for a lifetime. Vibhishan's heart was injured by the way his own brother Ravana had treated him, and in this background when he received a warm bear-hug, his happiness knew no bounds. He decided that this is the right place to be: for here in Lord Ram's camp his self respect and dignity would be shown due respect and honour.

Vibhishan was all the more overjoyed as he found that whatever he had heard of Lord Ram's nature and attitude proved to be absolutely true and correct. This instilled reassurance in his heart and gave comfort to his mind.]

Then, introducing him to all his companions, Lord Ram seated him near himself, and accepting him as one of his own men, reassured him and asked about his welfare² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 46.]

Vibhishan replied, 'Oh Lord! Those who chant your name are highly regarded by Brahma (the creator) and provided by all welfare, happiness and peace by him, so what to talk of me³! (4).

[³That is, those who merely take your holy name are blessed by good fortune by the Creator, but here I am sitting directly in front of you, hence these benefits are guaranteed to me in abundance. The Creator would shower me with his blessings. I am indeed so fortunate that you have seated me beside you.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Doha no. 47.]

Even eminent sages and gods find it difficult to have a vision of the Lord in their dreams despite all austerities and penances they do. That same Lord has embraced me!

Say, in all sooth, how lucky I am indeed! I do not boast, nor am trying to please you or flatter you. [To wit, it is a fact.] (5).'

(5 / 37)

करुणाकरकी करुणा भई ।
 मिटि मीचु, लहि लंक संक गइ, काहूसो न खुनिस खई ॥ 1 ॥
 दसमुख तज्यो दूध-माखी-ज्यौं, आपु काढ़ि साढ़ी लई ।
 भव-भूषन सोइ कियो बिभीषन मुद मंगल-महिमामई ॥ 2 ॥
 बिधि-हरि-हर, मुनि-सिद्ध सराहत, मुदित देत दुंदुभी दई ।
 बारहि बार सुमन बरषत, हिय हरषत कहि जै जै जई ॥ 3 ॥
 कौसिक-सिला-जनक-संकट हरि भृगुपतिकी टारी टई ।
 खग-मृग सबर-निसाचर, सबकी पूंजी बिनु बाढ़ी सई ॥ 4 ॥
 जुग-जुग कोटि-कोटि करतब, करनी न कछू बरनी नई ।
 राम-भजन-महिमा हुलसी हिय, तुलसीहूकी बनि गई ॥ 5 ॥

(5/37)

karunākarakī karunā bha'ī.
 miṭi mīcu, lahi laṅka saṅka ga'i, kāhūsō na khunisa kha'ī.. 1..
 dasamukha tajyō dūdha-mākhī-jyauṁ, āpu kāḍhi sārḥī la'ī.
 bhava-bhūṣana sō'i kiyō bibhīṣana muda maṅgala-mahimāma'ī.. 2..
 bidhi-hari-hara, muni-sid'dha sarāhata, mudita dēta dundubhī da'ī.
 bārahi bāra sumana baraṣata, hiya haraṣata kahi jai jai ja'ī.. 3..
 kausika-silā-janaka-saṅkaṭa hari bhṛgupatikī ṭārī ṭa'ī.
 khaga-mṛga sabara-nisācara, sabakī pūṁjī binu bārḥī sa'ī.. 4..
 juga-juga kōṭi-kōṭi karataba, karanī na kachū baranī na'ī.
 rāma-bhajana-mahimā hulāsī hiya, tulasīhūkī bani ga'ī.. 5..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-III

Verse no. 5/37—In this way, when the Lord who shows mercy, compassion and grace showered his blessings and benedictions upon Vibhishan, the latter's worries and lamentations regarding his fear of death were erased¹, he got the kingdom of Lanka as a reward², and the constant fear of Ravana that had made him sore affright was eliminated (from his heart and mind).

Verily, Vibhishan's inner-self felt so blessed and contented that he no more harboured any ill-will, malice, hatred, discord and suspicion towards anyone, and he had no fear from any quarter (1).

[¹Prior to his being accepted by Lord Ram, Vibhishan was constantly tormented by the fear of death, for he knew that once Ravana had become openly hostile towards him, the fear of death always loomed over his head. But now he became fearless.

²Lord Ram had anointed him as the 'king of Lanka' to express his thanks to him for coming to join him in the war. This was another master stroke of wise military strategy of the Lord: for now Vibhishan had all the more reasons to remain loyal to the Lord because if the Lord wins the impending war he would be made the next king of Lanka. Otherwise, if Ravana survives and the tide of war does not turn favourable, the worst affected would be Vibhishan. Ravana would go hammer and

tong after him, baying for his blood, and no matter where he hides he would be caught and summarily executed.]

Vibhishan—who was summarily discarded with utter contempt like a ‘fly in the milk’ by Ravana who had usurped the entire cream (i.e. the entire wealth of Lanka without sharing it with his brothers)—was made a jewel of the world by the virtue of his being accepted by Lord Ram and more so by taking the side of righteousness and morality (represented by Lord Ram) vis-à-vis unrighteousness and immorality (represented by Ravana), and was bestowed with the fame and glory which were not only fine but also rare and unprecedented (2).

Brahma, Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Sages, Hermits and Siddhas (mystics; the attained ones) began to praise his luck and good fortune, while the Gods played kettle-drums (and other musical instruments) in delight and showered flowers repeatedly with a joyful heart and cries of applause for Vibhishan (3).

He (Sri Ram) had removed the troubles and tribulations of sage Vishwamitra (by protecting his fire sacrifice)³, Janak (by breaking the bow and marrying his daughter Sita when the king faced a piquant situation as no one else had been able to even move the bow, resulting in the king worrying about the fate of his daughter)⁴, and the rock-like Ahilya (when the Lord had given her deliverance by touching her with his feet)⁵. Not only this, the Lord had vanquished the terror caused by Parshuram⁶.

*At the same time, he had improved the stature (and the fate) of the bird (Jatau)⁷, the deer (Marich)⁸, Sabari (the tribal woman)⁹ and the demon (Vibhishan)¹⁰ even without their having any capital (good deeds, high birth, righteousness, noble characters etc.) at their disposal (4).

[*Refer also to Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/43, stanza no. 1.

³Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/47—1/56; 1/60, stanza no. 1; 1/66.

⁴Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/73—1/90.

⁵Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/57—1/59.

⁶Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/90, stanza no. 7.

⁷Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3/12—3/16.

⁸Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3/3—3/7.

⁹Refer: Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 3/17/1—3/17/8.

¹⁰Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 5/33—5/37.]

The Lord has numerous such divine, marvelous and spectacular deeds to his credit spread over different ages (eras, Yugs)—nothing astonishing or new has been said here.

Tulsidas asserts about himself that by remembering such excellent virtues of the Lord, there is an upsurge of emotional warmth, devotion and affection for the Lord in his heart; he wants to worship, do service to, and submit himself all the more to Lord Ram. The excellent glories and renowned fame and fine virtues of the Lord have firmly enshrined themselves in his (Tulsidas') heart, and this has made him most lucky and fortunate too (like the ones described above) (5).

भयो बिसोक बिलोकि बिभीषन, नेह देह-सुधि-सीव गई ॥ 1 ॥
 उठि दाहिनी ओरतें सनमुख सुखद माँगि बैठक लई।
 नखसिख निरखि-निरखि सुख पावत भावत कछु, कछु और भई ॥ 2 ॥
 बार कोटि सिर काटि, साटि लटि, रावन संकरपै लई।
 सोइ लंका लखि अतिथि अनवसर राम तृनासन-ज्यों दर्ई ॥ 3 ॥
 प्रीति-प्रतीति-रीति-सोभा-सरि, थाहत जहँ जहँ तहँ घई।
 बाहु-बली, बानैत बोलको, बीर बिस्वबिजई जई ॥ 4 ॥
 को दयालु दूसरो दुनी, जेहि जरनि दीन-हियकी हई ?
 तुलसी काको नाम जपत जग जगती जामति बिनु बई ॥ 5 ॥

(5/38)

mañjula mūrati maṅgalama'ī.

bhayō bisōka bilōki bibhīṣana, nēha dēha-sudhi-sīnva ga'ī.. 1..
 uṭhi dāhiniṁ ōratēm sanamukha sukhada māṁgi baiṭhaka la'ī.
 nakhasikha nirakhi-nirakhi sukha pāvata bhāvata kachu, kachu aura bha'ī.. 2..
 bāra kōṭi sira kāṭi, sāṭi laṭi, rāvana saṅkarapai la'ī.
 sō'i laṅkā lakhi atithi anavasara rāma ṭṛnāsana-jyōm da'ī.. 3..
 prīti-pratīti-rīti-sōbhā-sari, thāhata jahaṁ jahaṁ tahaṁ gha'ī.
 bāhu-balī, bānaita bōlakō, bīra bisvabija'ī ja'ī.. 4..
 kō dayālu dūsarō duni, jēhi jarani dīna-hiyakī ha'ī?
 tulasī kākō nāma japata jaga jagatī jāmati binu ba'ī.. 5..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-IV

Verse no. 5/38—Seeing the most attractive and auspicious image (of Lord Ram), Vibhishan became free from all sorrows, anguish and miseries, and he was so enchanted and enraptured by its captivating view that he encroached upon the limits of the awareness of his body (i.e. he became unaware of himself or his surroundings)¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45.]

Then he (Vibhishan) got up from the right side (where he had been seated upto now) and asked to be seated right in front of the Lord, facing him². There, he observed the Lord intently from the toe-nails to the tuft of hair on his head, and became exhilarated (at his stupendous beauty and charm). He wanted something different while something else happened³ (2).

[²By sitting right in front, Vibhishan wished to ascertain the facial expressions of Lord Ram to judge for himself if he is sincerely welcome as a friend, or was there some sort of doubt in the mind of Lord Ram which would be evident from the Lord's expressions. Besides this, it will also give the Lord an opportunity to judge Vibhishan by looking directly into his eyes. The resultant trust that would be built between them would be more robust and sustaining than what they have garnered about each other by way of hearing from others.

³What was that he wanted or expected, and what different thing happened? This question is answered in the next stanza. Vibhishan had merely expected to be

accepted by Lord Ram so that he could escape the wrath of his brother Ravana. He came as a refugee, and a refugee in a king's court can't expect the same status as the original inhabitants of the country immediately, with full honour as is bestowed on others in the royal court. But the treatment he got at the hands of Lord Ram was beyond his imagination. First, the Lord embraced him as if he was very dear to him and were like his own brother Bharat (refer: verse no. 5/36, stanza no. 2 herein above). Second, he seated Vibhishan close to him like he would make his close confidantes and ministers sit (refer: verse no. 5/36, stanza no. 3 herein above). Third, the Lord anointed him as the next king of Lanka (refer: verse no. 5/38, stanza no. 3 herein below).

What more would Vibhishan want; he got more than was due to him. So he was astonished and felt exceedingly obliged towards Lord Ram.]

The Lanka which Ravan had got as a boon (blessing) from Shiva after having offered his head to him numerous of times (literally crores of times), and suffering immense troubles and difficulties to get this boon (“*bāra kōṭi sira kāṭi, sāṭi laṭi, rāvana saṅkarapai laṭi*”), the same realm of Lanka was given by Lord Ram to Vibhishan even though the latter never asked for it, with great hesitance as if this was an inadequate gift by the Lord to his guest who had come uninvited and sudden at a time when the Lord had nothing more to offer him as a gift that is usually given to an honoured guest, for the Lord regarded this gift (of offering him the kingship of Lanka) as very inconsequential and humble like offering a valueless reed or a blade of grass to an honourable guest that does not match its stature or standing in society (in the absence of anything more valuable or worthwhile that could be given to be given to him at the moment) (*sō'i laṅkā lakhi atithi anavasara rāma ṭṇāsana-jyōm daṭi*)⁴. (3).

[⁴Or conversely, it can also mean that Sri Ram gave Vibhishan a seat made of grass or reed, which is a humble seat for a king, in the absence of a better seating arrangement. And this seat of grass was symbolically the throne of Lanka. Since Lanka had been stripped bare of all its gold, fortunes and fames of being invincible at the hands of Hanuman earlier, Sri Ram indeed felt reluctant to give such a desolate city as a reward to Vibhishan. Another probable reason for his reluctance and hesitation was the fear that he (Sri Ram) would go down in history as the one who—inspite of being the epitome of righteousness and probity—had rewarded a person for treason and betrayal because, notwithstanding the spiritual aspects of devotion, humility, worship, surrender before the Lord, abandoning those who are evil and vile etc., what Vibhishan had actually done was exactly this—treason and betrayal. Thirdly, Ravana was still alive, the outcome of the war may not be certain or known now. So, Sri Ram thought—what if Ravana is not killed, or the war ends in such a way that the throne is retained by the latter. What shall he give to Vibhishan then? This is why Lord Ram felt hesitant and shy at the time of anointing Vibhishan in a symbolic manner as the king of Lanka.

Remember: Vibhishan was not an ordinary defecting demon who came to join an enemy's camp out of disenchantment with his own king Ravana, or for seeking personal gains when he realized that the invading army was stronger and sure to conquer the land. He was a prince in his own right, and an apparent heir to the throne of Lanka should the present king Ravana pre-decease him. Welcoming a great prince who would be the next king of the country by offering him a seat of grass was not in accordance to his royal stature. This is also why Lord Ram felt hesitant.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it; and (b) Kavitawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/52.]

He (Sri Ram) is like a river of love and affection who upholds mutual trust and endearing relationships, one who obeys the laws and regulations of code of good behaviour and respect for each other, and one who generally is adorned by excellent virtues, adorable qualities and immaculate character that are like his ornaments (prīti-pratīti-rīti-sōbhā-sari).

Wherever and whenever attempts are made to measure his glorious virtues and noble characters, they are found to be measureless and fathomless (thāhata jahaṁ jahaṁ tahaṁ gha'ī).

The Lord's arms are very strong and his is exceedingly valiant (bāhu-balī). He is steadfast in his vows (i.e. he is true to his words and promises; "bānaita bōlakō"). And he is the conqueror of those who are world-conquerors themselves (e.g. sage Parshuram, demon Ravana; "bīra bisvabija'ī ja'ī") (4).

Who else is so merciful, compassionate and kind in this world that he has removed (erased, eliminated) the burnings (anguish, sorrows, tribulations, miseries, agonies) in the heart of those who are the underdogs, who are downtrodden, poor, humble, meek and lowly (kō dayālu dūsarō dunī, jēhi jarani dīna-hiyakī ha'ī)?

Tulsidas declares assertively—who else is there in this world, chanting (or repeating, remembering, recalling, taking shelter of) whose name the earth gives produce even without sowing (i.e. one gets the auspicious blessings or rewards even without doing noble and virtuous deeds) (tulasī kākō nāma japata jaga jagatī jāmāti binu ba'ī)⁵. (5)

[⁵Tulsidas does not advise one to become indolent, lithargic and lazy. It is evident that the earth will not produce anything without sowing seeds. It's absolutely absurd. He was a poet, so his words should be understood in their true 'spirit content' rather than the 'letter content'. For him, Sri Ram's holy name is far superior than Sri Ram himself, and personifies dignity and holiness. When one constantly remembers the Lord's name it guards him from any evil doings, evil thoughts or evil mongerings. So, what Tulsidas' intention is, is to safeguard us from vices, sins and evils by keeping the holy name as a constant guard against these vices and misdemeanours, and not to sit idle at home doing nothing, with a rosary in hand and saying 'Ram-Ram'. That will be of no use. Advice of philosophers should be properly understood and interpreted to be of any benefit. This should clear the air of accusation which Tulsidas is generally subjected to—that he advocates indolence, lithargy and in-action in the name of chanting Lord Sri Ram's holy name.]

(5 / 39)

सब भाँति बिभीषनकी बनी ।

कियो कृपालु अभय कालहुतें, गइ संसृति-साँसति घनी ॥ 1 ॥

सखा लषन-हनुमान, संभु गुर, धनी राम कोसलधनी ।

हिय ही और, और कीन्हीं बिधि, रामकृपा औरै ठनी ॥ 2 ॥

कलुष-कलंक-कलेस-कोस भयो जो पद पाय रावन रनी ।

सोइ पद पाय बिभीषन भो भव-भूषन दलि दूषन-अनी॥ 3॥
 बाँह-पगार, उदार-सिरोमनि, नत-पालक, पावन पनी।
 सुमन बरषि रघुबर-गुन बरनत, हरषि देव दुंदुभी हनी॥ 4॥
 रंक-निवाज रंक राजा किए, गए गरब गरि गरि गनी।
 राम-प्रनाम महामहिमा-खनि, सकल सुमंगलमनि-जनी॥ 5॥
 होय भलो ऐसे ही अजहुँ गये राम-सरन परिहरि मनी।
 भुजा उठाइ, साखि संकर करि, कसम खाइ तुलसी भनी॥ 6॥

(5/39)

saba bhāṁti bibhīṣanakī banī.
 kiyo kṛpālu abhaya kālahutēm, ga'i sansṛti-sāṁsati ghanī.. 1..
 sakhā laṣana-hanumāna, sambhu gura, dhanī rāma kōsaladhanī.
 hiya hī aura, aura kīnhīm bidhi, rāmakṛpā aurai ṭhanī.. 2..
 kaluṣa-kalaṅka-kalēsa-kōsa bhayō jō pada pāya rāvana ranī.
 sō'i pada pāya bibhīṣana bhō bhava-bhūṣana dali dūṣana-anī.. 3..
 bāmha-pagāra, udāra-sirōmani, nata-pālaka, pāvana panī.
 sumana baraṣi raghubara-guna baranata, haraṣi dēva dundubhī hanī.. 4..
 raṅka-nivāja raṅka rājā ki'ē, ga'ē garaba gari gari ganī.
 rāma-pranāma mahāmahimā-khani, sakala sumaṅgalamani-janī.. 5..
 hōya bhalō aisē hī ajahuṁ gayē rāma-sarana parihari manī.
 bhujā uṭhā'i, sākhī saṅkara kari, kasama khā'i tulasī bhanī.. 6..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-V

Verse no. 5/39—Vibhishan had achieved everything in all respects. The merciful Lord Sri Ram made him fearless from the God of Death, as well as from the torments of this world (1).

He (Vibhishan) found good friends such as Laxman and Hanuman, Guru such as Lord Shiva, and his lord and master such as Lord Ram. He had something different in his heart (fear of Ravana and worry for his own safety), but with Lord Ram's mercy an opposite prevailed (i.e. he became fearless and the happiest being in the world) (2).

Ravana, who as a demon, had become the treasury of sins, most disgraceful in his race, and a storehouse of wickedness upon becoming the king of Lanka, but the same post or designation (of being a demon king of Lanka) turned Vibhishan into the jewel of his race, and a slayer (eliminator) of all that was un-righteous and un-holy (3).

The Gods showered flowers, beat trumpets and sang the glory of Lord Ram whose arms are like walls to protect the distressed (bāmha-pagāra), who is the most magnanimous and kind Lord of all the Lords (udāra-sirōmani), who is an eternal maverick sustainer of the universe (nata-pālaka), and who makes righteous vows and keep them diligently (pāvana panī) (4).

The helper of the poor (i.e. Lord Ram) had made the pauper Vibhishan into a King (of Lanka) (*raṅka-nivāja raṅka rājā ki'ē*). This crushed the false pride of the so-called millionaires and super-rich people (who boast of being charitable by giving only a miniscule portion of their fortunes as charity or alms while hiding the bulk of their wealth and treasures) (*ga'ē garaba gari gari ganī*).

Bowing before Lord Ram and submitting one's self to the Lord is like a rich mine that bestows all types of honour, fame, achievements and glory that are priceless (*rāma-pranāma mahāmahimā-khani*)¹.

[¹That is, if one surrenders one's self before the Lord, all the goodness that exists in this world, all the auspicious virtues and qualities, all the good fortunes and luck, all sorts of peace and happiness—everything becomes easily accessible by him.] (5).

Tulsidas says that if one goes to seek refuge at the feet of Lord Ram even now, all these benefits can be had by him. He says this with Lord Shiva as a witness, raising his hands and making a solemn oath that what he says is the truth, without gainsay, and he is very definite about it² (6).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 50; and (ii) Doha no. 60 along with Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede it.]

(5 / 40)

कहो, क्यों न बिभीषनकी बनै ?
गयो छाडि छल सरन रामकी, जो फल चारि चार्यौ जनै ॥ 1 ॥
मंगलमूल प्रनाम जासु जग, मूल अमंगलके खनै ।
तेहि रघुनाथ हाथ माथे दियो, को ताकी महिमा भनै ? ॥ 2 ॥
नाम—प्रताप पतितपावन किए, जे न अघाने अघ अनै ।
कोउ उलटो, कोउ सूधो जपि भए राजहंस बायस—तनै ॥ 3 ॥
हुतो ललात कृसगात खात खरि, मोद पाइ कोदो—कनै ।
सो तुलसी चातक भयो जाचत राम स्यामसुंदर घनै ॥ 4 ॥

(5/40)

kahō, kyōm na bibhīṣanakī banai?
gayō chāḍi chala sarana rāmakī, jō phala cāri cāryauṁ janai.. 1..
maṅgalamūla pranāma jāsu jaga, mūla amaṅgalakē khanai.
tēhi raghunātha hātha māthē diyō, kō tākī mahimā bhanai?.. 2..
nāma-pratāpa patitapāvana ki'ē, jē na aghānē agha anai.
kō'u ulaṭō, kō'u sūdhō japi bha'ē rājahansa bāyasa-tanai.. 3..
hutō lalāta kṛsagāta khāta khari, mōda pā'i kōdō-kanai.
sō tulasī cātaka bhayō jācata rāma syāmasuṁdara ghanai.. 4..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-VI

Verse no. 5/40—Say, why should Vibhishan not be rewarded (or be treated as being most fortunate and lucky)? For, after forsaking all trickery, deception, pretension, cheating and stratagem, he had come to seek refuge with and shelter of Lord Sri Ram who gives all the four types of celebrated fruits to all the four types of devotees¹ (1).

[¹The 4 types of fruits are—“Artha” = wealth, prosperity; “Dharma” = virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety; “Kaam” = fulfilled of all desires; and “Moksha” = emancipation, salvation, liberation and deliverance from the shackles of this mundane, delusory world.

The 4 types of devotees are as follows— (a) “Aarta” = one who worships the Lord to get rid of their sorrows, miseries, agonies, troubles and tribulations; (b) “Arthaarthi” = those who worship the Lord for material gain, wealth, prosperity etc.; (c) “Jigyaasu” = those who worship the Lord in order to seek Him, or find out about His true nature, the Supreme Truth, the essence of existence etc.; and (d) “Gyani” = those who have realised Him, and worship Him selflessly. They are also aware of the true nature of the soul.

Refer: Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/15, stanza no. 3; verse no. 7/16, stanza no. 2; verse no. 7/17, stanza no. 2.]

Doing ‘Pranam’ (i.e. paying obeisance by bowing the head) to Lord Sri Ram is the root of all auspiciousness and well-beings, and is potent enough to uproot all inauspiciousness and evil forebodings in this world. Verily, it is the same Raghunath (Sri Ram) who had placed his benevolent and merciful hands on the head of Vibhishan. Say, how can one describe his (Vibhishan's) privilege and good luck, and the resultant fame that he acquired for himself? (2).

The power and might of the Lord's holy Name has purified even those sinners and vile ones who were never tired of doing evil, sinning and committing misdemeanours and unrighteousness of all kinds². Some had chanted his name in the correct order, and others in the reverse order (i.e. some as RAAM and some as MARAA)³, and by doing so, even those whose characters and deeds were like crows became as exalted as royal swans (3).

[²The glory of Lord Ram's holy name is extolled in (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; (b) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 7/89—7/93; and (c) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 46, 64—70.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 19. The legendary sage Valmiki had repeated Lord Ram's name in the reverse order to achieve an exalted stature amongst the greatest sages and seers of his time.]

[Talking about himself, Tulsidas says—] ‘He, who was of a weak body (i.e. under-nourished, emaciated) and had to eat husk (i.e. eat worthless, left-over food), who yearned for bits and morsels of food, and had to content himself with ordinary food and felt happy even to get it (in short, who was extremely impoverished and hungry to even find sufficient to feed his stomach)—now is so privileged that he is able to directly ask or seek like a Papiha (a sparrow hawk) from the beautiful dark cloud representing Sri Ram⁴ (4).

[⁴Tulsidas cites his early life when he was so poor that he had to beg for food, but no one cared for him. Now that he has declared himself as a servant and devotee of the Lord, everyone around wishes to please him and get his blessings, and therefore

there is no dearth of anything that he needs. All this is because of one factor: that is his surrendering before Lord Ram.

Realizing the import of this, Tulsidas has decided not to seek from anybody other than his Lord Ram who is compared here to the dark rain-bearing clouds. The cloud is symbolic of magnanimity, generosity and charity, and used as a metaphor for life and its abundant pleasures and joys. The cloud showers rain which sustains life on this earth so much so that when it rains and the dark cloud is cited in the sky, the farmer rejoices and the animals begin to sing in the garden and the forests. The 'Papiha' asks for rain-drops from the cloud to satisfy its own thirst, but the gracious and kind cloud gives rain not only to him, but at his behest or on his excuse, to the whole world at large.

Similarly, Tulsidas asks from Lord Sri Ram for his own benefit, but the magnanimous Lord showers his grace and munificence on the whole creation. Tulsidas rejoices at the Lord's grace and benevolent nature.]

(5 / 41)

अति भाग बिभीषनके भले ।
 एक प्रनाम प्रसन्न राम भए, दुरित-दोष-दारिद दले ॥ 1 ॥
 रावन-कुंभकरन बर माँगत सिव-बिरचि बाचा छले ।
 राम-दरस पायो अबिचल पद, सुदिन सगुन नीके चले ॥ 2 ॥
 मिलनि बिलोकि स्वामि-सेवककी उकटे तरु फूले-फले ।
 तुलसी सुनि सनमान बंधुको दसकंधर हँसि हिये जले ॥ 3 ॥

(5/41)

ati bhāga bibhīṣanakē bhalē.
 ēka pranāma prasanna rāma bha'ē, durita-dōṣa-dārida dalē.. 1..
 rāvana-kumbhakarana bara māṁgata siva-birañci bācā chalē.
 rāma-darasa pāyō abicala pada, sudina saguna nīkē calē.. 2..
 milani bilōki svāmi-sēvakakī ukaṭhē taru phūlē-phalē.
 tulasī suni sanamāna bandhukō dasakandhara haṁsi hiyē jalē.. 3..

Vibhishan meets Lord Sri Ram-VII

Verse no. 5/41—Vibhishan is extremely fortunate for Lord Sri Ram was pleased by his bowing his head once, and, as a result, all his sins, faults and poverties were eliminated (erased, removed) for good (1).

At the time when Ravana and Kumbhakarn propitiated Lord Shiva and Brahma respectively and received boons, both of them were deceived by the latter two¹.

But even at that time, Vibhishan was blessed with a boon that would bring him stable good fortune and eternal glory and exalted stature (by way having devotion for Lord Ram) which fructified and took effect when he started on his journey to meet the Lord².

Forsooth, Vibhishan had embarked on his journey to meet the Lord on an auspicious day and time as he was blessed with a stable stature and eternity of life by simply having a divine sight of Lord Ram. (2).

[¹To wit, these two Gods used clever ploys and use of words that had double meaning and interpretations to mislead these two demon brothers so that when the time came to ask for boons they asked for things that made no sense, and rendered them vulnerable. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 177.

Both Ravana and Kumbhakaran had asked and got boons that related to worldly fame and comfort; they had not sought anything for their spiritual welfare. This single error on their part proved to be their undoing, for the body is perishable and one or the other day it has to come to an end. And that is what happened: both the brothers died in the war of Lanka. Whereas their brother Vibhishan got the blessing of devotion for Lord God that made him live a life for a long time that transcended the era. It is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas that Vibhishan ruled over Lanka till the time Lord Ram himself left this world, and at that time the Lord asked Vibhishan to stay back and look after the remnants of the demon race. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 32—34.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 177 where Vibhishan has asked for the boon of having devotion for Lord God. And as it turned out, this paved his way for his meeting and acceptance by Lord Ram who was a manifestation of the 'Lord God'.]

Watching this union of the Lord and his servant (devotee, follower Vibhishan), even the dried-up trees blossomed once again, bearing flowers and fruits.

Tulisdas says that when Ravana heard that his brother had been welcomed by Sri Ram, he laughed overtly, but jealousy and envy burnt his heart³ (3).

[³He laughed externally to hide his embarrassment, to conceal his annoyance and indignation that his own brother has joined his enemy's camp, and to show his utter contempt for Vibhishan. But internally he was scared stiff because Vibhishan knew all the secrets of Lanka, and this may prove dangerous when the war starts.

At the same time as this, Ravana had an inkling and his sixth sense told him that Sri Ram was no ordinary human prince, but was actually an incarnation of the Supreme Lord himself in a human form (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 22 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow it).

He was repeatedly told that this is a fact, first by Marich (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it), then by his own wife Mandadori (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede it), his old minister and uncle Malyawan (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 40), and later on by his own brother Kumbhakaran (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 62 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow it).

Ravana felt envious of Vibhishan because the latter had reached the Lord even before he himself had a chance to see him face to face and seek deliverance from his gross body of a demon. Also because the Lord had welcomed Vibhishan and had put his hand on his head, something for which all souls yearned but rarely had the privilege to get.

Then, Lord Ram had declared Vibhishan as the future king of Lanka, and this peeved Ravana the most and made him burn out of jealousy, as no king would ever want that his crown should be so easily usurped in favour of someone whom he despises.]

(5 / 42)

गये राम सरन सबकौ भलो ।
 गनी—गरीब, बड़ो—छोटो, बुध—मूढ़, हीनबल—अतिबलो ॥ 1 ॥
 पंगु—अंध, निरगुनी—निसंबल, जो न लहै जाचे जलो ।
 सो निबह्यो नीके, जो जनमि जग राम—राजमारग चलो ॥ 2 ॥
 नाम—प्रताप—दिवाकर कर खर गरत तुहिन ज्यों कलिमलो ।
 सुतहित नाम लेत भवनिधि तरि गयो अजामिल—सो खलो ॥ 3 ॥
 प्रभुपद प्रेम प्रनाम—कामतरु सद्य बिभीषनको फलो ।
 तुलसी सुमिरत नाम सबनिको मंगलमय नभ—जल थलो ॥ 4 ॥

(5/42)

gayē rāma sarana sabakau bhalō.
 ganī-garība, baṛō-chōṭō, budha-mūrha, hīnabala-atibalō.. 1..
 paṅgu-andha, niragunī-nisambala, jō na lahai jācē jalō.
 sō nibahyō nīkē, jō janami jaga rāma-rājamāraga calō.. 2..
 nāma-pratāpa-divākara kara khara garata tuhina jyōm kalimalō.
 sutahita nāma lēta bhavanidhi tari gayō ajāmila-sō khalō.. 3..
 prabhupada prēma pranāma-kāmataru sadya bibhīṣanakō phalō.
 tulasī sumirata nāma sabanikō maṅgalamaya nabha-jala thalō.. 4..

Benefits of Taking Shelter with Lord Ram

Verse no. 5/42—Everyone stands to gain and have welfare by seeking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram—whether he is rich or impoverished, whether he is of high or low birth, of whatever stature and position in society he is, whether he is wise or an idiot, and whether he is weak or most strong and valiant (1).

Even those who are lame, blind, without any virtues and qualities, and most impoverished and wretched, who do not even get water to drink when desired—if they took birth in this world and followed the highway that leads to Lord Ram (i.e. the path of devotion, worship, adoration, love, affection, surrender, submission and service etc.), they were well looked after and sustained by the Lord (2).

In the face of the brilliant and splendorous rays of the sun representing the might, glory, fame and virtues of Sri Ram's Holy Name, the faults (i.e. evils, vices, misdemeanours, sins etc.) of Kaliyug melt away like snow.

Even the wicked rascal such as Ajaamil crossed the ocean of this illusionary and mundane world, and attained emancipation and salvation just by calling out his name (“Narayan”), even though he had meant to call out to his son of the same name¹ (3).

[¹Ajaamil was so horrified at seeing the messengers of death that he called for his own son, named Narain, to protect him. But since the word also was the name of Vishnu, the latter immediately sent his own messengers to rescue the wretched Ajaamil and bring him to heaven.]

The bowing of his head by Vibhishan (to pay obeisance to Lord Ram) proved to be a Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree) for him, and it bore fruits for him immediately too².

Tulsidas cites this as an example to say that similarly, when one recalls or remembers the Lord's Holy Name, the sky, the earth (land) and the water (rivers, oceans etc.) all become auspicious and full of good omens for him (4).

[²Vibhishan was subjected to great humiliation in Lanka by his own brother Ravana who treated him with great contempt because Vibhishan was a stout follower of Lord Vishnu. But when Vibhishan came and took the shelter of Lord Ram, he was not only warmly welcomed but also given respect and a position in the hierarchy of Lord's ministers. Not only this, his honour was restored as the Lord anointed him as the next king of Lanka.]

(5 / 43)

सुजस सुनि श्रवन हौं नाथ ! आयो सरन ।
 उपल-केवट-गीध-सबरी-संसृति-समन,
 सोक-श्रम-सीव सुग्रीव आरतिहरन ॥ 1 ॥
 राम राजीव-लोचन बिमोचन बिपति,
 स्याम नव-तामरस-दाम बारिद-बरन ।
 लसत जटाजूट सिर, चारु मुनिचीर कटि,
 धीर रघुबीर तूनीर-सर-धनु-धरन ॥ 2 ॥
 जातुधनेस-भ्राता बिभीषन नाम
 बंधु-अपमान गुरु ग्लानि चाहत गरन ।
 पतितपावन ! प्रनतपाल ! करुनासिंधु !
 राखिए मोहि सौमित्रि-सेवति-चरन ॥ 3 ॥
 दीनता-प्रीति-संकलित मृदुबचन सुनि
 पुलकि तन प्रेम, जल नयन लागे भरन ।
 बोलि, 'लंकेश' कहि अंक भरि भेंटि प्रभु,
 तिलक दियो दीन-दुख-दोष दारिद-दरन ॥ 4 ॥
 रातिचर-जाति, आराति सब भाँति गत
 कियो सो कल्याण-भाजन सुमंगलकरन ।
 दास तुलसी सदयहृदय रघुबंसमनि
 'पाहि' कहे काहि कीन्हों न तारन-तरन? ॥ 5 ॥

(5/43)

sujasa suni śravana haurṁ nātha! āyō sarana.
 upala-kēvaṭa-gīdha-sabarī-sansṛti-samana,
 sōka-śrama-sīva sugrīva āratiharana.. 1..
 rāma rājīva-lōcana bimōcana bipati,

syāma nava-tāmarasa-dāma bārīda-barana.
 lasata jaṭājūṭa sira, cāru municīra kaṭi,
 dhīra raghubīra tūnīra-sara-dhanu-dharana.. 2..
 jātudhanēsa-bhrātā bibhīṣana nāma
 bandhu-apamāna guru glāni cāhata garana.
 patitapāvana! pranatapāla! karunāsindhu!
 rākhi'ē mōhi saumitri-sēvati-carana.. 3..
 dīnatā-prīti-saṅkalita mṛdubacana suni
 pulaki tana prēma, jala nayana lāgē bharana.
 bōli, 'laṅkēsa' kahi aṅka bhari bhēṇṭi prabhu,
 tilaka diyō dīna-dukha-dōṣa dārīda-darana.. 4..
 rāticara-jāti, ārāti saba bhāṁti gata
 kiyo sō kalyāna-bhājana sumaṅgalakarana.
 dāsa tulasī sadayahṛdaya raghubansamani
 'pāhi' kahē kāhi kīnhōm na tārana-tarana?.. 5..

Vibhishan speaks to Lord Ram, and his Anointment
 As the King of Lanka-I

Verse no. 5/43—[Vibhishan said—] ‘Oh Lord! I have come to seek shelter at your holy feet after having heard your renown, glory and fame with my own ears’¹.

You are the one who brought to rest the cycle of birth and death of the rock-like Ahilya, Kewat (the boatman), the vulture (Jatau) and Sabari (the old out caste Bhil woman) as well as are the remover of the sorrows and miseries, travails and weariness of Sugriv (the king of monkeys)² (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45.

²Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/37, stanza no. 4.]

Oh Lord Sri Ram! You have lotus-like eyes, are the destroyer of all types of troubles, misfortunes, difficulties and adversities, have a countenance which is radiant and glowing like a dark blue lotus, and a complexion like a dark rain-bearing cloud.

A crown of matted hairs adorns your head. There are attractive clothes suitable for a hermit around your waist, and you are a most patient, courageous and steadfast warrior of Raghu's clan, who holds a bow, arrow and a quiver (2).

I am a brother of the demon king Ravana. My name is Vibhishan. I am anguished, exceedingly remorseful and dejected at being scornfully humiliated and reproached publicly by my brother (in the full assembly of demons).

Oh the purifier of the lowly, downtrodden, wretched, sinful and humble ones (patitapāvana)! Oh the protector or sustainer of those who have surrendered themselves before you and have sought your refuge/shelter by bowing their heads before you (or those who are humble, modest and meek = pranatapāla)! Oh an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (karunāsindhu)! Please give me the shelter of your feet which are served by Laxman too.³ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

Hearing these humble, meek and pleasant words of Vibhishan that were soaked in affection and earnest pleadings, the Lord's body was thrilled with affectionate emotions and tears began welling-up in his eyes.

The Lord, who removes the sorrows, miseries, troubles, faults and wants (poverty) of the meek, lowly, humble, poor and downtrodden ones, called him by the title of 'Lankesh' (meaning 'the king of Lanka'), spread his arms and embraced him, and then anointed him (as the king of Lanka), putting a ceremonial Tilak Mark on his forehead to formalise it⁴ (4).

[⁴Refer: (a) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/36, stanza no. 2; verse no. 5/38, stanza no. 3; verse no. 5/42, stanza nos. 1-2; verse no. 5/44, stanza no. 4; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 46; Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.]

Vibhishan, being a demon by birth and belonging to the enemy camp, was to be forsaken and avoided at all costs (or looked at with suspicion and scepticism). In spite of that, he was made an abode of auspiciousness and good fortune by him (Sri Ram) who is the bestower of all auspiciousness, good fortunes and welfares.

The servant (of Lord Sri Ram, i.e.) Tulsidas asserts that the jewel of Raghu's clan ("raghubansamani"; i.e. Lord Sri Ram) is of a very merciful, simple, pure and tender heart (sadayahṛdaya). Simply by pleading 'Save me⁵', who has he not made so exalted and potent that the latter himself becomes capable of liberating others? (5).

[⁵Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/29, stanza no. 4.]

(5 / 44)

दीन-हित बिरद पुराननि गायो ।
 आरत-बंधु, कृपालु, मृदुल-चित जानि सरन हौं आयो ॥ 1 ॥
 तुम्हरे रिपुको अनुज बिभीषन, बंस निसाचर जायो ।
 सुनि गुन-सील-सुभाउ नाथको मैं चरननि चितु लायो ॥ 2 ॥
 जानत प्रभु दुख-सुख दासनिको, तातें कहि न सुनायो ।
 करि करुना भरि नयन बिलोकहु, तब जानौं अपनायो ॥ 3 ॥
 बचन बिनीत सुनत रघुनायक हँसि करि निकट बुलायो ।
 भेंट्यो हरि भरि अंक भरत-ज्यों, लंकापति मन भायो ॥ 4 ॥
 करपंकज सिर परसि अभय कियो, जनपर हेतु दिखायो ।
 तुलसिदास रघुबीर भजन करि को न परमपद पायो ? ॥ 5 ॥

(5/44)

dīna-hita birada purānani gāyō.

ārata-bandhu, kṛpālu, mṛdula-cita jāni sarana haum āyō.. 1..

tumharē ripukō anuja bibhiṣana, bansa nisācara jāyō.

sunī guna-sīla-subhā'u nāthakō maim caranani citu lāyō.. 2..

jānata prabhu dukha-sukha dāsanikō, tātēm kahi na sunāyō.

kari karunā bhari nayana bilōkahu, taba jānaum apanāyō.. 3..

bacana binīta sunata raghunāyaka haṁsi kari nikaṭa bulāyō.
 bhēṇṭyō hari bhari aṅka bharata-jyōm, laṅkāpati mana bhāyō.. 4..
 karapaṅkaja sira parasi abhaya kiyō, janapara hētu dikhāyō.
 tulasidāsa raghubīra bhajana kari kō na paramapada pāyō?.. 5..

Vibhishan speaks to Lord Ram, and his Anointment
 As King of Lanka-II

Verse no. 5/44—[Vibhishan pleads with Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord! The Purans (ancient histories of the Hindus) have sung your glories (i.e. made you renowned) as being one who is the well-wisher and benefactor of the meek, weak, lowly, humble, wretched and downtrodden, the underdogs and the miserable ones (dīna-hita birada purānani gāyō).

I too have come to seek your refuge and shelter, recognising you as a friend of the lowly, the humble and the distressed, as being merciful, compassionate and gracious, and of being a sweet, amiable and friendly temperament (ārata-bandhu, kṛpālu, mṛdula-cita) (1).

I am born in the demon clan and am a younger brother of your arch enemy Ravana. Hearing your virtues, noble characters and merciful temperament, I have concentrated my mind in your holy feet (with the hope that you will bless me and be compassionate towards me) (2).

The Lord is aware of the joys and sorrows of those who serve him faithfully, with devotion and sincerity (i.e. the Lord knows the pain and sufferings as well as joys and happiness of all his devotees, followers and subordinates—because he is omniscient and resides in the heart of all as their soul). This is the reason why I have not told you anything; I did not mention in detail about my sufferings and agonies.

Now, only when you intently look at me with merciful, loving and compassionate eyes will I know that you have accepted me (as one of your own, as your devotee whom you have given refuge and shelter—*taba jānaum apanāyō*) (3).’

Hearing such prayerful words of earnest pleadings spoken by Vibhishan, Raghunayak (i.e. the Lord of king Raghu’s race; Lord Sri Ram) laughed (i.e. smiled politely) and called him near, embraced him, and held him close to his bosom as if he were his own brother Bharat¹, and regarded him as a king of Lanka for all practical purposes² (4).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/36, stanza no. 2; verse no. 5/43, stanza no. 4.

²Refer: Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/38, stanza no. 3; verse no. 5/43, stanza no. 4.]

Then, touching his (Vibhishan's) head with his lotus-like hands (i.e. palms), the Lord made him fearless—this is how Lord Ram exhibited his affection for his devotee (and faithful, loyal follower)³.

Tulsidas observes that indeed, who has not attained the most exalted and the supreme state (or status) of existence⁴ by worshipping and having devotion for Lord Sri Ram? (5).

[³To wit, the Lord not only elevated Vibhishan to the high stature of being equivalent to his own beloved brother Bharat, embracing him with the same affection as he would have embraced Bharat, but also made him the king of Lanka, and to top it he blessed Vibhishan by putting his hands on his head as a gesture of providing him fearlessness and abiding protection from his side.

⁴The 'supreme post or stature' for Vibhishan here has different connotations—in the material world it is the kingship of Lanka and freedom from Ravana's fear. In the spiritual realm it is to be blessed by the divine sight and blessing of the Lord, be recognised as his devotee, and attain the chance to serve his holy feet. And in the highest realm of metaphysics it is the oneness with the Supreme Soul. Frankly speaking, without any prejudice and interpolating with the context, this third state was attained by Ravana and Kumbhakarn but not by Vibhishan.

During the final battle, a bright shaft of effulgence representing the life-force or Soul had emerged from their bodies and merged with Sri Ram (Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 respectively), but this privilege was denied to Vibhishan, albeit it is true that a devotee prefers to eternally serve the holy feet of the Lord, but the ultimate peace and bliss is attained only when the microcosmic soul merges with the macrocosmic Soul that is an eternal ocean of bliss—this stature both Ravana and Kumbhakarn achieved, but Vibhishan missed!]

राग धनाश्री

(5 / 45)

सत्य कहौं मेरो सहज सुभाउ ।
 सुनहु सखा कपिपति लंकापति, तुम्ह सन कौन दुराउ ॥ 1 ॥
 सब बिधि हीन—दीन, अति जड़मति जाको कतहुँ न ठाउँ ।
 आयो सरन भजौं, न तजौं तिहि, यह जानत रिषिराउ ॥ 2 ॥
 जिन्हके हौं हित सब प्रकार चित, नाहिन और उपाउ ।
 तिन्हहिं लागि धरि देह करौं सब, डरौं न सुजस नसाउ ॥ 3 ॥
 पुनि पुनि भुजा उठाइ कहत हौं, सकल सभा पतिआउ ।
 नहि कोऊ प्रिय मोहि दास सम, कपट—प्रीति बहि जाउ ॥ 4 ॥
 सुनि रघुपति बचन बिभीषन प्रेम—मगन, मन चाउ ।
 तुलसिदास तजि आस—त्रास सब ऐसे प्रभु कहँ गाउ ॥ 5 ॥

rāga dhanāśrī

(5/45)

satya kahauṁ mērō sahaja subhā'u.
 sunahu sakhā kapipati laṅkāpati, tumha sana kauna durā'u.. 1..
 saba bidhi hīna-dīna, ati jaṛamati jākō katahuṁ na ṭhā'uṁ.
 āyō sarana bhajauṁ, na tajauṁ tihi, yaha jānata riṣirā'u.. 2..
 jinhakē hauṁ hita saba prakāra cita, nāhina aura upā'u.
 tinhahirṁ lāgi dhari dēha karauṁ saba, ḍarauṁ na sujasa nasā'u.. 3..

puni puni bhujā uṭhā'i kahata haurṁ, sakala sabhā pati'ā'u.
 nahi kō'ū priya mōhi dāsa sama, kapaṭa-prīti bahi jā'u.. 4..
 suni raghupati bacana bibhīṣana prēma-magana, mana cā'u.
 tulasidāsa taji āsa-trāsa saba aisē prabhu kahaṁ gā'u.. 5..

Lord Ram's Proclamation

Verse no. 5/45—[After giving refuge and shelter to Vibhishan, Lord Ram made his basic kind and merciful nature known to the assembly. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where the same declaration has been made by Lord Ram.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 85—to Doha no. 87 where Lord Ram has preached the saintly crow Kaagbhusund on the same theme; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42 where Lord Ram has preached to Hanuman and Bharat and the rest of the company about the characters of saintly people who are dear to him; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 47 where Lord Ram has preached the citizens of Ayodhya about the characters of people who are dear to him.

If one understands the import of these teachings, one is motivated to improve one's self and inculcate these virtues that would make him feel very comfortable and assured of redemption at the hands of Lord Ram. It also motivates one to surrender himself fearlessly before the Lord who is none but the Supreme Being in a visible human form, a prospect that makes seeking deliverance and salvation so much the easier as compared to worshipping a God who is unknown and unseen.]

[Lord Sri Ram proclaimed—] 'I speak truthfully about my inherent and natural temperament. Listen attentively, the king of monkeys (Sugriv) and the king of Lanka (Vibhishan). There is nothing which I have to conceal from you (1).

He—who is lowly, drowntrodden, meek, humble, most foolish and highly unfortunate, one who has no where to go and has no destination, one who has no succour and solace anywhere in this world—if any such person comes to me seeking shelter and refuge, I 'serve' him in all possible ways, and never abandon, avoid or forsake him. This fact is well known to (and endorsed by) sage Valmiki and other exalted sages and seers (2).

Those whose mind and intellect regard me as their sole benefactor, their only protector, and their single well-wisher, and who find no solution (or way out) of their problems except seeking my refuge (i.e. they are in a virtual log-jam in this mundane world but sincerely seek a way out of their quandry)—I assume a human form for them and finish off all their works for them, not bothering (or fearing) that by doing any such act my reputation and fame will be harmed or tainted in any way¹ (3).

[¹To wit, I am not tardy and reluctant at helping my devotees, even at the cost of tarnishing my immaculate image or reputation. Sri Ram seems to justify his many acts that would seem a little bit unrighteous on their face. But since those acts would be of good of his devotees, the Lord did not hesitate to do them. For instance, his acceptance of Vibhishan would seem as a strategic military move to spark dissention and desertion in the enemy's camp, as well as to give shelter to such deserters and traitors to serve strategic gains on the battle field and get insider information on the

enemy's army and preparedness. But the Lord did not accept Vibhishan for this reason; the Lord accepted him as he was subjected to immense torment and was suffering horrors under the rule of his cruel and selfish demon brother Ravana who did not know what good treatment to his dependants meant.

Think what would be the fate of Vibhishan if Lord Ram had turned him away for fear of inviting ill-fame in the world for giving refuge to traitors such as Vibhishan? The latter would have surely been tortured to death by Ravana. Since Vibhishan came to seek help from the Lord when he was in immense consternation and fear of his life, it was incumbent upon the Lord to extend his protection to him because it his declared policy to give protection to all who come to seek it, and especially when Vibhishan was not in the wrong and was a pious soul. The Lord just could not refuse him.

Similar accusation can be made with respect of Lord Ram dethroning Baali and putting Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha—because then Sugriv would be obliged to the Lord and be under his command, almost like his vassal, providing the much needed army and arms for the campaign of Lanka. In this case, Lord Ram was more concerned for the good and welfare of Sugriv who had been wronged by his brother Baali. If mere help of the monkey army was the Lord's concern in making Sugriv the king of Kishkindha, the same objective could have been more easily achieved by seeking the help of Baali if Lord Ram would have helped the latter in capturing Sugriv. But the Lord preferred to accept the ignominy of taking sides in what was a mutual conflict between two brothers as it helped Sugriv to regain his honour and rightful share.

Earlier also, Lord Ram had liberated Ahilya, the wife of sage Guatam who was in the form of a stone, by 'touching her with his feet', something which is not totally beyond reproach as it is not right to touch a woman, especially if she is a sage's wife. But since this seemingly not-so-right action was necessary for the good of Ahilya, the Lord did it, fully knowing that the coming generation would continue to raise fingers at him for this kind act.]

I repeatedly lift my arms and declare, let the whole assembly listen carefully to it and believe my words—no one is dearer to me than my servant (i.e. my ardent devotee, humble follower, refuge seeker). But yes, that servant should be of pure intellect, pure mind and pure heart, uncorrupt, truthful, honest, free from deceit and conceit, and of pure disposition in all possible ways² (4).'

[²To wit, the Lord does not accept rascals and pretenders who wish to escape judgment by taking the garb of a devotee of the Lord for the time till he can hide himself from punishment, only to rear his ugly head and go back to his old evil ways once the danger of punishment is over. For in all sooth, this is not allowed; the Lord makes it clear here when he says that he abhors deception, pretensions, conceit, deceit, or cunning of any kind. If one wishes the Lord to help him or her, then he or she has to first clean the heart and mind before expecting anything from the Lord.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 44; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 48.]

Hearing these words of Raghupati (Sri Ram), Vibhishan was overwhelmed with waves of surging affections and emotions of endearment for the gracious Lord, while his heart and mind were greatly encouraged and enthused by the Lord's solemn oath.

Tulsidas advises that one should avoid or abandon all hopes of succour and solace from this world, and become fearless by taking refuge with Lord Ram. One

should sing the glories, the virtues and the fames of such a (munificent, benevolent, merciful, compassionate, gracious, benign, magnanimous and kind) Lord as Sri Ram! (5).

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Chapter 10

Building a Bridge across the Ocean; Crossing of it and Landing of Lord Ram's Forces on the Soil of Lanka

In Chapter no. 10 we shall read how Lord Ram's huge army crossed the ocean and landed on the soil of Lanka by constructing a bridge across the mighty ocean, spanning it from its northern shore till its shores in Lanka in the south. Since Lanka was situated at a distance of 100 Yojans (approximately 800 miles) in the middle of the ocean from its northern shore where Lord Ram had pitched his camp, it follows that this Bridge was also of this length.

It was indeed an awesome and spectacular sight to behold, of the formidable army of Lord Ram consisting of monkeys and bears crossing the mighty ocean, covering not only the surface of the bridge from one end to the other but also the surface of the ocean itself as the Kapi warriors enthusiastically and excitedly ran forward, energetically hopping, leaping and jumping over the backs of all sorts of marine creatures, small and large, that had come to the surface of the water due to the sudden obstruction of its flow caused by the bridge, as well as due to the extraordinary noise and tumult that was created by the excited waves after waves of cheering and shouting Kapi warriors who were eager to get to the other side ahead of their companions.

Once across, the Lord pitched his camp on "Mt. Subel", the third of the three summits of the Trikoot mountain upon which Lanka was situated. As has been noted earlier, this third summit known as 'Subel' was actually a plateau which was normally used by the demons for practicing martial arts, but which was now to be used as the battle-field of the impending war. {Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 5; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 8.}.

This Chapter no. 10 has been divided into two sections as follows:

Section 10.1—This section again has two sub-sections as follows:

Sub-section 10.1.1—It describes our Story from Ram Charit Manas. It picks up the thread of this fascinating Story from where we took a pause at the end of the previous sub-section 9.1, i.e. now we start reading from Ram Charit Manas once again, from Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50—to—Doha no. 60.

Sub-section 10.1.2—It narrates our Story from Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to—Doha no. 5; and (ii) Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Section 10.2—It narrates this part of our Story from Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos.49-87, and Canto 4, verse nos. 1-8.

Section 10.1: Ram Charit Manas

Sub-section 10.1.1—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50 to Doha no. 60:-

After accepting Vibhishan in his camp, Lord Ram called him and the monkey king (Surgriv) to hold a consultation regarding the next course of action to be taken, which was to decide on the question of ‘how to cross the ocean’. In this meeting Vibhishan suggested that though Lord Ram was capable of drying the ocean by his arrows but it would be strategically better and wiser to adopt a reconciliatory approach towards it by first politely requesting the deity representing the ocean to give them a safe passage across the water to Lanka. If it fails then the other option of using force was always open.

Vibhishan’s approach was right from the military point of view, as it would be wiser to not annoy the deity of the ocean by straightaway using force against it as it would mean the ocean becomes an enemy of the Lord’s forces, and it may prove disastrous once the army lands in Lanka and the war actually starts because they will have an enemy in their rear, right in their back yard, who may want to take revenge for his humiliation at the opportune time. This may prove fatal in case of an emergency when some kind of strategic retreat becomes necessary during the course of the war. But if the deity of the ocean voluntarily agrees to allow the Lord’s army to cross the water, then he would be friendly, and there would be no danger of back-stabbing.

So Lord Ram agreed to try out this approach, first as it was correct line to be adopted in the face of an impending ferocious war in an alien land, and second to show respect to his new friend Vibhishan and to signal to him that his advice is given its due weight.

Meanwhile, when Vibhishan had left Lanka upon being rebuked and insulted by his elder brother Ravana, the latter had sent one of his trusted spies, a demon named Suk, behind Vibhishan to follow his movements and report back about the developments. Suk had witnessed how Vibhishan was warmly welcomed by Lord Ram and shown great affection and respect. He was so emotionally overwhelmed by the Lord’s gracious nature that for a moment he forgot he was a spy and openly acclaimed the glory of Lord Ram. This indiscretion on his part revealed his identity, and he was caught by the guards of the Lord’s army, and beaten mercilessly. But when Laxman came to know of it he pardoned him; he gave Suk a letter addressed to Ravana and allowed him to go back home to Lanka safely.

This merciful nature of Laxman, and the earlier observation of Lord Ram’s nature vis-à-vis Vibhishan, had such a profound impact on Suk that he went back to

Ravana's court, and much to the annoyance and chagrin of the demon king, praised Lord Ram lavishly, proclaiming the Lord's kind and gracious nature. Suk even went to the extent of telling Ravana that the path of confrontation that he has adopted against Lord Ram was totally wrong, and he should return Sita to the Lord and make a rapprochement with him.

At this, Ravana kicked him the same way he had earlier kicked Vibhishan, and like Vibhishan, Suk too went to surrender to Lord Ram, praying for acceptance. The all-knowing Lord not only accepted him most affectionately but also blessed him so that Suk was freed from a curse cast upon him earlier by sage Agastya, and resumed his earlier form of a great sage.

In the meantime, Lord Ram tried all means to please the ocean's deity and seek permission to cross the ocean without use of force, but the deity remained stubborn, not even having the courtesy to pay its obeisance to the Lord. Finding this option closed and time running out, the Lord finally decided to show his might and asked Laxman to bring his fiery arrow so that he can now dry up the ocean.

Facing the prospect of complete annihilation, the ocean and its deity finally surrendered before Lord Ram; the Ocean, or rather the deity representing the ocean, appeared in person before the Lord with a lot of precious gifts that are exclusively found in the ocean, such as pearls, corals, shells etc., asking for mercy.

The Ocean then advised the Lord to build a bridge across its surface, promising that he would fully cooperate in its construction, and will not disturb or dismantle the bridge at any cost.

Lord Ram obliged the Ocean by heeding to the latter's request by eliminating his enemies in the north who were constantly annoying the Ocean. The Ocean felt exceedingly grateful towards the Lord, and returned after paying obeisance to him.

This part of the wondrous Story is now narrated as follows:

पुनि सर्वग्य सर्व उर बासी । सर्वरूप सब रहित उदासी ॥ ३ ॥
 बोले बचन नीति प्रतिपालक । कारन मनुज दनुज कुल घलक ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनु कपीस लंकापति बीरा । केहि बिधि तरिअ जलधि गंभीरा ॥ ५ ॥
 संकुल मकर उरग झष जाती । अति अगाध दुस्तर सब भाँती ॥ ६ ॥

puni sarbagya sarba ura bāsī. sarbarūpa saba rahita udāsī. 3.
 bōlē bacana nīti pratipālaka. kārana manuja danuja kula ghalaka. 4.
 sunu kapīsa laṅkāpati bīrā. kēhi bidhi tari'a jaladhi gambhīrā. 5.
 saṅkula makara uraga jhaṣa jāṭī. ati agādha dustara saba bhāṁṭī. 6.

Then Lord Ram—the Supreme Being who is all-knowing and omniscient, who resides in the subtle space of the heart of all living beings (as their pure consciousness known as the Atma), who has revealed himself in all the forms that constitute this creation, especially as a human being with the purpose of eliminating the scourge of the demon race, but who, inspite of his omnipresence and an all-pervading nature, is essentially detached from everything¹—spoke wise and prudent words that suited the occasion, and also conformed to the form of a human being that he had assumed². (3-4)

Lord Ram said, ‘Listen the brave king of monkeys (Sugriv) and the equally brave king of Lanka (i.e. Vibhishan)³. Tell me now, how shall we cross the formidable ocean? (5)

It is full of huge alligators and crocodiles, as well as formidable sea serpents and fish of all denominations, and of all sizes and shapes. It is also deep and vast, appearing to be un-crossable.’ (6)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram, is a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma or the Supreme Being, also known as ‘Brahm’. This whole creation is revelation of Brahm, which implies that each single entity in this creation is a form of Brahm. If the ‘Consciousness’ is known as the Parmatma at the macrocosmic level, it is known as the ‘Atma’ of the individual living being at the microcosmic level. That is to say, there is nothing that is not “Ram”. In spite of this universal Truth, the Lord remains detached from everything. So therefore, in spite of residing in the heart of all living beings and assuming the identity of everything that exists in this vast creation, Lord Ram is deemed to be independent from them.

²Lord Ram was the almighty Supreme Being, and as such he need not consult anyone and seek advice. But presently he was in the form of a human being, so he had to act and speak as a human being, and not as the Supreme Being. How would a human being behave when faced with a daunting challenge? He would consult his friends and well-wishers; a king would consult his ministers and commanders. So therefore, Lord Ram sought advice from his friends and advisors, presently Vibhishan and Sugriv, about what is to be done now.

³Lord Ram has addressed Vibhishan as the ‘king of Lanka’ (laṅkāpati) because he had declared him as the next king of Lanka once the war was over by anointing him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.]

कह लंकेस सुनुहु रघुनायक । कोटि सिंधु सोषक तव सायक ॥ ७ ॥
जद्यपि तदपि नीति असि गाई । बिनय करिअ सागर सन जाई ॥ ८ ॥

kaha laṅkēsa sunahu raghunāyaka. kōṭi sindhu sōṣaka tava sāyaka. 7.
jadyapi tadapi nīti asi gāī. binaya kari'a sāgara sana jāī. 8.

Vibhishan offered his advice to Lord Ram by replying, ‘Oh Lord of the Raghus (raghunāyaka), listen. Although your arrows have the ability to dry up countless such oceans by its fiery nature, yet it is prudent and better advised to first try a gentler method to tame the ocean politely (before resorting to the use of force)¹.

So therefore, you should pray to the deity of the ocean, requesting him to give us a passage across the surface of the water. (7-8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan wished to ensure that the deity of the ocean is not offended as far as it was possible; this was to safeguard the rear of the monkey army once the war started in Lanka by keeping the deity of the ocean in good humour by not offending the ocean and making it their enemy. A friendly ocean would be helpful during the

course of the war in case of an emergency when the need for a strategic retreat arose, and the army of Lord Ram wished to leave the shore of Lanka quickly. Surely it is not wise to have someone who is inimical in one's backyard.]

दो०. प्रभु तुम्हार कुलगुर जलधि कहिहि उपाय बिचारि ।
बिनु प्रयास सागर तरिहि सकल भालु कपि धारि ॥ ५० ॥
dōhā.

prabhu tumhāra kulagura jaladhi kahihi upāya bicāri.
binu prayāsa sāgara tarihi sakala bhālu kapi dhāri. 50.

Oh Lord (prabhu)! The deity of the ocean is a senior member of your clan; he is one of your ancestors¹. Hence, it is necessary to show him due respect and seek his permission to cross the water, for then he will consider your request and suggest a solution so that the monkey and bear warriors would be able to cross the ocean easily, without taking much trouble. (Doha no. 50)

[Note—¹King Sagar, who was an ancient king and an ancestor of Lord Ram, had created the ocean by getting the earth dug up. This is the reason the ocean was called after him as 'Saagar'. So, the deity of the ocean will certainly cooperate with Lord Ram as he belongs to the family of king Sagar. It is also proper to seek the blessings of one's ancestors at the beginning of an enterprise instead of offending them.

Hence, the best course of action would be to first politely ask the deity of the ocean to allow the army to pass over the surface of the water before resorting to some other means.]

चौ०. सखा कही तुम्ह नीकि उपाई । करिअ दैव जौं होइ सहाई ॥ १ ॥
मंत्र न यह लछिमन मन भावा । राम बचन सुनि अति दुख पावा ॥ २ ॥
नाथ दैव कर कवन भरोसा । सोषिअ सिंधु करिअ मन रोसा ॥ ३ ॥
कादर मन कहूँ एक अधारा । दैव दैव आलसी पुकारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

sakhā kahī tumha nīki upāī. kari'a daiva jaum hō'i sahāī. 1.
mantra na yaha lachimana mana bhāvā. rāma bacana suni ati dukha pāvā. 2.
nātha daiva kara kavana bharōsā. sōṣi'a sindhu kari'a mana rōsā. 3.
kādara mana kahūṁ ēka adhārā. daiva daiva ālasī pukārā. 4.

Lord Ram replied to Vibhishan, 'My friend. The course of action that you suggest is indeed right, and we may succeed in it if the gods are favourable and willing to help and cooperate in this matter.' (1)

This council of Vibhishan, however, did not find favour with Laxman; he did not agree with it. He felt very sad when he heard Lord Ram speak in its favour. (2)

So he (Laxman) interjected and expressed his strong reservations in this method of trying to appease the deity of the ocean by begging it to give the Lord and his army a passage across the water of the ocean, and relying on the mercy of the gods to succeed in this endeavour.

Laxman said, ‘Oh Lord! What reliance can be put on gods and their whims; how can one be certain of the freakish nature of fate and fortune? Me thinks that it would be wiser for you to be more determined in your mind and become proactive; you should become aggressive and dry up the ocean (with your fiery arrows)¹. (3)

Only those who are cowards and lazy think of praying to gods and humbly submit themselves to their wishes, blaming their misfortunes to pre-determined destiny². (4)

[Note—¹Laxman doubted Vibhishan’s integrity; is it possible that he was trying to delay the progress of the Lord’s army by wasting time in prayers and attempts at appeasement of the ocean? Is Vibhishan secretly not in favour of launching an assault on Lanka? Does he want that the demons get a chance to prepare for the war during the time the Lord spends in prayers and making humble requests to the ocean’s deity to let his army go across the water of the ocean?

Or is it possible that Vibhishan is playing some kind of dirty trick on Lord Ram by making him pray to the ocean and submitting himself to the mercy of its deity who may grant initial permission to the Lord to cross the heaving waters of the mighty ocean, only to suddenly betray him and go back on his words while the Lord’s army is mid-way across its surface; in this scenario the whole army would be drowned! Perhaps Vibhishan has cooked up the story of his being kicked out of the kingdom by his brother Ravana so that he can gain the Lord’s sympathy, only to stab him in the back at the first opportunity. It is quite possible that the demons have some secret tactical understanding with the ocean’s deity who may easily agree with the Lord’s request to allow his army to go across the ocean, and then submerge the whole army while it is left to the mercy of the water of the ocean, with no solid ground under its feet.

Laxman thought over all these possibilities and determined that the best course of action was not to be humble and submissive, but to be aggressive and proactive. This attitude would also boost the morale of the Lord’s army as all its soldiers (the monkey and bear warriors) were in favour of an all-out war instead of making compromises. If they found that their own Lord is weak in mind, being fearful of gods and submissive to their whims, and seeks an easy way out of things instead of being determined and confident of his own abilities to face hurdles and adversities, then it would be disastrous for the outcome of the war.

²To wit, lazy people want everything served to them on a platter; they loathe making effort to achieve success and attain their goals. They meekly accept whatever comes their way. If success comes to them and they make some gain, they say that they are lucky; if they fail they blame their misfortunes on bad destiny.

Similarly, cowards don’t have the courage to stand up boldly to face their enemy and adversary; they meekly submit themselves to their opponents without a fight.

Neither of these two attitudes is good for a man of excellent character. Submitting to the ocean humbly and meekly will not be proper for the Lord; he should take up arms and show his mettle by making the ocean submit to his might instead.]

सुनत बिहसि बोले रघुबीरा । ऐसेहिं करब धरहु मन धीरा ॥ ५ ॥
 अस कहि प्रभु अनुजहि समुझाई । सिंधु समीप गए रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

sunata bihasi bōlē raghubīrā. aisēhiṁ karaba dharahu mana dhīrā. 5.
 asa kahi prabhu anujahi samujhā'ī. sindhu samīpa ga'e raghurā'ī. 6.

When Lord Raghubir (Lord Sri Ram) heard what Laxman said, he smiled and said, 'Wait a while; have patience for I shall do as you advice.'¹ (5)

In this way, the Lord reassured his younger brother (Laxman). Then, the Lord of the Raghus ("raghurā'ī"; Lord Ram) went near the ocean (i.e. he went to shore of the ocean). (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram fully appreciated Laxman's views. He smiled at Laxman to indicate that he is aware of the situation, but there is a reason why he wishes to follow Vibhishan's advice first, before taking up arms against the ocean. What was the reason? First, the Lord wished to tell Vibhishan that he gives importance to him and treats him as his close associate. From a strategic and military point of view it was very important to take Vibhishan into confidence and make him believe that the Lord has great faith in him and fully relies on him, because Vibhishan can help the Lord and his army by disclosing all the secrets of the demons, their strengths and weaknesses, the chinks in the defences of the demon army and the fort of Lanka, which in turn will enable the Lord's army to easily overrun obstacles as soon as the war begins, as well as during the course of the war.

By smiling at Laxman the Lord indicated to him that he knows what the former says is true, but "let us wait for a while to prove that Vibhishan is wrong". This will be helpful in the future, for at times when Lord Ram or Laxman would have to neglect Vibhishan or overrule his advice during the heat of battle, they would have a precedent to justify their actions—that Vibhishan's council is not acceptable at that particular instance as he oftentimes makes an error of judgement, as is evident from the case when he had advised the Lord to pray to the deity of the ocean to allow the army to cross the barrier that the ocean presented to its progress, but which method failed completely.]

प्रथम प्रनाम कीन्ह सिरु नाई । बैठे पुनि तट दर्भ डसाई ॥ ७ ॥
 जबहिं बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आए । पाछें रावन दूत पठाए ॥ ८ ॥

prathama pranāma kīnha siru nā'ī. baiṭhē puni taṭa darbha ḍasā'ī. 7.
 jabahiṁ bibhīṣana prabhu pahīṁ ā'e. pāchēm rāvana dūta paṭhā'ē. 8.

When the Lord reached to shore of the ocean, he first bowed his head to the deity of the ocean to pay his obeisance to it, and then spread a seating mat on the ground near the shore and sat down on it calmly to pray humbly and meditate¹. (7)

In the meantime, when Vibhishan had left Lanka and come to Lord Ram, Ravana had sent one of his trusted spies (named Suk) to follow Vibhishan and track his movements. [This spy was tasked with reconnaissance, and to report back to Ravana about the latest developments.] (8)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram approached the ocean in a peaceful way, without showing any sign of aggression. He had a calm mind and a submissive demeanour. He cast aside his arms, the bow and the arrow, to indicate that he has no intention to challenge the might of the deity of the ocean.]

दो०. सकल चरित तिन्ह देखे धरें कपट कपि देह ।
प्रभु गुन हृदयँ सराहहिं सरनागत पर नेह ॥ ५१ ॥
dōhā.

sakala carita tinha dēkhē dharēm kapaṭa kapi dēha.
prabhu guna hṛdayaṁ sarāhahim saranāgata para nēha. 51.

That spy had assumed a false form of a monkey to avoid detection. In this deceitful form he had closely observed everything first hand.

He was greatly impressed by Lord Ram's gracious and magnanimous nature by which he shows such exceptional grace and mercy on those who come to seek refuge with him and surrender themselves at his feet¹. The spy therefore highly praised the Lord in his heart for this excellent and glorious virtue of his. (Doha no. 51)

[Note—¹The spy was amazed at the warm welcome that Lord Ram extended to Vibhishan, and accepting him in his camp affectionately inspite of his knowing that Vibhishan was a demon and a brother of his enemy Ravana, and also while his own commanders, such as Sugriv etc., expressed a strong reservation against accepting Vibhishan in the camp as he might spy on them and relay all information to their enemy, the demons. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45.}

This attribute of Lord Ram that he cares more for those who are suffering and seek his protection than for his own safety overwhelmed Suk, the spy, so much so that he could not conceal his joy at having met such a gracious Lord. His happiness was so profound that he could not suppress his emotions; he loudly proclaimed the Lord's glory which betrayed his true identity and led to his capture, as will be evident in the following verses.]

चौ०. प्रगट बखानहिं राम सुभाऊ । अति सप्रेम गा बिसरि दुराऊ ॥ १ ॥
रिपु के दूत कपिन्ह तब जाने । सकल बाँधि कपीस पहिं आने ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

pragaṭa bakhānahim rāma subhā'ū. ati saprēma gā bisari durā'ū. 1.
ripu kē dūta kapinha taba jānē. sakala bāṁdhi kapīsa pahim ānē. 2.

Ravana's agent or spy (named Suk) was so overwhelmed with joy at having witnessed the nobility of Lord Ram's heart as well as his magnanimous and gracious nature that he could not suppress his emotions. He became ecstatic so much that he affectionately lauded the greatness of Lord Ram and his excellent virtues openly, in a very effusive way. For a moment he forgot that his own master (Ravana) was inimical to Lord Ram, and there was an intense animosity between the demon race and the Lord. (1)

[This burst of emotional ecstasy betrayed him, and the monkeys immediately caught him as being an outsider.] The Kapis (the monkey warriors; the guards of the Lord's army) realised that he was an agent or a spy of the enemy (Ravana, the king of the demons). So they caught hold of him, tied him up, and brought him as a captive to their king Sugriv. (2)

कह सुग्रीव सुनुहु सब बानर । अंग भंग करि पठवहु निसिचर ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनि सुग्रीव बचन कपि धाए । बाँधि कटक चहु पास फिराए ॥ ४ ॥
 बहु प्रकार मारन कपि लागे । दीन पुकारत तदपि न त्यागे ॥ ५ ॥
 जो हमार हर नासा काना । तेहि कोसलाधीस कै आना ॥ ६ ॥

kaha sugrīva sunahu saba bānara. aṅga bhaṅga kari paṭhavahu nisicara. 3.
 suni sugrīva bacana kapi dhā'ē. bāṁdhi kaṭaka cahu pāsa phirā'ē. 4.
 bahu prakāra mārana kapi lāgē. dīna pukārata tadapi na tyāgē. 5.
 jō hamāra hara nāsā kānā. tēhi kōsalādhīsa kai ānā. 6.

Sugriv instructed his monkey warriors, 'Listen all of you monkeys. Disfigure this demon by mutilating his body, and then let him go back¹. (3)

The monkeys immediately lunged at the spy and tied him more tightly; then they made him walk around the whole camp of the monkey army as a captive to humiliate him. (4)

While the spy was being taken around the camp, the monkey warriors beat him mercilessly in different ways, subjecting him to kicks and blows. He pleaded for mercy and piteously cried for help, but to no avail, as the monkeys continued to jeer at him and beat him viciously. (5)

Overcome with dismay and seeing no hope of succour any other way, the spy finally decided to invoke the merciful nature of Lord Ram in order to get rid of his tormentors. He pleaded, 'In the name of the Lord of Kaushal ("kōsalādhīsa"; Lord Ram) I solemnly urge you not to harm me any further, and not to cut off my nose or ear². (6)

[Note—¹We may recall that when Hanuman was caught and brought to the court of Ravana in Lanka, the demon king also gave similar instructions—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 24.

It appears that at the time to which our Story relates it was a practice to punish a spy by mutilating him and sending him back to his master as a token of causing insult and inflicting injury to the master himself. It was a sort of a challenge to the

opposite party to come forward to settle scores if he dares to do so, or otherwise accept defeat. It was a grave provocation to the master himself who had sent the messenger or the agent, as the latter was merely carrying out his duty and acting on behalf of his master.

²Sugriv had not told his warriors to cut-off the 'nose and ears' of the spy; he had merely instructed them to mutilate him. How then did the spy guess that his captors were preparing to chop off his nose and ears? Well, the answer is simple: There was a precedent; Laxman had cut-off the nose and ears of Supernakha, the sister of Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 17.

So the spy feared that these monkeys would follow the example set by Laxman and repeat what he had done to the demoness Supernakha.]

सुनि लछिमन सब निकट बोलाए । दया लागि हँसि तुरत छोड़ाए ॥ ७ ॥
रावन कर दीजहु यह पाती । लछिमन बचन बाचु कुलघाती ॥ ८ ॥

sunī lachimana saba nikṭa bōlā'ē. dayā lāgi haṁsi turata chōṛā'ē. 7.
rāvana kara dījahu yaha pātī. lachimana bacana bācu kulaghātī. 8.

When Laxman heard the pitiful cries of the demon, he called everyone near. When he found out what had happened, he took pity for the demon and smiled, ordering him to be set free immediately. (7)

Then he gave the demon a letter for Ravana and said, 'Give this letter to Ravana, the one who would ruin his own race, and tell him to read this missive as a personal message from Laxman. (8)

दो०. कहेहु मुखागर मूढ़ सन मम संदेसु उदार ।
सीता देइ मिलहु न त आवा कालु तुम्हार ॥ ५२ ॥
dōhā.

kahēhu mukhāgara mūṛha sana mama sandēsu udāra.
sītā dē'i milahu na ta āvā kālu tumhāra. 52.

Tell that stupid fellow in an emphatic way that I am sending this message to him for his own welfare and good.

Tell him that he should give (return) Sita back and come to meet us to make peace. Otherwise, let it be known to him that his doom is a foregone conclusion; that Death is coming to him sooner than he expected.' (Doha no. 52)

चौ०. तुरत नाइ लछिमन पद माथा । चले दूत बरनत गुन गाथा ॥ १ ॥
कहत राम जसु लंकाँ आए । रावन चरन सीस तिन्ह नाए ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

turata nā'i lachimana pada māthā. calē dūta baranata guna gāthā. 1.
kahata rāma jasu laṅkāṃ ā'ē. rāvana carana sīsa tinha nā'ē. 2.

The messenger bowed his head to Laxman and immediately departed for Lanka, lauding Laxman's virtues and extolling his qualities on his way back home. (1)

At the time when he reached Lanka, the messenger was applauding the excellent glories of Lord Ram. Then he went to the court of Ravana and bowed his head at the latter's feet. (2)

बिहसि दसानन पूँछी बाता । कहसि न सुक आपनि कुसलाता ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि कहु खबरि बिभीषन केरी । जाहि मृत्यु आई अति नेरी ॥ ४ ॥
करत राज लंका सठ त्यागी । होइहि जव कर कीट अभागी ॥ ५ ॥

bihasi dasānana pūṁchī bātā. kahasi na suka āpani kusalātā. 3.
puni kahu khabari bibhīṣana kērī. jāhi mṛtyu ā'ī ati nērī. 4.
karata rāja laṅkā saṭha tyāgī. hō'ihī java kara kiṭa abhāgī. 5.

When Ravana saw the messenger, he laughed in a derisive manner¹ and asked him, 'Well, why don't you first tell me about your welfare?' (3)

Then report to me about Vibhishan whose death seems to have come calling upon him. (4)

He (Vibhishan) is such a stupid fellow that while he was living a comfortable life as a ruler in Lanka where he could have lived without fear, he chose to leave it, and now (by joining that hermit, Lord Ram) he will die like that wretched beetle that gets crushed and smothered along with the grains of barley when they are crushed to make flour². (5)

[Note—¹Why did Ravana laugh? When he saw the messenger standing silently as if in a state of confusion, he thought that the latter had faced some great trouble and was yet to overcome the mental trauma of his experience. The fact is that the messenger was indeed emotionally overwhelmed and so dazed that he stood silently, unable to speak anything. His speechlessness was not out of any bad experience, but because he was uncertain what to say and how to express himself.

He was so impressed by the good nature of Lord Ram and Laxman that when he stood before his own master Ravana, whose evil nature he was well acquainted with, he was undecided for some moment what to say.

Should he speak the truth about his own first hand experience and tell Ravana and all other demons present in the court that Lord Ram is not the sort he is depicted to be by their king (Ravana), for he found the Lord to be extremely gracious, generous and kind unlike what he expected of him according to the general bad impression he had had of Lord Ram due to the misinformation given by Ravana about him, or should he speak lies and criticise the Lord just to please Ravana, out of fear of annoying him which might cost him his own life?

The messenger was in a dilemma for some time, but then he chose the path of 'Truth' and decided to tell Ravana that he was pursuing a wrong path by unnecessarily confronting Lord Ram. This will be clear when he spoke.

²To wit, if Vibhishan had remained in Lanka he would have lived a life like that of a prince, because he is my younger brother. But when death comes calling, even the wisest man loses his senses; so he fell pray to the trap laid out for him by the death god by abandoning Lanka and joining the camp of Lord Ram. His fate is doomed now, for when the war begins and Lord Ram's army is crushed by the demon army, Vibhishan too would perish along with the rest of them. Don't blame me for Vibhishan's destiny.]

पुनि कहु भालु कीस कटकाई । कठिन काल प्रेरित चलि आई ॥ ६ ॥
जिन्ह के जीवन कर रखवारा । भयउ मृदुल चित सिंधु बिचारा ॥ ७ ॥
कहु तपसिन्ह कै बात बहोरी । जिन्ह के हृदयँ त्रास अति मोरी ॥ ८ ॥

puni kahu bhālu kīsa kaṭakā'ī. kaṭhina kāla prērita cali ā'ī. 6.
jinha kē jīvana kara rakhavārā. bhaya'u mṛdula cita sindhu bicārā. 7.
kahu tapasinha kai bāta bahōrī. jinha kē hṛdayaṁ trāsa ati mōrī. 8.

Tell me next about the army of a motley horde of monkeys and bears who have dared to come here, driven by their dark and doomed fate. [Tell me about their numbers, their arms, their enthusiasm, their strengths and their weaknesses etc.] (6)

Fortunately, the poor Ocean has been kind-hearted and graceful enough to become a protector of their lives by standing in the way and preventing them from proceeding any further!

[But will the Ocean succeed in saving their lives for long? I don't think so, for this poor fellow is not strong enough to counter the force of Providence and Destiny which have decided about the doom of these poor monkeys and bears, for sooner rather than later they would overcome the resistance offered by the Ocean and cross over to Lanka where 'death' awaits them with open arms.] (7)

After that, tell me more about those two hermits (Lord Ram and Laxman) who harbour an intense fear of me secretly in their hearts.

[To wit, they are terribly scared of me in their hearts, but put up a bold face outwardly as if they do not care for me. Well, let me hear about them, and tell me about their general behaviour and facial expressions that would betray their nervousness and the gravity of the fear lurking in their minds and hearts.] (8)

दो०. की भइ भेंट कि फिरि गए श्रवन सुजसु सुनि मोर ।
कहसि न रिपु दल तेज बल बहुत चकित चित तोर ॥ ५३ ॥
dōhā.

kī bha'i bhēṇṭa ki phiri ga'ē śravana sujasa suni mōra.
kahasi na ripu dala tēja bala bahuta cakita cita tōra. 53.

Did you meet those hermits, or did they turn back and return home after hearing of my glory and fame¹.

I observe that you seem to be extremely dazed and out of your wits. Well, what is the matter with you; why don't you come out of your shell and frankly disclose what confounds you. Why don't you tell us about what you saw and experienced about the enemy's strength and abilities as well as his weaknesses that has left you so much perplexed?' (Doha no. 53)

[Note—¹Tell me if you found those two hermit brothers, or was it that they decided not to confront me and turned back after hearing of my matchless reputation as an invincible warrior whose strength, powers, valour and abilities have enabled him to subdue even the so-called powerful gods of heaven, and who has conquered every known powerful army in this world as no one has been able to stand before him in the battle-field.]

चौ०. नाथ कृपा करि पूँछेहु जैसैं । मानहु कहा क्रोध तजि तैसैं ॥ १ ॥
मिला जाइ जब अनुज तुम्हारा । जातहिं राम तिलक तेहि सारा ॥ २ ॥
रावन दूत हमहि सुनि काना । कपिन्ह बाँधि दीन्हें दुख नाना ॥ ३ ॥
श्रवन नासिका काटैं लागे । राम सपथ दीन्हें हम त्यागे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

nātha krpā kari pūṁchēhu jaisēm. mānahu kahā krōdha taji taisēm. 1.
milā jā'i jaba anuja tumhārā. jātahim rāma tilaka tēhi sārā. 2.
rāvana dūta hamahi suni kānā. kapinha bāṁdhi dīnhē dukha nānā. 3.
śravana nāsikā kāṭaim lāgē. rāma sapatha dīnhēm hama tyāgē. 4.

Suk, the messenger-cum-spy, replied, 'Oh Lord! I prithee to not to become angry at me and listen to my submission with the same grace and kindness with which you have treated me heretofore, and have asked me to give you a truthful report about my personal experiences inside the enemy's camp. (1)

As soon as your younger brother (Vibhishan) met Lord Ram, the Lord welcomed him warmly by putting a Tilak mark on his forehead immediately (as a gesture of accepting him as one of his closest companions and anointing him as the future king of Lanka). (2)

Meanwhile, as soon as the monkeys heard that I was a messenger-cum-spy of Ravana¹, they pounced upon me and captured me; they tied me up and tormented me in different ways. (3)

They became ready to cut off my nose and ears, but when I pleaded for mercy in the name of Lord Ram, they let me off². (4)

[Note—¹And how did the monkeys come to know that this fellow was Ravana's spy? We have already read that when Suk, the spy, observed the kind treatment extended to Vibhishan by Lord Ram he was extremely amazed and overwhelmed with joy as he had not expected such a noble and warm reception of Vibhishan in an enemy's camp. He couldn't conceal his excitement and publicly exulted, expressing his feelings loudly, praising Lord Ram and the good luck of Vibhishan. This emotional outburst betrayed him, and the monkey guards immediately caught hold of him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 52.]

पूँछिहु नाथ राम कटकाई । बदन कोटि सत बरनि न जाई ॥ ५ ॥
 नाना बरन भालु कपि धारी । बिकटानन बिसाल भयकारी ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहिं पुर दहेउ हतेउ सुत तोरा । सकल कपिन्ह महुँ तेहि बलु थोरा ॥ ७ ॥
 अमित नाम भट कठिन कराला । अमित नाग बल बिपुल बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

pūṁchihu nātha rāma kaṭakāī. badana kōṭi sata barani na jāī. 5.
 nānā barana bhālu kapi dhārī. bikaṭānana bisāla bhayakārī. 6.
 jēhim pura dahē'u hatē'u suta tōrā. sakala kapinha maham tēhi balu thōrā. 7.
 amita nāma bhaṭa kaṭhina karālā. amita nāga bala bipula bisālā. 8.

Oh Lord; you have asked me about the army of Lord Ram. Well, let me then tell you frankly what I had observed. Forsooth, if I had a thousand mouths I wouldn't be able to fully describe this army—its formidable strength, its astounding numbers, its extreme enthusiasm, zeal and courage, its unrestrained energy and intense dynamism, and this boisterous army is raring to go to battle instantly. (5)

The army consisting of monkeys and bears have warriors of many forms and complexions that I wot naught how to describe. All of them have terrible and ferocious visages; their faces and bodies are fear-inspiring in as much as they are huge and deadly terrifying to look at. (6)

To give you an idea of the might of this army, recall the monkey who had burnt the city (of Lanka) and had killed your son (Akshay Kumar)—well, his strength is very much less as compared to the rest of his companions in the army. [To wit, he seemed to be a junior member of the army; I found him quite docile and orderly as compared to his peers who were all wild and ferocious in their talks and demeanours.] (7)

The warriors have so many names and are so countless in numbers that it is not possible to tell you much about them, except giving you a general picture. But one thing is definitely certain—and it is that they are extremely powerful, strong, ferocious and terrible, having unmatched strength and powers that are equivalent to innumerable war-elephants. (8)

दो०. द्विबिद मयंद नील नल अंगद गद बिकटासि ।
दधिमुख केहरि निसठ सठ जामवंत बलरासि ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

dvibida mayanda nīla nala aṅgada gada bikaṭāsi.
dadhimukha kēhari nisaṭha saṭha jāmavanta balarāsi. 54.

I remember the name of some of these great warriors—they are Dwivida, Mayand, Neel, Nal, Angad, Gada, Vikataasya, Dadhimukha, Kehari, Nisatha, Satha, Jamvant etc.¹

All of them, without exception, are very powerful, valiant and strong. (Doha no. 54)

[Note—¹Nal and Neel were great architects and engineers; they were instrumental in getting the bridge constructed across the surface of the ocean—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 60; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 2.

²Angad was the prince of Kishkindha and a nephew of its king Sugriv; he was the son of Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv. At the time of his death, Baali had put his son Angad in the protection of Lord Ram, making the Lord his guardian. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

³Jamvant was the chief of the bear community; he was old and very wise. It is believed that Brahma, the creator, had assumed this form when all the gods decided to come down to earth in the form of monkeys and bears to serve Lord Vishnu, who himself had come down as Lord Ram.]

चौ०. ए कपि सब सुग्रीव समाना । इन्ह सम कोटिन्ह गनइ को नाना ॥ १ ॥
राम कृपाँ अतुलित बल तिन्हहीं । तून समान त्रैलोकहि गनहीं ॥ २ ॥
अस मैं सुना श्रवन दसकंधर । पदुम अठारह जूथप बंदर ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ē kapi saba sugrīva samānā. inha sama kōṭinha gana'i kō nānā. 1.
rāma kṛpāṁ atulita bala tinahīṁ. tr̥ṇa samāna trailōkahi ganahīṁ. 2.
asa mair̥ṁ sunā śravana dasakandhara. paduma aṭhāraha jūthapa bandara. 3.

The few chiefs whom I have named heretofore are like Sugriv, who is the king of the monkeys and of the kingdom of Kishkindha. But I have named only a few, for there are so many countless others of whom I aught naught about; I had limited time and limited access, so obviously I could not gather more information about the Lord's expansive army (because I was caught very soon). (1)

By the grace and blessing of Lord Ram, they have acquired astounding strength and stupendous valour so much so that they treat the entire universe, consisting of three divisions (known as the heaven, the earth and the nether world), as if it was inconsequential as a blade of humble grass.

[To wit, they have no fear of any power in the world, no matter how majestic and strong it is. They are confident that they can easily pluck it and throw it away, or squash and rub it under foot like one does to an ordinary blade of grass or a small twig that comes in the way.] (2)

Oh the ten-headed One (Ravana; “*dasakandhara*”)! I have heard it being said that there are as many as eighteen thousand billion commanders of the monkey and bear army. [So just imagine: if this is the amazing number of commanders, then how many soldiers might actually be there in the army!] (3)

नाथ कटक महँ सो कपि नाहीं । जो न तुम्हहि जीतै रन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥
परम क्रोध मीजहिं सब हाथा । आयसु पै न देहिं रघुनाथा ॥ ५ ॥

nātha kaṭaka maham̐ sō kapi nāhīm̐. jō na tumhahi jītai rana māhīm̐. 4.
parama krōdha mijahim̐ saba hāthā. āyasu pai na dēhim̐ raghunāthā. 5.

Oh Lord; in my view there is not a single warrior in the army of monkeys and bears who is not capable of vanquishing you single-handed in the battle-field if he is afforded a chance to do so¹. (4)

The commanders and the warriors are very angry and restless; they are wringing their hands in excess of wrath, eager and raring to launch an immediate offensive to conquer Lanka. But they are constrained only because Lord Ram is not granting them his permission. (5)

[Note—¹Surely, this single statement must have sounded very offensive and insulting to Ravana, coming as it did from one of his own demons and a close confidante, and in front of the whole demon court. It acted as the spark that lit the fuse of Ravana’s anger, and as we shall see soon that he was so extremely peeved and exasperated by Suk’s speech and relentless praise of Lord Ram that finally he kicked the latter viciously in disgust—apropos: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 herein below.

सोषहिं सिंधु सहित झष ब्याला । पूरहिं न त भरि कुधर बिसाला ॥ ६ ॥
मर्दि गर्द मिलवहिं दससीसा । ऐसेइ बचन कहहिं सब कीसा ॥ ७ ॥
गर्जहिं तर्जहिं सहज असंका । मानहुँ ग्रसन चहत हहिं लंका ॥ ८ ॥

sōṣahim̐ sindhu sahita jhaṣa byālā. pūrahim̐ na ta bhari kudhara bisālā. 6.
mardi garda milavahim̐ dasasīsā. aisē’i bacana kahahim̐ saba kīsā. 7.
garjahim̐ tarjahim̐ sahaja asaṅkā. mānahuṁ grasana cahata hahim̐ laṅkā. 8.

They are confidently saying: ‘We will dry up the ocean with all its fish and other marine creatures; or we shall fill it up with huge rocks and boulders (to block its flow and create a bridge across it, or completely annihilate its existence by creating an

artificial land mass where the ocean presently exists; we would change the geography and topography of earth if the need arises). (6)

We would squeeze and crush the ten-headed Ravana, contemptuously reducing him to dust.' Oh Lord, such are the words spoken boldly by all the monkey and bear warriors whom I had heard. (7)

All the warriors, who are fearless by nature, are shouting and roaring violently as if they would devour Lanka at the first available opportunity. (8)

दो०. सहज सूर कपि भालु सब पुनि सिर पर प्रभु राम ।
रावन काल कोटि कहूँ जीति सकहिं संग्राम ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

sahaja sūra kapi bhālu saba puni sira para prabhu rāma.
rāvana kāla kōṭi kahuṁ jīti sakahim saṅgrāma. 55.

All the monkeys and bears are born warriors having immense courage, valour, strength and abilities. Besides that, they have the mighty and all-able Lord Ram over their heads to extend his patronage and protection to them.

So this combination is simply formidable, making it possible for them to vanquish not only a single Ravana but even millions of Kaals (the gods of death) themselves should they decide to do so¹. (Doha no. 55)

[Note—¹The monkeys and bears are exceptionally powerful in their own right, but now they have the additional support and blessing of Lord Ram who is their Lord and patron. This makes them warriors absolutely invincible and the most powerful fighting force in this creation; they can overcome millions of death gods simultaneously, what to talk about a single demon king named Ravana!]

चौ०. राम तेज बल बुधि बिपुलाई । सेष सहस सत सकहिं न गाई ॥ १ ॥
सक सर एक सोषि सत सागर । तव भ्रातहि पूँछेउ नय नागर ॥ २ ॥
तासु बचन सुनि सागर पाहीं । मागत पंथ कृपा मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

rāma tēja bala budhi bipulāī. sēṣa sahasa sata sakahim na gāī. 1.
saka sara ēka sōṣi sata sāgara. tava bhrātahi pūṁchē'u naya nāgara. 2.
tāsu bacana suni sāgara pāhīm. māgata pantha kṛpā mana māhīm. 3.

Lord Ram's majesty, glory and greatness, his might, strength and powers, as well as his intelligence, wisdom and erudition are so amazing and stupendous that even with a thousand heads (or mouths) Lord Sheshnath, the legendary serpent who is believed to hold the earth aloft on his thousand hoods, will be unable to narrate them. (1)

The Lord is capable of drying up thousands of oceans with a single arrow of his, yet, out of courtesy, civility and good manners, and also because he is an expert in

following the laws of probity and propriety, he has sought your brother's (i.e. Vibhishan's) opinion regarding the question of how to cross the ocean¹. (2)

Hearing his (Vibhishan's) advice, the Lord is presently requesting the ocean to give him a passage across its surface². (3)

[Note—¹Lord Ram could have soaked the water of the ocean by shooting a single fiery arrow at it, but he wishes to follow a more reconciliatory path by trying to first find out a way to cross the ocean without any use of force. Besides this, the Lord chose to consult Vibhishan on this issue to show due respect to him as he had appointed the latter as his close minister and advisor with respect to the impending campaign of Lanka.

The Lord wanted to keep the patron Deity of the ocean in good humour to ensure that the backyard is a safe place once the war begins in Lanka, because once the Lord's army lands on the soil of Lanka the ocean would be in the rear, separating the army from the mainland. No wise and intelligent military general would ever want a hostile force in the backyard of his army. In case an emergency arose and a quick withdrawal was needed for the Lord's army, a friendly ocean would be of great help as opposed to the situation when the ocean is inimical and willing to settle its own scores with the Lord as it feels that it had been humiliated and subjected to ruthless force earlier. So the Lord wished to be on good and friendly terms with the ocean by giving the latter a chance to let his army pass peacefully, in a friendly manner. Use of unwarranted force would not be conducive to a wise military strategy, as well as for establishing and maintaining long term amiable relations.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 51.]

सुनत बचन बिहसा दससीसा । जौं असि मति सहाय कृत कीसा ॥ ४ ॥
 सहज भीरु कर बचन दृढ़ाई । सागर सन ठानी मचलाई ॥ ५ ॥
 मूढ़ मृषा का करसि बड़ाई । रिपु बल बुद्धि थाह मैं पाई ॥ ६ ॥
 सचिव सभीत बिभीषन जाकें । बिजय बिभूति कहाँ जग ताकें ॥ ७ ॥

sunata bacana bihasā dasasīsā. jauri asi mati sahāya kṛta kīsā. 4.
 sahaja bhīru kara bacana dṛṛhā'ī. sāgara sana ṭhānī macalā'ī. 5.
 mūrha mṛṣā kā karasi baṛā'ī. ripu bala bud'dhi thāha mairi pā'ī. 6.
 saciva sabhīta bibhīṣana jākēm. bijaya bibhūti kahāṁ jaga tākēm. 7.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard what Suk had to say, he laughed in a derisive manner, saying 'With this sort of low intelligence there is no wonder that he (Lord Ram) has chosen to make monkeys as his allies and supporters. (4)

What an irony it is that he (Lord Ram) has sought the advice of Vibhishan who himself is cowardly, and has decided to follow the latter's advice by meekly praying to the ocean (like a child seeking favour from someone) in an attempt to make it agree, something that is impossible. (5)

Oh you dumb-witted wicked fellow; why are you falsely praising him (Lord Ram)? Listen, I have been able to measure how strong and powerful the enemy is on the basis of your own version of the developments. (6)

Say, someone who has a cowardly and frightened person like Vibhishan as his advisor and minister, how can he ever expect to have the glory of victory for himself, how can he ever hope to have the crown of triumph over his head? [No, it is not at all possible.]² (7)

[Note—¹Ravana alludes to Lord Ram praying to the ocean to let his army pass to the other side. He means that a brave and valiant warrior would forcefully remove all obstacles that stand in his way, not plead meekly before his opponent to let him move ahead. From Ravana's perspective, had Lord Ram been brave and capable as he is reputed to be, and also as Suk has himself so lavishly praised him to be, then why is he not subduing the ocean by use of force instead of wasting time praying like a humble man, fully knowing that the ocean would not yield as it is very stubborn. This clearly indicates that Lord Ram is trying to avoid a confrontation, and is looking out to find an excuse as he is uncertain of its outcome.

Ravana felt that perhaps Lord Ram is making the ocean a scapegoat, as an excuse to tell everybody that he could not win Lanka and conquer its king Ravana just because the ocean would not give passage to his army to cross over to Lanka and wage a war. It implies that he lacks confidence and is not sure of a win, putting the blame for his abandoning the Lanka campaign on the head of the ocean—for the ocean stood in the way and did not let him pass. Well, why can't Lord Ram show his mettle and grit in the first instance by overcoming the obstacle of the ocean if he talks so much of defeating the demon army that is a much more difficult task than subduing the ocean? Surely, there is more bluster and hollow talk than something concrete in all the claims he makes about his abilities and powers.

²Ravana means that he is now sure that Lord Ram would never win against him because he has chosen to make Vibhishan as his advisor and war minister. Why? It is because he knows how simple-hearted and docile Vibhishan is, how scared he is of facing his elder brother Ravana, and how his nature is of a peaceful type instead of being aggressive and confrontationist that foster war-like conditions. This is because Vibhishan is his younger brother, and no one would know more about Vibhishan's nature and inclinations and habits than his own elder brother Ravana.]

सुनि खल बचन दूत रिस बाढ़ी । समय बिचारि पत्रिका काढ़ी ॥ ८ ॥

रामानुज दीन्ही यह पाती । नाथ बचाइ जुड़ावहु छाती ॥ ९ ॥

बिहसि बाम कर लीन्ही रावन । सचिव बोलि सठ लाग बचावन ॥ १० ॥

sunī khala bacana dūta rīsa bāṛhī. samaya bicāri patrikā kāṛhī. 8.

rāmānuja dīnhī yaha pātī. nātha bacā'i jurāvahu chātī. 9.

bihasi bāma kara līnhī rāvana. saciva bōli saṭha lāga bacāvana. 10.

Hearing haughty words of the wicked fellow (Ravana), the messenger's lost his cool as his anger was further stoked¹, and feeling that the time was now appropriate, he

indignantly took out the letter of warning that Laxman had given to him for Ravana. (8)

He said scornfully, ‘See, the younger brother of Lord Ram (“rāmānuja”; Laxman) has given me this note for you. Oh Lord, first read it (or get it read by someone), and then try to cool down and comfort your heart (i.e. realise the gravity of the situation if you think I am lying to you)².’ (9)

Ravana received the letter with a show of contempt: he smirked sarcastically and took the letter by his left hand³. Then he summoned his minister and ordered him to read it aloud. (10)

[Note—¹Why was the messenger’s anger stoked; why did he become indignant? It is because Ravana had called him a ‘liar’—apropos Chaupai line no. 6 herein above. Suk was giving an honest report like a true spy, but instead of thanking him for gathering vital information and giving an honest opinion about the situation that existed on the ground so that proper action can be initiated, Ravana chose to rebuke him, calling him a virtual traitor and a liar just because he was praising his enemy even though what Suk said was nothing but the truth.

²Suk said “Look; you think I am telling you a bunch of lies. Here is a missive from Laxman; read it yourself or get it read by someone. Then you will realise the gravity of the matter.

³Good manners expect that a person receives a letter from someone with his right hand, instead of the left hand. Receiving someone’s letter by the left hand is a gesture that implies that the recipient of the letter holds the sender in great contempt.]

दो०. बातन्ह मनहि रिझाइ सठ जनि घालसि कुल खीस ।
 राम बिरोध न उबरसि सरन बिष्नु अज ईस ॥ ५६ (क) ॥
 की तजि मान अनुज इव प्रभु पद पंकज भृंग ।
 होहि कि राम सरानल खल कुल सहित पतंग ॥ ५६ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

bātanha manahi rijhā'i saṭha jani ghālasī kula khīsa.
 rāma birōdha na ubarasi sarana biṣṇu aja īsa. 56 (a).
 kī taji māna anuja iva prabhu pada paṅkaja bhṛṅga.
 hōhi ki rāma sarānala khala kula sahita pataṅga. 56 (b).

This letter read as follows: “Oh you dumb-witted and wicked fellow! Don’t cheat yourself and become a cause of ruin of your race by living in a fool’s paradise and trying to fool yourself by imaginary good times and happy tidings by living in an artificial world of colourful dreams!

Face reality and remember this: by being inimical to Lord Ram you will not be able to save yourself even if you go to seek shelter with the powerful Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of this creation¹. (Doha no. 56-a)

Alternatively (if you wish to actually save yourself and your race from complete annihilation), discard your sense of false pride and arrogance, and come to seek refuge at the feet of Lord Ram like your younger brother (Vibhishan) has wisely done. Become a devotee of the Lord like a bee is of the lotus flower².

Oh you evil fellow! Otherwise, you and your race will be roasted alive in the fire unleashed by the angry arrows of Lord Ram.

[To wit, the choice is yours: Either face annihilation by opposing Lord Ram, or seek redemption and eternal happiness by surrendering before the Lord.] (Doha no. 56-b)”

[Note—¹The same warning was given to Ravana by Hanuman earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23.

On both the occasions, however, he did not pay attention.

²The honey bee is so enamoured of the lotus flower and devoted to it that it hovers over it, longing to alight and drink its nectar. Likewise, a devotee of Lord Ram always thinks of worshipping the Lord and fixes his attention on the holy feet of the Lord, as this bestows great bliss, happiness and joy to him.]

चौ०. सुनत सभय मन मुख मुसुकाई । कहत दसानन सबहि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

भूमि परा कर गहत अकासा । लघु तापस कर बाग बिलासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunata sabhaya mana mukha musukāī. kahata dasānana sabahi sunāī. 1.

bhūmi parā kara gahata akāsā. laghu tāpasa kara bāga bilāsā. 2.

Ravana felt sore affright internally, but he laughed to hide his consternations, fears and worries, and putting up a bold face as if all was well and he is not at all concerned, he addressed everyone present and said scornfully [1], ‘Just like someone lying prostrate on the ground raises his hand and closes his fists to pretend that he is grasping the sky with his hands, this message from the younger hermit (i.e. Laxman) is nothing but an extension of his pretentious boast and loud bluster encapsulated in a fiery speech [2].’ (1-2)

कह सुक नाथ सत्य सब बानी । समुझहु छाड़ि प्रकृति अभिमानी ॥ ३ ॥

सुनहु बचन मम परिहरि क्रोधा । नाथ राम सन तजहु बिरोधा ॥ ४ ॥

kaha suka nātha satya saba bānī. samujhahu chāḍi prakṛti abhimānī. 3.

sunahu bacana mama parihari krōdhā. nātha rāma sana tajahu birōdhā. 4.

Suk (also pronounced as Suka; Shuka; Shuk) replied, ‘Oh Lord (nātha); abandon your inherently stubborn and proud nature, become serious in this matter, and treat what is being said as the truth. (3)

Oh Lord (nātha)! Discard your anger and listen to my good advice: abandon your confrontation with Lord Ram and stop being hostile to him. [Be prudent and wise; arrogance and haughtiness will not serve any purpose for you.] (4)

अति कोमल रघुबीर सुभाऊ । जद्यपि अखिल लोक कर राऊ ॥ ५ ॥
मिलत कृपा तुम्ह पर प्रभु करिही । उर अपराध न एकउ धरिही ॥ ६ ॥
जनकसुता रघुनाथहि दीजे । एतना कहा मोर प्रभु कीजे ॥ ७ ॥

ati kōmala raghubīra subhā'ū. jadyapi akhila lōka kara rā'ū. 5.
milata kṛpā tumha para prabhu karihī. ura aparādha na ēka'u dharihī. 6.
janakasutā raghunāthahi dījē. ētanā kahā mōra prabhu kijē. 7.

Lord Ram's nature is extremely graceful, kind and polite, though he is the Lord Emperor of the entire creation. (5)

Be rest assured that as soon as you go and meet the Lord, he would grant his mercy to you; he would grace you; he would bestow his kindness upon you in abundance. Be sure that the Lord would not harbour a single whit of your sins in his heart (as he warmly welcomes and embraces you). (6)

Oh Lord (prabhu)! Please be gracious and kind enough to oblige me by doing one simple thing that I sincerely advise you—and it is to give Janki (Sita, the daughter of Janak) back to Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram).' (7)

जब तेहिं कहा देन बैदेही । चरन प्रहार कीन्ह सठ तेही ॥ ८ ॥
नाइ चरन सिरु चला सो तहाँ । कृपासिंधु रघुनायक जहाँ ॥ ९ ॥

jaba tēhim kahā dēna baidēhī. carana prahāra kīnha saṭha tēhī. 8.
nā'i carana siru calā sō tahāñ. kṛpāsindhu raghunāyaka jahāñ. 9.

When Ravana was told by Suk, the messenger, to give Janki (Sita) back to Lord Ram, he lost his temper; that vile fellow vented his ire on Suk by kicking him contemptuously¹. (8)

Suk bowed his head before Ravana and immediately left the place (Ravana's court and the city of Lanka) to go where Lord Ram was². (9)

[Note—¹This is the second time Ravana has kicked one of his close associates when he was advised to give Sita back to her husband, Lord Ram. The first instance was when he had kicked his own brother Vibhishan—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41.

²Once again we find that Vibhishan too had done the same thing: when kicked by Ravana he had also bowed before him and immediately left Lanka to go and meet

Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.

Thus we observe that even before the actual war commenced, Ravana had lost two of his friends and well-wishers, first Vibhishan and now Suk, due to his haughty, stubborn and angry nature.]

करि प्रनामु निज कथा सुनाई । राम कृपाँ आपनि गति पाई ॥ १० ॥
 रिषि अगस्ति कीं साप भवानी । राछस भयउ रहा मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ११ ॥
 बंदि राम पद बारहिं बारा । मुनि निज आश्रम कहूँ पगु धारा ॥ १२ ॥

kari pranāmu nija kathā sunā'ī. rāma kṛpāṁ āpani gati pā'ī. 10.
 riṣi agasti kīṁ sāpa bhavānī. rāchasa bhaya'u rahā muni gyānī. 11.
 bandi rāma pada bārahīm bārā. muni nija āśrama kahuṁ pagu dhārā. 12.

When he reached Lord Ram's camp he reverentially bowed his head before the Lord to pay his obeisance to him, and then told him all about himself by way of an introduction. The Lord blessed him, and he attained the destiny that he deserved. [What was Suk's fate? It is outlined in the following verse.] (10)

In his previous life he was a wise, erudite and enlightened hermit, but unfortunately he had become a demon due to a curse cast on him by another sage named Agastya¹. (11)

When Lord Ram blessed him (Suk), the latter was freed from this curse. After that, the sage expressed his gratitude to Lord Ram by bowing his head repeatedly before the Lord, and then he went back to his old hermitage. (12)

[Note—¹What probable reason could have been for sage Agastya cursing Suk? Perhaps Suk may have very proud of his knowledge and erudition, and on some occasion he might have done something or behaved in some way that had offended sage Agastya. Annoyed thus, Agastya may have cursed him as a punishment to become a demon. Then Suk may have asked for pardon, whereupon sage Agastya must have blessed him that some day he would be freed from this curse when he meets Lord Ram and has the good fortune of being graced by the Lord himself.

Life of Suk/Shuka has been narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-24. After receiving Lord Ram's blessings, he went to the forest to do meditation and follow his spiritual pursuits with other enlightened ascetics and hermits.]

दो०. बिनय न मानत जलधि जड़ गए तीन दिन बीति ।
 बोले राम सक्रोप तब भय बिनु होइ न प्रीति ॥ ५७ ॥
 dōhā.

binaya na mānata jaladhi jara ga'e tīni dina bīti.
 bōlē rāma sakōpa taba bhaya binu hō'i na prīti. 57.

Meanwhile, the stupid Ocean was so dumb and stubborn that it did not pay any whit of attention to Lord Ram's prayers to allow the Lord a passage across it even though three days had passed.

Exasperated by the Ocean's arrogance, Lord Ram angrily exclaimed, 'It appears that there would be no peaceful and friendly way out of this predicament; there is no option left but of taking recourse to an action that would create fear for the Ocean¹. (Doha no. 57)

[Note—¹Lord Ram knew, in the very beginning itself, that he would have to ultimately use force to make the ocean give him a passage: this is evident by the answer the Lord gave to Laxman when the latter was not in favour of making humble pleadings to the ocean for passage, because it would be taken as a weakness on part of the Lord. But the Lord wanted to make sure that all peaceful means are exhausted before resorting to the use of force. So he had then assured Laxman that his wishes of using force will be fulfilled, but he ought to wait patiently for a while. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 51.}]

चौ०. लछिमन बान सरासन आनू । सोषौं बारिधि बिसिख कृसानू ॥ १ ॥
 सठ सन बिनय कुटिल सन प्रीती । सहज कृपन सन सुंदर नीती ॥ २ ॥
 ममता रत सन ग्यान कहानी । अति लोभी सन बिरति बखानी ॥ ३ ॥
 क्रोधिहि सम कामिहि हरि कथा । ऊसर बीज बाँ फल जथा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

lachimana bāna sarāsana ānū. sōṣaum bāridhi bisikha kṛsānū. 1.
 saṭha sana binaya kuṭila sana prīti. sahaja kṛpana sana sundara nīti. 2.
 mamatā rata sana gyāna kahānī. ati lōbhī sana birati bakhānī. 3.
 krōdhihi sama kāmīhi hari kathā. ūsara bīja ba'eṃ phala jathā. 4.

Lord Ram said angrily, 'Laxman; bring my bow and arrows. I shall dry up this ocean with my fiery arrows¹. (1)

[Now the Lord lays down some wonderful principles of prudence that can serve as guidelines to help us deal with the people of the world and the difficulty we face in making the right decision regarding how to deal with a particular situation and people of specific character and nature. Here he lists seven special characters of people, and tells us how to deal with them.]

Praying or making supplication before an idiot (saṭha sana binaya), making friendship with a scoundrel and having affection for an evil rogue (kuṭila sana prīti), teaching good virtues of liberality, charity, generosity and philanthropy to someone who is a born miser and exceedingly thrifty (sahaja kṛpana sana sundara nīti) [2],

--- Preaching spirituality and its eclectic principles that lead to wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment to someone who is deeply passionate and engrossed in worldly affairs (mamatā rata sana gyāna kahānī), lecturing on the virtues of

renunciation, detachment and dispassion to one who is exceptionally greedy and rapacious (*ati lōbhī sana birati bakhānī*) [3], ---

--- Attempting to inculcate the virtues of calmness and evenness of the mind and emotions to someone who is prone to anger, easily becoming wrathful and vehement (*krōdhihi sama*), and to narrate the divine stories of Lord Hari (Lord God) to one who is overcome with lust and passion (*kāmihi hari kathā*)—well, all these (seven) things are like trying to sow seed and expect it to sprout in a land that is infertile, dry and barren (*ūsara bīja ba'eṃ phala jathā*) [4]². (2-4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram threatened the ocean in these words: “I shall teach the deity of this ocean, which is stubborn and stupid, a good lesson of his life by shooting energised arrows at him. These arrows are unique and exceptionally ferocious by their inherent nature inasmuch as that they are presided over by the fire god, resulting in their target bearing the brunt of the wrath of the fire god, which simply means that anything at which these arrows are shot is reduced to ash in an instant. Since the ocean is a reservoir of water and can’t logically be turned to ash, it means that it will immediately be dried up, and its bed exposed in the form of a cracked and parched stretch of dessert land.”

Lord Ram actually did not want to carry out his threat because the Lord, who himself is an ‘ocean’ of mercy and compassion, was well aware that by drying up the ocean he would be killing all the marine creatures for whom the ocean is their home. Surely and certainly this cruel action was not in the nature of the Lord; his main intention was to instil fear in the heart of the ocean so that it agrees, albeit under the threat of extinction, to let the Lord’s army cross over to the other side and land on the shores of Lanka. That was all, and no real harm was intended.

²In these analogies, the ‘negative traits’ are like the dry and infertile land, while the ‘positive virtues’ are like the seed that sprouts into a flowering plant.

To wit, just as it is worthless to expect a seed to sprout and produce a beautiful flowering plant if it is sowed in an infertile and dry piece of land, so it is also useless to expect any good result by trying to attempt any of the things listed in these verses.

For instance, if one expects that an idiot would understand one’s situation and heed to his prayers for help, then he himself is an idiot because one is sure to be frustrated in his attempt. Similarly, it is dangerous to have friendship with someone who is crooked and vile; there is no use in trying to make a miserly person loosen his purse string and make donations or help others monetarily; a passionate man who enjoys worldly pleasures and who is deeply engrossed in sensual matters would turn a deaf ear and a blind eye when told about spiritual matters, its wonderful values and its principles of renunciation, detachment and dispassion along with the bliss, joy and peace they provide; an angry person would not listen to reasoning; and a worldly man for whom this gross material world is the real thing, talk of Lord God as well as of love and devotion for him is a boring subject.]

अस कहि रघुपति चाप चढ़ावा । यह मत लछिमन के मन भावा ॥ ५ ॥

संधानेउ प्रभु बिसिख कराला । उठी उदधि उर अंतर ज्वाला ॥ ६ ॥

मकर उरग झष गन अकुलाने । जरत जंतु जलनिधि जब जाने ॥ ७ ॥

कनक थार भरि मनि गन नाना । बिप्र रूप आयउ तजि माना ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi raghupati cāpa caṛhāvā. yaha mata lachimana kē mana bhāvā. 5.
sandhānē'u prabhu bisikha karālā. uṭhī udadhi ura antara jvālā. 6.
makara uraga jhaṣa gana akulānē. jarata jantu jalanidhi jaba jānē. 7.
kanaka thāra bhari mani gana nānā. bipra rūpa āya'u taji mānā. 8.

Saying this, Lord Raghupati (Lord Sri Ram) mounted his arrow on the bow. This attitude of the Lord found favour with Laxman, and he greatly appreciated it¹. (5)

When the Lord mounted his fiery, ferocious arrow on the bow and raised it (to shoot), there arose a great turbulence in the heart (middle) of the ocean.

[To wit, there was a sudden churning, bubbling and frothing of the water of the ocean. It appeared that a huge underwater volcano had suddenly erupted, making the ocean boil; or it was like a huge underwater quake that seemed to lift the ocean and split it into two, causing monstrous waves that replicated the scene of the doom's day.] (6)

All the marine creatures, such as alligators, sea-serpents and fish of all varieties, were immensely vexed and agitated (by the unexpected churn and the sudden turmoil).

The Deity of the ocean became alarmed and thought that all the creatures who inhabit its realm (i.e. who live in the ocean) would be severely scalded and boiled alive. (7)

To prevent a catastrophe from happening, it (Deity of the ocean) decided to approach Lord Ram and make peace with him. So it collected a large assortment of gems and precious stones found in the ocean (such as pearls, shells and corals etc.), arranged them in a golden plate, and having abandoned all its haughtiness and ego, it came out on the surface of the ocean in the form of a Brahmin². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 51. Here Laxman had strongly expressed his reservations about an attempt to make the ocean give a passage by humbly praying to it for this purpose; he was in favour of a robust action, of forcing the deity of the ocean to submit to Lord Ram's orders rather than making humble supplications.

Laxman was of the view, and correctly so, that Lord Ram's wish to make a peaceful crossing by avoiding a confrontation with the deity of the ocean would be taken in the wrong light by the latter, for since the ocean is dumb-witted by nature it would regard the Lord's gracious nature and friendly gesture as a sign of weakness, and not of nobleness. Eventually, Laxman's views turned out to be correct.

²Why did the Deity of the ocean assume the form of a 'Brahmin' when it came out to make peace with Lord Ram? The Deity was so scared of Lord Ram that it did not want to take the risk of coming out in his original form, whatever that form was. So to ensure that Lord Ram would not punish him he assumed the form of a Brahmin, for a Brahmin is a respected person and usually receives a warm welcome.

This sudden capitulation of the ocean, which was so stubborn and unrelenting just a while ago, proves the truth of Lord Ram's observation in Doha no. 57 and Chaupai line no. 2 that follows it.]

दो०. काटेहिं पड़ कदरी फरइ कोटि जतन कोउ सींच ।
बिनय न मान खगेस सुनु डाटेहिं पड़ नव नीच ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

kāṭēhiṁ pa'i kdarī phara'i kōṭi jatana kō'u sīnca.
binaya na māna khagēsa sunu ḍāṭēhiṁ pa'i nava nīca. 58.

No matter what pains one may take to water a plantain tree in order to make it bear fruits, but it will not oblige. The only way to make the plantain tree to bear fruits is to cut or chop it down completely¹.

Oh the king of birds (khagēsa; Garud, the celestial Eagle who is the mount of Lord Vishnu)²! Listen to this maxim—those who are lowly and wicked do not mend their ways by polite prayers and requests; the only way to bring them around is to deal with them sternly and strongly admonish them for their behaviour. (Doha no. 58)

[Note—¹The banana tree bears fruits only once in its life cycle. No matter what care is given to its stem or roots, and how much water is showered on it, it would not bear fruits again. The only way to have a good harvest of banana fruit is to cut off the earlier tree and plant a new one. To wit, those who have a particular bad habit often do not break that habit unless they are severely punished for it.

²Garud was one of the primary listeners of this divine Story of Lord Ram. The narrator in his case was the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund. This episode of Kaagbhusund narrating the divine Story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', is the subject matter of the second half of the last chapter the aforesaid Holy Book, i.e. from Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125.

A full English version of this wonderful narrative, known as the "Kaagbhusund Ramayan" that is soaked in spiritual wisdom and the virtues of devotion and love for Lord God, has been published by this author separately. It is available at the same site from where this current book the reader is reading presently was accessed.]

चौ०. सभय सिंधु गहि पद प्रभु केरे । छमहु नाथ सब अवगुन मेरे ॥ १ ॥
गगन समीर अनल जल धरनी । इन्ह कइ नाथ सहज जड़ करनी ॥ २ ॥
तव प्रेरित मायाँ उपजाए । सृष्टि हेतु सब ग्रंथनि गाए ॥ ३ ॥
प्रभु आयसु जेहि कहँ जस अहई । सो तेहि भाँति रहें सुख लहई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

sabhaya sindhu gahi pada prabhu kērē. chamahu nātha saba avaguna mērē.

1.

gagana samīra anala jala dharanī. inha ka'i nātha sahaja jaṛa karanī. 2.

tava prērita māyāñ upajā'ē. sṛṣṭi hētu saba granthani gā'ē. 3.

prabhu āyasu jēhi kahaṁ jasa aha'ī. sō tēhi bhāṁti rahēṁ sukha laha'ī. 4.

The terrified Deity of the ocean fell at the feet of Lord Ram, and clasping it with his hands he said, 'Oh Lord! Please be kind and gracious to excuse me for all my misdemeanours and faults. (1)

Oh Lord, the five elements, i.e. the sky, the wind, the water, the fire and the earth, are gross, thoughtless and dumb by their very nature¹. (2)

Every scripture affirms that it is your mystical and magical cosmic power known as 'Maya', i.e. the supernatural power that creates delusions of gigantic proportions, which is responsible for the creation of all these five gross elements for the purpose of creating this vast universe². (3)

Oh Lord! Since these elements were created to fulfil your wish (to create the world), they are obedient to you and faithfully follow the guidelines set for them by you. Since each and every single entity of this creation follows your wishes and obeys your instructions, doing aught naught which is contrary to what you desire keeps all of them happy and contented, and these five elements are no exception to this general rule. However, all problems and discontents arise when any of these entities attempt to violate this universal rule of conduct; all sorts of discord in any society or kingdom arise when the orders and authority of the realm's sovereign are undermined and individuals begin to act in their own way, heedless to the advice of their commanding authority (which in the case of this creation is you, the Supreme Lord).

Hence, one would do well and attain happiness in life if one is contented with where the Lord has placed him, and if one follows the instructions and wishes of the Lord³. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, their behaviour lacks finesse and delicacy; they are gross in their behaviour, thoughts and actions. Since the 'ocean' is a personified form of the 'water element', so it's but natural for it to be inherently gross and thoughtless. Therefore, oh Lord, you being merciful and considerate are requested to overlook the ocean's ill behaviour and stubbornness, and be kind to forgive it for its irreverent actions.

²To wit, these five elements are the basic building blocks for this creation. They were created by Maya, which is your supernatural cosmic power that enables you to create delusions of reality, which conjures up a surreal world of magic that is so wonderful and full of life, vibrancy and colour that even the wisest of sages are misled into believing it as being the real thing, whereas in fact it is just an imaginary dream-like world. This Maya, therefore, just in order to give effect to your wish to create an exceptionally fascinating creation of wondrous dimensions from virtually nothing, first created these five elements, viz. the sky, the air or the wind, the water, the fire and the earth, and then used them in myriads of permutations and combinations to craft the world as you wished.

It follows from this fact that since these five elements were created by Maya, i.e. the cosmic power of the Supreme Being to create delusions, they are 'gross, dull and inane' by themselves. They appear to be real and life-like just because the Lord himself wanted them to look as such just in the way a magician would like that he creates on the stage should appear to be absolutely life-like and real, without a hint of falsehood, though he himself knows that they are all imaginary.

When the originator or creator of these five elements is Maya, the progenitor of grand delusions of cosmic proportions, and when this Maya has employed its powerful delusion-creating powers to create these five elements, then say how can it be expected that these five elements, and anything made from them, would have any truth or substance in them?

³To wit, these five elements stick to their basic nature ordained by you at the time of their creation. If they begin to do what they like themselves, if they do what they wish, then the order and regulatory mechanism in this universe would break down. I am sure you, being the Supreme Lord and Master of this world, would not like that your subordinates begin to do what they like, because that would create anarchy and chaos.

If they are not stubborn and act in a dumb manner by not relenting, not heeding to pleadings and not bowing to pressure tactics, then every powerful creature in this creation would brow-beat them to do their bidding. For instance, everyone would want the ‘ocean’ to part and give them a passage at their own convenience, or someone would want the ocean to rise and submerge his opponent’s realm, or to freeze so that boats and ships can’t move, and others would want it to irrigate their fields.

Similarly, someone would order the ‘fire element’ to burn his opponent, and someone would order the fire element to cool down so that his enemy can’t cook food and die of hunger.

The earth may be ordered to dry up or shake to cause ruin and havoc for one’s opponents. The sky may lose control over all its stars and planets, failing to act as a buffer between them, which in turn would mean that these stars and planets start colliding with each other. Imagine the hellish conditions of anarchy and chaos that would prevail if these five elements do not act stubbornly and adhere to their basic nature.

The subjects of any kingdom can live in peace and harmony and prosperity only if they respect their king and follow his laws; otherwise there would obviously be anarchy and chaos. This applies to all countries: the citizens are expected to follow the established constitution and laws of their country; there would be peace and harmony if this is practiced. Otherwise there would be constant friction between different sections of the society, leading to disharmony and tensions.

Similarly, the Supreme Being had laid down certain rules of behaviour and conduct for the five elements, which form the fundamental building-blocks of this creation, at the time of beginning of creation; these elements are expected to adhere to these rules and regulations in order to maintain peace and equilibrium in this creation. If they break this regulation, if they do what suits them, then there would be chaos all around. If these basic elements follow the norms laid out for them by the Supreme Being, then the overall structure of this creation as well as its finer constituents, which are formed out of these five elements, too would maintain their proper place, resulting in a peaceful existence. Otherwise, the structure would weaken and start crumbling from within.]

प्रभु भल कीन्ह मोहि सिख दीन्ही । मरजादा पुनि तुम्हरी कीन्ही ॥ ५ ॥

ढोल गवाँर सूद्र पसु नारी । सकल ताड़ना के अधिकारी ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu bhala kīṇha mōhi sikha dīnhī. marajādā puni tumharī kīnhī. 5.
dhōla gavāmra sūdra pasu nārī. sakala tāḍaṇā kē adhikārī. 6.

Oh Lord (prabhu)! You have done the correct thing by teaching me a lesson and upbraiding me for my impertinence (and I owe my thanks to you for it)¹. But the fact is that I was reluctant to give a passage across the water (of the ocean) because I did not wish to break the laws ordained by your own self; I was merely following the laws of conduct established for me and doing my duties². (5)

It is a established practice that a drum, one who is an utter fool, a lowly person, an animal, and a woman who has an evil character and a mean nature (like that of a lowly person or an animal)—these five entities deserve strictness in order to be tamed and taught good conduct³. (6)

[Note—¹What lesson did Lord Ram teach the Deity of the ocean? The Lord taught him that though it is okay that one should follow standard rules of conduct in routine life under ordinary circumstances, but one ought to be practical, prudent, wise and flexible enough in life to adjust and adapt oneself under changed circumstances, instead of being too rigid and stubborn.

For instance, though it was alright for the ocean not to allow anyone to cross over its surface, for that would break the law of Nature which had ordained that the surface of the ocean is different from the hard surface of the land, and though one could easily walk on the land one would be barred from walking over the surface of the water of the ocean or the river. The mass of solid earth known as ‘land’ does not drown anyone, and one can walk over it easily, but the mass of water known as an ‘ocean’ or a ‘river’ has the characteristic of drowning anyone who tries to walk over it barefoot like he does over the land. In order to go across the water of the ocean or river one needs a boat unlike in the case of the land where one can simply walk.

This is the normal law of Nature under ordinary circumstances. But the situation and circumstance here was different: if the ocean did not allow the army of Lord Ram to cross over it to the other side then it would be impossible for the Lord to free an innocent lady (Sita) who was kidnapped by a demonic person, and it would also prevent the Lord from carrying out his duty to restore peace and order in this world by eliminating the scourge of the evil demons who had run amok in this world, horrifying all the creatures, and creating terror and devastation everywhere.

In this peculiar situation, the stubbornness of the Ocean in not allowing Lord Ram to cross over its surface to go to Lanka to stop the demons from further spreading mayhem in this world was actually an act of the Ocean that was obstructing the Lord and creating hurdles in his path in carrying out his duties as the Supreme Lord of this creation. The Lord was not going to Lanka on a holiday, for a picnic or for pleasure. The Lord was on a divine mission of eliminating the evil and cruel demons, and obstructing him from carrying out his noble duties for the welfare of the world as a whole was a sinful act on the part of the Deity of the ocean. Therefore it was not pardonable, and the Lord, being the King Emperor of the world, had the right to punish the Ocean for being so stupid as to not understand the reality, and foolishly creating hurdles in the Lord’s path on the pretext of just following his natural character.

²The Ocean tried to explain his actions by pleading before the Lord that since it is an embodiment of the ‘water element’, it was ordained not to allow any creature who

walks on foot on land to also walk over water in the same way. Hence, it was merely following the rule established for it by the Lord himself at the time of creation. The Ocean said ‘sorry’ and asked the Lord to forgive him.

³The word used in the verse is “tāḍaṇā”, which refers to the ‘use of force’ against anybody. The ‘drum’ needs to be ‘beaten’ or ‘struck’ or ‘hit’ by a stick in order to make it produce sound. If one touches it softly in order not to hurt it or be kind to it, then the drum would produce no sound. To wit, the ‘drum’ is so dumb that it requires a harsh treatment to produce desired results; treating it politely is useless.

If anyone is a complete fool then trying to make him do something sensible in a polite manner is a waste of time and energy. He needs stern words, constant strict vigil and the fear of punishment if one wants him to do anything worthwhile.

Similarly, a lowly person needs strictness if one expects him to be disciplined; showing politeness and being courteous with such persons would make them go wild with arrogance and get up on one’s nerves.

An animal is to be treated with strictness, and so is the case with a woman who is of an evil character.

It is interesting to note here that the word “pasu”, which means an animal, is strategically placed between “sūdra” and “nārī”, meaning a lowly person and a woman respectively. It implies that a lowly person and a woman who are “animal-like” in their mind and heart, whose intellect and behaviour are no less dumb and gross than that of an animal, surely deserve to be treated like one would treat an animal. They deserve harsh and strict treatment if one wants to keep them under leash.

Shakespeare has famously said regarding a woman in ‘Hamlet’: “Frailty thy name is woman”. These observations need not be taken in the wrong light as they are clearly meant for a woman who is ‘no better than an animal’ by her inherent nature.

Of course such ‘evil women’ are exceptions, and so are persons called ‘Sudras’ who are so ‘mean and lowly’ by nature that they are at the bottom of the rung in hierarchy of civil society, and these rules are meant only for such persons.]

प्रभु प्रताप मैं जाब सुखाई । उतरिहि कटकु न मोरि बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥

प्रभु अग्या अपेल श्रुति गाई । करौं सो बेगि जो तुम्हहि सोहाई ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pratāpa maim jāba sukhāī. utarihi kaṭaku na mōri baṛāī. 7.

prabhu agyā apēla śruti gāī. karaum sō bēgi jō tumhahi sōhāī. 8.

[The Ocean pleaded:] Oh Lord (prabhu)! Though it is true that I would be dried up if your majesty so wishes, and then the army of monkeys and bears would easily cross over to the other shore (i.e. reach Lanka by walking on my dried bed), but that would deprive me of a chance to get some glory of being able to be of some service to you! (7)

Your orders and instructions are sacrosanct and inviolable in this creation, so say the scriptures. Hence, I (and for that everyone else) am bound to obey you. So please be kind to instruct me regarding what pleases you, and what you expect me to do.’ (8)

[Note—The Deity of the ocean tells Lord Ram that he is at the Lord’s command. The Lord should forgive him as all great Kings ought to be merciful, considerate and

forgiving in their hearts. If the Lord decides to go ahead and punish the Ocean then it would not be good for the Lord's reputation. On the other hand, if the Lord shows mercy on the Ocean and gives him a chance to devise a device by means of which the Lord's army gets across it while letting the Ocean retain its dignity, form and status, then both would gain—the Lord's reputation as a merciful and gracious Lord would be enhanced further, and the Ocean would also feel happy that it could serve the Lord and help him fulfil his divine mission of getting rid of the demons who were tormenting the world.

So therefore it would be fit and proper if Lord Ram does not dry up the Ocean but allows it to form a strategy which would help the army of the Lord go across its surface without violating his dignity.]

दो०. सुनत बिनीत बचन अति कह कृपाल मुसुकाइ ।
जेहि बिधि उतरै कपि कटकु तात सो कहहु उपाइ ॥ ५९ ॥

dōhā.

sunata binīta bacana ati kaha krpāla musukā'i.
jēhi bidhi utarai kapi kaṭaku tāta sō kahahu upā'i. 59.

When the merciful Lord Ram heard these polite words of the Deity of the ocean, he smiled affectionately and replied, 'Alright; so be it. Now tell me a way by which the army of monkeys and bears can go to the other side.' (Doha no. 59)

[Note—Why did Lord Ram 'smile'? It was because only after he had threatened the Ocean with dire consequences that the latter had relented. By 'smiling' at the Ocean the Lord indicated that he had no actual animosity or rancour against the former in his heart, but was only showing superficial anger at the Ocean just in order to make him mend his ways, and stop being inveterately arrogant and stubborn. That was all, and the Lord did not actually intend to harm the Deity of the ocean in any material way.

Why would the Lord not actually harm the ocean by drying it up? It is because the Lord knew that the ocean harbours a rich culture of marine life, and being merciful by nature and protector of the world, the Lord would never imagine doing anything rash that would extinguish this life.]

चौ०. नाथ नील नल कपि द्वौ ज़ाई । लरिकाई रिषि आसिष पाई ॥ १ ॥
तिन्ह कें परस किऐँ गिरि भारे । तरिहहिँ जलधि प्रताप तुम्हारे ॥ २ ॥
मैं पुनि उर धरि प्रभु प्रभुताई । करिहउँ बल अनुमान सहाई ॥ ३ ॥
एहि बिधि नाथ पयोधि बाँधाइअ । जेहिँ यह सुजसु लोक तिहुँ गाइअ ॥ ४ ॥

caupā'i.

nātha nīla nala kapi dvau bhā'i. larikā'īm riṣi āsiṣa pā'i. 1.
tinha kēm parasa ki'ēṁ giri bhārē. tarihahim jaladhi pratāpa tumhārē. 2.
mairṁ puni ura dhari prabhu prabhutā'i. kariha'uṁ bala anumāna sahā'i. 3.
ēhi bidhi nātha payōdhi baṁdhā'i'a. jēhim yaha sujasu lōka tihumṁ gā'i'a. 4.

[Reassured by the way Lord Ram politely and calmly received the Deity of the ocean and smiled affectionately at him, he felt very grateful to the Lord. Then he volunteered to help the Lord in the best way possible, a way that would maintain the sanctity of the laws of Nature and become a precedent for the coming generations. And what was that way? It was this:--]

The Deity of the ocean replied courteously, ‘Oh Lord (nātha). Two monkeys named Nala and Neela had been granted a boon by a venerated sage during their childhood days. (1)

By the virtue of this boon as well as by your blessings, even huge boulders and rocks as large as hills and mountains would be able to float on the surface of the water of the ocean¹.

[Verily indeed, the world would see this miraculous deed as an evidence of your glory and mystical powers—for no one can ever imagine that huge and heavy rocks and boulders that resemble miniature mountains can ever float on the surface of the ocean; it is virtually impossible. Oh Lord, very few would know that this feat was achieved by these two monkey warriors also due to the boon that was granted to them by some ancient sage. The world would actually praise you and your mystical powers alone that enabled this stupendous feat to be achieved by them. So therefore, you can see that I am really helping to enhance your glory instead of reducing it.] (2)

Meanwhile, I too would eternally feel grateful to you in my heart for showing immense mercy and grace upon me, and I will do my best to help you in whatever way I can. (3)

Oh Lord (nātha). In this way you can get the ocean tamed by getting a bridge built across its surface. This method would establish your glory and majesty in all the three divisions of the world² for all times to come, and all future generations would be able to sing about it and glorify you for this remarkable act of yours.

[To wit, oh Lord, this would be win-win situation for both of us—for on the one hand it would help me to maintain my dignity and obey the laws of Nature by which it was ordained that land-bound living beings cannot walk on water, and on the other hand it would also help your Lordship’s majesty and glory to reach greater heights. Further, it would help your army to cross the water easily, with the least trouble. It would also enable all the marine creatures living in the realm of the ocean to pay their obeisance to you and see your divine and holy form while you are crossing the ocean. This method of crossing the ocean would be in line with the human form that you have assumed, in spite of the fact that you are the Supreme Being having an all-pervading, omnipresent cosmic form.]³ (4)

[Note—¹The legend goes that Nala and Neela were sons of Vishwakarma, the architect of the gods in heaven. They had inherited their father’s acumen in constructing great structures; they would be quietly helped by their father Vishwakarma himself once the construction of the bridge commenced. When they were young they used to be naughty, throwing idols worshipped by learned sages into the water. These sages knew who these two young monkey-boys were, and that when they grow up they would one day help the Supreme Being proceed on his mission of eliminating the cruel demon race. Besides this they were very young in age, and the

sages also knew that the monkeys are inherently mischievous and fond of creating nuisance. So they forgave Nala and Neela for their childish behaviour.

But since these two fellows continued with their deed of throwing the sages' idols into the water for the sake of fun, without realising the gravity and sinfulness of their deed, the sages devised a device by which they could protect their idols from sinking in the water—which was to pronounce a boon, by way of a curse, that all stone-like things (such as the idols) which Nala and Neela would touch will not sink but float on the surface of the water. So these idols never drowned, and they were recovered by the sages and reinstated in their hermitages.

This sort of 'curse' later on became a 'boon' for Nala and Neela, as it helped them to put together huge boulders and rocks to construct the bridge across which Lord Ram's army crossed over to Lanka!

²The three divisions of the world are heaven, earth and nether world.

³The Deity of the ocean is wise and intelligent, and not as dumb as he appeared to be! The way the Deity answered Lord Ram, and the reasoning he gives showing how they both would be gainers if the method advocated by him is implemented by the Lord, clearly proves his wisdom and prudence.

In the future, if anyone wished to cross a river or any other large water body then he would have a precedence to guide him what to do: he would have to construct a 'bridge' across the water.

This event of heavy rocks and boulders, which were definitely larger and heavier than ordinary wooden boats that were normally used to cross the water during those days, being able to 'float' on the water's surface also perhaps laid the foundation of the concept of building huge ships and water-crafts of gigantic proportions by future generations.]

एहिं सर मम उत्तर तट बासी । हतहु नाथ खल नर अघ रासी ॥ ५ ॥
सुनि कृपाल सागर मन पीरा । तुरतहिं हरी राम रनधीरा ॥ ६ ॥

ēhiṁ sara mama unāra taṭa bāsī. hatahu nātha khala nara agha rāsī. 5.
suni kṛpāla sāgara mana pīrā. turatahiṁ harī rāma ranadhīrā. 6.

On my northern coast or boarder (i.e. to my north; in the northern direction from here) there live certain very vile criminals who are a constant source of grief for me. So oh Lord, please be kind to exterminate them with your arrow (that you had mounted on your bow to punish me)¹. (5)

When the merciful Lord heard of the torments of the Ocean's heart, he was moved by pity at him. So taking cognizance of this, the graceful Lord who is valiant and steadfast in the battle-field immediately acted to dispel the troubles of the Ocean. [To wit, the Lord immediately shot the arrow in the direction indicated by the Deity of the ocean, and once the arrow was gone the ocean felt at ease as now there was no physical danger for it.] (6)

[Note—¹This verse is very interesting. We have read that Lord Ram had mounted his arrow on his bow to punish the Ocean before he appeared to plead for mercy and be

forgiven. This arrow was still there, mounted on the bow! The Ocean felt terrified at the sight of this mounted arrow and was sore affright that if he does not tell the Lord of any target for this arrow then chances are that he himself would be one, for the Lord's arrow, once raised, cannot go in vain; it must be shot at something to dissipate its energy. So what ought to be done now?

By the term 'northern direction' or 'northern boarder', the Ocean means the land mass extending all the way up from the shore where Lord Ram met it till the fringes of the mighty Himalayan Mountain range which formed the extreme northern boundary of the known land mass of that era. There were many criminal tribes and demons who still lived there. So the Deity of the ocean requested Lord Ram to shoot his arrow in that direction so that it can eliminate such elements in the Ocean's backyard.

This request has great symbolic importance and significance—it means the Ocean reminded Lord Ram that while it is okay that he is going to Lanka to exterminate the demons who are sinful, cruel and vile to the extreme, but if this is the aim of the Lord then why should he neglect or ignore similar evil creatures still living in his own backyard, up in the main land? In Lanka only the worst of such demonic entities are concentrated, but others who may be less evil at present and who may one day evolve into evil forces similar to those who live presently in Lanka if they are not rooted out now are spread all over the north of the ocean. The Ocean reminded Lord Ram that it is a precautionary measure the Lord ought to take!

According to sage Valmiki's Ramayana, there was a place known as Droom-Kulya lying to the north of the ocean. That place was inhabited by low-caste people who were very sinful. The Ocean asked Lord Ram to shoot his arrow in that direction so that its explosive and fiery landing on the land would terrify these people, and they would think that the gods in heaven have shot this meteor at them to warn them to mend their sinful ways. There are good chances that it would suffice the purpose of reforming these sinful people. It is said that Lord Ram shot the arrow in the direction proposed by the Ocean, and the land got scorched, turning it into a desert known as 'Marukantar'. But since Lord Ram is kind and merciful in his heart, and since he wished to give the land and its people a chance for reformation, he blessed them that the land would be free from diseases, and that it would soon bear green trees that would have fruits on them. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 22, verse nos. 32-43.}

It is believed that this area is known as the Thar Desert and its surrounding areas in the present-day state of Rajasthan in India. In ancient times there was a huge cavity in the land, and it was filled with salt water to form a huge lagoon, or it could have been a fresh-water lake, a sort of an 'inland sea'. This lake or lagoon had a narrow water-channel linking it to the present-day Arabian Sea, that in turn merged with its parent body known as the 'Ocean' which was where Lord Ram now stood, on the southern tip of the mainland India.]

देखि राम बल पौरुष भारी । हरषि पयोनिधि भयउ सुखारी ॥ ७ ॥

सकल चरित कहि प्रभुहि सुनाव । चरन बंदि पाथोधि सिधावा ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi rāma bala pauruṣa bhārī. haraṣi payōnidhi bhaya'u sukhārī. 7.
sakala carita kahi prabhuhi sunāvā. carana bandi pāthōdhi sidhāvā. 8.

When the Deity of the ocean observed the might and valour of Lord Ram (as well as the Lord's readiness to oblige him and adopt a friendly attitude towards him), he felt extremely glad and exhilarated in his heart. (7)

Then after narrating the whole story to the Lord (regarding the evil doings of the inhabitants of his northern borders as well as other things directly related to the Lord's campaign, such as the reason for the ocean's initial reluctance to allow the Lord's army to cross over to Lanka)¹, the Deity of the ocean reverentially bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ram and went back to his own abode. (8)

[Note—¹The Deity of the ocean told Lord Ram that he had no real intention of creating an obstruction in the Lord's way, and to prove his integrity and a cooperative attitude he cited how he had asked a mountain named Mainak to rise from the depth of the ocean and invite Hanuman to take some rest while the latter was on his way to Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 1 and Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes it.

The demons led by Ravana were a formidable enemy, so the Ocean wished to make sure that the Lord is sufficiently powerful to defeat them by testing his might and resolve just like the case of Hanuman when the mother of serpents, known as Sursa, was sent by the gods to test his mettle and war readiness—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it.

There was another reason why the Ocean initially pretended to obstruct Lord Ram's way to Lanka. It was well known that Ravana was very harsh and cruel and unforgiving in his wrath and meting out punishment to those who offended him. So if the Ocean did not pretend to block Lord Ram's progress to Lanka, and if it appeared that he was a willing ally of the Lord, then there were good chances that his act would certainly offend Ravana, and that would mean unending horror for himself as well as all the marine creatures that live in his realm. So therefore, in order to deflect such a terrifying situation the Ocean decided to pretend to block Lord Ram's progress to Lanka; it was merely for show to appease Ravana. Now when the Lord had pulled out his arrow to shoot at him, the Ocean would have an excuse, in case Ravana became furious and came calling, that he was forced to cooperate with Lord Ram under the threat of death.

There was fear from the backyard too, because demon pickets were posted by Ravana on the mainland, to the north of the shore of the ocean where Lord Ram presently stood. We have already read about demons defiling the fire sacrifices of sages, about them attacking Lord Ram himself on different occasions, and how Ravana's sister Supernakha had tried to trap the Lord, an event that culminated in Sita's abduction by Ravana.

These were the many stories and facts that the Deity of the ocean confided to Lord Ram.]

छं०. निज भवन गवनेउ सिंधु श्रीरघुपतिहि यह मत भायऊ । १ ।
 यह चरित कलि मलहर जथामति दास तुलसी गायऊ ॥ २ ॥
 सुख भवन संसय समन दवन बिषाद रघुपति गुन गना । ३ ।
 तजि सकल आस भरोस गावहि सुनहि संतत सठ मना ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija bhavana gavanē'u sindhu śrīraghupatihi yaha mata bhāya'ū. 1.
 yaha carita kali malahara jathāmati dāsa tulasī gāya'ū. 2.
 sukha bhavana sansaya samana davana biṣāda raghupati guna ganā. 3.
 taji sakala āsa bharōsa gāvahi sunahi santata saṭha manā. 4.

The Ocean (i.e. the Deity of the ocean) went to his own abode. The advice given by him to Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) was very much liked by the Lord. (Chanda line no. 1)

This narrative is able to wipe out the negative consequences arising out of sins prevalent in the era of Kaliyug.

[To wit, by hearing and narrating this glorious story of Lord Ram, a devotee is cleansed of all taints that tarnish his inner self in the age of Kaliyug that is known for predominance of sins and evil qualities.]

Tulsidas has sung the Lord's glories and the divine story narrating the Lord's deeds in this world according to his limited abilities. (Chanda line no. 2)

Singing and narrating the divine qualities and glorious virtues of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) through the means of stories related to the Lord and his life on earth are like a treasury of happiness, joy and peace (for they bestow eternal pleasure and bliss to the heart). They have the potential of destroying or exterminating all spiritual doubts and consternations that confuse a devotee. They vanquish all grief and sorrows that cause torment to the creature. (Chanda line no. 3)

Oh my stupid mind and heart ("saṭha manā")! Listen to me: abandon all other wishes that you may have, and stop relying on any other source for obtaining peace and happiness in life.

Instead, rely solely on listening to and singing of these divine stories of Lord Ram as the single-window source for all your spiritual requirements, as the only panacea for accessing eternal bliss and happiness, as the fountainhead that would grant you everlasting beatitude and felicity. (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. सकल सुमंगल दायक रघुनायक गुन गान ।

सादर सुनहिं ते तरहिं भव सिंधु बिना जलजान ॥ ६० ॥

dōhā.

sakala sumaṅgala dāyaka raghunāyaka guna gāna.
 sādara sunahim tē tarahim bhava sindhu binā jalajāna. 60.

Verily indeed, the singing and narrating of the glories and divine stories of Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) is the only fountainhead that bestows all sorts of auspiciousness, good omens, welfare and well-being to one and all.

Truly, in all sooth and without gainsay, those who are fortunate to listen to the narration of Lord Ram's divine story and of the Lord's glories are able to cross over this symbolic ocean represented by the endless cycle of transmigration. [To wit, their soul finds liberation and deliverance once and for all. They attain emancipation and salvation for themselves. Their soul attains eternity; they find eternal beatitude and felicity.] (Doha no. 60)

Sub-section 10.1.2—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to—Doha no. 5; (ii) Doha no. 11 (a) along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it:-

(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to—Doha no. 5:-

दो०. लव निमेष परमानु जुग बरष कलप सर चंड । १ ।
भजसि न मन तेहि राम को कालु जासु कोदंड ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

lava nimēṣa paramānu juga baraṣa kalapa sara caṇḍa. 1.
bhajasi na mana tēhi rāma kō kālū jāsū kōdaṇḍa. 2.

[The poet-saint Tulsidas exhorts his own self, i.e. his mind and his heart known as the ‘Mana’, to worship and adore Lord Ram who is none but the Supreme Being himself in a physical form. Addressing his Mana, the learned poet says:-]

‘Oh my dear Mana! Why don’t you worship and adore Lord Ram—the Supreme Being whose primary form is cosmic and timeless in nature, a form that transcends the boundaries of Time as it is eternal and infinite, a form that is all pervading and all-encompassing—for whom the ‘Kaal’ (the factor of immortal Time; the factor of Time that precedes this creation and would even follow its conclusion) is the cosmic ‘Bow’, and the different divisions of this Time factor, both at the microcosmic level as well as the macrocosmic level of existence, from the very tiny fractions such as Lava, Nimesh and Parmaanu (referring to an hour, a minute and a second), to the cosmic scale of the measurement of Time known as Yuga, Varsha and Kalpa (referring to an era, a year and one cycle of creation) are different types of ‘Arrows’, fierce and powerful, that the Lord employs both for short-range as well as for long-range use respectively. (Doha line nos. 1-2)

[Note— The factor of Time and how the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram uses it to exercise his control over this creation should be clearly understood. When anything comes into existence it has a certain life-span or life-time at the end of which time it ceases to exist. This is a universal Law of Nature that is true for everything, both at the macrocosmic level of creation and its microcosmic counterpart. Therefore, by exercising control over this factor of Time, and ensuring that this Law of Nature remains inviolable, the Lord ensures that each and every entity in this creation remains within its designated limits.

The Lord himself also follows this Law of Nature that has been promulgated by him—and this is the reason why when the time came for him to leave this world and return to his heavenly abode he willingly accepted it and shed his worldly mortal coil. This fact is explicitly narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-39 where we read that ‘Kaal’, the god of death, came to Lord Ram and reminded him that his time on earth has come to an end, and it would be proper for him to return to heaven. The Lord willingly accepted this advice, and thereafter he

maneuvered things in such a clever way which gave him an excuse to make an honourable exit from this mundane, physical and gross world. How Lord Ram steered his exit has been narrated in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 40-72, and Canto 9, verse nos. 1-67.

In the current verse we are reading, it is the cosmic form of Lord Ram that is being invoked. This form is also known as Brahm in the Upanishads. This form has no physical characteristics, for it is without any attributes, is invisible, sublime and subtle, is all-pervading and all-encompassing. The Upanishads assert that there is nothing beyond Brahm, and this Brahm is a term that is used to refer to the ‘cosmic Consciousness’ that is the only Truth in this creation. Without this Consciousness there will be no ‘life’ in this world, and a world without life is dead.

Lord Ram is the Supreme Emperor of this creation, and like an Emperor he employs different means to control his realm. At the microcosmic level of creation the Lord ensures that the cycle of creation keeps on rotating or moving in the form of each passing moment represented by seconds, minutes and hours. Similarly, on a larger plane, or at the macrocosmic level, he ensures that the creation slowly revolves and changes from one year to another, from one era to the next, and from one cycle of creation to the next, a fresh cycle.

This is like a gigantic wheel rotating slowly but certainly, without pause and stopping. Whatever has come into existence would end one day, whether that ‘day of end’ is measured in an hour, a year or an era, but the fact is that the end cannot be avoided.

But then, what remains after that ‘end’? It is the immortal Time, known as ‘Kaal’, that presides the birth and death of everything; it is Kaal that brings about an ‘end’ of what exists, and it also Kaal that sees the ‘beginning’ of another or a new phase of everything. But Kaal has no ‘life’ or ‘authority’ of its own; it is but a tool in the hands of Brahm, the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness. Lord Ram represents this Brahm. So therefore it follows that Time, known as Kaal, is an instrument in the hands of Lord Ram by which he controls this creation.

And just like the case of an Emperor who presides over a vast administrative machinery with a governor at the helm of each division of his extended empire, and then appoints other authorities to help these governors to exercise proper control over the realm, Lord Ram, in his cosmic role as the Supreme Being, employs Time and its various divisions as outlined in this verse to exercise his control over the vast realm known as ‘creation’.]

सो०. सिंधु बचन सुनि राम सचिव बोलि प्रभु अस कहेउ । १ ।

अब बिलंबु केहि काम करहु सेतु उतरै कटकु ॥ २ ॥

सुनहु भानुकुल केतु जामवंत कर जोरि कह । ३ ।

नाथ नाम तव सेतु नर चढ़ि भव सागर तरहि ॥ ४ ॥

sōraṭhā.

sindhu bacana suni rāma saciva bōli prabhu asa kahē'u. 1.

aba bilambu kēhi kāma karahu sētu utarai kaṭaku. 2.

sunahu bhānukula kētu jāmavanta kara jōri kaha. 3.

nātha nāma tava sētu nara caḍhi bhava sāgara tarahim. 4.

[After a little pause marked by the end of Canto 5 known as Sundar Kand, the learned poet Tulsidas resumes his narration in Canto 6 known as Lanka Kand.]

After hearing the advice of the Deity of the ocean¹, Lord Ram summoned his advisors and ministers (such as Sugriv, Vibhishan, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman etc.) and instructed them: ‘Why are you delaying now? Get cracking immediately and make preparations for building a bridge across the ocean so that the army can cross it and land on the other shore.’ (Sortha line nos. 1-2)

Jamvant (the old bear chieftain) joined his hands in prayer and politely submitted to Lord Ram, ‘Listen oh Lord Ram who symbolizes the exalted glory of the Solar Race (bhānukula kētu). Your divine and holy Name is itself a symbolic bridge which helps creatures cross this mundane world of birth and death with its accompanying torments and horrors, thereby helping them to attain eternal peace and beatitude². (Sortha line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 59 and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it.

²Jamvant said: “Oh Lord, by taking the help of your holy Name a creature easily finds liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration. Your divine Name helps the creature’s soul to attain emancipation and deliverance. Your exalted Name provides peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity to the tormented creature.

This being the case, if a creature can be certain to cross this vast ocean-like world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death along with its attendant grief and horrors, an ‘ocean’ that seems to have no end in sight, then getting across this ‘worldly ocean’ is no problem. Of course we have to construct a bridge, but your Name is so powerful that if it is constructed by invoking your Name each time its blocks are put into the water then it is assured that they will never sink, and so by employing this method we will be able to build the bridge step by step.”]

चौ०. यह लघु जलधि तरत कति बारा । अस सुनि पुनि कह पवनकुमारा ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु प्रताप बड़वानल भारी । सोषेउ प्रथम पयोनिधि बारी ॥ २ ॥

तव रिपु नारि रुदन जल धारा । भरेउ बहोरि भयउ तेहिं खारा ॥ ३ ॥

सुनि अति उकुति पवनसुत केरी । हरषे कपि रघुपति तन हेरी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

yaha laghu jaladhi tarata kati bārā. asa suni puni kaha pavanakumārā. 1.

prabhu pratāpa baṛavānala bhārī. sōṣē'u prathama payōnidhi bārī. 2.

tava ripu nāri rudana jala dhārā. bharē'u bahōri bhaya'u tēhim khārā. 3.

sunī ati ukuti pavanāsuta kērī. haraṣē kapi raghupati tana hērī. 4.

[Jamvant continued—] In the context of what I have just said, what does this humble worldly ocean mean? [If your Name is so powerful that it enables the creature to cross over the infinite ocean of transmigration, than what is there to worry about this

worldly ocean which has a limited dimension, especially when you yourself are present here to tame it and help us to cross over it?]¹

Hearing these words of Jamvant, the son of the wind god (Hanuman) said --- (1),

‘Oh Lord (prabhu)! Your majesty’s anger had created such a fierce underwater fire known as ‘*baravānala*’² that it has already dried up the ocean. What is seen now is salty water that has filled the cavity that was formed when the original water was evaporated. (2)

The emptied cavity or trough of the ocean was then filled with streams of tears shed by your enemy’s wives, and that is why the water of the ocean is so salty and alkaline³.’ (3)

Hearing this witty observation of the son of the wind god (Hanuman), all the assembled monkeys and bears glanced at Lord Ram and marveled at this idea, feeling joyous in their hearts. [To wit, everyone heard Hanuman’s witty statement and thoroughly enjoyed it.]⁴ (4)

[Note—¹Jamvant said: “Oh Lord! If your Name is so powerful, potent, majestic and authoritative that by merely remembering it and invoking its mystical powers a creature is able to help his soul cross over the endless barriers that come in the way of his liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration that is like a huge cosmic ocean without any end, then this body of water which lies in the front, and which the world likes to call an ‘ocean’, is of no consequence, for its dimensions are equivalent to a small puddle of water collected in the hollow made in the ground by the hoof of a cow as compared to the dimensions of the ocean symbolizing the cycle of birth and death which the creature crosses easily by simply relying on the mystical powers of your holy and divine Name. So therefore, there is nothing to worry about. Just issue your instructions and see how we tame this ocean.’

²The “*baravānala* fire” is the fierce fire that burns in the bowls of the earth, underneath the bed of the ocean. It is believed that it keeps the water of the ocean warm and helps sustain a rich culture of marine life, both zoological and botanical, even in great depths of the ocean, a life which would otherwise have died due to constant dampness and coldness of the water. The existence of this life-sustaining underwater fire is the reason why liquid water and marine life are sustained even under glaciers that would have otherwise frozen everything under them.

Like overland volcanoes, this underwater fire also erupts once in a while, giving rise to spouts of water and steam that are observed rising from the surface of the ocean at some places. It is also this underwater fire that produces ‘hot water springs’.

Perhaps it was produced at the time when the ocean was vigorously churned by the gods and the demons in some ancient time in search of the ambrosia known as ‘Amrit. In order to churn the celestial ocean they used Mt. Madrachal as the churning rod, and it was placed on the bed of the ocean. The vigorous turning of this ‘rod’ created friction that produced the ‘*baravānala*’.

Another possibility is that some drops of the exceedingly hot and corrosive ‘Halal poison’ that was produced due to this churning may have fallen in the ocean, which in turn not only heated its water but also caused it to become corrosive. In due

course of time this Halal poison so much affected the rocks already present in the water that they formed into corals.

According to 'Kalki Puran', when Lord Shiva produced the shaft of fire that burned Kamdeva (because this god of passion was tormenting the Lord and disturbing his meditation), the creator Brahma intervened to stop further destruction in this creation. Brahma converted this horrifying dart of fire into a 'sea-horse' and sent it to the ocean in an attempt to cool it down. The marine creature of this name and the underwater fire were the result of this.

Valmiki Ramayan says that the 'baravānala' is the anger of a sage named Aurva, and it is this fire that one day would heat the ocean so much that it would eventually evaporate and dry up, leading to an end of all water resources that cool this world that would eventually result in the extinction of all life on earth as it becomes a hot ball of fire.

Another narrative appears in Padma-Puran, Shristi-Khand, Pushkar-Mahatamya where it is said that Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, was asked by the creator Brahma to take the golden pot full of eternally burning fire from the possession of Lord Vishnu and keep it in the custody of the god of the ocean because the creator feared this pot could fall in the hands of the demons who had many a times attacked heaven.

³We have read earlier that Lord Ram had prepared to shoot his fiery arrow or missile at the ocean to burn it and dry it up, when the Deity of the ocean appeared before the Lord and pleaded for mercy. The Ocean asked the Lord to shoot the arrow in the 'northern direction'. The Lord shot his arrow as requested. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 60.}

But then what might have happened? This fierce and hot arrow dried up the water body where it landed, and then bored itself into its bed. Since the water was shallow and it dried up quickly, the arrow was not sufficiently cooled down, and so when it drilled itself into the earth it made the bowls of the earth hot too. This event could have produced an event that in modern times we can liken to an underground nuclear explosion. This phenomenon not only heated the bowls of the earth and dried up the water where the arrow landed but it also contaminated all the water that had any link with the water body where the arrow landed, i.e. the lagoon that was referred to by the Ocean, and at which Lord Ram had shot his arrow.

This is possibly why the entire ocean became corrosive, and this is also what might have caused the underground fire, because the red hot arrow may have ignited the vast underground reservoir of natural gas and oil that lies under the bed of the ocean.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 82-83 we read that the "Lord's formidable arrow returned to his quiver after successfully completing its assignment". This means in practical terms that the entire stretch of water, from where the Lord stood now till the place where the arrow was initially shot at, was dried up by the Lord's missile.

Then how was the cavity of the ocean filled again? Hanuman gives here an interesting way how it may have happened, and why the ocean became saline and corrosive. He says that when the original water, that was sweet, evaporated due to the heat of Lord Ram's arrow, the empty cavity was filled by streams of tears of the wives of demon warriors who wept bitterly at the prospect of the death of their male relatives in the war that loomed on the horizon of Lanka. These tears formed streams that flowed into the empty ocean just like ordinary rivers today do when they fall into

the ocean. This imagery is indeed a fantastic and a wonderful way of depicting an event that may have actually happened long-long ago!

Was it possible for the ocean to dry up instantly while everyone was observing it, and then how did it get so quickly filled with the tears of the ladies of the demon warriors? What did Hanuman actually mean? Well, from the more practical perspective Hanuman meant that from the time Lord Ram decided to go to Lanka to eliminate the demons, his anger was seething inside him much like the underground fire that burns invisibly inside the earth. This wrath of the Lord had quietly dried up the ocean, and by the time they reached its shores it was filled by the tears of weeping demon ladies.

Why were the demonesses so sure that their male relatives would all die? Well, the whole city of Lanka had witnessed what havoc Hanuman had unleashed when he had burnt it down during the time he had gone there in search of Sita. In fact, large numbers of demon warriors were already killed in the skirmishes they had with Hanuman at that time. So the signs were loud and clear: that doom was not far away. So the demonesses wept and grieved bitterly, shedding tears endlessly that flowed into the cavity of the ocean.]

⁴Everyone present heard Hanuman's witty observation and thoroughly enjoyed the subtle sense of humour it contained. They glanced at the Lord to see how he reacted to Hanuman's reasoning, and when they saw him smile they understood that he too enjoyed the wit of Hanuman. After the somber situation that had just ended with the Ocean succumbing to the Lord, it was a pleasant turn of events. An otherwise serious and grave atmosphere was suddenly changed into a pleasant one by Hanuman, lifting everyone's spirits and sending a ripple of laughter in the rank and file of the Lord's army. Of course, Lord Ram too enjoyed and appreciated it.]

जामवंत बोले दोउ भाई । नल नीलहि सब कथा सुनाई ॥ ५ ॥

राम प्रताप सुमिरि मन माहीं । करहु सेतु प्रयास कछु नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

jā mavanta bōlē dō'u bhā'ī. nala nīlahi saba kathā sunā'ī. 5.

rāma pratāpa sumiri mana māhīm. karahu sētu prayāsa kachu nāhīm. 6.

Jamvant (the bear chieftain) called the two brothers Nala and Neela, and told them about everything. [Jamvant related to the two brothers what the Deity of the ocean had told Lord Ram a little while ago—that to cross the ocean a bridge across the surface of the water had to be constructed, and for this purpose the two brothers, Nala and Neela, were fully qualified and very competent¹.] (5)

He exhorted them to start the construction of the bridge forthwith, saying, 'You must remember the glory of Lord Ram and feel rest assured that you would be successful in constructing the bridge. So don't worry. Building this bridge will not need any great effort, and you will be able to do it as if it was a mere sport for you.' (6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 60.]

बोलि लिए कपि निकर बहोरी । सकल सुनुहु बिनती कछु मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 राम चरन पंकज उर धरहू । कौतुक एक भालु कपि करहू ॥ ८ ॥
 धावहु मर्कट बिकट बरूथा । आनुहु बिटप गिरिन्ह के जूथा ॥ ९ ॥
 सुनि कपि भालु चले करि हूहा । जय रघुबीर प्रताप समूहा ॥ १० ॥

bōli li'ē kapi nikara bahōrī. sakala sunahu binatī kachu mōrī. 7.
 rāma carana paṅkaja ura dharahū. kautuka ēka bhālu kapi karahū. 8.
 dhāvahu markṭa bikaṭa barūthā. ānahu biṭapa girinha kē jūthā. 9.
 suni kapi bhālu calē kari hūhā. jaya raghubīra pratāpa samūhā. 10.

After briefing Nala and Neela, Jamvant summoned large number of monkey and bear warriors and addressed them as follows: 'I pray to all of you to listen to my little request. (7)

This request is a simple one. First invoke the glory of Lord Ram and enshrine his holy feet in your hearts, and then engage yourselves in a little sporting activity¹. (8)

All of you who are full of daring and courage must get cracking immediately. Run in all the directions, wherever you wish to go. Find trees and rocks, pick them up, and bring them here as fast as you can.' (9)

As soon as the multitudes of monkeys and bears heard this instruction they gave out a thunderous cheer (as there was nothing better they could have been asked to do). Then they embarked on this mission instantly, with immense zeal and energy.

They enthusiastically applauded Lord Ram and exclaimed in unison, 'Hail Lord Ram; Glory to you. [Oh Lord, off we go! Just wait for some more time and see what wonder unfolds right in front of you.]' (10)

[Note—¹Jamvant told the assembled monkey and bear warriors, "Listen my friends! What I will now ask you to do is something all of you will enjoy doing. You have always been playing around with huge trees and their branches, and you have always enjoyed throwing big boulders and rocks here and there as well at each other playfully. I mean that you have been doing this since your childhood days; all of you are habituated in uprooting great trees and rocks, and using them as tools for your games and other sporting activities. Now well, it is the time to employ this skill and put it to some good use.

I am absolutely sure that you will thoroughly enjoy this activity—of uprooting trees and boulders and rocks from wherever you can find them, and then bringing them here and dumping them into the ocean so that Nala and Neela could use them to build a bridge. So go ahead and enjoy yourselves!

Remember: Never earlier you had a chance of being actually asked to uproot trees and dislodge rocks and boulders from hills and mountains, and then get praised for this mischievous deed of yours. Since this is a natural game for you, since it is a habit for all of you, and the icing on the cake is that now you are being actually asked to do it instead of being reprimanded for it, so get cracking immediately and thoroughly enjoy this freedom to engage in an activity that suits your natural temperament. This is a sort of a boon for you. So go ahead; you have my permission. Good luck!"]

दो०. अति उत्तंग गिरि पादप लीलहिं लेहिं उठाइ ।
आनि देहिं नल नीलहि रचहिं ते सेतु बनाइ ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

ati utaṅga giri pādapa līlahiṁ lēhiṁ uṭhā'i.
āni dēhiṁ nala nīlahi racahiṁ tē sētu banā'i. 1.

The huge army of monkeys and bears got a bonanza of their lives. They uprooted large trees as well as stones, boulders and rocks of all sizes and shapes from mountains and hills, and brought them immediately to the shore of the ocean. There they handed their collection over to Nala and Neela who used these trees, stones, boulders and rocks to construct the bridge step-by-step. (Doha no. 1)

[Note—We must remember that Nala and Neela were blessed by a boon that anything they touched would float on the water. So it means that the rocks and boulders which the warriors brought were first handed over to the two brothers, and not directly dumped into the water because then they would have sunk. When Nala and Neela touched these heavy rocks and boulders they began floating. There was of course no problem with tree trunks as they naturally float on the surface of the water.

Nala and Neela had merely to put these trees, stones, rocks and boulders into their proper position and tie them up. Perhaps they first tied up the trees using thick but soft stems and creepers as twines, and then over this temporary float they placed the rocks and the boulders, fixing them tightly over the tree trunks that acted as rough wooden planks over which slabs of stones were placed to make a strong floating bridge.

It has also been said that the stones that were used to construct this miraculous bridge were actually porous and light, and not solid rocks, thereby enabling them to float on the surface of the water instead of sinking.

A very interesting question arises here: Ravana was surely informed by his spies on this development, that a bridge is being constructed. Why then did he not react; why did he not do anything to disrupt it somehow even if his attempt failed?

There are two ways to look at the answer of this question. One is that Ravana wanted to find deliverance from his evil body of a demon, and it was for this purpose he had abducted Sita in the first place as this would force Lord Ram to come and kill him. This 'killing' of his gross body would free his soul that was trapped in it. So therefore, in spite of all the pretensions of hostility, boastful talk and angry posturing, Ravana secretly welcomed the move of building the bridge as this would ensure that Lord Ram actually came to Lanka.

Ravana actually wished that the Supreme Being in the physical form of Lord Ram set his holy feet on the soil of Lanka which would purify his land. Not only this, being a magnanimous and generous king, albeit of the evil demon race, he wished that all other demons of his race could also find liberation and spiritually benefit by the actual presence of the Supreme Lord in their midst. This being his desire, why would he disrupt the bridge?

There is another angle to the reason why Ravana did not do anything to break the bridge while it was still under construction. He was so extremely deluded about his own powers, strength, invincibility and authority that he was sure that the Deity of

the ocean would never ever dare to offend him by allowing his enemy Lord Ram to get across. He was therefore sure that the ocean is playing some trick on the Lord by seemingly being cooperative, but would suddenly break the bridge either before its completion, or when the whole army of Lord Ram was on it while crossing to Lanka. In the former case, both Nala and Neela, along with their aides, would be drowned, and so there would be no one left to continue with the bridge. It would also completely demoralize the rest of the Lord's army. In the second case—when the ocean would make the bridge collapse while the army was mid-way across it, it would be the end of the whole story.

Besides this, even in the remote chance of the ocean betraying Ravana, the latter felt that the demon warriors were strong and powerful enough to easily get rid of the invaders. Or, he would cut the bridge himself from the place where it touched the soil of Lanka at the right time. He minced no words in this regard when later on in the story we read that he first reassured his wife Mandodari that there is nothing to fear because not even gods dared to stand before him so what is there to worry about monkeys, bears and humans—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 8.

Then, when the Lord's army actually launched the attack, Ravana thought that his demon warriors would easily overcome the enemy by simply eating them up as it was the habit of meat-eating demons. So he ordered his hungry demons to 'go and eat those monkeys and bears and human brothers alive'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (1) Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 8; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 40.

So, the deluded and over-confident Ravana, who was too haughty, proud and egoist to come to terms with ground realities that there was someone stronger and more powerful than him in this world, decided to 'wait and watch' while the bridge was being constructed. In the end when Lord Ram's army succeeded to cross the ocean and land on the soil of Lanka, and this news was conveyed to Ravana, he was absolutely shocked, stunned and amazed as he had never ever imagined even in his wildest of dreams that this thing, of crossing the virtual un-crossable ocean, is actually possible. His astonishment and inability to digest this bit of news is clearly mentioned in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5; and (ii) Devi Puran Mahabhagvat Ramayan, Canto 40, verse no. 8. We shall be reading them by-and-by.]

चौ०. सैल बिसाल आनि कपि देहीं । कंदुक इव नल नील ते लेहीं ॥ १ ॥
देखि सेतु अति सुंदर रचना । बिहसि कृपानिधि बोले बचना ॥ २ ॥
परम रज्ज उत्तम यह धरनी । महिमा अमित जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥ ३ ॥
करिहउँ इहाँ संभु थापना । मोरे हृदयँ परम कल्पना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

saila bisāla āni kapi dēhīm. kanduka iva nala nīla tē lēhīm. 1.
dēkhi sētu ati sundara racanā. bihasi kṛpānidhi bōlē bacanā. 2.
parama ramya uttama yaha dharanī. mahimā amita jā'i nahim baranī. 3.
kariha'uṁ ihāṁ sambhu thāpanā. mōrē hṛdayaṁ parama kalapanā. 4.

The monkeys (and bears) brought heavy rocks and boulders and handed them over to Nala and Neela who received them as if they were balls. [To wit, the warriors brought

the large rocks and boulders and simply flung them towards Nala and Neela, who caught them like one catches a football.] (1)

When Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, saw the progress of the construction of this wonderful bridge that looked exceptionally magnificent and wondrous as it stretched in front of him as far as the eyes could see (i.e. appearing to touch the horizon), he was very glad and fascinated¹. He marveled at this sight, smiled and said --- (2),

‘This land is very beautiful, charming and auspicious. Its glory and importance cannot be sufficiently described². (3)

I wish to sanctify it by establishing (consecrating) Lord Shiva here (in the form of his Lingam).

[To wit, I will make this land holy and purified by establishing an idol of Lord Shiva here and consecrate it. I will sanctify this place by worshipping Lord Shiva first before setting my foot on the bridge.]³

This has been the cherished wish of my heart for long; I had imagined that I would be able to fulfill my heart’s wish soon, and I had been planning to do it for a long time.’ (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram stood on the shore and gazed at this fascinating sight of the construction of the bridge and its rapid progress into the distant horizon. He watched amused as thousands of his warriors were singing and dancing merrily as they untiringly and full of enthusiasm brought boulders and rocks and trees and creepers of all imaginable sizes, shapes and denominations, either dumping them on the shore of the ocean to be used later when required, or directly passing them over to those who were engaged in helping Nala and Neela in the construction work.

The Lord surveyed his surroundings: to his left, right and front stretched a vast expanse of water of the ocean. A pleasant breeze blew from all the directions. There was a chorus of noises made by the excited monkey and bear warriors who sang, cheered and joked with each other, encouraging their companions and boosting the energy of one another.

Lord Ram marveled at this fascinating scene and smiled in amusement. He called his trusted lieutenant Sugriv to his side and shared his joy with him. Then the Lord said, “Look Sugriv! Behold this wonderful sight. Look around yourself and see how beautiful the scene is. It’s awe-inspiring and most fascinating, is it not? Well, I had an inspiration. While our troops are engaged in the construction of this bridge, which is obviously going to take some time during which period we have some free time in our hands, it is my earnest wish to utilize it to honour and worship Lord Shiva. My friend, it is an established tradition that one should worship one’s revered deity and seek the latter’s blessings before starting on an enterprise. So let me first pay my obeisance to Lord Shiva whom I adore, and who himself adores me, during the free time that we have before the bridge is completed, for once it is finished there would be no time to be lost. Hence, summon those warriors who are free and not directly engaged in the construction work, and send them to nearby sages, hermits and seers with an invitation for them to come here to attend the consecration ceremony of Lord Shiva’s Lingam which I propose to establish here. This will not only sanctify this place but also ensure that the bridge is completed without any hurdle.”

²⁻³Why is this land so special? And why did Lord Ram wish to worship Lord Shiva here before embarking on his mission to Lanka? Now, let us examine these points one by one.

First, let us see why Lord Ram worshipped Lord Shiva. There are a variety of reasons why Lord Ram worshipped and prayed to Lord Shiva before he set foot on the bridge and his actually embarking on his campaign to eliminate the cruel demons in Lanka. Let us see some of the most important reasons.

When the bridge across the ocean was getting ready and Lord Ram was about to embark on his military campaign to Lanka with his majestic and vast army not only to free his wife Sita from the captivity of the demon king Ravana but also to eliminate, with freeing Sita as an obvious excuse, the cruel and sinful demons from the world so that the rest of the creatures can live fearlessly in peace and harmony, and the laws of Dharma can be restored, he decided to offer his worship to Lord Shiva and pay his obeisance to the latter.

Before launching any enterprise it is necessary and prudent to offer one's respects and worship to one's chosen deity to invoke the latter's blessing, good wishes and patronage. Lord Shiva is not only the revered God of the whole world in general as he is the 'Maha-Deva', the 'Great God', but is also the God revered by Lord Ram himself, as well as the patron God of Ram's arch enemy and rival Ravana, the king of Lanka and of the demon race.

So therefore, Lord Ram offered his worship to Lord Shiva before he stepped on the bridge to launch his campaign for the conquest of Lanka. It was on this occasion that Lord Ram praised Shiva and declared that if anyone wants to have devotion for him (Ram as an incarnation of the Supreme Being) then it is ordained upon him to first offer his respects and worship to Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva was not an ordinary god; he is honoured by the epithet of 'Maha-Deva', i.e. a 'Great God'. Amongst all the gods of the Hindu pantheon, Lord Shiva occupies a very important and revered place; he is regarded as being the wisest, the most enlightened and extremely self-realised amongst all the gods. Whenever the gods needed help they approached him for correct guidance. It is narrated in the book 'Ram Charit Manas' that when the cruelty and terror unleashed by the demons led by Ravana reached a point that was intolerable and the whole creation began to suffer, all the gods and mother earth first approached the Creator (Brahma) for help. Controlling Ravana was beyond his means, so he suggested to the group that they pray to Lord Vishnu who would surely help them as he is responsible for the safety, security and welfare of this creation. Now the big question was where to find Vishnu. It was then that Lord Shiva intervened and advised that the Supreme Being, Lord Vishnu, is available wherever his devotees seek him if they pray to him with sincerity and devotion. So on his advice, all the gods, including Brahma himself, prayed to Lord Vishnu who revealed himself and assured the assembled gods that he will come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to take care of things. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Doha no. 187.}

Since it was Lord Shiva who showed the gods the correct way to access Lord Vishnu, so when the latter manifested himself as Lord Ram he now wished to request Shiva to do the same to him, i.e. to show him the path to victory, because Lord Shiva, being very wise and enlightened, knows the correct path that would help anyone to achieve his desired goal.

The second reason is this: Lord Shiva is the third God of the Trinity, the others being Lord Vishnu, the protector and sustainer of creation, and Lord Brahma who is

the creator. Lord Shiva represents the deity that presides over the third phase of creation, i.e. the end of creation. Therefore, Shiva is responsible for bringing to a conclusion or an end to one cycle of creation that was started by Brahma and looked after by Vishnu. This being the case, Lord Ram thought it fit to seek Shiva's permission and blessing before he moves ahead with his mission of bringing to an end of the demon race that was evil and sinful. There were many other demons whom Lord Ram had eliminated or killed earlier, but those were isolated cases and that did not involve the extinction of an entire clan or a whole community of demons as would be done during the forthcoming war at Lanka. So it was absolutely necessary for Lord Ram to seek Lord Shiva's permission to do so as mass extinction of a race, a clan or a community, or bringing to an end of an era, falls within Shiva's jurisdiction.

The third reason: Lord Ram is an exceptionally merciful and compassionate Lord God. He was not happy that he would become an instrument of mass death and destruction of the demons, but he couldn't help because he was also the protector and well-wisher of this creation, responsible for maintaining peace, security, law and order in the world, and as these demons had caused so much untold misery and suffering in the world, tormenting all its creatures, it became obligatory for Lord Vishnu, Lord Ram's primary form, to step in to end this horror and mayhem. So while compelled to kill and eliminate the demons Lord Ram also wished that their souls found deliverance, emancipation and salvation, instead of being condemned to hell. This only Lord Shiva could do. Lord Shiva utters the holy Name of Lord Ram in the ears of dying creatures so that they find eternal freedom from the cycle of transmigration, and attain emancipation and salvation, i.e. attain 'Moksha'—this fact is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119.

Had Lord Ram been vengeful and wanted the demons to 'go to hell', he would have invoked and worshipped Yama, the god who presides over hell, and definitely not Lord Shiva who gives liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying creature.

The fourth reason: Shiva worships Lord Ram as his favourite deity, and he uses Lord Ram's holy Name as a Mantra (a divine, spiritual formula) for the purpose of Dhyan (meditation) and Japa (repetition). In fact, the whole Story of Lord Ram, known as the Ramayana, was originally conceived by Lord Shiva in his heart while meditating. So therefore, Lord Ram wished to pay his obeisance to Lord Shiva and show due respect to him by worshipping him and praying to him to reciprocate the latter's devotion for the former.

The fifth reason: It is a normal practice to first worship one's revered deity and seek the latter's blessings before one launches a project or embarks on a strategic mission, especially the one that was as important as the campaign to eliminate the cruel demons in the war of Lanka, a mission that was full of hazards and uncertainties.

The sixth reason: Ravana worshipped Lord Shiva and was his great devotee. So it was strategically important for Lord Ram to first seek Shiva's blessings and take him into confidence before launching his campaign to vanquish Ravana. It must be remembered that it was Lord Shiva who had showed the gods the way to invoke Lord Vishnu and ask him to get rid of the demons led by Ravana. So now Lord Ram wishes to remind Shiva of that day and seek his help; this would ensure that Shiva did not favour Ravana when the war actually begins even in the case of Ravana attempting to seek Shiva's favour to escape death.

The seventh reason: Ravana worships Lord Shiva, and therefore he would never come to attack Lord Ram and his companions during the time Lord Shiva's worship is in progress. This will ensure that the bridge would be constructed without interference and much of a trouble from the demons.

Now, let us examine the second point. This land was beautiful because the ocean here was calm as compared to other shores where it roars in a frightful way. The reason is that Lord Ram had tamed it and overcome its arrogance.

This place also marked the spot where for the first time in human history someone had built a floating bridge across the deep and churning waters of the ocean. It was no ordinary bridge; it successfully carried the weight of an entire army of monkeys and bears numbering in countless hundreds and thousands. And they weren't quietly strolling across it; they were jumping and dancing and stamping their feet heavily on the bridge all the way across it. This means that the bridge was exceptionally strong and sustainable.

There was ocean on three sides—east, west and south. It was a point on land from where one could see both the sunrise and the sunset in the east and the west respectively, making it a unique place geographically. The ocean lying to the south was the one that was needed to be bridged and crossed, and this bridge extended over the surface of the water as far as the eyes could see. Remember: Lanka was at a distance of 100 Yojan (approximately 800 miles) from this shore, and so the bridge obviously was also of the same length. This effectively divided the ocean into two parts—one that was to the east of this causeway, and one that was to the west of it. This presented a wonderful sight—the hitherto undivided ocean was now virtually partitioned into two! It was a 'beautiful' sight.

A soothing and cool breeze blew in from the three directions, the left, the right and the front, where the ocean was present. This made the atmosphere very pleasant.

This land also marked the place from where the Supreme Being finally launched his mission of eliminating the cruel demons to free the world from their tyranny and horror. But the war that led to the death of these demons was actually a blessing in disguise for them, for their souls were liberated and all the demons found salvation.

This land was the spot that marked the dawn of a new era of peace and tranquility in this world. It also marked the place where hopelessness turned into hope, where gloom gave way to cheer, where despair yielded to success.

Symbolically, this magnificent bridge represented a creature's effort to cross over from his mundane worldly existence mired by grief and worries, by making a little effort on his part and also by relying on the strength of Lord Ram's blessings and grace, to a new world of glory and happiness—because now Lord Ram would not only free the world from the horrors of the demons but would also free Sita from her captivity and distressful existence. In the process, the Lord would also free the souls of the demons and grant them a destiny that they would not ordinarily have imagined they could have ever attained.]

सुनि कपीस बहु दूत पठाए । मुनिबर सकल बोलि लै आए ॥ ५ ॥

लिंग थापि बिधिवत करि पूजा । सिव समान प्रिय मोहि न दूजा ॥ ६ ॥

sunī kapīsa bahu dūta paṭhā'ē. munibara sakala bōli lai ā'ē. 5.
liṅga thāpi bidhivata kari pūjā. siva samāna priya mōhi na dūjā. 6.

Hearing Lord Ram's wishes, the king of the monkeys, i.e. Sugriv, sent many messengers who went hastily in all the directions. They brought with them all the great sages and seers they could find to participate in this auspicious ceremony¹. (5)

Then, Lord Ram duly established and consecrated an idol of Lord Shiva, known as the "Lingam", and worshipped it as per established tradition. After completing the worshipping rituals and paying his obeisance to Lord Shiva, Lord Ram declared, 'There is no one who is as dear as Lord Shiva is for me'². (6)

[Note—¹The fact that a number of sages and seers were called to attend this consecration ceremony at such a short notice shows that they lived not far away. There was not much time in hand as the construction of the bridge was already underway, and no time could be wasted once it was finished.

This means that these sages and seers lived in the kingdom of Kishkindha and its nearby areas. Why were they called? Lord Shiva's "Lingam" had to be duly consecrated and worshipped, and for this purpose learned sages who were well-versed in worship rituals were needed.

A very important point can be inferred here. Ravana, though reviled as being a blood-thirsty demon who was a terror for sages and seers, killing them at will, was not after all as cruel and merciless as he has been painted out to be—for it is obvious that many sages, hermits and seers lived around the area so close to the shore of the ocean from where Lanka was merely 800 miles away. These sages and seers had no fear from Ravana while coming to attend Lord Ram's ceremony though they were fully aware that the Lord was about to launch a campaign against Ravana and was determined to eliminate the demons.

It is also possible that since the invitation sent to them was for attending a consecration ceremony of Lord Shiva's Lingam, they could not refuse even if they had some fear for their safety. But they knew Ravana and his nature well; they knew that Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, and so definitely he would never create any hindrance in worshipping Lord Shiva, and equally surely he would not harm anyone who was worshipping Lord Shiva or had come expressly for such worship.

²Here and in the verses that follow herein below, Lord Ram hints at the reason why he has worshipped Lord Shiva—it is because he adores and loves Shiva more than any other god.]

सिव द्रोही मम भगत कहावा । सो नर सपनेहुँ मोहि न पावा ॥ ७ ॥
संकर बिमुख भगति चह मोरी । सो नारकी मूढ़ मति थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

siva drōhī mama bhagata kahāvā. sō nara sapanēhum mōhi na pāvā. 7.
saṅkara bimukha bhagati caha mōrī. sō nārakī mūrha mati thōrī. 8.

Anyone who is inimical to Lord Shiva and claims to be my devotee then let it be clear to him that he can never attain me or find me even in his dreams. (7)

A person who is opposed to Lord Shiva and then expects to have Bhakti (devotion) for me is utterly stupid and ignorant. He is committing a grave mistake which would only lead him to hell. [To wit, he will have to suffer spiritually.] (8)

[Note—In these verses Lord Ram stresses the importance of paying obeisance to Lord Shiva. He says that if one wishes to worship Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being, then the first step is to worship Lord Shiva.

It has already been pointed out a little earlier that Lord Shiva is a great devotee of Lord Ram; Shiva continuously chants the holy Name of Lord Ram and uses this Name as his chosen spiritual formula which he employs during meditation. The divine story of Lord Ram as we know it today was first conceived in Shiva's heart while he was once meditating. And now we read here that Lord Ram too is a great devotee of Lord Shiva. This means that both, Lord Ram and Lord Shiva, adore each other.

This is the reason why the holy place where Lord Ram had established Lord Shiva's image is called 'Rameshwaram', meaning 'The Lord of Ram or the Lord whom Ram worships', a reference to Lord Shiva, and 'One for whom Lord Ram is the Lord God', once again a reference to Lord Shiva.

This unique combination of words and ideas incorporated in the deity's name 'Rameshwaram' simply means "Lord Shiva who worships Lord Ram, and who himself is worshipped by Lord Ram". The glory and importance of Rameshwaram as a sacred pilgrimage sight is highlighted in Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 2 herein below.]

दो०. संकरप्रिय मम द्रोही सिव द्रोही मम दास ।

ते नर करहिं कलप भरि घोर नरक महुँ बास ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

saṅkarapriya mama drōhī siva drōhī mama dāsa.

tē nara karahim kalapa bhari ghōra naraka mahum bāsa. 2.

[Lord Ram reiterated—] Let it therefore be clear: Those for whom Lord Shiva is dear but who are opposed to me, and conversely those who love me and have devotion for me but are opposed to Lord Shiva—both such individuals are destined to live in hell for an entire generation. [To wit, it is absolutely wrong to do so; it is sinful to distinguish between me and Lord Shiva, and to treat either of us insultingly.] (Doha no. 2)

[Note—This verse is directly addressed to Ravana though he is not mentioned by name. Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, but he was inimical to Lord Ram. This was not allowed. So Lord Ram indirectly gives the reason why it would be okay for Ravana to die as he is violating this rule.]

चौ०. जे रामेस्वर दरसन करिहहिं । ते तनु तजि मम लोक सिधरिहहिं ॥ १ ॥

जो गंगाजलु आनि चढ़ाइहि । सो साजुज्य मुक्ति नर पाइहि ॥ २ ॥

होइ अकाम जो छल तजि सेइहि । भगति मोरि तेहि संकर देइहि ॥ ३ ॥

मम कृत सेतु जो दरसनु करिही । सो बिनु श्रम भवसागर तरिही ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jē rāmēśvara darasanu karihahim̐. tē tanu taji mama lōka sidharīhahim̐. 1.

jō gaṅgājalū āni caṛhā'ihī. sō sājujya mukti nara pā'ihī. 2.

hō'i akāma jō chala taji sē'ihī. bhagati mōri tēhi saṅkara dē'ihī. 3.

mama kṛta sētu jō darasanu karihī. sō binu śrama bhavasāgara tarihī. 4.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘He who comes here and reverentially beholds this holy sight with its consecrated deity known as “Rameshwar”¹ (and pays his obeisance to Lord Shiva here) shall attain my abode at the time of his death.

[To wit, those who undertake a pilgrimage to Rameshwar and pay their homage to Lord Shiva, such persons are sure to attain my heavenly abode at the time of death—“tē tanu taji mama lōka sidharīhahim̐”] (1)

He who brings the water from the sacred river Ganges and offers it to Lord Shiva’s Lingam here would attain the reward of being one with me at the time of death². [This is called “sājujya mukti”.] (2)

Those who serve (worship) Lord Shiva selflessly and without pretensions, Lord Shiva would grant such persons Bhakti (devotion) for me (i.e. for Lord Ram)³. [To wit, one of the primary methods for having devotion for Lord Ram is to first worship Lord Shiva. Then Lord Shiva would grant the worshipper his desire—which is to have devotion for Lord Ram.] (3)

Verily, those who behold the bridge got constructed by me would be able to cross over this ocean-like mundane world of transmigration, along with all its attendant problems, very easily. [To wit, such persons who come on a pilgrimage to this sacred place, who first worship Lord Shiva’s Lingam consecrated by me here and after that they reverentially view this bridge, they surely would be blessed with the boon of liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death in which their soul is trapped. They would be able to get over all their worldly problems as easily as one crosses a vast body of water by walking across it on a bridge.]’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer a note appended to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 2 herein above.

The Lingam of Lord Shiva established and consecrated by Lord Ram on the shores of the ocean is named after Ram. The word ‘Rameshwar’ has two-pronged meaning—one is ‘the Lord who is the Ishwar or God of Lord Ram, the deity who is worshipped and adored by Ram’, and the other meaning is ‘the Lord, i.e. Shiva, who regards Lord Ram as his Ishwar or Lord God’.

This is an extremely important observation—as it removes in one intelligent stroke the schism and dichotomy that has led to the delusion of ‘duality’ between the two facets of the same Divinity. In other words, it lays stress on the fact that there is absolutely no difference between Lord Ram and Lord Shiva—they are both the same Supreme Being performing two different roles, to sustain and protect the creation as Vishnu or Ram, and to bring about its conclusion and punish the sinful as Shiva.

This obvious metaphysical tenet is at the base of the principle of Non-duality or Advaita Vedanta, and is evident also in fact that both Lord Ram and Shiva worship each other.

There is no other God or non-God in creation who is more well-versed in and more convinced of the spiritual philosophy of non-duality, as well as the fact that Lord Ram's divine name 'Ram' is a synonym of the cosmic word-symbol for the supreme Brahm, i.e. 'OM', than Lord Shiva. It is this reason why Shiva had selected the divine name 'Ram' as his spiritual formula—both for his personal usage during meditation and for providing liberation and deliverance to the dying man by muttering the holy word 'Ram' into his ears at Kashi or Varanasi. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, 1/19/3; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4.

²In the 'Sayuja' form of Mukti, the concerned creature is able to become one with the deity worshipped. In other words it means to merge oneself with the Lord God.

References: Atharva Veda's Tripadvibhut Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-17; Canto 6, paragraph no. 22; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 6-7, 17, 19, 22. While discussing this specialised form of Mukti, this Upanishad also describes the eclectic concept of Mukti in a comprehensive form in paragraph nos. 4-13 of Canto 5. In the Bhasma Jabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 2, paragraph no. 15, Lord Shiva tells sage Jabal Bhusund that if one offers proper worship to the Shiva Lingam as described in detail in this particular Upanishad, the worshipper is able to obtain Sayujya Mukti.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 104.]

राम बचन सब के जिय भाए । मुनिबर निज निज आश्रम आए ॥ ५ ॥
गिरिजा रघुपति कै यह रीती । संतत करहिं प्रनत पर प्रीती ॥ ६ ॥

rāma bacana saba kē jiya bhā'ē. munibara nija nija āśrama ā'ē. 5.
girijā raghupati kai yaha rītī. santata karahim pranata para prītī. 6.

The words of Lord Ram were liked by one and all. The sages, hermits and seers who were present there (during the consecration ceremony of Lord Shiva's Lingam) were pleased to hear these words of Lord Ram. Once the ceremony was over, all of them returned to their respective hermitages with gladdened hearts. (5)

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this divine story known as Ram Charit Manas, said to his consort Parvati to whom he was narrating it.]

Shiva said—'Oh Girija (meaning 'daughter of Giri', the king of the kingdom of mountains; here referring to Parvati, Shiva's divine consort)! It is a natural habit and an established practice of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) that he always shows affection for those who come to seek refuge at his holy feet (santata karahim pranata para prītī)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16.]

बाँधा सेतु नील नल नागर । राम कृपाँ जसु भयउ उजागर ॥ ७ ॥
 बूड़हिँ आनहि बोरहिँ जेई । भए उपल बोहित सम तेई ॥ ८ ॥
 महिमा यह न जलधि कइ बरनी । पाहन गुन न कपिन्ह कइ करनी ॥ ९ ॥

bāṁdhā sētu nīla nala nāgara. rāma kṛpāṁ jasu bhaya'u ujāgara. 7.
 būṛahim ānahi bōrahim jē'ī. bha'ē upala bōhita sama tē'ī. 8.
 mahimā yaha na jaladhi ka'i baranī. pāhana guna na kapinha ka'i karanī. 9.

Meanwhile, Nala and Neela completed the construction of the legendary bridge. This miraculous feat of theirs, that was however made possible by the grace of Lord Ram, granted the two brothers (Nala and Neela) eternal fame; their glory shone and spread far and wide in the whole world (like the sun's light). (7)

The stones, rocks and boulders that have the characteristic quality of sinking in the water themselves, and drown anything else that is attached to them, even those stones, rocks and boulders miraculously and magically floated on the surface of the ocean like boats usually do! (8)

Verily indeed, those who are in the know and are enlightened about facts do not give credit to the ocean for successful construction of this floating bridge, nor do they ascribe this success and the achievement of this marvelous feat to the construction skills of Nala and Neela, or to any especial quality of the stones, rocks and boulders used for the construction that they could float on water. [Then who should be given credit for this miraculous event? The answer is given in the next Doha no. 3 herein below.] (9)

दो०. श्री रघुबीर प्रताप ते सिंधु तरे पाषान ।
 ते मतिमंद जे राम तजि भजहिँ जाइ प्रभु आन ॥ ३ ॥
 dōhā.

śrī raghubīra pratāpa tē sindhu tarē pāṣāna.
 tē matimanda jē rāma taji bhajahim jā'i prabhu āna. 3.

In all sooth and without gainsay there is no doubt that those stones, rocks and boulders floated on the surface of the ocean due to the grace of Lord Ram; there is no other way to explain this unusual phenomenon.

Verily indeed, he who does not worship Lord Ram (the Lord whose grace and mere wishes could make lifeless stones float magically on water against all established norms and laws of Nature), and instead goes to worship some other deity, is a dumb-witted and utterly foolish fellow. (Doha no. 3)

[Note—To wit, the stones floated on the surface of the turbulent waters of the ocean due to the grace and blessings of Lord Ram; they floated because the Lord wished

them to do so. This proves the supremacy of Lord Ram over all other forces of creation—for the Lord can make possible that which is impossible. This being the case, why would a sensible person not worship Lord Ram and seek his blessings for his own welfare? Say, why would any intelligent person go to someone else to seek fulfillment of his wishes when all that he wants can be granted by Lord Ram very easily?]

चौ०. बाँधि सेतु अति सुदृढ़ बनावा । देखि कृपानिधि के मन भावा ॥ १ ॥

चली सेन कछु बरनि न जाई । गर्जहिं मर्कट भट समुदाई ॥ २ ॥

सेतुबंध ढिग चढ़ि रघुराई । चितव कृपाल सिंधु बहुताई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bāṁdhi sētu ati sudr̥ḥa banāvā. dēkhi kṛpānidhi kē mana bhāvā. 1.
calī sēna kachu barani na jāī. garjahiṁ markṭa bhaṭa samudāī. 2.
sētubandha ḍhiga caḍhi raghurāī. citava kṛpāla sindhu bahutāī. 3.

The bridge was finally completed; all precautions were taken to make it exceptionally strong and secure¹.

When Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, saw this fantastic bridge, a wonderful creation of outstanding ingenuity, skill and creativity, he appreciated it very much. Verily, the bridge pleased the Lord's heart and mind (kṛpānidhi kē mana bhāvā). (1)

The army of monkeys and bears marched enthusiastically on this bridge, presenting a sight so wonderful and fascinating that it cannot be described in words. All the valiant warriors, individually as well as in groups, were roaring and yelling loudly. (2)

Then Lord Ram (the Lord of the Raghus; “raghurāī”) set his foot on this wondrous bridge that was exceptionally strong and secure. He looked around him and saw the wide expanse of the ocean spreading majestically on all the sides (to his right and left, to the front and to the rear)². (3)

[Note—¹How long did it take Nala and Neela to finish the bridge? Well, according to (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 22, verse nos. 64-68, and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-6, the entire bridge, spanning a length of 100 Yojans (approx. 800 miles) was completed in five days.

How long and wide was this bridge? Well, it was 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles) long, and 10 Yojans (80 miles) wide—apropos: Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 22, verse no. 72.

On the 1st day of the construction, 14 Yojans length of the bridge was laid; on the 2nd day another 20 Yojans were added; on the 3rd day a further span of 21 Yojans was completed; on the 4th day, further 22 Yojans were finished; and on the 5th and the final day, the remaining part of the bridge covering 23 Yojans was put into place. After completion this bridge stretched for 800 long miles, its one end was at the northern shore of the ocean that touched the mainland, and its other end was on the further end of the ocean that touched the shore of the island of Lanka at its northern tip.

However, in Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan, it is said that the bridge was completed in a record time of '2 Prahars', which means roughly 6 hours. [1 Prahara = 3 hours.] {Refer: Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan, Canto 40, verse nos. 6-7.}

The existence of this bridge has been established by satellite images taken by the Indian satellite IRS-1A which in 1962 had taken photographs of the remnants of a stone bridge. It appeared as an underground streak from Dhanushkoti in India to Talai Manner in Sri Lanka. This was corroborated by U.S. astronauts aboard Gemini XI satellite launched on 14/9/1966.

One wonders 'what happened to this bridge later on'? It is said in the story of the Ramayana that Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya with his wife Sita and younger brother Lakshman, along with many of his friends from Kishkindha as well as Vibhishan who had all helped the Lord in his Lanka campaign, by an air-plane called 'Pushpak'. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 119; and Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4.}

This means he went back home by the path of the sky, and not overland. So this bridge was not used for the Lord's return journey. What then was its fate? Well, the fate of the unique bridge is narrated in Padma Puran, Shristi Khand, Chapter 38, verse 28-32 as follows: When the airplane was above the bridge, Vibhishan requested Lord Ram to demolish it. The Lord first struck the bridge with the tip of his formidable bow, rupturing the bridge somewhere from the center. Hence, the 100 Yojan bridge collapsed into two segments. Then the Lord broke each of these two segments into three smaller parts; then each of these parts further into still smaller units measuring roughly 10 Yojans each. To make it sink completely below the surface of the water, and render it useless for all times to come, each of these 10-Yojan units were further broken down into smaller parts measuring 1 Yojan in length. So finally, Lord Ram broke the bridge into 100 units, each fraction measuring 1 Yojan (approx. 8 miles) in length.

Why did Vibhishan wish to get the bridge demolished by Lord Ram himself? In all probability he feared for the future of safety of Lanka; he feared an invasion in the future from the mainland. He had witnessed the war and watched how the army of Kishkindha, consisting of ferocious, strong and fearless monkeys and bears, had completely ravaged and recklessly destroyed what was once a golden city of Lanka, a prosperous, thriving and almost impenetrable citadel of the demons that rivaled heaven in its beauty and magnificence. The warriors of Kishkindha were the victors; they were the conquerors who regarded the remnants of the demon race as vanquished and vile. So Vibhishan feared that in the future there was a probability that once he managed to make Lanka prosperous and beautified once again, these same warriors of Kishkindha, who are now his friends and are restrained because of Lord Ram, would turn hostile in due time; they will be tempted to tease him every now and then, coming to Lanka and running amok in the reconstructed city, uprooting trees in parks and occupying buildings, and may be even going to the extent of extracting tributes from him to let him live in peace. What would he do then? Lord Ram would not be there always to protect him.

In case he decided to break the bridge on his own, then that would be a dangerous step. Why? Because the army of Kishkindha wouldn't let him do so, arguing that he had no right over it as it was constructed by them on the express orders of Lord Ram. They would tell Vibhishan: "Oh, stop! We have built this bridge. It was on the orders of Lord Ram. So first go and get the Lord's permission, and then only, mind you, can you remove a single stone from it; not before that."

So Vibhishan thought that it would be very wise and prudent to get it demolished by the Lord himself while he is here. He was sure that the Lord would not go against his wish, for the Lord was wise and intelligent enough to guess what was in Vibhishan's mind. And Vibhishan was correct in his assumption, as the Lord willingly obliged him and broke the bridge without asking 'why'.

²Only a person who has an experience of standing on a long suspension bridge across a wide river that has rapidly flowing currents and frothy waters can understand how Lord Ram must have felt on this bridge. The thrill is indescribable. To the left and the right, as far as the eyes could see, there was nothing but water. When the Lord moved ahead on this bridge, say for a mile or two, the mainland was much behind him, almost lost to sight. What the Lord saw was the bridge spreading like a ribbon across the surface of the water of the ocean, with water on its two sides and underneath it. The bridge swayed gently with the movement of the water of the ocean, majestically heaving slightly upwards and downwards as well as to the left and the right from its median plane; it was wobbling on the surface of the ocean like a lifebuoy, a raft, or a balloon. It was virtually like being suspended on water; or like being on a swing, swaying to the left and the right.]

देखन कहूँ प्रभु करुना कंदा । प्रगट भए सब जलचर बृंदा ॥ ४ ॥
मकर नक्र नाना झष ब्याला । सत जोजन तन परम बिसाला ॥ ५ ॥
अइसेउ एक तिन्हहि जे खाहीं । एकन्ह केँ डर तेपि डेराहीं ॥ ६ ॥
प्रभुहि बिलोकहिं टरहिं न टारे । मन हरषित सब भए सुखारे ॥ ७ ॥

dēkhana kahuṁ prabhu karunā kandā. pragaṭa bha'e saba jalacara bṛndā. 4.
makara nakra nānā jhaṣa byālā. sata jōjana tana parama bisālā. 5.
a'isē'u ēka tinhahi jē khāhīm. ēkanha kēm ḍara tēpi ḍērāhīm. 6.
prabhuhi bilōkahīm ṭarahīm na ṭārē. mana haraṣita saba bha'e sukhārē. 7.

All the marine creatures that lived in the ocean around the bridge came on the surface of the water¹ to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram who is a treasury of mercy, compassion and kindness (prabhu karunā kandā).

There were many kinds of alligators, crocodiles, fish and sea-serpents, of all shapes and sizes, of different families and classes, who gathered on the surface of the water. Some were small, but others were of gigantic proportions with bodies extending even up to a hundred Yojans in length, width or height. (5)

Each one of these creatures was ferocious in its own right and large enough to be able to devour other creatures, but there were many more like them that were far more ferocious and larger in size who could terrorize and devour the former very easily. The variety of such marine animals was so wide and large that those who were terrifying themselves were fearful for their lives from others². (6)

All these creatures watched Lord Ram with awe and wonder; they were so amazed at the divine sight of the Lord that they were stunned and refused to move. Their heart and mind felt, and they were very glad that they had this opportunity³. (7)

[Note—¹The Bridge obstructed the flow of the water of the ocean. It was like a modern day dam or a dyke, albeit built not on land but in the middle of the ocean, effectively blocking its normal flow. This caused a build-up of marine animals such as fish and others that normally swam freely in the water of the ocean; their path was now choked by the bridge. So one by one they piled up along the two sides of this great bridge; as the number of animals increased there was pushing and shoving, first gently and then angrily as each agitated creature growled and snarled, trying to elbow out others in order to get ahead in the crowd milling around the bridge's two sides. In the chaos that followed, smaller marine animals such as fish etc. got crushed; some were drowned and others were angrily eaten by their larger neighbours, say whales and sharks, or even crocodiles who bit ferociously at any other creature that blocked their way and gobbled it.

²To wit, the marine creatures were all exceptionally ferocious and dangerous. It appeared that there was no end to the large variety of creatures present in the bosom of the ocean who surfaced to look at the sight of the wonderful bridge that had blocked their way, and also watch the magnificent sight of Lord Ram, surrounded by his army, walking majestically across this bridge as it swayed on the surface of the ocean.

³It ought to be remembered that 'Ram Charit Manas' is a telling of the Story of Lord Ram, which is known universally as the Ramayana, with a high devotional quotient in it. Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, so his presence is naturally appealing and pleasant to the creature's soul, known as the creature's Atma. The individual Atma of a creature is an image of the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is pure Consciousness and also known as the Supreme Being. Hence, a natural affinity exists between the creature's own Atma, which in effect is the creature's true 'self', and Lord Ram who personifies the universal Atma. Therefore, when a creature sees Lord Ram he feels a natural affection for the Lord; for the Atma of a creature there is no one dearer than Lord Ram.

Like the case of two siblings having a natural bond between them arising out their being of the same stock of blood, resulting in creating a sense of natural affection for each other and an untold familiarity that when they meet each other for the first time in their lives after ages of separation they find that some intangible force seems to pull them together, creating a bond between the two, the creature too is naturally related to Lord Ram, and whenever the creature feels the presence of Lord Ram nearby he experiences natural affection for the Lord as if he has met his kith and kin after a long time.

So therefore, when these marine creatures saw Lord Ram for the first time in their lives, their Atma got naturally attracted to the Lord; the creatures felt exhilarated as if they have met their long-time friend and a lost parent after passing through the many phases of cycle of birth and death.

And this good news spread quickly and widely in the community of marine creatures. So even those who had yet not come made all haste to arrive. The result was that the crowd of excited marine creatures around the bridge got thicker and wilder with each passing moment, with each creature trying to squeeze himself ahead of the others to be closer to the bridge so as to get a more close-up view of their beloved Lord Ram.]

तिन्ह की ओट न देखिअ बारी । मगन भए हरि रूप निहारी ॥ ८ ॥
चला कटकु प्रभु आयसु पाई । को कहि सक कपि दल बिपुलाई ॥ ९ ॥

tinha kī ōṭa na dēkhi'a bārī. magana bha'e hari rūpa nihārī. 8.
calā kaṭaku prabhu āyasu pā'ī. kō kahi saka kapi dala bipulā'ī. 9.

The marine creatures were so densely packed around the sides of the bridge that the water of the ocean could not be seen. Verily indeed, the creatures were mesmerized by the charming sight of Lord Hari (Lord Ram) so much so that they did not want to move away. (8)

Meanwhile, on the orders of Lord Ram, the huge and formidable army of monkeys and bears marched ahead on the bridge. No one can say what the numbers of the warriors were, for they were countless. (9)

दो०. सेतुबंध भइ भीर अति कपि नभ पंथ उड़ाहिं ।
अपर जलचरन्हि ऊपर चढ़ि चढ़ि पारहि जाहिं ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

sētubandha bha'i bhīra ati kapi nabha pantha uṛāhim.
apara jalacaranhi ūpara caḍhi caḍhi pārahi jāhim. 4.

There was such a large crowd of warriors on the bridge that it seemed to be jam-packed with them. Finding insufficient space on the bridge, some of these warriors went ahead through the path of the sky (i.e. they jumped for long distances over others, or probably flew across the sky much like Hanuman had done earlier), while others walked (jumped, hopped and skipped) across over to the other side on the back of the marine creatures who had gathered together in a tight pack on either side of the bridge. (Doha no. 4)

चौ०. अस कौतुक बिलोकि द्वौ भाई । बिहँसि चले कृपाल रघुराई ॥ १ ॥
सेन सहित उतरे रघुबीरा । कहि न जाइ कपि जूथप भीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

asa kautuka bilōki dvau bhā'ī. bihañsi calē kṛpāla raghurā'ī. 1.
sēna sahita utarē raghubīrā. kahi na jā'i kapi jūthapa bhīrā. 2.

The two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, watched with fascination this wonderful spectacle. They smiled at this sight, and marched ahead (with their army). (1)

By-and-by, Lord Ram reached the other end of the bridge and set foot on the shore of Lanka along with his army¹. No one can say how large this army was². (2)

[Note—¹How long did the army take to cross the bridge and land on the shores of Lanka? Well, according to (a) Skanda Puran, Brahm Khand, Canto 30, and (b) Padma Puran, Patal Khand, Canto 36—the Lord and his army crossed the bridge in “three days”.

And what was the formation of this army when it landed at Lanka? Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 24, verse nos. 14-18 describes it as follows: “Lord Ram and Laxman would lead from the front; Nala and Angad were to follow them from behind with their troops; to their right should be Rishava and to their left should be Durghash Gandhamaadan with their monkey troops; Jamvant and Sushen should take control of the remaining troops that follow from behind by being at the center, and the rear should be under the command of Sugriv and his troops.”

²Refer: Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 4 herein above.]

सिंधु पार प्रभु डेरा कीन्हा । सकल कपिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
खाहु जाइ फल मूल सुहाए । सुनत भालु कपि जहँ तहँ धाए ॥ ४ ॥

sindhu pāra prabhu ḍērā kīnhā. sakala kapinha kahūṁ āyasu dīnhā. 3.
khāhu jā'i phala mūla suhā'ē. sunata bhālu kapi jaham̐ taham̐ dhā'ē. 4.

The Lord pitched his camp on the other side of the ocean (on the soil of Lanka). Then the Lord instructed all the monkeys --- (3)

--- ‘Go and eat to your heart’s content as many sweet fruits and edible roots and stems as you wish’. Hearing this instruction (and getting Lord Ram’s permission), all the monkeys and bears ran in all the directions wherever they wished¹. (4)

[Note—¹The warriors were very hungry as they had not got anything to eat while crossing the ocean. So naturally as soon as they got Lord Ram’s permission they ran in all the directions in search of fruits, stems and roots.

They feared nothing; they were not scared of meeting demons. These verses also show that the place where Lord Ram landed in Lanka with his army was deserted; they did not meet any demon guard or lookout, or any resistance. In all probability any demon who may have been there earlier ran away out of fear of his life as soon as he saw the army set foot on land. The common demons were already demoralized and terrified of the prospect of having to face the wrath of the monkey warriors after the horrifying experience they have had with Hanuman who had killed many of them, even Ravana’s own son Akshaya Kumar, and had burnt Lanka to a dark hull. So, Lord Ram and his army found the field clear upon arrival!

The next verse shows that this place was lively and verdant, lush with greenery, having a lot of edible roots and stems as well as fruit-bearing trees.

Earlier, when Hanuman had arrived in Lanka in search of Sita, he too had landed at this same place because we have read that he too saw a wonderful forest with animals and birds as well as fine fruit-bearing green trees—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 3.]

सब तरु फरे राम हित लागी । रितु अरु कुरितु काल गति त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥

खाहिं मधुर फल बिटप हलावहिं । लंका सन्मुख सिखर चलावहिं ॥ ६ ॥

saba taru pharē rāma hita lāgī. ritu aru kuritu kāla gati tyāgī. 5.
khāhim madhura phala biṭapa halāvahim. laṅkā sanmukha sikhara calāvahim.
6.

All the trees had been in full blossom, whether or not it was the season and the time of the year for them to bear sweet fruits or edible stems and roots, for the sake of the convenience of Lord Ram and his army¹. (5)

The hordes of monkey and bear warriors went wild while eating sweet-and-succulent fruits from trees, shaking the trees (uprooting some of them and breaking the branches of others) and picking up rocks of all shapes and sizes from the adjoining hills and mountains and hurling them in the direction of the fort (or citadel) of Lanka.

[The excited monkeys and bear warriors vented their anger at the demons by pelting stones and rocks in the direction of their city. Perhaps they wanted to instigate or provoke the demons to retaliate so they would get a chance to pounce upon them.]
(6)

[Note—¹The members of the Plant kingdom decided to do their bit to serve the Supreme Being who had come visiting them in the form of Lord Ram. They thought that it was their moment of glory and honour that they would be able to serve the Lord, that the gracious Lord had been kind enough to give them an opportunity to serve him. So they must not miss this chance because by serving Lord Ram they would be freed from the sin of growing up in the land of the demons and serving their interests all their lives till now.

Here ‘Prakriti’, or Mother Nature, had stepped in to serve her own Lord known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the cosmic form of the supreme Consciousness that is also known as ‘Brahm’, and is deemed to be the one who had created this world in conjunction with Prakriti. A similar thing had happened earlier too while Lord Ram was on his way to the forest when Nature had done its best to provide as much comfort to the Lord by giving him the shade of clouds to protect him from the heat of the sun, and making the earth soft below his tired legs—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

Then when Lord Ram reached Chitrakoot mountain and decided to stay there for some time, all facets of Nature became pleasant to please the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Later on during the Lord’s sojourn in Panchavati, the part of the dense forest from where Sita was abducted by Ravana, Mother Nature once again went out of her way to serve Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14.

Once again we read how Nature was at its vibrantly colourful best in order to give comfort to and please Lord Ram during his stay on Mt. Prabarshan in Kishkindha prior to the time the messengers were dispatched in search of Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 12—to—Doha no. 17.]

जहँ कहँ फिरत निसाचर पावहिं । घेरि सकल बहु नाच नचावहिं ॥ ७ ॥

दसनन्हि काटि नासिका काना । कहि प्रभु सुजसु देहिं तब जाना ॥ ८ ॥

jahaṁ kahuṁ phirata nisācara pāvahiṁ. ghēri sakala bahu nāca nacāvahiṁ.

7.

dasananhi kāṭi nāsikā kānā. kahi prabhu sujasu dēhiṁ taba jānā. 8.

If they chanced to find any demon roaming around, they caught hold of him, surrounded him from all sides and then teased him by making him dance to their tune, poking fun at the helpless captive, mocking him and humiliating him in various ways. (7)

They bit the demon's ears or nose with their sharp teeth while telling him about the glory of Lord Ram, and only then (when the monkeys and bears had enough fun from their captive and had thoroughly bashed him) would they let the demon go¹. (8)

[Note—¹We have observed that the army of Lord Ram landed on the shores of Lanka without any resistance. All the demons who may have guarded the front facing the ocean ran away in fear as they saw the colossal army of ferocious monkeys and bears aggressively heading towards the shore of Lanka over the ocean. The majority of these demon sentries took to the safety of the fort, but some may have strayed, deciding to stay back in order to do some reconnaissance work.

The monkeys and bears were itching for a fight, but while they rampaged through the forested area around the fort of Lanka they were dismayed to find no trace of demon forces on which to vent their ire. But however they found some isolated demon here and there, so they immediately pounced upon this poor and helpless fellow and made a good time teasing and ragging him in different ways. They made the captured demon dance, do sit-ups and many other things to mock him; they snarled at him, pinched and poked at him, and unable to suppress their anger they even bit the demon in his ears and nose, leaving the poor fellow bleeding profusely and gravely wounded. Then they let him go so that when he went back to the city the rest of the demons would get a stern warning—that the brave warriors of Lord Ram have finally arrived, and they are eager for war.]

जिन्ह कर नासा कान निपाता । तिन्ह रावनहि कही सब बाता ॥ ९ ॥

सुनत श्रवन बारिधि बंधाना । दस मुख बोलि उठा अकुलाना ॥ १० ॥

jinha kara nāsā kāna nipātā. tinha rāvanahi kahī saba bātā. 9.

sunata śravana bāridhi bandhānā. dasa mukha bōli uṭhā akulānā. 10.

These demons who had got their noses and ears bitten off ran back into the city of Lanka, and reported all the developments to their king Ravana. (9)

As soon as Ravana heard that the virtually un-crossable and indomitable ocean had been finally tamed and tied with a bridge, he was exceedingly amazed and confounded. He was so agitated and exasperated beyond measure that he could not suppress his dread and blurted out his utter astonishment at this alarming development by speaking all at once with his ten mouths¹. (10)

[Note—¹Normally Ravana would speak with one of his ten mouths. But on this occasion he was so utterly shaken by surprise and became so extremely dreadful and alarmed of the fact that his arch enemy, Lord Ram, had actually landed in Lanka that all his wits went for a toss and all his mouths opened at once, as if to exclaim: “Awe, oh gosh; what am I hearing? Is it really possible that the mighty ocean known for its stubbornness and independence has been actually tamed and tied by a bridge? Is it true or am I having delusions? Am I not hearing properly, or have these messengers gone mad? Oh come on, you fools; don’t joke with me. Is what you say true? Mind you, I shall get you roasted alive if it turns out to be wrong information. I just can’t believe it.”]

दो०. बाँध्यो बननिधि नीरनिधि जलधि सिंधु बारीस ।
सत्य तोयनिधि कंपति उदधि पयोधि नदीस ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

bāṁdhyō bananidhi nīranidhi jaladhi sindhu bārīsa.
satya tōyanidhi kampati udadhi payōdhi nadīsa. 5.

‘Is it really true that someone can actually bind and tie the fathomless abode of water, of the waves and the billows that is known by various names such as the ocean and the sea which is also the lord of the clouds that produce rain, that which is full of heaving and swirling tides, that which is full of brine and sour liquid, that which is deep, measureless and endless, and that which is also the lord of the rivers?’¹ (Doha no. 5)*

[Note—We have read in the preceding verse that Ravana could not suppress his emotions and spoke with all his ten heads at once. Each head used one epithet to describe the ocean, and they are the following: (1) *bananidhi*, (2) *nīranidhi*, (3) *jaladhi*, (4) *sindhu*, (5) *bārīsa*, (6) *tōyanidhi*, (7) *kampati*, (8) *udadhi*, (9) *payōdhi*, and (10) *nadīsa*. All these terms are synonyms for the ocean because it is a vast habitat of marine life, is an endless reservoir of water, it has no end as all its different divisions are seamlessly joined together, it has huge waves and high tides, is always on the move, is turbulent, is the origin of rain-bearing clouds, and is where all the rivers end or empty themselves.

The way Ravana expresses his amazement and disbelief shows that never before in the history of the world the ocean had ever been bridged and tamed. It was therefore a miraculous feat, never achieved hitherto, that took Ravana by surprise and left him stunned.

When told by the demons who had run to him to report after being released by the monkeys and bears as we have just read above, that a bridge had been constructed over the mighty ocean and Lord Ram’s army has landed on the shore of Lanka, Ravana was dumb-founded and taken aback. Till now he was rest assured that it is absolutely impossible that someone can cross the ocean by making a bridge over its surface. This proves that his own spies and look-outs whom he had assigned the job of keeping an eye on the frontiers had betrayed him, or perhaps they were too terrified of him to come and tell him some unpleasant news which he did not want to hear

because they all feared for their own lives, not wishing to annoy Ravana and invite his wrath.

Ravana had been feeling secure in Lanka so far because the island-city and its fort were surrounded on all the four sides by the ocean which effectively formed a deep and exceptionally wide moat around them, making Lanka inaccessible from all sides. That security has now been breached and compromised. Ravana was not prepared for this sudden rupturing of his defenses. So he was exceedingly alarmed and upset, not knowing how to cope with this new and un-imagined challenge; it was a danger for which the demons were not prepared.

* If we carefully analyse the Story of the Ramayan and ponder over the question as to why Ravana was ultimately defeated and killed we find that there are four crucial points which cannot escape our attention as being the primary reasons for Ravana's undoing. These are the following:

(a) Ravana was surrounded by many close aides and subordinates on whom he had great faith, but who were disgruntled and disenchanted with him. Some had openly expressed their displeasure at his attitude, his way of thinking and doing things, while others may have remained quiet out of fear of their own safety but were nevertheless unhappy with him. In the first category come Mandodari, Ravana's wife, Vibhishan, his youngest brother, Kumbhakaran, another younger brother of his, Shuk (or Shuka), his trusted spy and messenger, Malyawan, an old demon who was very close to him, his maternal grandfather and one of his senior ministers, and so on. In the second category come Lankini, the female demon tasked with the security of the gates of the fort of Lanka, Trijata, the old demoness tasked to guard Sita in her captivity, and may be many more of whom we have no account.

Mandodari had tried to persuade Ravana on four different occasions to abandon his confrontationist attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; and (iv) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37).

Vibhishan was kicked out by Ravana when he had attempted to dissuade the latter from pursuing a hostile attitude towards Lord Ram, the reason why Vibhishan decided to go and join Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41).

Malyawan had endorsed Vibhishan's advice, but he too was shouted down by Ravana (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40).

Shuk was sent by Ravana behind Vibhishan to spy on him, and when he came back to report he very strongly rebuked Ravana and pleaded with him to stop his madness and make peace with Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57).

Kumbhakaran too had sternly chided Ravana when he was asked to go and fight Lord Ram during the heat of battle (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 63).

Then we have the instances of the two female demons named Lankini and Trijata who weren't happy at all with Ravana, and had predicted his demise. For (a) Lankini, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5; and for (b) Trijata, refer to refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 11; and Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100).

(b) The second prominent reason of Ravana's fall was lack of an efficient and skilled network of spies. Having a good and competent network of spies and informers who are diligent and dedicated and loyal to their masters and their country are absolutely vital and a most important feature for success in politics and statecraft. Ravana's spies failed him. There are two glaring examples of this failure: (a) When the gods and mother earth had gathered to pray to Lord Vishnu to protect them against Ravana and his demon horde, and Vishnu promised them he would come down himself as Lord Ram to fulfil their needs, Ravana did not get a wind of this meeting. Had he been informed then it is most certain that he would have gone there and chased away the gods and grabbed mother earth like he had done with Sita. (b) The second glaring example of his failed intelligence apparatus is that a huge bridge was being built right next door to his kingdom, literally right under his nose, and he had no inkling of it as he was kept in the dark. This is very clear when he was taken aback with astonishment and expressed his dismay when finally informed that a bridge was in place and Lord Ram's army has landed (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 10 that precede it). Obviously, the bridge was not built surreptitiously or in a clandestine manner without any sound emanating. Why was Ravana not informed?

(c) The third most obvious reason for his fall was his own nature. He was egoist, arrogant, stubborn and haughty to the extreme. He was over-confident of himself, and over-estimated his own invincibility, valour, strength, abilities and powers. He was transformed so blind and deaf in his self-pride and ego that he failed to see the reality and hear sane voices.

It is to be noted here that Ravana was not weak or lacking in courage, valour, strength and abilities as he himself has asserted so many times, but he misgauged the actual measure of these virtues in him when they were compared with those of his opponent, who in this case was Lord Ram. When put on a scale to measure and compare these qualities between Lord Ram and Ravana, the scale tilted heavily in favour of the Lord, which unfortunately Ravana, in his egoist haughtiness, could not come to terms with.

(d) And the fourth and perhaps the main reason why Ravana would not listen to anyone is this:

Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is known as the 'Viraat Purush', had assumed a human form as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons led by their king Ravana of the demon kingdom of Lanka. The Gods and Mother Earth had prayed to Lord Vishnu to protect them from Ravana's merciless reign of terror and mayhem. In order to fulfill his promise made to them, Lord Ram was on his mission to Lanka from his capital city of Ayodhya. During his journey through the forests, he, along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, took a break and rested for some time at a place endowed with nature's bounty of exceptional beauty; it

was called Panchvati. Sage Agastya had advised the Lord to abide here for some time, and during his retreat he must devise a device by which the next phase of his mission could be realized—which was to find out a way that would give the Lord an honourable excuse to go to Lanka and get rid of Ravana.

Lord Ram pondered over the subject and decided that the only way to get the ball rolling was to use his powerful force known as ‘Maya’ (which is the Lord’s magical cosmic powers that create an overriding sense of delusion and conjures up a world of illusions so real that even the wisest of sages are taken for a ride) and have Sita abducted by Ravana. To keep the momentum going and ensure success in his mission, the Lord decided that he would employ this Maya of his to the full, and in such a way that no matter what happens Ravana would not see the reality and listen to no one who might advise him to give Sita back to the Lord and end hostility.]

(ii) Doha no. 11 (a) along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it:-

चौ०. इहाँ सुबेल सैल रघुबीरा । उतरे सेन सहित अति भीरा ॥ १ ॥
 सिखर एक उत्तंग अति देखी । परम रज्ज सम सुभ्र बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥
 तहँ तरु किसलय सुमन सुहाए । लछिमन रचि निज हाथ डसाए ॥ ३ ॥
 ता पर रुचिर मृदुल मृगछाला । तेहिं आसन आसीन कृपाला ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ihāṁ subēla saila raghubīrā. utarē sēna sahita ati bhīrā. 1.
 sikhara ēka utaṅga ati dēkhī. parama ramya sama subhra bisēṣī. 2.
 tahaṁ taru kisalaya sumana suhā'ē. lachimana raci nija hātha ḍasā'ē. 3.
 tā para rucira mṛdula mṛgachālā. tēhiṁ āsana āsīna kṛpālā. 4.

[This verse tells us the exact place where Lord Ram and his army landed on the shore of Lanka. It continues from Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 5 herein above where we have already read that the Lord crossed the ocean and landed on the soil of Lanka. But where did he actually land? This question is now answered:-]

Meanwhile, Lord Ram landed on Mt. Subel¹ along with his huge army that formed a big crowd around the place. (1)

Lord Ram looked at the mountain (or the large hill) and saw that its high summit was clean, very pleasant, and in the form of a flat piece of land (or a plateau). (2)

On this high ground, Laxman himself spread soft and newly plucked green leaves and flower petals [3], upon which he laid out a deer skin, and the merciful Lord Ram sat down on it [4]. (3-4)

[Note—¹Mt. Subel was in the north of the island of Lanka. It was a little away from the shore. It was very high and gave a magnificent view of the city. So when the monkey and bear warriors had eaten their fill and Lord Ram had rested a while near

the shore of the ocean after landing, he decided to move to a higher ground so as to have a vantage point where he would pitch his camp during the war. Mt. Subel presented a viable option as it was right in front and easily accessible; it also afforded a clear view of the fort of Lanka. Perhaps it was from here that Hanuman too had viewed Lanka when he came here in his search of Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8 and 10 that precede Doha no. 3.}

प्रभु कृत सीस कपीस उछंगा । बाम दहिन दिसि चाप निषंगा ॥ ५ ॥
दुहुँ कर कमल सुधारत बाना । कह लंकेस मंत्र लगि काना ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu kṛta sīsa kapīsa uchaṅgā. bāma dahina disi cāpa niṣaṅgā. 5.
duhum̐ kara kamala sudhārata bānā. kaha laṅkēsa mantra lagi kānā. 6.

[Lord Ram wished to relax a bit, so he lied down on the soft bed made by Laxman by spreading tender leaves and flowers on the ground as described in the previous verse.]

Sugriv, the commander of the monkey army and the Lord's trusted friend, offered his lap to the Lord to rest his head upon like he would have done on a pillow. The Lord's bow was lying to his left, and his quiver was to his right. (5)

Lord Ram held an arrow in his hands and was moving them casually on it. At that time, Vibhishan (the future king of Lanka; "laṅkēsa") whispered something secretly in the ears of the Lord¹. (6)

[Note—¹Vibhishan and Lord Ram were discussing something about the future course of action; perhaps it was about how to penetrate the virtually impregnable fort of Lanka. In the whole army, it was only Vibhishan who knew all the secrets of Lanka as he was its prince before joining Lord Ram's camp. They were talking in a hushed tone so that no one could listen what they were talking about. It was necessary to maintain top secrecy for in times of war no one can be certain who would betray whom. Vibhishan feared the most because if there was some spy of Ravana mingling with the monkeys and bears after assuming their form then he will dig his own grave and push others into it even before the war commenced.

Both Sugriv and Vibhishan were princes of their respective kingdoms—so they sat near Lord Ram's head. Angad and Hanuman were the Lord's favourite and devoted followers who were very eager to serve the Lord personally—so they messaged his tired legs, one each. And Laxman, the Lord's younger brother, sat a respectable distance to keep vigil.]

बड़भागी अंगद हनुमाना । चरन कमल चापत बिधि नाना ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु पाछें लछिमन बीरासन । कटि निषंग कर बान सरासन ॥ ८ ॥

baṛabhāgī aṅgada hanumānā. carana kamala cāpata bidhi nānā. 7.
prabhu pāchēm lachimana bīrāsana. kaṭi niṣaṅga kara bāna sarāsana. 8.

While Lord Ram thus reclined, Hanuman and Angad felt themselves exceedingly lucky and blessed because they got a chance to press and message the Lord's legs in

many different ways (to make the Lord as comfortable as possible, and to alleviate his tiredness). (7)

Laxman was sitting in a posture called “bīrāsana”¹ with a bow and an arrow ready in his hands, and a quiver tied to his waist². (8)

[Note—¹The “bīrāsana” is a sitting pose that is normally adopted by a warrior because it keeps him alert and ready to jump to take action at short notice.

²Laxman was sitting in this way to keep a strict watch over the proceedings. Should any danger appear and Lord Ram was in harm’s way, Laxman was ready to leap up to defend the Lord and take appropriate action. Earlier also in the story of the Ramayana it is narrated that on any occasion when Lord Ram and Sita slept during the course of their long journey to the forest, Laxman would sit at a distance with his bow and arrow at the ready to keep guard over the Lord and Sita for the whole night to ensure no harm comes to them. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90.}]

दो०. एहि बिधि कृपा रूप गुन धाम रामु आसीन ।
धन्य ते नर एहिं ध्यान जे रहत सदा लयलीन ॥ ११ (क) ॥
dōhā.

ēhi bidhi kṛpā rūpa guna dhāma rāmu āsīna.
dhan'ya tē nara ēhīm dhyāna jē rahata sadā layalīna. 11 (a).

Lord Ram, who is a treasury of grace, kindness, beauty and excellent virtues, rested in the way described herein before.

Verily, he who is able to meditate upon this magnificent view of the Lord and remain submerged in the thoughts of it, is surely and without gainsay very fortunate and blessed. (Doha no. 11-a)

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Section 10.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

{Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand,
Canto 3, verse nos. 59-87, and Canto 4, verse nos. 1-8 }

After reading how Lord Ram crossed the ocean and landed in Lanka from the classic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Goswami Tulsidas, now let us see how ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of Veda Vyas describes it.

This episode appears in ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 59-87, and Canto 4, verse nos. 1-8.

(i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 59-87:-

शार्दूलोऽपि ततः पूर्वं दृष्ट्वा कपिबलं महत् ।
यथावत्कथयामास रावणाय स राक्षसः ॥ ५९॥
दीर्घचिन्तापरो भूत्वा निःश्वसन्नास मन्दिरे ।
ततः समुद्रमावेक्ष्य रामो रक्तान्तलोचनः ॥ ६०॥

śārdūlo'pi tataḥ pūrvam dr̥ṣṭvā kapibalaṁ mahat ।
yathāvatkathayāmāsa rāvaṇāya sa rākṣasaḥ ॥ 59॥
dīrghacintāparo bhūtvā niḥśvasannāsa mandire ।
tataḥ samudramāvekṣya rāmo raktāntalocanaḥ ॥ 60॥

59-60. Prior to Shuk (one of the spies sent by Ravana to reconnoiter Vibhishan's movement and report back), another demon (who had also come at the instance of Ravana, but preferred to stay hidden all along while Shuk was caught and teased by the monkeys and bears) had seen the great army of monkeys, and when he went back to Lanka he described about it to Ravana (59).

Hearing all this, Ravana was extremely perplexed and profoundly worried, not knowing what to do next. So he sat in his palace breathing heavily (out of anxiety).

Meanwhile, Lord Sri Ram glared at the ocean with eyes red with indignation, exasperation and anger, and said (60)—

पश्य लक्ष्मण दुष्टोऽसौ वारिधिर्मामुपागतम् ।
नाभिनन्दति दुष्टात्मा दर्शनार्थं ममानघ ॥ ६१॥
जानाति मानुषोऽयं मे किं करिष्यति वानरैः ।
अद्य पश्य महाबाहो शोषयिष्यामि वारिधिम् ॥ ६२॥

paśya lakṣmaṇa duṣṭo'sau vāridhirmāmupāgatam ।
nābhinandati duṣṭātmā darśanārthaṁ mamānagha ॥ 61॥
jānāti mānuṣo'yaṁ me kiṁ kariṣyati vānaraiḥ ।
adya paśya mahābāho śoṣayiṣyāmi vāridhim ॥ 62॥

61-62. 'Oh Laxman! How wicked is this fellow Ocean! I have come to its shore, but oh Anagh (one who is pure and faultless), this wicked soul has no good manners for he has not even bothered to greet me as his guest. [To wit, the Deity of the ocean appears to be too haughty, arrogant, un-courteous and un-civilised.] (61).

It thinks 'after all, he is an ordinary human being; what harm can he do to me although he has joined forces with the powerful monkeys and bears who reside on my northern banks'.

So, my brave brother, look: today I shall dry up this ocean (to teach its stubborn and haughty deity a good lesson) (62).

पादेनैव गमिष्यन्ति वानरा विगतज्वराः ।
 इत्युक्त्वा क्रोधताम्राक्ष आरोपितधनुर्धरः ॥ ६३॥
 तूणीराद्वाणमादाय कालाग्निसदृशप्रभम् ।
 सन्धाय चापमाकृष्य रामो वाक्यमथाब्रवीत् ॥ ६४॥

pādenaiva gamiṣyanti vānarā vigatajvarāḥ ।
 ityuktvā krodhatāmrākṣa āropitadharnurdharaḥ ॥ 63॥
 tūṇīrādbāṇamādāya kālāgnisadr̥śaprabham ।
 sandhāya cāpamākṛṣya rāmo vākya mathābravīt ॥ 64॥

63-64. Then, when I have dried the ocean up, the army of monkeys (and bears) can cross it on foot'.

Saying this, the Lord lifted and stringed his formidable bow (63), took out from his quiver a fiery arrow which was as fierce as the fire of dooms-day, mounted it on the bow, pulled it, and said (64)—

पश्यन्तु सर्वभूतानि रामस्य शरविक्रमम् ।
 इदानीं भस्मसात्कुर्यां समुद्रं सरितां पतिम् ॥ ६५॥
 एवं ब्रुवति रामे तु सशैलवनकानना ।
 चचाल वसुधा द्यौश्च दिशश्च तमसावृताः ॥ ६६॥
 चुक्षुभे सागरो वेलां भयाद्योजनमत्यगात् ।
 तिमिनकृज्झषा मीनाः प्रतप्ताः परिततूंसुः ॥ ६७॥

paśyantu sarvabhūtāni rāmasya śaravikramam ।
 idānīm bhasmasātkuryāṃ samudraṃ saritām patim ॥ 65॥
 evaṃ bruvati rāme tu saśailavanakānanā ।
 cacāla vasudhā dyauśca diśaśca tamasāvṛtāḥ ॥ 66॥
 cukṣubhe sāgaro velāṃ bhayādyojanamatyagāt ।
 timinakrajhaṣā mīnāḥ prataptāḥ paritatraśuḥ ॥ 67॥

65-67. 'Let all the creatures see the might, the prowess and the potential of Ram's arrow. I will immediately reduce to ashes (i.e. dry up) the king of rivers known as the 'ocean' (65).

As soon as Lord Ram threatened the Deity of the ocean in the aforesaid manner, the whole earth trembled along with its mountains and forests, while darkness covered all the directions of the earth as well as the sky (66).

The ocean was extremely terrified and was out of its wits. Out of anxiety it began to swell, and its water moved 1 Yojan (roughly 8 miles) inland¹.

This sudden rise of the water caused turbulence in the ocean, which in its turn agitated all the marine creatures that lived in it. So therefore, large and small fish of all sizes and classifications, such as sharks, whales, crocodiles, alligators etc., became agitated and perplexed; the water churned and swirled to form huge whirlpools (67).

[Note—¹To wit, there was a huge tidal wave in the ocean which pushed the water for 8 miles inland along the shoreline. Lord Ram was standing on the shore, so the water

obviously touched the Lord's holy feet in a symbolic gesture to indicate that the Deity of the ocean wishes to wash his feet to ask for forgiveness by saying 'sorry'.]

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे साक्षात्सागरो दिव्यरूपधृक् ।
दिव्याभरणसम्पन्नः स्वभासा भासयन् दिशः ॥ ६८॥
स्वान्तःस्थदिव्यरत्नानि कराभ्यां परिगृह्य सः ।
पादयोः पुरतः क्षिप्त्वा रामस्योपायनं बहु ॥ ६९॥
दण्डवत्पूणित्याह रामं रक्तान्तलोचनम् ।
त्राहि त्राहि जगन्नाथ राम त्रैलोक्यरक्षक ॥ ७०॥

etasminnantare sāksātsāgaro divyarūpadhrk ।
divyābharaṇasampannaḥ svabhāsā bhāsayan diśaḥ ॥ 68॥
svāntaḥsthadivyaratnāni karābhyāṃ parigrhya saḥ ।
pādayoḥ purataḥ kṣiptvā rāmasyopāyanaṃ bahu ॥ 69॥
daṇḍavatpraṇityāha rāmaṃ raktāntalocanam ।
trāhi trāhi jagannātha rāma trailokyarakṣaka ॥ 70॥

68-70. Just about that moment, the Ocean appeared himself (i.e. in a personified form that was represented by its presiding Deity) before Lord Ram. He had a divine form, was adorned by magnificent ornaments, and carried in his hands beautiful gems / jewels that are naturally found inside the ocean (such as pearls, corals, shells etc.) as gifts for the Lord. He was illuminating all the directions by his self-radiant glow. He kept the various gems / jewels that he had brought as gifts at the feet of Lord Ram (68-69).

Then he fell down like a stick (i.e. prostrated) at the feet of the Lord whose eyes were extremely red with anger, exasperation and indignation. After that the Ocean said, 'Oh Lord Ram. You are a protector of the three worlds¹ as well as the Supreme Lord of the whole universe. Lord, I beseech you to protect me, to save me from any harm (70).

[Note—¹The 'three worlds' mean the three divisions of creation, viz. the past, the present and the future. It also refers to the three divisions of the world, such as the heaven, the earth and the nether world.]

जडोऽहं राम ते सृष्टः सृजता निखिलं जगत् ।
स्वभावमन्यथा कर्तुं कः शक्तो देवनिर्मितम् ॥ ७१॥
स्थूलानि पञ्चभूतानि जडान्येव स्वभावतः ।
सृष्टानि भवतैतानि त्वदाज्ञां लङ्घयन्ति न ॥ ७२॥

jaḍo'haṃ rāma te sṛṣṭaḥ srjatā nikhilaṃ jagat ।
svabhāvamanyathā kartuṃ kaḥ śakto devanirmitam ॥ 71॥
sthūlāni pañcabhūtāni jaḍānyeva svabhāvataḥ ।
sṛṣṭāni bhavataitāni tvadājñāṃ laṅghayanti na ॥ 72॥

71-72. 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! At the time of creation of the world, you had created me (along with the other five elements¹) and had made me (i.e. the 'water element') gross. Say then, how can anyone change the temperament, the basic nature, and one's inherent tendencies and inclinations with which he has been born? (71).

All the five basic elements¹ that you had created (at the time of creation, and one of which, the 'water element' is represented by me) are all gross by nature. They cannot think for themselves, they cannot violate the nature you had assigned them at the time of their creation, and they must follow the laws and regulations you had laid out for them (72).

[Note—¹The five elements from which the whole creation has materialized are the following—earth or soil, water which is here represented by the 'ocean', fire, air and space. These are the basic ingredients for the whole creation.

The Supreme Being laid out the law that those who lived on hard surface of the earth, such as on land, cannot walk on water, and those creatures who lived in the water cannot walk on the solid surface represented by the land. To wit, animals and humans can't walk on the surface of any water body, including the ocean, and likewise water-living creatures such as fish etc. cannot walk on dry land.

Hence, the ocean pleaded with Lord Ram that he was merely following this law in not allowing the Lord and his army to go across its watery, fluid surface on foot. So therefore, there is no reason why the Lord should be angry at him.]

तामसादहमो राम भूतानि प्रभवन्ति हि ।
कारणानुगमात्तेषां जडत्वं तामसं स्वतः ॥ ७३॥
निर्गुणस्त्वं निराकारो यदा मायागुणान् प्रभो ।
लीलाङ्गीकरोषि त्वं तदा वैराजनामवान् ॥ ७४॥
गुणात्मनो विराजश्च सत्त्वादेवा बभूवरे ।
राजोगुणात्प्रजेशाद्या मन्योर्भूतपतिस्तव ॥ ७५॥

tāmasādahamo rāma bhūtāni prabhavanti hi ।
kāraṇānugamātteṣāṃ jaḍatvaṃ tāmasaṃ svataḥ ॥ 73॥
nirguṇastvaṃ nirākāro yadā māyāguṇān prabho ।
līlayāṅgīkaroṣi tvaṃ tadā vairājanānavān ॥ 74॥
guṇātmano virājaśca sattvāddeva babhūvire ।
rajoguṇātprajesādyā manyorbhūtapatistava ॥ 75॥

73-75. [The following verses deal with the metaphysical philosophy of creation and its elements.]

Oh Lord Ram! The elements originate from 'Tamas Ahankar' (i.e. illusive or false pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy). Hence, since their origin is not pure and noble, these five elements would naturally be tainted and faulty by nature, acquiring the characteristic of the seed (Tamas Ahankar) from which they have sprouted. This is a self evident fact.

[To wit, since the ingredient of 'Tamas Ahankar' is negative and gross in nature, so the elements that were formed from it too acquired its characteristic. Since,

the input was of a negative character, how can one expect the output to be of positive character?] (73).

Oh Lord! You are the Supreme Being known as Brahm who has no attributes and forms. When you playfully (i.e. willingly, just for the sake of it) accept the qualities or characteristics of Maya (the cosmic power of Brahm that creates delusions or illusions), you are known by the name of ‘Vairaj’ (“*vairājanāmavān*”; meaning the supreme Lord known as the Parmatma who has assumed form for the purpose of creation; this form is known as the Creator Brahma) (74).

Out of the different aspects of that Vairaj, the different Gods and demi-Gods were created. Such as for instance, the senior Gods were created out of the Satvic aspect of Vairaj. [This is the best of the three qualities, and it symbolizes virtuousness, nobility, positivity, holiness and divinity etc.]

The Prajapatis, the junior Gods in the hierarchy who look after the day-to-day functions of the world and take care of its creatures, were created out of the Rajsic aspect of Vairaj. [This quality produces a desire to remain involved in worldly affairs and help the world to sustain, expand, acquire and enjoy worldly things.]

Finally, the different Rudras were created out of the Tamas aspect of Vairaj. [This aspect symbolizes negative characteristics of creation such as anger, wrath, discords, quarrels, conflicts, malice, vengeance, animosity, ill-will, jealousy, quarrels etc. This is the lowest quality in creation and fully negative in nature.] (75).

त्वामहं मायया छन्नं लीलया मानुषाकृतिम् ॥ ७६॥

जडबुद्धिर्जडो मूर्खः कथं जानामि निर्गुणम् ।

दण्ड एव हि मूर्खाणां सन्मार्गपूषकः प्रभो ॥ ७७॥

भूतानाममरश्रेष्ठ पशूनां लगुडो यथा ।

शरणं ते व्रजामीशं शरण्यं भक्तवत्सल ।

अभयं देहि मे राम लङ्कामार्गं ददामि ते ॥ ७८॥

tvāmahaṃ māyayā channaṃ līlayā mānuṣākṛtim ॥ 76॥

jaḍabuddhirjaḍo mūrkhaḥ katham jānāmi nirguṇam ।

daṇḍa eva hi mūrkhāṇāṃ sanmārgaprāpakāḥ prabho ॥ 77॥

bhūtānāmamaraśreṣṭha paśūnāṃ laguḍo yathā ।

śaraṇam te vrajāmīśam śaraṇyam bhaktavatsala ।

abhayaṃ dehi me rāma laṅkā-mārgam dadāmi te ॥ 78॥

76-78. You have assumed a human form by willingly and almost playfully letting yourself be surrounded (or being influenced, affected) by your ‘Maya’ (delusion creating powers of the Supreme Being that results in ignorance, illusions, hallucinations and deceptions) (76).

How can I, who am by nature ignorant, foolish, gross and block-headed, therefore realise or comprehend the cosmic form of yours that is known as ‘Nirguna’, i.e. a form that has no attributes and physical forms, that is invisible and cosmic, and which pervades the whole creation in the form of pure consciousness.

[To wit, oh dear Lord, how can I, who am of such a low intellect, ever fathom the vastness of the Lord who is the object of profound and deep meditation, who is so miniscule that he is invisible to the naked eye like the atom or the molecule of the

elements, but at the same time is so vast and myriad in his forms that the entire universe with its spectacular diversity and variety of forms is actually your own revelation as it has its origin in you.]

Oh Lord! Say then, how can such an ignorant and dumb-headed fellow like me be ever expected to follow the path of righteousness, propriety, probity and noble conduct merely by 'using the stick', i.e. by the fear of punishment or by coercion.

[To wit, why do you intend to use force against me by shooting your fiery arrow at this poor fellow. Oh Lord, you are exceptionally wise, intelligent and understanding, so you ought to realize that I am by nature dumb and gross, so a compassionate and merciful Lord like you must not use force against me for my being stubborn and appearing to obstruct your path purposefully just to tease you and test your might. No Lord, it is not that at all. Say, what do you expect from a stupid servant like me? If I had the sort of wisdom to know that my actions are offending you then I wouldn't have dared to do what I did, but unfortunately I don't have it and so couldn't realize my errors and follies. So therefore, in the cause of justice, I must be forgiven.] (77).

Verily, just like the case of a herdsman prodding and cajoling his animals to walk properly along their path, for otherwise his animals would either not move or go astray from the chosen path, you too should guide me along the right path.

Oh Lord whose name is the most exalted and superior amongst all the names in this animate as well as inanimate creation, I have come to take refuge at your auspicious feet and seek shelter there. So oh Lord Ram, you must protect me as you are exceedingly compassionate towards your devotees who have taken shelter with you and have sought refuge in your holy feet. Therefore oh Lord, bless me with fearlessness. I shall give you the right of passage to Lanka (and this I promise to you).' (78).

श्रीराम उवाच ।

अमोघोऽयं महाबाणः कस्मिन् देशे निपात्यताम् ।

तक्ष्यं दर्शय मे शीघ्रं बाणस्यामोघपातिनः ॥ ७९॥

रामस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा करे दृष्ट्वा महाशरम् ।

महोदधर्महातेजा राघवं वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ८०॥

śrīrāma uvāca ।

amogho'yaṃ mahābāṇaḥ kasmin deśe nipātyatām ।

lakṣyaṃ darśaya me śīghraṃ bāṇasyāmoghapātinaḥ ॥ 79॥

rāmasya vacanaṃ śrutvā kare dr̥ṣṭvā mahāśaram ।

mahodadhirmahātejā rāghavaṃ vākyaṃ abravīt ॥ 80॥

79-80. Lord Ram said, referring to his raised arrow, 'This great arrow of mine cannot go in vain. Hence, in which direction must I shoot it? Show me quickly the target for this arrow.' (79).

Hearing these stern and urgent words of the Lord, and seeing that the formidable and potent arrow in his hand was about to be shot, the Ocean who had appeared before Lord Ram in a glorious and radiant form, replied politely --- (80).

रामोत्तरप्रदेशे तु द्रुमकुल्य इति श्रुतः ।
 प्रदेशस्तत्र बहवः पापात्मानो दिवानिशम् ॥ ८१॥
 बाधन्ते मां रघुश्रेष्ठ तत्र ते पात्यतां शरः ।
 रामेण सृष्टो बाणस्तु क्षणादाभीरमण्डलम् ॥ ८२॥
 हत्वा पुनः समागत्य तूणीरे पूर्ववत्स्थितः ।
 ततोऽब्रवीद्रघुश्रेष्ठं सागरो विनयान्वितः ॥ ८३॥

rāmottarapradeśe tu drumakulya iti śrutaḥ ।
 pradeśastatra bahavaḥ pāpātmāno divāniśam ॥ 81॥
 bādhante māṃ raghuśreṣṭha tatra te pātyatām śaraḥ ।
 rāmeṇa sṛṣṭo bāṇastu kṣaṇādābhīramaṇḍalam ॥ 82॥
 hatvā punaḥ samāgatya tūṇīre pūrvavatsthitaḥ ।
 tato'bravidraghuśreṣṭhaṃ sāgaro vinayānvitaḥ ॥ 83॥

81-83. 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! There is a country called 'Drumkul' to the north of here. Many sinners and evil persons reside there. Night and day (always) (81) they torment and harass me. So therefore oh the most exalted Lord of king Raghu's line (of Ayodhya), if you must shoot your arrow then let it be shot in that direction. '

Thence, that arrow shot by Lord Ram annihilated the whole of the area inhabited by those indicated by the Deity of the ocean. Having accomplished its assigned task, the mystical arrow returned to the Lord's quiver.

After that, feeling reassured that he was out of harms way and the Lord is pleased with him, the Ocean said to Lord Ram, who is the best amongst all the kings of Raghu's line, in a very polite way --- (82-83).

नलः सेतुं करोत्वस्मिन् जले मे विश्वकर्मणः ।
 सुतो धीमान् समर्थोऽस्मिन् कार्ये लब्धवरो हरिः ॥ ८४॥
 कीर्तिं जानन्तु ते लोकाः सर्वलोकमलापहाम् ।
 इत्युक्त्वा रघवं नत्वा ययौ सिन्धुरदृश्यताम् ॥ ८५॥

nalaḥ setuṃ karotvasmin jale me viśvakarmaṇaḥ ।
 suto dhīmān samartha'smin kārye labdhavaro hariḥ ॥ 84॥
 kīrtiṃ jānantu te lokāḥ sarvalokamalāpahām ।
 ityuktvā rāghavaṃ natvā yayau sindhuradrśyatām ॥ 85॥

84-85. 'Let Nala, the son of Vishwakarma (the architect of the gods), construct a bridge over the water. This clever and expert monkey is able to do it because of a special boon that he possesses¹ (84).

By doing so (i.e. by constructing the bridge), your name and fame would spread in all the corners of the world. People would remember you for all times to come as the Lord who overcomes all obstacles and oppositions that one faces in one's life (without harming any innocent creature in the process)².

Saying this to Raghav (Lord Sri Ram), the Ocean vanished from sight (85).

[Note—¹Nala and his brother Neela had a boon granted to them in their childhood by sages that any stone or rock that they would touch will float on the surface of water—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 60. This boon was employed to use rocks and stone and boulders of all shapes and sizes to make a floating bridge across the water of the ocean. This bridge was 100 Yojans (800 miles) long to link the two shores of the ocean, one where Lord Ram stood and the other at Lanka.

For more details, the reader should refer to Section 10.1, sub-section 10.1.2 of this Book.

²Such a ‘floating bridge’ was never ever constructed in the history of the world. So this unique and marvelous feat would surely spread the fame and glory of Lord Ram throughout the world. It goes without saying that the fame and glory of its actual builders and craftsmen, the two brothers Nala and Neela, would also be immortalized by this fantastic bridge.

The world would especially honour Lord Ram for showing compassion on the ocean by not harming it although it was trying to obstruct the Lord’s way.]

ततो रामस्तु सुग्रीवलक्ष्मणाभ्यां समन्वितः ।
नलमाज्ञापयच्छीघ्रं वानरैः सेतुबन्धने ॥ ८६॥
ततोऽतिहृष्टः प्लवगेन्द्रयूथपैर्महानगेन्द्रप्रतिमैर्युतो नलः ।
बबन्ध सेतुं शतयोजनायतं सुविस्तृतं पर्वतपादपैर्दृढम् ॥ ८७॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
तृतीयः सर्गः ॥ ३॥

tato rāmastu sugrīvalakṣmaṇābhyāṃ samanvitaḥ ।
nalamājñāpayacchīghraṃ vānaraiḥ setubandhane ॥ 86॥
tato'tihṛṣṭaḥ plavagendrayūthapairmahānagendrpratimairyuto nalaḥ ।
babandha setuṃ śatayojanāyataṃ suviśṛtaṃ parvatapādapairdṛḍham ॥ 87॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmarāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
tṛtīyaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 3॥

86-87. Thereafter, Nala was ordered by Lord Sri Ram, Sugriv and Laxman to tie the bridge together with the help of other monkeys (86).

Then Nala, with the help of commanders and chieftains of the different groups of monkeys, who were as colossus as mountains themselves, skillfully and cheerfully built a bridge with huge mountains and trees¹. The bridge was very strong and sturdy, and it extended for 100 Yojans (i.e. for 800 miles from the northern shore of the ocean where Lord Ram stood with his army, to the southern shore which touched the island of Lanka, the kingdom of the demon race) (87).

Thus ends Canto 3 of Yuddha Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and his divine consort Uma.

[Note—¹The logs of wood from trees were used because they would keep the stone slabs afloat on the water, and the planks were tied together using creepers found on mountains and trees. The existence of this bridge has been established by satellite images taken by the Indian satellite IRS-1A which in 1962 had taken photographs of the remnants of a stone bridge. It appeared as an underground streak from Dhanushkoti in India to Talai Manner in Sri Lanka. This was corroborated by U.S. astronauts aboard gemini XI satellite launched on 14/9/1966.]

(ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-8:-

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

सेतुमारभमाणस्तु तत्र रामेश्वरं शिवम् ।

संस्थाप्य पूजयित्वाह रामो लोकहिताय च ॥ १॥

पूणमेत्सेतुबन्धं यो दृष्ट्वा रामेश्वरं शिवम् ।

ब्रह्महत्यादिपापेभ्यो मुच्यते मदनुग्राहात् ॥ २॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

setumārabhamāṇastu tatra rāmeśvaram śivam ।

saṁsthāpya pūjayitvāha rāmo lokahitāya ca ॥ 1॥

praṇametsetubandham yo dr̥ṣṭvā rāmeśvaram śivam ।

brahmahatyādipāpebhyo mucyate madanugrahāt ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! At the time of beginning of the construction of the bridge, Lord Sri Ram installed the Lingam of 'Rameshwar Shiva' (literally, Shiva who is the Lord of Sri Ram, and conversely, Sri Ram who is the Lord of Shiva), worshipped Shiva in the form of this consecrated Lingam, and said the following words for the welfare of the world (1), ---

'Those people who would have 'Darshan' of Rameshwar Shiva (i.e. who would come here and view this Lingam established by me with due reverence and faith, and pay homage to Lord Shiva), and then bow reverentially with devotion before the bridge (which I have built), verily they shall be freed from many horrible sins, such as the killing of a Brahmin¹ etc. (2).

[Note—¹This statement of Lord Ram must not be seen or read in the wrong light. The Lord never meant that he condones sins. It is not meant to allow people to commit sins freely in the belief that they would easily overcome punishment by going to Rameshwar Shiva and offering prayers there. There is nothing of the sort intended.

The Lord simply means that if one sincerely regrets for having committed some grave sin and wants to actually atone for it, then there is a remedy for it. Such persons must offer their prayers and ask for forgiveness from Lord Shiva along with paying their homage to this bridge that symbolizes the Lord's effort to go and liberate even the most horribly sinful creatures that ever walked on the surface of the earth, i.e. the demons who had been perpetually tormenting countless Brahmins.

Lord Ram means that it is a normal thing for a human being to err, but that does not mean the end of the world. Therefore, all persons who are sincere and wish to repent for their past evil, who wish to turn a new leaf in their lives, must be given a

chance to do so. The first sin ought to be forgiven and the creature ought to be given a chance to reform. By undertaking a pilgrimage to Rameshwar Shiva, he will mentally free himself of the guilt of having committed something wrong, and this would go a long way to help in his reformation and rehabilitation at the psychological level.]

सेतुबन्धे नरः स्नात्वा दृष्ट्वा रामेश्वरं हरम् ।
सङ्कल्पनियतो भूत्वा गत्वा वाराणसीं नरः ॥ ३॥
आनीय गङ्गासलिलं रामेशमभिषिच्य च ।
समुद्रे क्षिप्ततद्भारो ब्रह्म प्राप्नोत्यसंशयम् ॥ ४॥

setubandhe naraḥ snātvā dr̥ṣṭvā rāmeśvaram haram ।
saṅkalpaniyato bhūtvā gatvā vārāṇasīm naraḥ ॥ 3॥
āniya gaṅgāsailaṁ rāmeśamabhiṣicya ca ।
samudre kṣiptatadbhāro brahma prāpnotyasamśayam ॥ 4॥

3-4. Any person who first bathes in the ocean near the bridge, has a Darshan (divine and august viewing) of Rameshwar Har (Shiva), goes to Kashi (Varanasi) determined to bring the water of the holy river Ganges from there to this place, pours that holy water over the Rameshwaram Lingam, and then puts the container (in which the water was brought) in the ocean—such a person shall attain Brahm (the supreme Soul). There is no doubt about it. [To wit, such persons shall attain liberation and deliverance from his sins, and at the time of death they would find emancipation and salvation for their soul.] (3-4).

[Note—These two verses describe the proper way to undertake a pilgrimage to Rameshwar Shiva.]

कृतानि प्रथमेनाह्ना योजनानि चतुर्दश ।
द्वितीयेन तथा चाह्ना योजनानि तु विंशतिः ॥ ५॥
तृतीयेन तथा चाह्ना योजनान्येकविंशतिः ।
चतुर्थेन तथा चाह्ना द्वाविंशतिरिति श्रुतम् ॥ ६॥
पञ्चमेन त्रयोविंशद्योजनानि समन्ततः ।
बबन्ध सागरे सेतुं नलो वानरसत्तमः ॥ ७॥
तेनैव जग्मुः कपयो योजनानां शतं द्रुतम् ।
असङ्ख्याताः सुवेलाद्रि रुरुधुः प्लवगोत्तमाः ॥ ८॥

kṛtāni prathamēnāhnā yojanāni caturdaśa ।
dvitīyena tathā cāhnā yojanāni tu viṁśatiḥ ॥ 5॥
tṛtīyena tathā cāhnā yojanānyekaviṁśatiḥ ।
caturthena tathā cāhnā dvāviṁśatiriti śrutam ॥ 6॥
pañcamena trayoviṁśadyojanāni samantataḥ ।
babandha sāgare setuṁ nalo vānarasattamaḥ ॥ 7॥
tenaiva jagmuḥ kapayo yojanānām śataṁ drutam ।

asaṅkhyātāḥ suvelādrim rurudhuḥ plavagottamāḥ ॥ 8॥

5-7. It is heard being said (in ancient scriptures) that on the first day the bridge was tied for a distance of 14 Yojans, on the second day for 20 Yojans (5), on the third day 21 Yojans further, on the fourth day 22 Yojans were added (6), and on the fifth day the last leg of 23 Yojans were completed.

Thus, the bridge was finally completed and made ready for use to cross the ocean by Nala who was the best amongst the monkeys in his field of expertise (7).

The monkeys crossed the 100-Yojan wide ocean on that bridge without losing much time. After crossing the bridge and landing on the soil of Lanka, the countless monkey warriors laid siege of Mt. Subel (8).

[Note—We see that the bridge spanning 100 Yojans was completed in a record number of five days as follows—14+20+21+22+23 = 100 Yojans.]

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Part 3

Chapter 11

A brief Recapitulation of the Story from the episode of Sita's abduction by Ravana till the time Lord Ram landed in Lanka from 'Devi Puran Mahabhagwat Ramayan'

Before proceeding ahead with the telling of our fascinating Story titled 'Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka', let us pause for some moments to recapitulate the events that led to the abduction of Sita by Ravana followed by Lord Ram's search for her, his meeting with Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, and befriending him, Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, joining Lord Ram's camp, messengers being sent out in all the directions to find the whereabouts of Sita, Hanuman's success in locating her in the Ashok grove in Lanka, the construction of the magnificent bridge across the ocean, and the landing of Lord Ram on the shore of Lanka with his formidable army of monkey and bear warriors.

There is a wonderful ancient classic in Sanskrit titled "Devi Puran Mahabhagwat Ramayan" which describes all these events briefly in its (i) Canto 38, verse nos. 33-53, (ii) Canto 39, verse nos. 1-42, and (iii) Canto 40, verse nos. 1-12.

"Devi Puran Mahabhagwat Ramayan" is a rare book and little known. By quoting this book and reading the relevant verses from it here we get to have a different view, a sort of a different perspective of the unfolding of the events which we have already read in our present Book, from Chapter no. 5 to Chapter no. 10.

It will be interesting to read these verses from “Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan” as it would truly make our present Book ‘The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion’ a really colourful bouquet by adding another version of the magnificent Story from a source other than the ones cited earlier.

This Chapter has three Sections, nos. 11.1—to—11.3.

So, let us start reading now:-

Section 11.1: Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan, Canto 38, verse nos. 33-53:-

These verses narrate the episode of Supernakha approaching Lord Ram with evil intentions, and the Lord punishing her by getting Laxman to cut-off her nose and ears. Angered and insulted, she first goes to instigate her demon brothers Khar and Dushan to take revenge for her; they attacked Lord Ram with their huge army of demons but were quickly eliminated by the Lord in the ensuing battle. Then Supernakha approaches Ravana, the king of demons of Lanka, and pleads with him to intervene and seek retribution on her behalf. Ravana forced a demon named Marich to assume the form of a golden deer to lure Lord Ram away so that he can abduct Sita. While on his way back to Lanka with her, Ravana fought a pitched battle with Jatayu, the king of vultures, and mortally wounded him. Finally, Ravana reached Lanka and kept Sita captive in his royal garden called the ‘Ashok Van’ which was a small forest or a wonderful grove of beautiful trees.

रामस्तु दण्डकारण्ये विराधं घोररूपिणम् । हत्वा राक्षसनाशाय कियत्कालमुवास ह ॥३३॥
निर्माय पर्णशालां तु पञ्चवट्यां महामते ॥३४॥
तत्र शूर्पणखानाम्नी राक्षसी कामरूपिणी । समेत्य राघवं कर्तुं पतिमैच्छत्स्मरातुरा ॥३५॥

rāmastu daṇḍakāraṇye virādhaṁ ghorarūpiṇam ।
hatvā rākṣasanāśāya kiyatkālamuvāsa ha ॥33॥
nirmāya parṇasālāṁ tu pañcavaṭyāṁ mahāmate ॥34॥
tatra śūrpaṇakhānāmnī rākṣasī kāmārūpiṇī ।
sametya rāghavaṁ kartuṁ patimaicchatsmarāturā ॥35॥

Lord Ram killed a fierce demon named Viradh in the Dandakaranya forest. Then for the purpose of eliminating the demons, he stayed there for some time (33) in Panchvati. There, the great and wise one (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) erected a thatched hut for his dwelling (34).

During his stay there, a demoness named Supernakha, who could assume any form that she wished, once came to visit that place. She was overwhelmed with passion and lust (when she saw the handsome personality of Lord Ram), and so she approached Raghav (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) with a desire to make him her husband (35).

तां ज्ञात्वा राक्षसीं दुष्टां लक्ष्मणो भ्रातृशासनात् । चिच्छेद कर्णौ नासां च खड्गेन मुनिपुङ्गव ॥३६॥
ततः सा रुदती गत्वा भ्रातरौ खरदूषणौ । उवाच वचनं क्रुद्धा राक्षसी भीमरूपिणी ॥३७॥

tām jñātvā rākṣasīm duṣṭām lakṣmaṇo bhrātr̥śāsanāt ।
ciccheda karṇau nāsām ca khaḍgena munipuṅgava ॥36॥
tataḥ sā rudatī gatvā bhrātarau kharadūṣaṇau ।
uvāca vacanaṁ kruddhā rākṣasī bhīmarūpiṇī ॥37॥

[Lord Shiva said—] Oh the most exalted sage (i.e. Narad)¹! On the instructions of (or a hint from) his brother (i.e. Lord Ram), Laxman cut-off her ears and nose with a sword because he realized that she was a ferocious demoness (instead of the beauty she appeared to be) (36).

Humiliated, peeved and wounded, she went away weeping to her demon brothers Khar and Dushan, and said to them angrily— (37)

[Note—¹This story is being narrated to sage Narad by Lord Shiva.]

शूर्पणखोवाच

अयोध्याधिपतिः श्रीमान् रामो भ्रात्रा सह स्वयम् । आगतो दण्डकारण्ये श्यामो दूर्वादलप्रभः ॥३८॥
तस्याङ्गनापि तेनैव सार्धं तत्र समागता । सा यथा रूपसौन्दर्यशालिनी न तथा क्वचित् ॥३९॥
सर्वो मर्त्ये च पाताले कैश्चिद्दृष्टं न च श्रुतम् । त्वदर्थं तामानयन्त्या भ्राता तस्यानुजो मम ॥४०॥
चिच्छेद कर्णौ नासां च तेन याता त्वदन्तिकम् ॥४१॥

śūrpaṇakhovāca

ayodhyādhīpatiḥ śrīmān rāmo bhrātrā saha svayam ।
āgato daṇḍakāraṇye śyāmo dūrvādalaprabhaḥ ॥38॥
tasyāṅganāpi tenaiva sārḍhaṁ tatra samāgatā ।
sā yathā rūpasaundaryaśālīnī na tathā kvacit ॥39॥
savarge martye ca pātāle kaiścidḍṛṣṭaṁ na ca śrutam । tvadārthaṁ
tāmānayaṁtyā bhrātā tasyānujo mama ॥40॥
ciccheda karṇau nāsām ca tena yātā tvadantikam ॥41॥

Supernakha said— 'Oh brother! The king of Ayodhya, Lord Sri Ram, has come to the Dandakaranya forest along with his brother (Laxman). He is dark complexioned like the Durba grass (38).

His wife (Sita) has also come along with him. She is so beautiful that the like of her has never been heard of anywhere (39), not in the celestial world, neither in the

terrestrial nor in the nether world. I was bringing her for you, but his younger brother (Laxman) (40) chopped-off my ears and nose. That is why I have come to you' (41).

[Note—What a big pack of lies! Supernakha did not go to the place where Lord Ram lived to somehow bring Sita as a gift for her two demon brothers Khar and Dushan. She had approached Lord Ram because she had gone mad with passion and wished to marry him herself. But now she says that she wished to bring Sita for her demon brothers.

We see here how that the wicked demoness has twisted facts to incite her brothers to avenge her insult and hide her own misdeeds. Had she been truthful, she would not have been a demoness in the first place.]

श्री महादेव उवाच

इति तस्या वचः श्रुत्वा राक्षसौ खरदूषणौ । राक्षसानां परिवृतौ चतुर्दशसहस्रकैः ॥४२॥
जग्मतुः कानने तत्र यत्रास्ते रघुनन्दनः । तान् जघान शरव्रातै रामचन्द्रः समागतान् ॥४३॥

śrī mahādeva uvāca

iti tasyā vacaḥ śrutvā rākṣasau kharadūṣaṇau ।
rākṣasānām parivṛtau caturdaśasahasrakaiḥ ॥४२॥
jagmatuḥ kānane tatra yatrāste raghunandanau ।
tān jaghāna śaravrātai rāmacandraḥ samāgatān ॥४३॥

Lord Shiva said to Narad— 'Hearing her words, the demons Khar and Dushan, accompanied by fourteen thousand demon warriors, went to the forest where the two Raghunandans (Lord Sri Ram and his younger brother Laxman) lived.

[The demon army attacked Lord Ram, and in the ensuing battle—] Lord Ram killed all those demons by a hail of his arrows (42-43).

ततः शूर्पणखा गत्वा लङ्कायां शोकविह्वला । वृत्तान्तं कथयामास रावणाय महामते ॥४४॥
स तस्या वचनं श्रुत्वा सीताया रूपमुत्तमम् । गुण्ठितः कालपाशेन तां हर्तुं मतिमादधे ॥४५॥

tataḥ śūrpaṇakhā gatvā laṅkāyām śokavihvalā ।
vṛttāntaṁ kathayāmāsa rāvaṇāya mahāmate ॥४४॥
sa tasyā vacanaṁ śrutvā sītāyā rūpamuttamam ।
guṇṭhitaḥ kālapāśena tāṁ hartuṁ matimādadhe ॥४५॥

Then Supernakha was overwhelmed with anguish and sorrows (at the death of her brothers Khar and Dushan). She rushed to Lanka to narrate the whole episode to Ravana, the great king of the demon race (45).

When he heard her and learnt about the matchless beauty of Sita, and then being inspired by death (or prodded by his doomed destiny), he decided, out of his wickedness, delusions and stupidity, to abduct her (Sita) (45).

ततः सहायं कृत्वा तु मारीचं ताडकासुतम् । तां हर्तुकामः प्रययौ काननं तं स रावणः ॥४६॥
मारीचस्तु विनिश्चित्य श्रीरामान्मृत्युमात्मनः । मायास्वर्णमृगो भूत्वाऽनयद्रामं सुदूरतः ॥४७॥

tataḥ sahāyaṁ kṛtvā tu mārīcaṁ tāḍakāsutam ।
tām hartukāmaḥ prayayau kānanaṁ taṁ sa rāvaṇaḥ ॥46॥
mārīcastu viniścitya śrīrāmānmṛtyumātmanaḥ ।
māyāsvaṇṇamṛgo bhūtvā'nayadrāmaṁ sudūrataḥ ॥47॥

Thence, in order to take the help of Tadak's son Marich to kidnap Sita, he went to that forest (where Marich resided) (46).

Marich decided that his death at the hands of Lord Sri Ram was a certainty¹, so he assumed the form of a golden deer (a stag) and took the Lord far away from the latter's hermitage by employing deceit² (47).

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 26.

²How did Marich, disguised as a golden stag, manage to take Lord Ram away from his hermitage so that Ravana could steal Sita? This is answered in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 27.

Briefly, Marich's magnificent golden hide attracted Sita's attention, and she asked Lord Ram to bring the golden deer to her as she wished to keep it as a pet. Lord Ram went behind the 'golden deer' to catch it, but it ran away. So the Lord went deep into the forest pursuing it. Observing that it is not possible to catch the deer alive, the Lord shot an arrow to kill it so that its skin can be used as a seating mat. When Lord Ram killed the demon Marich, the latter gave out a shrill cry, loud enough to be heard at the hermitage. When Sita heard it, she got alarmed, thinking that the Lord was within harms way. So she sent Laxman to go and help the Lord.

Meanwhile, finding Sita alone in the hermitage, Ravana came to her disguised as a mendicant, asking for alms. As soon as Sita stepped close to him to fulfill her religious duty of giving alms to a mendicant, Ravana grabbed her and scampered away to Lanka on his chariot as fast as he could drive it. We read about these developments below.]

रामस्तं प्राहिणोद्बाणं तेन विद्धः स राक्षसः । पपात धरणीपृष्ठे लक्ष्मणेति वदन्मुने ॥४८॥
तन्मत्वा रामचन्द्रस्य भाषितं जनकात्मजा । सद्यः प्रस्थापयामास रामं प्रति च लक्ष्मणम् ॥४९॥

rāmastaṁ prāhiṇodbāṇaṁ tena viddhaḥ sa rākṣasaḥ ।
papāta dharaṇīpṛṣṭhe lakṣmaṇeti vadanmune ॥48॥
tanmatvā rāmacandrasya bhāṣitaṁ janakātmajā ।

sadyaḥ prasthāpayāmāsa rāmaṁ prati ca lakṣmaṇam ||49||

[Lord Shiva said—] Oh sage (Narad)! Lord Ram aimed and shot an arrow at him (Marich, disguised as a golden deer). Being mortally wounded, he cried aloud ‘oh Laxman’ as he fell to the ground (48).

The daughter of Janak (Sita) thought that it was Lord Sri Ram calling out in distress, and she immediately sent Laxman in that direction (to help him) (49).

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे सोऽपि समागत्य दशाननः । जहार जानकीं लक्ष्मीदेव्या मूर्त्यन्तरं बलात् ॥५०॥
तदैव भस्मसात्कर्तुं समर्थापि सुरेश्वरी । नाकरोत्प्रार्थिता यस्माद्देवीरूपेण सा सदा ॥५१॥

etasminnantare so'pi samāgatya daśānanaḥ ।

jahāra jānakīm lakṣmīdevyā mūrtyantaram balāt ||50||

tadaiva bhasmasātkartuṁ samarthāpi sureśvarī ।

nākarotprārthitā yasmāddevīrūpeṇa sā sadā ||51||

Meanwhile, the 10-headed one (Ravana) came there and forcibly kidnapped Janki (Sita) who was actually an incarnation of Goddess Laxmi (the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the second God of the Trinity) (50).

Though that great Goddess was capable of reducing him to ashes then and there if she so wished, but she refrained from doing so because Ravana always worshipped her in her another divine form as a Goddess (Jagdamba, the Universal Mother Goddess, also known as Katyayani) (51).

रक्षसा नीयमानां तां जटायुः पक्षिपुङ्गवः । त्रातुकामोऽकरोद्युद्धं रावणेन दुरात्मना ॥५२॥
स तस्य पक्षौ छित्त्वा तां बलाद्राक्षसपुङ्गवः । गृहीत्वा प्रययौ लङ्कां रात्रौ देवर्षिसत्तम ॥५३॥

rakṣasā nīyamānām tām jaṭāyuh pakṣipuṅgavaḥ ।

trātukāmo'karodyuddham rāvaṇena durātmanā ||52||

sa tasya pakṣau chittvā tām balādrākṣasapuṅgavaḥ ।

grhītvā prayayau laṅkāṁ rātrau devarṣisattama ||53||

Jatau, the king of birds and the most respected amongst them¹, intervened. He was very angry, and he fought bravely and courageously with the wicked and sinful Ravana in order to protect and retrieve Sita who was being forcibly taken away by him (52).

Oh the most exalted sage of the gods (i.e. Narad)! However, that fellow, who was the best in the race of demons (i.e. Ravana), cut-off his (Jatau's) wings (to immobilise him)², and took away Sita stealthily to Lanka during the night (53).

[Note—¹Jatau was a vulture of gigantic size. On his way to Panchavati, the part of the forest from where Sita was abducted, Lord Ram had befriended him. Then Jatau had promised the Lord that he would try his best that was within his means to protect him

and his companions, i.e. his wife Sita and brother Laxman. Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-8.

²Ravana chopped-off the wings of Jatau, which made the latter fall down on the ground, gravely wounded and bleeding profusely. With the giant bird out of his way, Ravana drove his chariot towards Lanka as fast as he could through the night sky.]

अशोककानने रम्ये स्थापयामास तां सतीम् । न धर्षितुमभूच्छक्तो ज्वलदग्निसमप्रभाम् ॥५४॥
एवं भगवती देवी भवकालं शुभप्रदा । स्वयं लङ्केश्वरी देवी ह्यन्तर्धातुं मनो दधे ॥५५॥

aśokakānane ramye sthāpayāmāsa tām satīm ।
na dharṣitumabhūcchakto jvaladagnisamaprabhām ॥54॥
evaṁ bhagavatī devī bhavakālaṁ śubhapradā ।
svayaṁ laṅkeśvarī devī hyantardhātuṁ mano dadhe ॥55॥

He kept the Sati¹ (i.e. Sita) in the charming Ashok grove. He failed to exert influence or use force on her because she was radiant and fierce like raging fire² (54).

After that, the patron Goddess of Lanka called Lankeshwari— whose presence had made Ravana and Lanka invincible— decided to abandon the city (as she was disgusted and fed-up with Ravana).¹ (55).

[Note—¹The word “Sati” refers to a married woman who is chaste, virtuous, righteous, faithful and loyal to her husband.

²Ravana could not use force upon Sita because she was a ‘Sati’, a lady who possessed immense spiritual and mystical powers that come naturally to a woman who is exemplarily chaste, virtuous and righteous. Just as one gets burnt if one touches a raging fire, Ravana would recoil in terror if he ever dared to get too close to her with malefic intentions of trying to outrage her modesty.

At the time of her abduction his priority was simply to kidnap her and escape from the site as fast as he could lest Lord Ram and Laxman returned and slayed him on the spot. In such a situation he was too mentally worried and scared for his own physical safety to have the time for being passionate and lustful. But once Sita was securely in his custody, Ravana may have tried to use some force on her. So whenever he came close to her with evil intentions, he had to recoil in horror just like a man would do if he puts his finger in the flame of a raging fire.]

{Thus ends Canto 38 describing the story of Lord Sri Ram till the time of Sita’s abduction by Ravana and her incarceration at Lanka.}

Section 11.2: Devi Puran Mahabhagwat Ramayan, Canto 39, verse nos. 1-42:-

[This Canto narrates that Lord Ram lamented for Sita and began his search for her, how then he made Sugriv his friend, how Hanuman crosses the ocean, reaches Lanka, meets Sita, requests the patron Goddess to abandon the city, burns Lanka, returns to Kishkindha with the news of Sita, and how Vibhishan came to seek refuge with Lord Ram.]

श्री महादेव उवाच

रामस्तु हत्वा मारीचं लक्ष्मणेन समन्वितः । आगत्य पर्णशालायां नापश्यत्तत्र जानकीम् ॥१॥
बभ्राम कानने तत्र रुदन् सीतामनुस्मरन् । तत्र दृष्ट्वा पतङ्गेशं जटायुं छिन्नपक्षतिम् ॥२॥
सीतापहारिणं मत्वा हन्तुकामोऽन्तिकं ययौ । ततस्तमपि विज्ञाय सखायं पितुरात्मनः ॥३॥

śrī mahādeva uvāca

rāmastu hatvā mārīcaṁ lakṣmaṇena samanvitaḥ ।
āgatya parṇaśālāyāṁ nāpaśyattatra jānakīm ॥1॥
babhrāma kānane tatra rudam sītāmanusmaran ।
tatra dr̥ṣṭvā pataṅgeśaṁ jaṭāyuraṁ chinnaṣṭim ॥2॥
sītāpahāriṇaṁ matvā hantukāmo'ntikaṁ yayau ।
tatastamapi vijñāya sakhāyaṁ piturātmanaḥ ॥3॥

Lord Shiva continued with his narrative and said to Narad— 'After slaying Marich, when Lord Sri Ram came back to his thatched dwelling, he didn't find Sita there. Being extremely dismayed and overwhelmed by sorrows and anguish, he distressfully started wandering aimlessly in the forest, very fondly remembering Sita and frantically searching for her. Seeing the king of birds named Jatau (lying wounded on the ground) with wings cut-off (2), the Lord (wrongly) thought that the mighty bird might be the one who had kidnapped her (Sita). So he went near him (Jatau) to kill him to avenge Sita's abduction. There, he found out that Jatau was actually a friend of his father, king Dashrath (3).

न प्राहिणोच्छरं तत्र रामः सत्यपराक्रमः । ततः स उक्त्वा रामाय रावणेन हृतां प्रियाम् ॥४॥
परित्यज्य दिवं प्रायात्प्राणान् रामस्य पश्यतः । ततस्तमपि दग्ध्वा च कानने तत्र राघवः ॥५॥

na prāhiṇoccharaṁ tatra rāmaḥ satyaparākramaḥ ।
tataḥ sa uktvā rāmāya rāvaṇena hṛtāṁ priyām ॥4॥
parityajya divaṁ prāyātprāṇān rāmasya paśyataḥ ।
tatastamapi dagdhvā ca kānane tatra rāghavaḥ ॥5॥

As soon as Lord Ram, who was a most truthful, steadfast, righteous, principled and valiant warrior, realized this fact (that Jatau was his father's friend, and therefore

couldn't have abducted Sita), he immediately restrained himself and did not shoot the arrow as intended. Then, Jatau told Lord Ram about the abduction of his beloved Sita by Ravana (4).

Then, being mortally wounded, he (Jatau) died immediately while Lord Sri Ram watched him ascending to the heaven.

Thereafter, Raghav (Lord Ram) himself performed Jatau's last rites in the forest (as his next-of-kin because Jatau was his father Dashrath's friend) (5).

हत्वा कबन्धं प्रययावृष्यमूकं महामते । यत्र वालीभयादास्ते सुग्रीवः सूर्यनन्दनः ॥६॥
हनुमत्प्रमुखैर्वीरैश्चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिसत्तमैः । तत्र सख्यं स कृत्वा तु सुग्रीवेण महात्मना ॥७॥
निहत्य समरे वीरं वालिनं भीमविक्रमम् । राज्याभिषेचनं चक्रे सुग्रीवस्य महामते ॥८॥

hatvā kabandham prayayāvṛṣyamūkaṁ mahāmate ।
yatra vālībhayādāste sugrīvaḥ sūryanandanah ॥6॥
hanumatpramukhairvīraiściturbhirmantrisattamaiḥ ।
tatra sakhyaṁ sa kṛtvā tu sugrīveṇa mahātmanā ॥7॥
nihatya samare vīraṁ vāliṁ bhīmavikramam ।
rājyābhiṣecanaṁ cakre sugrīvasya mahāmate ॥8॥

Oh the wise one (Narad)! After killing the demon Kabandh¹, both the brothers reached Mt. Rishyamook where the Sun God's son Sugriv (6) stayed along with his four chief ministers, of whom Hanuman was one. Sugriv lived there due to the fear of his brother Baali². There, he (Lord Ram) befriended the great soul named Sugriv (7).

Oh the wise one (Narad)! Then he (Lord Ram) killed the extremely valiant, strong, fearless and powerful Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv, in battle, and then anointed the latter (Sugriv) on the throne (of Kishkindha)³ (8).

[Note—¹Kabandha was a demon who was like a giant octopus. His body consisted of his abdomen which had large holes for eyes, nose, ears and mouth, and long protuberances to represent hands. Lord Ram was confronted by Kabandha as he moved ahead in the direction of Lanka as indicated by Jatau.

²Baali had threatened to kill his younger brother Sugriv due to some grave misunderstanding between them. The cause of this animosity is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-13 that precede Doha no. 6.

³When Sugriv told his story of woes to Lord Ram, the latter felt that injustice had been done to the former. The Lord motivated Sugriv to go and settle his accounts with Baali, promising to him that in case things go wrong he personally would protect him. In the ensuing duel between the two brothers, Baali was killed.]

ततो व्यतीत्य वर्षा स स्थित्वा माल्यवति प्रभुः । आनाय्य वानरं सैन्यं विपुलं मुनिसत्तम ॥९॥
सीतान्वेषणकार्यार्थं दूतान् प्रास्थापयद्भुवि । चतुर्दिक्षु ययुस्तेऽपि सीतान्वेषणतत्पराः ॥१०॥

tato vyatītya varṣāṁ sa sthitvā mālyavati prabhuḥ ।
 ānāyya vānaraṁ sainyaṁ vipulaṁ munisattama ॥9॥
 sītānveṣaṇakāryārthaṁ dūtān prāsthāpayadbhuvi ।
 caturdikṣu yayuste'pi sītānveṣaṇatatparāḥ ॥10॥

Oh the most exalted sage (Narad)! After the rainy season, Sugriv summoned the vast army of monkeys (and bears) on the Malyawan Mountain where Lord Ram had been staying during the intervening period (9).

Then he sent messengers in all the four direction of the earth in search of Sita. Those messengers went to search for her everywhere (10).

तत्र याता दिशं यामीं हनूमदङ्गदादयः । जाम्बवत्प्रमुखाश्चापि महाबलपराक्रमाः ॥११॥
 ते सम्पातिमुखाच्छ्रुत्वा सविशेषं महामते । समुद्रलङ्घनायाशु मन्त्रयामासुरेव हि ॥१२॥

tatra yātā diśaṁ yāmīṁ hanūmadaṅgadādayaḥ ।
 jāmbavatpramukhāścāpi mahābalaparākramāḥ ॥11॥
 te sampātimukhācchrutvā saviśeṣaṁ mahāmate ।
 samudralaṅghanāyāśu mantrayāmāsureva hi ॥12॥

Those who were most famous, strong, courageous, brave and powerful amongst the monkeys and bears, such as Hanuman, Angad and Jamvant etc., went in the south direction (11).

Oh wise sage (Narad)! They heard everything in detail (about the place where Sita was incarcerated at Lanka) from the mouth of Sampati (the brother of Jatau), and discussed how to cross the ocean¹ (12).

[Note—¹The full episode is narrated in (a) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 29; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 29-56.]

अथर्क्षधिपतेर्वाक्याद्धनुमान्भीमविक्रमः । उल्लङ्घ्य सागरं घोरं शतयोजनविस्तृतम् ॥१३॥
 सायं प्रविश्य लङ्कायां रात्रौ च व्यचरत्पुरीम् । अन्वेषयन्नकजां सप्तरात्राणि मारुतिः ॥१४॥
 अशोकवनिकामध्ये तां ददर्श शुभाननाम् । ततश्चिकीर्षुरत्यन्तं दुष्करं कर्म मारुतिः ॥१५॥

atharkṣādhipatervākyāddhanumānbhīmavikramaḥ ।
 ullāṅghya sāgaram ghoram śatayojanavistṛtam ॥13॥
 sāyam praviśya laṅkāyāṁ rātrau ca vyacaratpurīm ।
 anveṣayañjanakajāṁ saptarātrāṇi mārutiḥ ॥14॥
 aśokavanikāmadhye tāṁ dadarśa śubhānanām ।

tatścikīrṣuratyantam duṣkaram karma mārutiḥ ||15||

Then on the advice of Jamvant, the most valiant, brave, strong and courageous Hanuman leapt across the ocean which was one hundred Yojans wide (i.e. appx. 800 miles wide) (13), entered Lanka during the evening hours, and roamed around the city during the night in search of Janaki (Sita). The son of the wind god spent seven consecutive nights searching for her (14).

Then finally he saw the most auspicious Sita in the centre of the Ashok grove. Maruti (Hanuman) decided that he will accomplish the most difficult and a very daunting task which was at hand (no matter what comes) (15).

सस्मार पूर्ववृत्तान्तं देव्या युद्धं कृतं पुरा । तत आरुह्य वृक्षाग्रं देव्या मन्दिरमद्भुतम् ॥१६॥
दिदृक्षुर्दिक्षु सर्वत्र स दृष्टिं प्राहिणोत्तदा । तथापश्यत्स ऐशान्यां मन्दिरं सुमनोहरम् ॥१७॥

sasmāra pūrvavṛttāntam devyā yuddham kṛtam purā ।
tata āruhya vṛkṣāgrm devyā mandiramadbhutam ||16||
didṛkṣurdikṣu sarvatra sa dṛṣṭim prāhiṇottadā ।
tathāpaśyatsa aiśānyām mandiram sumanoharam ||17||

He recalled an earlier episode when the Mother Goddess had prophesized about the war, saying that the end of the wicked Ravana would come when he would abduct Sita and Lord Ram would launch a campaign to free her from his captivity. Then Ravana and his cruel demon race would be eliminated by the Lord in the ensuing war¹.

He then climbed atop a tall tree and looked in all the directions in order to have a good bird's eye-view of the majestic temple of the Goddess. He then saw a beautiful shrine in the east (16-17).

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in detail in 'Devi Puran Mahabagwat Ramayan', Canto 36, verse nos. 56-76.

The question arises 'how did Hanuman know about this episode?' Well, Lord Shiva has eleven forms, one of which is known as 'Rudra', meaning the Lord's angry form. It is believed that Hanuman was a manifestation of this Rudra aspect of Shiva which is the latter's eleventh form. See verse no. 24 herein below.

When Mother Goddess was advising Lord Vishnu to come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram, and bring his divine consort goddess Laxmi with him in the form of Sita, at that time Lords Shiva and Brahma were both present along with the other gods and mother earth.]

मणिमाणिक्यरचितं शुद्धहेमपरिष्कृतम् । सिंहध्वजं च तस्याग्रे दृष्ट्वा पवननन्दनः ॥१८॥
चकार निश्चयं देव्या मन्दिरं चैतदेव हि । ततस्तन्मन्दिरद्वारं गत्वाऽपश्यत्सुरेश्वरीम् ॥१९॥

maṇimāṇikyaracitam śuddhahemapariṣkṛtam ।

siṁhadhvajaṁ ca tasyāgre dṛṣṭvā pavananandanāḥ ||18||
 cakāra nīscayaṁ devyā mandiraṁ caitadeva hi |
 tatastanmandiradvāraṁ gatvā'paśyatsureśvarīm ||19||

The gold plated, beautiful, charming, auspicious and clean shrine was studded with glittering gems and priceless jewels. There was a 'Singha-dhwaj (siṁhadhvajaṁ)¹' on it. Seeing it, the son of the wind God (Hanuman) (18) determined that it was the temple of the Goddess. He went to the main door of the temple and had a divine glimpse of Goddess Sureshwari ("sureśvarīm")² there (19).

[Note—¹The "siṁhadhvajaṁ" is a high ceremonial standard or flag bearing the mark of the patron deity worshipped in a shrine. In this case it was the patron goddess of the kingdom of demons.

²The word "sureśvarīm" means the Goddess of the Gods; the Mother Goddess.]

नृत्यन्तीं प्रहसन्तीं च सहितां योगिनीगणैः । तां प्रणम्य महादेवीं प्रावृत्य पवनात्मजः ॥२०॥
 उवाच त्रिजगद्वन्द्यां भक्त्या परमया युतः ॥२१॥

nṛtyantīm prahasantīm ca sahitām yoginīgāṇaiḥ |
 tām praṇamya mahādevīm prāvṛtya pavanātmajaḥ ||20||
 uvāca trijagadvandyām bhaktyā paramayā yutaḥ ||21||

She was merrily dancing in the shrine along with her companions called Yoginis. The son of the wind god (Hanuman) went around the Goddess to pay his respects to her, and then bowed before her (20).

Then he most humbly said to the Goddess who is worshipped by the three worlds (as she is the 'Mother Goddess')— (21).

हनुमानुवाच

देवी प्रसीद विश्वेशि रामस्यानुचरोऽस्म्यहम् । अन्वेष्टुं जानकीं लक्ष्मीं लङ्कायां समुपागतः ॥२२॥
 त्वयैव प्रेरितो विष्णुर्मनुजत्वमुपागमत् । वधार्थं राक्षसेन्द्रस्य रावणस्य दुरात्मनः ॥२३॥

hanumānuvāca

devī prasīda viśveśi rāmasyānucaro'smyaham |
 anveṣṭuṁ jānakīm lakṣmīm laṅkāyām samupāgataḥ ||22||
 tvayaiva prerito viṣṇurmanujatvamupāgamat |
 vadhārthaṁ rākṣasendrasya rāvaṇasya durātmanaḥ ||23||

Hanuman said— 'Oh divine Goddess! Oh Mistress and Goddess of the whole world! Be pleased with me. I am a humble servant (messenger) of Lord Sri Ram, and I have come to Lanka searching for Janki who is an incarnate Laxmi herself. [Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and Sita of goddess Laxmi.] (22).

It is on your inspiration that Lord Vishnu has manifested himself as Lord Sri Ram with the express purpose of killing the tyrannical, the wicked, the cruel, the sinful and the evil king of demons named Ravana¹ (23).

[Note—¹Refer 'Devi Puran Mahabagwat Ramayan, Canto 36, verse nos. 61-76. The reason was that Ravana had unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem in the world, undermining all the laws of righteous behaviour, probity and propriety collectively known as Dharma, and upturning the Supreme Being's cart of the 'rule of law' that granted peace and joy and liberty and safety for all living beings.]

शिवोऽहमपि सम्भूय वानरोऽत्र समागतः । कर्तुं रामस्य साहाय्यं तवाज्ञावशतः शिवे ॥२४॥
 त्वयैवैतत्पुरा प्रोक्तं लङ्कायामागते त्वयि । संत्यज्य नगरीमेनां प्रस्थास्ये स्वनिवेशनम् ॥२५॥
 तस्मात्त्यज पुरीमेनां रावणं सुदुरासदम् । पातयस्व महादेवी रक्ष विश्वं चराचरम् ॥२६॥

śivo'hamapi sambhūya vānaro'tra samāgataḥ ।
 kartuṁ rāmasya sāhāyyaṁ tavājñāvaśataḥ śive ॥24॥
 tvayaivaitatpurā proktaṁ laṅkāyāmāgate tvayi ।
 saṁtyajya nagarīmenāṁ prasthāsye svaniveśanam ॥25॥
 tasmā'ttyaja purīmenāṁ rāvaṇaṁ sudurāsadam ।
 pātayasva mahādevī rakṣa viśvaṁ carācaram ॥26॥

Oh Shive (the divine goddess who is the consort of Lord Shiva; she is known by various names, one of which is Parvati, and the other is Uma)¹! I (Hanuman) myself am Shiva (śivo'hamapi), and I have manifested myself as a monkey on your advice and orders in order to help Lord Sri Ram on this earth (24).

You had earlier said that when I come to Lanka, you will leave the city and go to your divine abode (at Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva) (25).

So, oh the great Goddess, you must leave this city forthwith, help in destroying that formidable Ravana, and protect the entire animate as well as the inanimate world (which is being tormented and tyrannized by him).² (26).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is known as 'Mahadeva', the 'Great God', and his divine consort is therefore the 'Great Goddess', or the 'Maha-Devi'. It was this Goddess that Ravana used to worship; he was also a great devotee of Lord Shiva.

²These facts are narrated in 'Devi Puran Mahabagwat Ramayan', Canto 36, verse nos. 64-66, 88-89, and Canto 37, verse no. 8.]

सीतावमानेनापि रुष्टाहं वानरर्षभ । लङ्कात्यागमतिं पूर्वमकार्षं पुरुषर्षभ ॥२७॥
 त्वद्वक्यापेक्षयाद्यापि स्थिताहं रावणालये । त्यजाम्येतां पुरीं लङ्कां त्वयोक्ता कपिपुङ्गव ॥२८॥

śrī devyuvāca

sītāvamānanenāpi ruṣṭāhaṁ vānararṣabha ।
 laṅkātyāgamatiṁ pūrvamakārṣaṁ puruṣarṣabha ॥27॥
 tvadvakyāpekṣayādyāpi sthitāhaṁ rāvaṇālaye ।
 tyajāmyetāṁ purīm laṅkāṁ tvayoktā kapipuṅgava ॥28॥

The Goddess replied— 'Oh the best amongst monkeys (vānararṣabha)! I am very angry, extremely peeved and exasperated at the way Ravana has insulted Sita. Oh the best amongst males (puruṣarṣabha)! I have already decided to abandon Lanka¹ (27).

Oh the most exalted monkey (kapipuṅgava)! I have been staying here waiting for the moment when I would meet you and shall hear this request from you (to abandon Lanka and go back to my abode in Mt. Kailash). Now as per your wishes therefore, I am abandoning Lanka forthwith.' (28).

[Note—¹The Mother Goddess had been tolerating Ravana's mischief for quite some time. But her tolerance reached a limit when he kidnapped Sita, who was herself an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. Laxmi herself was one of the many forms of Mother Goddess. So by insulting Sita, Ravana had unwittingly insulted the Mother Goddess whom he used to worship. This was unacceptable, so the Goddess decided to leave his kingdom for good.]

श्री महादेव उवाच

इत्युक्त्वा सा महादेवी लङ्कां त्यक्त्वा महेश्वरी । अन्तर्दधे मुनिश्रेष्ठ सहसा तस्य पश्यतः ॥२९॥
 ततो बभञ्ज गहनं राक्षसेन्द्रेण पालितम् । अशोकवृक्षसंघातं मारुतिः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः ॥३०॥

śrī mahādeva uvāca

ityuktvā sā mahādevī laṅkāṁ tyaktvā maheśvarī ।
 antardadhe muniśreṣṭha sahasā tasya paśyataḥ ॥29॥
 tato babhañja gahanaṁ rākṣasendreṇa pālitaṁ ।
 aśokavṛkṣasaṁghātaṁ mārutiḥ krodhamūkhracchataḥ ॥30॥

Shiva said to Narad— 'Oh the best amongst sages (muniśreṣṭha)! Saying this, the great Goddess Maheshwari (literally, the divine consort of Lord Mahesh, i.e. Shiva) vanished from sight immediately even while Hanuman watched (29).

Then, being extremely angry and furious so much that he literally fainted with anger, Maruti (Hanuman; the son of the wind god known as 'Marut') wrathfully

destroyed the Ashok grove that was very dear to Ravana and well looked after by him (30).

तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणः क्रोधाद्राक्षसान्सुबहूंस्तदा । अक्षाहं तनयं चापि प्रेषयामास नारद ॥३१॥
तं जघान महाबाहुर्हनुमान् सुमहाबलः । वृक्षैराताड्य समरे स्वयमुत्पाटितैर्बलात् ॥३२॥

tacchrutvā rāvaṇaḥ krodhādrākṣasānsubahūmstadā ।
akṣāhnaṁ tanayaṁ cāpi preṣayāmāsa nārada ॥31॥
taṁ jaghāna mahābāhurhanumān sumahābalaḥ ।
vṛkṣairātāḍya samare svayamutpāṭitairbalāt ॥32॥

Oh Narad! When the news reached Ravana, he was annoyed beyond measure, and so he angrily sent his son named Akshay along with many other demons (31).

In the ensuing duel, Hanuman, who was extremely strong, brave, courageous and powerful, uprooted trees and killed him (Akshay) with them¹ (32).

[Note—¹As soon as news reached Ravana that an unknown intruder in the form of a monkey is ruining his favourite garden, the Ashok grove, he dispatched his valiant son Akshay Kumar with his troops to control the situation. Akshay rushed to the scene and challenged Hanuman. In the free-for-all uproarious fracas that followed, Hanuman uprooted huge trees to use them as a baton, and swinging them wildly he bashed Akshay Kumar violently with them, resulting in his death.]

ततो विरूपं तं कर्तुं रावणो राक्षसाधिपः । लाङ्गूलं वाससा बद्ध्वा दत्त्वा वह्निं स दीपयत् ॥३३॥
ततः स मारुतिर्वीरो वह्निना तेन नारद । लङ्कां दग्ध्वा समुल्लङ्घ्य पुनस्तं सरितां पतिम् ॥३४॥

tato virūpaṁ taṁ kartuṁ rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
lāṅgūlaṁ vāsasā baddhvā dattvā vahnim sa dīpayat ॥33॥
tataḥ sa mārutirvīro vahninā tena nārada ।
laṅkāṁ dagdhvā samullaṅghya punastaṁ saritāṁ patim ॥34॥

Thereafter, the king of demons, Ravana, got his (Hanuman's) tail wrapped in cloth and put fire to it in order to punish and deform him¹ (33).

Oh Narad! The most brave Maruti (Hanuman) burnt down Lanka with that ferociously raging fire, and then crossed the ocean (literally, the Lord of rivers—“**saritām patim**”) and came back to this side of the shore (where other monkeys were waiting eagerly for him) (34).

[Note—¹It will be noted that this version of the Ramayan is extremely brief inasmuch as it tells the story in the form of an outline, touching only on the main events and omitting the details. It does not, for example, tell us here ‘how Hanuman was caught after he had killed Akshay Kumar and brought to the court of Ravana where the latter ordered his tail to be wrapped in oil-soaked cloth and set ablaze’.

Well, after Akshay was killed, Ravana sent his other valiant son named Meghnad who caught Hanuman after a pitched battle when he shot the latter with an arrow provided to him by the creator Brahma and then tied him with a magical snare consisting of serpents. Then Meghnad brought Hanuman as a captive to his father Ravana's presence. This was followed by a heated and acrimonious oral spat between Ravana and Hanuman following which Ravana ordered his soldiers to set Hanuman's tail on fire in order to punish him as well as to deform him so that when he goes back to the Lord who had sent him (i.e. Sri Ram) the latter would be sternly rebuffed and hinted of the consequences of attacking Lanka.

All these developments are narrated earlier in our Book in Chapter no. 7. {More specifically, refer to (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 89-199, and Canto 4, verse nos. 1-46.}

सत्प्राप तीरं यत्रैव सन्ति तेऽप्यङ्गदादयः । ततश्च समुपागम्य जाम्बवत्प्रमुखैर्वृतः ॥३५॥
 भुक्त्वा मधुवनं राज्ञो ययौ रामस्य सन्निधिम् । तं दृष्ट्वा रामचन्द्रस्तु दूरतो मुनिसत्तम ॥३६॥
 पप्रच्छ जानकीं चाथ हनुमांस्तुष्टमानसः । ततः सर्वं यथावृत्तं राघवाय न्यवेदयत् ॥३७॥

satprāpa tīraṁ yatraiva santi te'pyaṅgadādayaḥ ।
 tataśca samupāgamyā jāmbavatpramukhairvṛtaḥ ॥35॥
 bhuktvā madhuvanaṁ rājño yayau rāmasya sannidhim ।
 taṁ dṛṣṭvā rāmacandrastu dūrato munisattama ॥36॥
 papraccha jānakīṁ cātha hanumāṁstusṭmānasaḥ ।
 tataḥ sarvaṁ yathāvṛttaṁ rāghavāya nyavedayat ॥37॥

Here, on this side of the ocean, Angad, Jamvant and other brave warriors were present (35).

He (Hanuman) refreshed himself by playing and eating in the 'garden of honey' called Madhuvan that belonged to their king (Sugriv). Then, accompanied by all other messengers, he presented himself before Lord Sri Ram.

Oh the most exalted sage (Narad—"munisattama")! Lord Ram saw him approaching from a distance (36) and asked about his meeting with Janki (Sita). Then Hanuman cheerfully told him everything as it had happened (37).

ततः स राघवश्चापि समस्तैर्वानरैर्वृतः । दशम्यां शुक्लपक्षस्य श्रावणे मासि निर्ययौ ॥३८॥
 वधार्थं राक्षसेन्द्रस्य रावणस्य महामते । स्थितः परिवृतः सर्वैः ससैन्यैर्वानरर्षभैः ॥३९॥

tataḥ sa rāghavaścāpi samastairvānarairvṛtaḥ ।
 daśamyāṁ śuklapakṣasya śrāvaṇe māsi nirayayau ॥38॥
 vadhārthaṁ rākṣasendrasya rāvaṇasya mahāmate ।

sthitāḥ parivṛtāḥ sarvaiḥ sasainyairvānararṣabhaiḥ ॥39॥

Then on the 10th day of the bright lunar fortnight in the Hindu month of Shrawan (roughly late July-early August), Lord Sri Ram made his departure (for Lanka) along with all other monkeys (38).

Oh the wise one (Narad; “mahāmate”)! Lord Ram, together with the excellent and brave monkey army, pitched camp on the shore of the ocean with the objective of slaying Ravana, the king of demons (as promised by Lord Vishnu to the gods earlier¹) (39).

[Note—¹Refer: ‘Devi Puran Mahabagwat Ramayan’, Canto 36, verse nos. 48-55.]

एतस्मिन्नैव काले तु रावणो राक्षसाधिपः । आहूय मन्त्रिणः सर्वान्मन्त्राय समुपाविशत् ॥४०॥
तत्रोवाच महाबुद्धिः सर्वमन्त्रविदां वरः । विभीषणो दशास्यं तु वारयन् सर्वतो रणे ॥४१॥

etasminnaiva kāle tu rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
āhūya mantriṇaḥ sarvānmantrāya samupāviśat ॥40॥
tatrovāca mahābuddhiḥ sarvamantravidāṁ varaḥ ।
vibhīṣaṇo daśāsyaṁ tu vārayan sarvato raṇe ॥41॥

Meanwhile, Ravana called all his ministers to a meeting to discuss the matter (which by now had assumed a grave proportion and a serious dimension) (40).

There, Vibhishan—who was an expert in the laws of proper conduct, propriety, probity and good behaviour, and was also very wise, sagacious, prudent and intelligent (mahābuddhiḥ sarvamantravidāṁ varaḥ)—tried all the methods he could think of to dissuade the 10-headed one (Ravana) from going to war (which would be ruinous for the whole of the demon race) (41).

सीतां त्यक्तुं मुहुः प्राह राघवस्य पराक्रमम् । तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणः क्रुद्धस्तं पदास्ताडयन्मुने ॥४२॥
ततः क्रुद्ध स्वयं धर्मस्वरूपोऽयं विभीषणः । चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिभिः प्रायाद्रामचन्द्रस्य सन्निधिम् ॥४३॥

sītāṁ tyaktuṁ muhuḥ prāha rāghavasya parākramam ।
tacchrutvā rāvaṇaḥ kruddhastam padā'tāḍayanmune ॥42॥
tataḥ kruddha svayaṁ dharmasvarūpo'yaṁ vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
caturbhirmantribhiḥ prāyādrāmacandrasya sannidhim ॥43॥

He (Vibhishan) described the immense glory, the majestic powers, the famed valour and the stupendous prowess and strength of Raghav (Lord Sri Ram), and advised him (Ravana) that Sita should be sent back to the Lord.

Hearing this, Ravana became furious with anger (as he did not like the idea of his younger brother Vibhishan heaping praises on his arch enemy, Lord Ram).

Oh sage (Narad)! Ravana was so extremely annoyed with Vibhishan that he kicked him disgustedly (in full court) (42).

After that, Vibhishan—who was like Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble and virtuous conduct) personified (*dharmasvarūpo'yaṁ bibhīṣaṇaḥ*)—became very exasperated and angry himself¹, and accompanied by four of his ministers (or advisors), he came to Lord Sri Ram Chandra (to join him and seek his refuge).¹ (43).

[Note—¹Vibhishan was advising something which would ensure that the destructive war could be avoided and the demon race could be saved from annihilation. It was his moral duty to give good advice to his elder brother Ravana even if it sounded like his praising Ravana's enemy. But Ravana did not like this advice as he mistook it for Vibhishan's cowardice and disloyalty. He accused his younger brother of treason and kicked him out of the court. Thus humiliated and shown the door in such a rough manner, Vibhishan decided that it is not good for him to stay for one more minute in Lanka as there was always the chance that Ravana would order his demon soldiers to arrest Vibhishan and throw him in a dungeon. So Vibhishan immediately took four trusted aides and escaped from Lanka to come and join Lord Ram's camp where he was cordially received by the Lord.

This episode is narrated in great detail in (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-46, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-16, 34-48.]

Section 11.3: Devi Puran Mahabhogwat Ramayan, Canto 40, verse nos. 1-12:-

In this Section no. 11.3 we read briefly about the construction of the bridge across the mighty ocean, and the landing of Lord Ram's formidable army on the soil of Lanka.

श्री महादेव उवाच

विभीषणमशेषेण ज्ञात्वा तु शरणार्थिनम् । सख्यं कृत्वा महाबाहुर्लङ्कारज्येऽभ्यषेचयत् ॥१॥
ततस्तितीर्षुर्जलधिं रामस्तं वानराधिपम् । सुग्रीवं वचनं प्राह जिज्ञासुर्बलविक्रमम् ॥२॥

śrī mahādeva uvāca

vibhīṣaṇamaśeṣeṇa jñātvā tu śaraṇārthinaṁ ।
sakhyaṁ kṛtvā mahābāhurlaṅkārajye'bhyaṣecayat ॥1॥
tatastitīrṣurjaladhiṁ rāmastaṁ vānarādhipam ।
sugrīvaṁ vacanaṁ prāha jijñāsurbalavikramam ॥2॥

Lord Shiva said to Narad— 'Seeing that Vibhishan has come with a sincere intention to seek refuge and succour with him, he (Lord Sri Ram) established a cordial and friendly relationship with him.

The Lord (Sri Ram) who has strong and sturdy arms (i.e. the Lord is capable of protecting those who come to seek refuge with him; “mahābāhu”) anointed Vibhishan to the throne of Lanka in a symbolic way (by putting a ‘Tilak Mark’¹ on his forehead after a brief formal ceremony on the shore of the ocean) (1).

Then, with the intention of crossing the ocean, Sri Ram enquired of Sugriv about the potentials of his army (2).

[Note—¹According to Hindu tradition, when a king is put on the throne of a kingdom for the first time, a ritual is held in which a ‘Mark’ is made on his forehead using a scented paste made of many auspicious materials such as sandalwood etc. in a formal ceremony. Then some consecrated water is sprinkled on his body amidst chanting of sacred verses. In this case the ceremony was brief, and the formality was fulfilled by sprinkling the water of the ocean, and the Tilak Mark was made using a paste made from sand mixed with water.

Even though it was not an elaborate ceremony but it served its purpose. Lord Ram in effect declared that after winning the war of Lanka, he would make Vibhishan its next king. This was a clever and wise act on the part of Lord Ram because now Vibhishan would certainly be loyal to him as he knew that his future lay in Lord Ram winning the war, and not otherwise, for if Ravana did not lose the war and was not killed, Vibhishan would have a dark future; he’d probably be killed himself or be imprisoned for life.]

स आह भगवंस्त्वं तु मा चिन्ता कर्तुमर्हसि । समुद्रं शोषयिष्यामि सेतुं चोत्पाद्य भूधरान् ॥३॥
रचयिष्ये महासिन्धौ तेन पारं गमिष्यसि । तच्छ्रुत्वा सम्प्रहृष्टात्मा रामः सत्यपराक्रमः ॥४॥

sa āha bhagavaṁstvaṁ tu mā cintā kartumarhasi ।
samudraṁ śoṣayisyāmi setuṁ cotpātyā bhūdharān ॥3॥
racayisye mahāsindhau tena pāraṁ gamisyasi ।
tacchrutvā samprahṛṣṭātmā rāmaḥ satyaparākramaḥ ॥4॥

He (Sugriv) replied— 'Oh Lord! You must not worry in this regard. We will dry up (conquer or tame) the ocean by uprooting mountains and constructing a bridge across it. We will throw huge mountains (i.e. huge boulders and rocks as large as hills) in the ocean and create an artificial dam across it. We shall hammer these mountains and trees into place and walk across this rough structure (3). You can then easily get across the great ocean on top of it.'

The truly powerful and valiant Lord Sri Ram felt extremely glad when he heard it (4).

चक्रे जलनिधिं घोरं स्वयंस्वीकृतबन्धनम् । ततः सुग्रीववचनादुत्पाद्योत्पाद्य भूधरान् ॥५॥
रचयामास जलधौ सेतुं मयसुतो नलः । आरभ्य पौर्णमास्यां तु श्रावण्यां मुनिसत्तम ॥६॥
यामद्वयेनैव सेतुं सागरे वानरर्षभः । बबन्ध मुनिशार्दूल सर्वलोकसुदुष्करम् ॥७॥

cakre jalanidhiṁ ghoram svayaṁsvīkṛtabandhanam ।
 tataḥ sugrīvavacanādutpāṭyotpāṭya bhūdharān ॥5॥
 racayāmāsa jaladhau setuṁ mayasuto nalaḥ ।
 ārabhya paurṇamāsyāṁ tu śrāvaṇyāṁ munisattama ॥6॥
 yāmadvayenavai setuṁ sāgare vānararṣabhaḥ ।
 babandha muniśārdūla sarvalokasuduṣkaram ॥7॥

Lord Ram created such a situation that the ordinarily fierce and uncompromising ocean had to relent and submit itself to the Lord's wishes by willingly accepting to be tied (or 'bridged')¹.

Thereafter, on the instructions of Sugriv, huge mountains were uprooted and dumped in the ocean (5) by Nala, the son of Maye. Thus was created (constructed) the marvelous bridge.

Oh the great sage who is the most exalted in the community of sages (i.e. Narad; "munisattama; muniśārdūla")! The construction of this fabulous bridge was started on the full moon day of the month of Shrawan (roughly late July-early August; "ārabhya paurṇamāsyāṁ tu śrāvaṇyāṁ") (6), and that great and expert monkey named Nala completed it in (a record period of) two Prahars (i.e. approximately 6 hours; 1 Prahar = 3 hours) between sunrise and sunset (yāmadvayenavai setuṁ sāgare --- babandha).

Oh the most superior amongst sages (Narad)! This feat was impossible for anyone to accomplish, and even thinking of it was unimaginable in the whole world (sarvalokasuduṣkaram) (7).

[Note—¹Why the ocean surrendered before Lord Ram and agreed to be tied with a bridge across it has been elaborately explained earlier in our Book in Chapter no. 10. {More specifically, refer to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 60-87.}]

ततस्तु रावणः श्रुत्वा सेतुबन्धं महाम्बुधौ । भयं मोहं च सम्प्राप्य चकम्पे च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥८॥
 ततः परिवृतो रामो वानरैश्च महाबलैः । कोटिलक्षैर्महाबाहुलक्ष्मणेन समन्वितः ॥९॥
 त्रयोदश्यां तु कृष्णायां लङ्कां प्राप महामते । वेष्टिता वानरैर्लङ्का समन्ताद्भीमविक्रमैः ॥१०॥

tatastu rāvaṇaḥ śrutvā setubandhaṁ mahāmbudhau ।
 bhayaṁ mohaṁ ca samprāpya cakampe ca muhurmuḥuḥ ॥8॥
 tataḥ parivṛto rāmo vānaraiśca mahābalaiḥ ।
 koṭīlakṣairmahābhūlakṣmaṇena samanvitaḥ ॥9॥
 trayodaśyāṁ tu kṛṣṇāyāṁ laṅkāṁ prāpa mahāmate ।
 veṣṭitā vānarairlaṅkā samantādbhīmavikramaiḥ ॥10॥

When Ravana heard about the taming of the ocean by the construction of the bridge across it, he became extremely alarmed, astonished and terrified so much so that he repeatedly shivered and trembled with fear (8).

Meanwhile, surrounded by millions of monkeys and accompanied by Laxman (his brother) (9), Lord Ram reached Lanka on the 13th day of the waning phase of the moon (“trayodaśyām tu kṛṣṇāyām laṅkāṁ prāpa”)¹.

Oh great sage! The most courageous and brave monkeys besieged Lanka from all the sides (10).

[Note—¹We have read in verse no. 7 herein above that the construction of the bridge was started on the ‘day of the full moon’, and now we read that the Lord and his army landed on the ‘thirteenth day after the full moon’. So it obviously means that the time lapse between the start of the construction of the bridge and Lord Ram actually setting foot on Lanka was of thirteen days. It was during this time that he worshipped Lord Shiva as well as the Goddess for success in his endeavour to vanquish Ravana and defeat the demons.]

जले स्थले च प्राकारे वृक्षेषु गृहमध्यतः । चत्वरेषु गोपुरेषु वनेषूपवनेषु च ॥११॥
नासीद्वानरशून्यं तु स्थलं किञ्चिन्महामते । ततो युयुत्सुर्भगवान् चिन्तयामास चेतसा ॥१२॥

jale sthale ca prākāre vṛkṣeṣu gr̥hamadhyataḥ ।
catvareṣu gopureṣu vaneṣūpavaneṣu ca ॥11॥
nāsīdvānaraśūnyaṁ tu sthalaṁ kiñcinmahāmate ।
tato yuyutsurbhagavān cintayāmāsa cetasā ॥12॥

In the water and on the land, on the ramparts, the trees and the houses, in the public squares, at the entrances and the gates, in the gardens, groves and forests (11) — there was not a single place where one could not find the monkeys (and bears)¹.

Oh the wise one (Narad)! Then the Lord (i.e. Sri Ram) thought of starting the war (12).

[Note—¹To wit, the huge army of monkeys and bears invaded the city of Lanka and swamped the place, roaming around it freely. The war had yet not commenced, but the demons were so scared out of their wits that none dared to oppose or resist the monkeys who had a free run of the place.]

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An interesting thing is to be remarked at this point of our Story. The form of Lord Ram passing through the region of Kishkindha and then fighting the war of Lanka is known by the name of ‘Kodand Ram’. In the next section no. 11.4 we shall examine it closely, and see what it means and what its significance is, as well as its relationship with the other form of Lord Ram that is known as ‘Sarang Pani Ram’.

Section 11.4:

‘Kodand Ram’ and ‘Sarang Pani Ram’

Upon close examination of the divine Story of Lord Ram as narrated in Goswami Tulsidas’ classic epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, we come across two forms of Lord Ram—one is known as ‘Kodand Ram’, and the other as ‘Sarang Pani Ram’.

Both these two forms pertain to Lord Ram, but with a wee whit of subtle difference. These two names are assigned to the Lord by the virtue of the ‘Bow’ that he holds in his hand. The ‘Kodand Bow’ is the name of the bow that Lord Ram normally holds, while the ‘Sarang Bow’ is the one that is held by Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and is exclusive to him.

The word ‘Kodand’ always refers to the bow of Lord Ram; and therefore, ‘Kodand Ram’ is that form of Lord Ram who held this bow. The word ‘Kodand’ has two parts—viz. Ko and Danda. While ‘Ko’ may refer to ‘who’ or ‘whom’, ‘Danda’ clearly means punishment or use of force to enforce a rule.

The word ‘Sarang’ refers always to the bow held by Lord Vishnu, and therefore it follows that by saying that Lord Ram too held this bow in his hand, i.e. assigning the name of ‘Sarang Pani Ram’ to the Lord, it is clearly meant that Lord Ram is no one else but Lord Vishnu himself in his form. The word ‘Pani’ means to hold something in one’s hand.

It must be remembered that Lord Vishnu had promised the gods and mother earth that he would come down to the mortal world in the form of Lord Ram to eliminate the terror of the sinful Ravana and his cruel demon race who had run madly amok in this world, unleashing a reign of cruelty, tyranny, dread and horror all around, tormenting and traumatizing every single humble creature. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.}

So, Lord Ram was fulfilling this promise. In order to do it, he had to use force against the demons and their king Ravana, and it had to be force that not only matched that of the opponents, but even surpass it in its dynamics and energy so as to effectively overcome and neutralize it. Therefore, the bow which Lord Ram used to vanquish Ravana and his cruel demons was no ordinary bow; it was a special bow endowed with unique qualities and powers.

Now, let us read briefly about the origin of these two bows—the Kodand and the Sarang. In ancient scriptures the story goes that during the legendary War of the Gods in some ancient time in the past, said to be the Sata-yuga, the first of the 4-era period of one cycle of creation and destruction of this creation according to Hindu mythology, a huge castor-oil tree was produced. It measured approximately 25 feet. Out of the stem of this tree, Vishwakarma, the chief engineer of the gods, devised the following ‘bows’ when asked to do so by the gods: one bow of 9 feet length for Lord Vishnu which was called Sarang, one bow of 7 feet length for Lord Shiva which was called Pinak, one bow of 5 feet length for Lord Ram which was called Kodand (or Kodanda), one bow of 3 feet length for Arjun of the Pandava race, and it was called Gandiva, and the remaining part of the tree, measuring 1 foot, was used to make the flute of Lord Krishna which was called Vanshi.

Since Lord Ram was a visible manifestation in this physical world of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who has a cosmic form that is invisible, it follows that the form of the Supreme Lord as Lord Ram holding a bow was addressed by two

interchangeable names, viz. he was called ‘Kodand Ram’ because he held the Kodand bow especially made for him by Vishwakarma, while at the same time he was also called ‘Sarang Pani Ram’, i.e. Lord Ram who holds the Sarang bow of Lord Vishnu in his hand, as this Sarang bow was specifically made for Lord Vishnu.

To wit, the term ‘Kodand Ram’, or Lord Ram with the Kodand bow, refers to the human form of Lord Vishnu as Ram, while an occasional reference to the ‘Sarang bow’ is employed to remind the reader not to forget that Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince of Ayodhya, but the Supreme Lord Vishnu himself in that form.

In fact, the term ‘Kodand Ram’ is used to indicate how fierce the Lord would be for those who try to disrupt peace and order in the Lord’s creation. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91.}

This form of Lord Ram known as the ‘Kodand Ram’—i.e. Lord Ram with the Kodand bow—refers to the Lord’s divine form while he was on his way through the wild forests to eliminate the scourge of the demons living in Lanka and led by their cruel king Ravana. This form is worshipped especially in the south of India, i.e. through the territory where Lord Ram passed en-route to Lanka; this area covered the ancient region known as Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey race, and in modern age it is the region covered by the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The inhabitants of this geographical area mentioned herein above recognized this fact that their land had been made holy and pure and sanctified by Lord Ram in his individual capacity as the Supreme Being who is free from all attachments and delusions that are associated with Maya—because Sita, who represented the Lord’s ‘Maya’, did not accompany Lord Ram during this phase of Lord’s life; and so Lord Ram represented the absolutely pure and holy form of the Supreme Being.

During the period when he was alone and single in the forest, Lord Ram symbolized the Supreme Being, the Parmatma, in his purest and holiest form, a form that had no grossness or attachments that are normally associated with worldly existence. Indeed, the Lord known as ‘Kodand Ram’ was like a true ascetic, a hermit roaming in the forest; it was the Lord’s truly holy form. Besides this fact, he was on a divine mission on behalf of the gods and mother earth—which was to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons. Hence, the Kodand Ram is the form of Lord Ram where the Lord is getting ready to fulfill his divine mission of eliminating the tyranny of the demons—the mission for which the Supreme Being, Lord Vishnu, had come down to earth in the human form known as Lord Ram.

But should one forget that this form of Lord Ram is none else but Lord Vishnu himself in that form, and also to quell confusion and doubts about the Lord having two bows at the same time, something which seems impractical, it is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas that these two terms, i.e. the Kodand bow and the Sarang bow, are used synonymously and interchangeably when applied to the bow of Lord Ram at a point of time when he is stepping out on the battle-field to fight and deliver Ravana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 86.}

There are other instances also that show that the two forms of Lord Ram—i.e. the ‘Kodand Ram’ and the ‘Sarang Pani Ram’—are one and the same. So we see that while normally Lord Ram’s bow was referred to as the ‘Kodand bow’, but when the time came for the Lord to slay the two great demons, Kumbhakaran and Ravana, the term ‘Sarang bow’ is used for the Lord’s bow. This is to indicate that it was actually Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram who was fulfilling his words given to the gods and mother earth that he would himself eliminate the sinful demons. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 68 with

reference to Kumbhakaran; and (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86 with reference to Ravana.}

It is important to note at this juncture that Lord Ram has always held a 'bow' in his hand, so what was so special about him during the phase of his life after Sita's abduction and till her recovery at the end of the war of Lanka that he is especially honoured and worshipped by his devotees as a 'Kodand Ram'?

Well, the answer is simple and straight: this form of 'Lord Ram holding the Kodand bow' symbolizes the Lord's determination to punish those who are sinful and evil by nature, and to provide protection, solace and succour to all those who rely upon the Lord; it is indicative of the Lord's firm resolution not to allow evil and wild forces to have their way, and torment and cause trouble to those who are good, noble, righteous and pious.

While Lord Ram was passing through the kingdom of Kishkindha he was not accompanied by Sita, as she had already been stolen away by Ravana by this time. Sita represented 'Maya', the secret power of Brahm represented by Mother Nature's ability to create delusions and attachments to this world. With Sita by his side, Lord Ram was accompanied by this Maya; her sight would make him believe that he was a human being who had a wife named Sita. This interfered, no matter how subtly and silently, with the Lord's divine mandate to eliminate the scourge of the demons who were evil, sinful, pervert and tormentors of the world and its creatures, the primary purpose for which Lord Vishnu had come down to earth in Lord Ram's form. But when the Lord was free from this encumbrance of a wife accompanying him, he was also freed of its attendant delusions and attachments, becoming more conscious and diligent towards accomplishment of his real mission in the world.

Hence, once Lord Ram embarked on the final leg of his mission to eliminate the evil forces symbolized by the demons, and passed through the region of Kishkindha, he became famous as 'Kodand Ram', i.e. the Ram who holds the Kodand bow, ready to punish those who were vile, mischievous, evil, sinful and tormentors of other humble creatures of the Lord's creation.

In this form as Kodand Ram, he is also free from 'Maya', as Sita was not with him. The Lord is in the form of a wandering hermit, an ascetic, a sage walking through the forest towards his goal, towards his destination, which in the case of Lord Ram was to free the world from the horrors of the demons led by Ravana, to grant the unfortunate souls of the demons freedom from the cycle of birth and death, to help their souls leave their evil bodies and attain eternal liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation—all of which fits in perfectly with the concept of someone who is free from Maya, someone who is a true ascetic or hermit. It is because only such a person would be able to overcome and vanquish all the negativities, perversions, sins, vices and evils that are associated with this gross mortal world of material attractions, and at the same time aim to attain final freedom for his soul from the cycle of birth and death in which it had been hitherto trapped, to free his 'self', represented by his pure conscious Atma, from the fetters of his gross physical body, to help his Atma attain salvation and emancipation that would grant him eternal beatitude and bliss.

It was a form that was truer and more nearer to Lord Ram's primary and essential form as the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness that is represented by Lord Vishnu at the macrocosmic level of existence.

Hence, the 'Kodand' form of Lord Ram is holy, pure and divine; it is worthy of worship, adoration and devotion; it is an image of an illustrious sage, an ascetic or

a hermit who is free from delusions and worldly attachments, one who is focused on the holy mission of his life rather than being distracted by any of the effects of Maya.

Since Lord Ram traveled through the region of Kishkindha in his form known as ‘Kodand Ram’, he is worshipped and adored in this form in the southern regions of modern India, i.e. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, that cover the geographical area known as the ancient kingdom of Kishkindha.

Now, one pertinent query is this: On what occasions did Lord Ram employ the ‘Kodand bow’, and on which the ‘Sarang bow’?

The answer is this: When Lord Ram had to eliminate the senior demons, such as the demon king Ravana and his brother Kumbhakaran, the Lord had employed the Sarang bow, and he had used his normal bow known as the Kodand bow to eliminate the junior demons, such as demon commanders Khar, Dushan and Subahu, as well as the demon army. There is ample proof of this in Ram Charit Manas where the term ‘Sarang bow’ is used only when the Lord has stepped out to fight Kumbhakaran and Ravana*, while during the rest of the war a reference is made only to a ‘bow’, which obviously means the ‘Kodand bow’ as it was Lord Ram’s personal bow. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 68—this is reference to Lord Ram stepping out to fight Kumbhakaran; (ii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 86, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86, and Doha no. 96—this is reference to Lord Ram stepping out to slay Ravana.}

The other query is also important: How, when and from whom did Lord Ram get these two bows?

The answer is this: The Lord was given the ‘Kodand bow’ by sage Vishwamitra when he was accompanying the sage to his hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons, and the ‘Sarang bow’ was given to him by sage Parashuram during the ceremony of the Lord’s marriage with Sita at Janakpur.

Briefly, the story related to these two events is as follows:-

When Lord Ram had slayed the demoness Tadka who came to attack sage Vishwamitra, the sage realized the true nature of the Lord, because it was not possible to kill this giant demoness so easily. So in order to help Lord Ram to fulfill his mission of eliminating the demons and free the world of their terror, the sage gifted divine weapons to the Lord, and a bow is definitely an important part of a weapon system that was used in those times as it was the tool by which arrows could be shot by way of missiles that are launched to hit at the enemy. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209.}

The bow of Lord Vishnu, known as Sarang, on the other hand was handed over to Lord Ram by sage Parashuram at the venue of the Lord’s marriage ceremony in Janakpur. It so happened that sage Parashuram was very angry when Lord Ram had broken the old bow of Lord Shiva, known as Pinak, to fulfill the vow of king Janak, Sita’s father, that he would marry his daughter to anyone who could lift and break the bow. It was because sage Parashuram worshipped Lord Shiva, and he felt that breaking of the bow had insulted his deity. A heated argument followed, and inspite of all his threats and angry outbursts to punish Lord Ram the sage failed to even raise his arms against the Lord. This stunned Parashuram as he had a reputation of being merciless and unforgiving, and once he decided to punish someone, no one could dare to save his victim. So, the sage was mightily astonished at his inability to harm either Lord Ram or his younger brother Laxman. Surely, he thought when he calmed down a bit, that there must be more to Lord Ram than what meets the eye; he had a subtle feeling that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. To test his hunch, the sage gave the Lord the ‘bow of Lord Vishnu’, i.e. the Sarang

bow, and to his amazement he observed that this bow went on its own to Lord Ram, who received it easily. This miraculous event confirmed to sage Parashuram that Lord Ram was no one else but Lord Vishnu himself in this form. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

That said, let us now have a quick glance at the verses that refer to these two forms of the Lord's bow—the 'Kodand bow' and the 'Sarang bow'—as follows:

(a) कटितट परिकर कस्यो निषंगा । कर कोदंड कठिन सारंगा ॥ १० ॥

kaṭitaṭa parikara kasyō niṣaṅgā. kara kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina sārāṅgā. 10.

He (Lord Ram) fastened his quiver to a length of cloth tied around his waist, and held his formidable Kodand bow, also known as the legendary bow known as Sarang, in his hand (as he stepped on the battle-field to face the demon king Ravana and his ferocious demon army). (10)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 86—this is reference to Lord Ram stepping out to slay Ravana. Here is clearly meant that the two terms 'Sarang' and 'Kodand' refer to the same bow.]

(b) छं०. भए क्रुद्ध जुद्ध बिरुद्ध रघुपति त्रोन सायककसमसे । १ ।

कोदंड धुनि अति चंड सुनि मनुजाद सब मारुत ग्रसे ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

bha'ē krud'dha jud'dha birud'dha raghupati trōna sāyaka kasamasē. 1.
kōdaṇḍa dhuni ati caṇḍa suni manujāda saba māruta grasē. 2.

When Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram, the Lord of Raghu's line of great kings of Ayodhya) became highly enraged with the enemy in the battle-field (of Lanka), the arrows in his quiver became restless and vied with each other to shoot forth at the enemy, while the fierce and hair-raising formidable twang of the Lord's Kodand bow instilled so much terror in the man-eating demons that they were seized with horror and became mortally pale with fear.

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91. This verse shows how fierce Lord Ram would be in order to overcome evil and sinful creatures.]

(c) चौ०. कर सारंग साजि कटि भाथा । अरि दल दलन चले रघुनाथा ॥ १ ॥

प्रथम कीन्हि प्रभु धनुष टँकोरा । रिपु दल बधिर भयउ सुनि सोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kara sārāṅga sāji kaṭi bhāthā. ari dala dalana calē raghunāthā. 1.
prathama kīnhi prabhu dhanuṣa ṭaṁkōrā. ripu dala badhira bhaya'u suni sōrā.

2.

Arming himself with his famous bow known as ‘Sarang’ that he held in his hand, and a quiver full of arrows that was tied to his waist, Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram) went forward to tackle the enemy (Kumbhakaran) and his army. (1)

The Lord first twanged his mighty bow so loudly that it produced a thunderous sound which had the effect of deafening the enemy hordes. (2)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 68—this is reference to Lord Ram stepping out to fight Kumbhakaran.]

(d) छं०. सारंग कर सुंदर निषंग सिलीमुखाकर कटि कस्यो । १ ।

chanda.

sāraṅga kara sundara niṣaṅga silīmukhākara kaṭi kasyō. 1.

The Lord (Sri Ram) held the formidable Sarang bow in his hand, and he tied a quiver, with an inexhaustible stock of arrows, to a band of cloth wrapped around his waist. Both the bow and the quiver looked magnificent on the body of the Lord.

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86—this is reference to Lord Ram stepping out to fight with Ravana. He has invoked his ‘Sarang bow’.]

(e) दो०. सुर बानर देखे बिकल हँस्यो कोसलाधीस ।

सजि सारंग एक सर हते सकल दससीस ॥ ९६ ॥

dōhā.

sura bānara dēkhē bikala haṁsyō kōsalādhīsa.
saji sāraṅga ēka sara hatē sakala dasasīsa. 96.

[In the advanced stages of the epic war, Ravana unleashed his famed potentials of spreading terror and mayhem in his opponents, and uncorked the genie of his dreaded wrath upon them all, the monkey army on the ground as well as the gods who were witnessing the war and cheering the army of Lord Ram from their station in the sky. A fearful atmosphere of dread and horror spread in all the directions; Ravana employed his ability to create horrifying illusions to strike terror in the rank and file of his enemy by making it appear that there was not one but countless Ravanases who were full of wrath and vengeance running everywhere in the battle-field, all over the place, pouncing on the monkeys and bears on the ground, and chasing the gods in the sky, all simultaneously. This caused a massive stampede.]

When Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal, observed this alarming situation—that the monkeys on the ground and the gods in the sky were very agitated and panicky because of Ravana’s excessive aggressiveness and his use of tricks that created fearful illusions of countless Ravanases attacking them simultaneously from all the sides, spreading utter dread and terror in all directions—the Lord readied his Sarang bow

and shot one arrow which at once cut-off the illusion of there being so many Ravanaas attacking the monkeys and gods, providing instant relief to them all.

To wit, Lord Ram invoked his cosmic form of Lord Vishnu and used his Sarang bow to shoot an arrow that removed this illusion (of numerous Ravanaas attacking everyone from all sides instantaneously) with a snap. This dispelled the fear of everyone in an instant, as suddenly only one Ravana, the original demon king, was left on the battle-field, while all the illusionary Ravanaas vanished from sight. This sudden change in the situation for good led both the monkey and bear warriors on the battle-field and the gods in heaven rejoice and celebrate. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 96.}

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NOTE: Till now we have read that Lord Ram has crossed the ocean and landed on the soil of Lanka with his formidable and invincible army of brave and valiant monkeys and bears. The Lord had pitched his camp on Mt. Subel.

The next part of this fabulous Story is continued below:

Part 4

Introduction:

In Part 4 of this Book, we read about the following episodes:-

(A) Prelude to the Sacking of Lanka: This is divided into two Chapters as follows—

Chapter 12: Ravana's wife Mandodari's many attempts to avoid the war by trying to make her husband abandon his stubbornness, heed sane advice and come to terms with reality. This Chapter further has the following Sections—

- Section 11.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 11.2 Adhyatma Ramayan
- Section 11.3 Geetawali Ramayan
- Section 11.4 Kavitawali Ramayan

Chapter 13: War Parleys in both the camps of Lord Ram and Ravana; Lord Ram sends Angad as an Emissary of Peace to avoid the Destructive War. This Chapter has the following Sections—

- Section 12.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 12.2 Adhyatma Ramayan
- Section 12.3 Geetawali Ramayan
- Section 12.4 Kavitawali Ramayan

(B) The War Begins: The Attack by Lord Ram's Forces and the Horrors of War; The Sack of Lanka; Death of Kumbhakaran and Meghanad; Battle with Ravana and His Death. These episodes are narrated in the following five Chapters—

Chapter 14: The Attack by Lord Ram's Forces; The Horrifying and Blood-Curdling War between the Demons and the Army of Monkeys and Bears; The Sack of Lanka and the Ravages of War. This Chapter has the following Sections—

- Section 14.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 14.2 Adhyatma Ramayan
- Section 14.3 Geetawali Ramayan
- Section 14.4 Kavitawali Ramayan

Chapter 15: Laxman's fainting during the battle. This Chapter has the following Sections—

- Section 14.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 14.2 Adhyatma Ramayan
- Section 14.3 Geetawali Ramayan
- Section 14.4 Kavitawali Ramayan

Chapter 16: Battle with Kumbhakaran and His Death. This Chapter has the following Sections—

- Section 16.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 16.2 Adhyatma Ramayan

Chapter 17: Battle with Meghnad and His Death. This Chapter has the following Sections—

- Section 17.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 17.2 Adhyatma Ramayan

Chapter 18: The Final Battle with Ravana and His Death. This Chapter has the following Sections—

- Section 18.1 Ram Charit Manas
- Section 18.2 Adhyatma Ramayan

Now, let us commence reading.

Prelude to the Sacking of Lanka

Chapter 12

Ravana's wife Mandodari's many attempts to avoid the war by trying to make her husband abandon his stubbornness, heed sane advice and come to terms with reality.

Ravana's faithful wife named Mandodari was totally confounded and aghast at her husband's negative attitude, his stubbornness and his reckless actions. Why, she wondered, was he being so arrogant and unrelenting inspite of being warned repeatedly about the perils and the disastrous consequences of his wildness? Why can't he read the so-called writing on the wall symbolized by so many is clear and unambiguous signs which all point to complete ruin and calamitous end that stares in his face like the dark clouds of dooms-day destruction looming menacingly on the horizon of Lanka? Couldn't he see what is certainly coming after Hanuman had burnt the city of Lanka right under his nose? Why doesn't he realize the gravity of the situation and comes to term with reality?

Therefore, Mandodari berated Ravana and made several attempts to try to persuade him to end his bellicose behaviour and hostility towards Lord Ram, and instead make peace with him. She tried her best to dissuade him from being instrumental in the annihilation of the demon race.

She had made four attempts in all. The first such attempt was made after Hanuman had burned Lanka and killed Akshayakumar (pronounced as "Akshay Kumar") with his army. We have already read it in our Book in the previous Chapter no. 9, section no. 9.1. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37.}

Her other three attempts to diffuse the situation and avoid the bloody war were made after Lord Ram and his formidable army of ferocious monkey and bear warriors have finally landed on the soil of Lanka. The first of these three attempts was made immediately after this news arrived. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.}

The second such attempt was made soon thereafter, after Ravana's crown and other paraphernalia of kinghood of the demon race were made to fall by an arrow shot by Lord Ram from his camp on Mt. Subel. The Lord had shot them to warn Ravana that it was still time to make amends. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

The third and the final attempt by Mandodari was after Lord Ram's emissary Angad had rebuked and humiliated Ravana in full court. Angad too had tried his best to persuade Ravana to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid a calamitous war, but the demon king wouldn't listen. After Angad had left, warning Ravana that Death seems to be hungry and wished to devour him which seems to be the apparent reason why he is not listening to anybody, Mandodari was filled with consternation, felt sore affright, and was extremely worried about the fate of her husband. So she made another

attempt to persuade Ravana to abandon his madness and make peace with Lord Ram by sending his wife Sita back to him to end the confrontation. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35 (b)—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38.}

But Mandodari's all attempts failed. She finally realized that it was the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny that the end of her husband had finally arrived, and so therefore it was futile to make him change his mind. So she gave up.

In the following Section nos. 12.1.1—12.1.3 we shall read how Mandodari tried to persuade Ravana to end his confrontational attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him on three occasions.

Even a causal reading of these verses would make it abundantly clear that Mandodari had lavishly praised Lord Ram in front of her husband. To praise someone who is her husband's enemy, and that too on her husband's face without fearing for her life, and without inviting severe punishment for her audacity to do so, shows how much Ravana loved her and how much secretly he knew that she was speaking the truth. He appreciated this quality in her—that she could muster courage to tell him what was in his best of interests even if the truth was unpalatable and unpleasant to hear for him. An ordinary husband would have taken his wife to severe task for praising another person before him, but not Ravana. It once again proves that though on the outside Ravana appeared to be a wild and an intolerant person, but internally he was very compromising and understanding.

He knew that his life had been spent in wickedness, so if a chance came by which his soul could be freed from his evil body and attain deliverance he must grab it with both hands. And this chance has now come, for now he would be killed by Lord Ram whom he had rightly guessed to be an incarnation of the Supreme Being. So he determined in his heart and mind that he would not budge an inch from his determination to get killed by Lord Ram. Say, what more honourable death can a brave warrior have than to die in the battle-field without showing his back to his enemy? Why then should Ravana surrender?

The conversation between Mandodari and Ravana can be interpreted in another way also. Mandodari espouses the path of Bhakti (devotion); this is the reason why she insists her husband Ravana to surrender before Lord Ram, whom she knows to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being, and worship the Lord. She is of the view that by doing this her husband, who has led a life so pervert and full of sinfulness that all chances of him ever finding rest for his soul are beyond his reach, would at last now be easily able to attain eternal peace and happiness by surrendering to Lord Ram and worshipping him. This simple method would enable him to find deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself and his soul. He ought to be thankful to Lord Ram that he has taken the trouble to come to his very doorstep to provide him an opportunity to find beatitude and felicity for his soul. This in essence is Mandodari's view.

Ravana too knows fully well that Lord Ram is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and surely not a human being. He is of the view that the only way his soul—which is trapped inside his sinful body of a demon, a body which has become so thick and hardened with layers and layers of accumulated sins, pervert practices and evil deeds done over a long period of time that it has made very hard for his soul to break free from inside it—can find its liberation and deliverance only when this body is killed, or should we say it is ruptured or slit into two or perforated by being cut or pierced by Lord Ram's arrows. When that happens, the soul would be able to move out of the body, and escape from the trap to find its freedom.

In this scenario, his soul, better known as the Atma which is pure consciousness and a living being's 'true self', would be able to find eternity by merging with the supreme Soul or the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma which is represented by Lord Ram. Ravana's wishes were fulfilled because at the time of death his Atma emerged from his body, which was perforated by a hail of arrows shot by Lord Ram, and entered the holy body of the Lord, symbolizing the merger of the individual's soul, a person's Atma, with the cosmic Soul or the supreme Atma that is known as the 'Parmatma' represented by Lord Ram. This is the ultimate exalted destiny of the Atma, a destiny known as 'Moksha', as it grants eternity and beatitude to the Atma which is henceforth freed from the cycle of transmigration.

So in brief we can say that Ravana's approach was based on 'Gyan', a path which implies truthful knowledge and enlightenment that comes with a thorough understanding of the philosophy of the Upanishads and their metaphysical teachings regarding an Atma and what its ultimate destiny is, what true liberation and deliverance implies, and how a soul can find its eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity.

To wit, whereas Mandodari prefers the path of 'Bhakti', Ravana likes to follow the path of 'Gyan'.

Section 12.1: Ram Charit Manas

This Section no. 12.1 is divided into three Sub-sections to narrate Mandodari's pleadings with Ravana:

(i) Sub-section 12.1.1 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.

(ii) Sub-section 12.1.2 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

(iii) Sub-section 12.1.3 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35 (b)—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38.

(i) Sub-section 12.1.1 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8:-

चौ०. निज बिकलता बिचारि बहोरी । बिहँसि गयउ गृह करि भय भोरी ॥ १ ॥

मंदोदरीं सुन्यो प्रभु आयो । कौतुकीं पाथोधि बंधायो ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nija bikalatā bicāri bahōrī. bihañsi gaya'u gṛha kari bhaya bhōrī. 1.
mandōdarīm sun'yō prabhu āyō. kautukahīm pāthōdhi bañdhāyō. 2.

[We have read earlier, at the end of Chapter 10, section 10.1.2, that Ravana was utterly confounded and extremely worried when he came to know of Lord Ram landing on the soil of Lanka with his huge and formidable army of brave and fearless monkey-and-bear warriors. This news took him by surprise as he had not dreamt about it even in his wildest of dreams that it was ever possible for anyone to cross the mighty ocean.

As his secret fear of annihilation and complete destruction reared its ghostly and dreaded head inside his heart, leaving Ravana shaken to the core, he decided to retire from the court to take a break to recover from this initial shock. So he went to his royal palace to regain his composure. There he was confronted by his wife Mandodari who was equally shaken and worried. She had taken a decision that she would try her level best to make her husband see reason and come to terms with ground realities, instead of dreaming of living in a fool's paradise where everything was honey and sweet. All was not lost till this point of time, and now there was still a chance of controlling the damage without much further loss. Though time was running out but still it was not too late.

Therefore, when Ravana entered his royal chamber to recover his wits and get some time to reflect, Mandodari approached him with an urgent appeal to abandon a confrontational attitude with Lord Ram as there was no match between the Lord and her husband Ravana. To engage in a destructive war that loomed on the horizon was not at all justified on the part of her husband, especially when the fault was not of Lord Ram but entirely of Ravana himself. She advised her husband to return Sita to her husband, Lord Ram, as this simple action of his would not only save the entire demon clan from annihilation but would give him immense good fame as well.

But unfortunately, the fiat of Fate and the writ of Destiny wished something different for the demon race, and so Ravana, under the influence of these two powerful forces of creation, was so much deluded and made so stubborn that he refused to relent and budge from his position.]

When Ravana felt that he was feeling very restless, he dismissed the court, smiled as if to dispel his worries (and hide his embarrassment), and then retired to his palace.
(1)

Meanwhile, Mandodari (Ravana's wife) heard the news¹ that Lord Ram has finally arrived by tying or bridging the ocean as it was a mere sport for him. [To wit, Lord Ram had no difficulty in getting a bridge across the ocean constructed. It was almost like a sporting activity for him, requiring no great effort.] (2)

[Note—¹How did Mandodari hear the news? Well, the queens had their own loyal spies and confidantes who would keep her updated about the goings-on in the kingdom. Mandodari too had her own network of faithful spies and messengers who would keep her informed of all the developments in and around Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36.]

कर गहि पतिहि भवन निज आनी । बोली परम मनोहर बानी ॥ ३ ॥

चरन नाइ सिरु अंचलु रोपा । सुनहु बचन पिय परिहरि कोपा ॥ ४ ॥

kara gahi patihi bhavana nija ānī. bōlī parama manōhara bānī. 3.
carana nā'i siru āncalu rōpā. sunahu bacana piya parihari kōpā. 4.

She received her husband at the gate of the palace, and holding his hands she brought him inside her own palace, speaking to him sweetly and in a polite way. (3)

Once inside, she respectfully bowed her head at his feet, and then spreading the end of her garment before him in a symbolic gesture of submission and as a token of her expecting him to fulfill her wishes, she pleaded, 'My dear husband! Please listen to my words without getting angry at me. [My Lord, abandon your anger and listen to what I have to say. It is for your own good, as well as mine.] (4)

नाथ बयरु कीजे ताही सों । बुधि बल सकिअ जीति जाही सों ॥ ५ ॥
तुम्हहि रघुपतिहि अंतर कैसा । खलु खद्योत दिनकरहि जैसा ॥ ६ ॥

nātha bayaru kījē tāhī sōṁ. budhi bala saki'a jīti jāhī sōṁ. 5.
tumhahi raghupatihi antara kaisā. khalu khadyōta dinakarahi jaisā. 6.

Oh Lord, one should be hostile towards and make an enemy with only such a person with whom one is very sure to win by the virtue of one's superior intellect as well as far better strength and abilities¹. (5)

Verily, the difference between you and Raghupati (Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya) is akin to the difference between a glow-worm and the sun². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, it is an established maxim that one should be sure of his own strength and abilities, of one's own strengths and weaknesses before creating animosity with another person. Otherwise, it is a stupid thing for one to create hostility with someone who may later on prove to be a hard nut to crack and more than a match for the former. A careless action of dare devilry often leads to an embarrassing situation and loss of face, if not outright defeat and loss of whatever prestige and dignity that one possesses.

Two virtues are mentioned by Mandodari here—'intellect or intelligence' and 'strength and power'. These two qualities are needed to vanquish one's opponent and win a war. An intelligent and wise commander who has a strong and powerful army can easily out-manoeuvre the enemy and defeat him even if the latter is superior in terms of number of soldiers.

These qualities—of intelligence and wisdom on the one hand, and strength, power, skill and ability on the other hand—are essential to achieve success in an endeavour. Sursa, the mother of the serpents, who was sent by the gods to test Hanuman on these parameters while he was on his way to Lanka to search for Sita, also declared that since Hanuman did have these virtues he would definitely succeed in his mission—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 2.

Later on when Hanuman met Sita and wished to eat fruits from the trees in the Ashok garden because he was feeling very hungry, Sita too let him do so because she

decided he is highly intelligent and strong enough to cope with any eventuality and protect himself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 17.

²Here, Mandodari compares Lord Ram to the bright sun and her husband Ravana to the glow-worm. Just like the dim light of the glow-worm fades in comparison to the brilliant light of the sun, all the strength, powers, glories and virtues of Ravana taken together are dimmed when weighed against those of Lord Ram.

It ought to be noted here that the same analogy of a glow-worm vis-à-vis the sun to compare Ravana with Lord Ram was used by Sita when she rebuked the demon king for his attempt to force her to submission—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 9. It should also be noted that at that time Ravana had become furious with Sita, but when Mandodari now chides him with the same example he remained restrained. It is because he loved Mandodari dearly and knew that what she was saying was out of her concern for his own safety, while in the case of Sita it was a rebuke from a captive and an enemy's wife, which was unacceptable.

Another reason is that here Ravana and Mandodari are alone, while when he was talking to Sita in the Ashok grove there were so many demons and demonesses in attendance, a situation which made him furious because he felt that he was being insulted publicly in front of his own subordinates.]

अतिबल मधु कैटभ जेहिं मारे । महाबीर दितिसुत संघारे ॥ ७ ॥

जेहिं बलि बाँधि सहसभुज मारा । सोइ अवतरेउ हरन महि भारा ॥ ८ ॥

atibala madhu kaitabha jēhim mārē. mahābīra ditisuta saṅghārē. 7.
jēhim bali bāṁdhi sahasabhuja mārā. sō'i avatarē'u harana mahi bhārā. 8.

He (Lord Ram in his primary form as Lord Vishnu, the 2nd of the Trinity Gods and the protector and sustainer of creation; the cosmic form of the Supreme Being) is the one who had slayed the most powerful and strong demons named Madhu and Kaitav¹, as well as the great warriors who were the sons of Diti (i.e. the two demon brothers Hiranyakashipu² and Hiranyaksha³). (7)

He who had tied the legendary king of demons named Bali⁴, and had slayed Sahastrabahu⁵, he is the Lord who has now manifested himself as Lord Ram.

[To wit, my dear husband, be wary of Lord Ram. He is the same Lord who had killed so many powerful demons as listed here, demons who had considered themselves virtually invincible and un-conquerable during their time. They were all like you, may be stronger and more powerful. But they stood no chance against Lord Vishnu. So mind you—there is an alarm bell ringing and you ought to wake up before it's too late for you.] (8)

[Note—¹Madhu and Kaitav—According to the legendary story as narrated in Markandey Puran, the Vedas had been stolen by two demons named Madhu and Kaitav who had hidden them in the eastern ocean. Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of Hayagriva to kill them and restore the Vedas.

The legend about the birth of these two demons Madhu and Kaitav is that at the time Brahma the creator emerged atop a thousand-petal lotus that sprouted from

the navel of Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush, two drops of water symbolising the two Gunas (qualities) of Raja and Tama (the medium and the lowest type of qualities) were present on one of the petals on which Brahma sat. Madhu was born from the drop of Raja Guna, and Kaitav from the drop of water representing Tama Guna.

Once they went up to the heaven and saw the Vedas in all their glorious form placed alongside Brahma who was engaged in the process of creation. The duo immediately stole the Vedas and hid them under the water of the eastern ocean. Brahma was confounded and requested Lord Vishnu to retrieve them as the Vedas were the former's eyes as they contained all the knowledge needed for all the aspects of creation. So Vishnu appeared as a deity with a head of a horse—i.e. as Hayagriva. The heaven was his head, the rays of the Sun were his glistening hairs, the sky and the underworld were his ears, the earth was his forehead, the river Ganges and Saraswati were the two halves of his chest, the oceans were his thighs, the Sun and the Moon were his eyes, dusk was his nostril, OM was his ornament, electric was his tongue, the Pittars (Spirits of dead ancestors) were his teeth, the Brahma Loka was his lip, and Kalratri (the night of the doomsday) was his neck.

The Lord entered the ocean and went to the ocean bed, the nether world called the 'Patal Loka'. There, he began to neigh melodiously, singing the hymns of the Sam Veda. The two demons were so enchanted by this singing that they came out to hear it. Lord Hayagriva got an opportunity and he immediately took the Vedas and gave them to Brahma. After their restoration, he went back to the ocean and lived there for some time.

When the demons reached the place from where they had heard the sweet singing emanating, they found no one. So they got suspicious and rushed back to where they had concealed the Vedas to find them missing. Then they began frantically to search for the Vedas as well as the miscreant who removed the scriptures from the hiding place. They reached the surface of the ocean and found Lord Vishnu peacefully reclined on the bedstead of the celestial serpent named Sheshnath. They assumed that certainly the Lord was the one who had taken away the Vedas. They shouted and caused so much raucous that Lord Vishnu woke up from his cosmic sleep, and then there ensued a battle between the Lord and the demons which lasted for five thousand years.

Pleased by their valour and ardour, Vishnu asked them to request for a grant of a boon. The haughty demons retorted and sneered at the Lord, asking the latter to ask for a boon instead. The Lord asked that they be killed at his hands. [Markandey Puran, 81/74.] Taken aback, the demons said that they were also entitled for a boon as promised by the Lord himself. The Lord granted them permission to ask, and they requested that they be killed at a place where the earth was not submerged in water. [Markandey Puran, 81/76.] Vishnu immediately spread his thighs on the surface of the ocean, and deluded by the Lord's Maya the demons thought that dry earth has emerged from the ocean. Aside of this, they also found in this happening a chance of their own salvation and so willingly put their heads on it. Vishnu invoked his Sudarshan Chakra (the sharp weapon of Vishnu which is like a circular saw) to chop off their heads. This episode is described in detail in the Markandey Puran, Chapter 81.

Perhaps this episode describes how the continents and islands came into being during the process of creation.

A slight variant of the above narration is available in the Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto no. 203. According to it, the demons Madhu and Kaitav went to the Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu was reclining on the

coiled body of Seshnath, some time after Brahma, the creator of the physical world and the Vedas, was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from Lord Vishnu's navel. These two demons began to terrorize Brahma. The scared Brahma shook the stem of the lotus violently, and this stirred up Lord Vishnu from his sleep. The Lord saw the two great demons and was very impressed by them and their valour. Lord Vishnu asked the two demons to request for a boon which will be granted to them. The two demons were very haughty, and they sneered at Vishnu, saying that the latter should ask for a boon instead. They will grant Vishnu anything he wants.

Vishnu was extremely annoyed and taken aback at their temerity and arrogance. So he said that he wished to kill them—this is the boon he wants to be granted. The two demons replied that though they do not like giving this boon as this means their death, but they are true to their words, so Lord Vishnu could go ahead and kill them. But since Vishnu had asked them for a boon first, they also had a right to be granted what they wished. The first boon they wanted to be granted to them was that must die at a place where there is no water, and the second boon was that they wished to become sons of the Lord. So Lord Vishnu spread his thighs on which he placed the two demons and cut off their heads with his circular weapon known as the Sudarshan Chakra.

According to the version in *Devi Bhagwat*, 1/4/9, these two demons were killed at the intervention of goddess Mahakali, the divine Mother and the cosmic force that brings an end to this creation. She was invoked by Brahma when the demons began terrorizing him. She woke Vishnu from his deep sleep of meditation, and when even Vishnu couldn't kill these demons after a vicious battle, the goddess Mahakali used her powers of delusions to help Vishnu slay them.

There is another demon by the name of Madhu. He was himself the son of demoness Lolaa, and the father of the demon Lavanaasur. This Madhu was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and had obtained a powerful Trident from the Lord with the condition that it would not be used to attack the gods or harm (injure and kill) anybody in this world. He built a city named Madhupura and ruled from there. His queen was called Khumbhinasi.

When his son Lavanaasur began transgressing the laws of Dharma (righteous conduct), he became extremely disgusted so much so that he went away to do Tapa (austerities and penances). After his going away, Lavanaasur became very cruel and tyrannical. Ultimately, he was killed by Shatrughan, the younger brother of Lord Ram.

²Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of 'Narsingh or Nirsingh' (half-lion and half-man) to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. After having killed the demon, Nrsingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrsingh. [Refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 8.] Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrsingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrsingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Tulsidas has narrated this incident in his book "Kavitawali", Uttar Kand, verse no. 128 which says—

“The demon Hiranyakashipu drew his sword to kill Prahalad (his son), but though the former had no mercy in his heart, the latter did not run away seeing his father who resembled the terrible God of death in a personified form. And when he challenged Prahalad saying, ‘Tell me where your Ram is?’ The son replied, ‘Everywhere!’ At this, the father asked him, ‘Is he present in this stone pillar as well?’ Then Prahalad replied, ‘Yes, sure!’.

Hearing his earnest conviction and urgent call, Lord Narsingh manifested immediately, destroyed Prahalad’s enemy (his father), and became ferociously angry. Then, it was only after Prahalad prayed to him that he calmed down.

³Hiranyaksha—He was slayed by Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as the Boar. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

⁴The demon king Bali— The story of king Bali appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 8/15-23. It relates to the Vaaman (dwarf mendicant) incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. Bali was a grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh (half men and half lion) earlier.

King Bali was very righteous and powerful; he chased away Indra, the promiscuous and lustful king of Gods, from the throne of heaven, and conquered it. He performed a thousand Ashwamedha Yagya (horse sacrifice) during the course of which he had conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, of his heavenly powers. Aditi, the mother of Gods, was peeved, and she requested her husband, sage Kashyap, to find a way out. Kashyap advised her to pray to Lord Vishnu. Aditi did severe penance for twelve days at the end of which Vishnu appeared before her and asked how he could help her. When Aditi told him the problem, Vishnu promised that he will take birth as her son in the form of a ‘Vaaman’ (a dwarf Brahmin) and retrieve the earth and the kingdom of heaven from Bali’s dominion.

Once he heard that king Bali was performing a great fire sacrifice, something Bali used to do routinely, and during which he had declared that he will give anything asked for, again something for which he was renowned. This religious sacrifice was being conducted on the banks of river Narmada. Seizing this opportunity, Vishnu in the form of a Vaaman approached Bali who welcomed him and paid his due respects. Then Bali asked Vaaman to ask for some gift or donation as this was the traditional practice during such great religious sacrifices. Vaaman was waiting for this chance. First he made Bali repeat his vows in public, and then asked for land measuring his three steps.

Bali was dumbfounded—he wondered at the inconsequential dimension of the land covered by three tiny steps of this dwarf! Bali requested Vishnu to ask for something more, but Vishnu was adamant. Bali’s priest, sage Shukracharya, knew that this dwarf was no one else but Vishnu, and so he tried to persuade Bali to abstain from making such commitment off-hand, because he will lose his entire kingdom. But Bali refused, saying that being the grandson of Prahalad, he cannot rescind on his

words that he will give this Brahmin dwarf whatever he asks, even if it means sufferance.

Shukracharya was annoyed at this disobedience, but Vishnu was extremely pleased, and the Lord decided that after fulfilling the promise made to the Gods he will instantly reward Bali in ample terms, and will himself serve him! What a wonderful grace Vishnu shows.

So it happened that Vishnu, in the form of Vaaman, assumed a colossal form of cosmic proportions. The Lord measured the entire earth that Bali ruled in his first step. In the second step Vishnu measured the whole heaven. Nothing was left for the third step—so Bali offered his head! Vishnu was extremely pleased, and being the Lord of the world, he decided that since Bali has offered his own self to him like a faithful devotee, he will fully reward him. Hence, Vishnu blessed Bali that he will go down in history as the greatest donor and righteous of all times, that he will become Indra, the king of Gods, and rule over the heavens during the celestial era known as Saawarni Manvantar, that till that time he shall become the king of the nether world where demons would live, and to add icing to the cake the Lord declared that he himself will become his gatekeeper, and anybody who dared oppose him would be punished by the Lord himself!

⁵Sahasbahu— The story of ‘Sahastra-baahu’ in brief is as follows—There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’. He was the son of king Kritvirya whose kingdom was known as Anup; its capital city was known as Maahismati and it was situated on the southern bank of river Narmada.

In his early life he was a very righteous and conscientious person, a man of upright thoughts and noble conduct. After the death of his father when the court ministers wished to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom, he refused, saying: ‘Kingdom leads a king to hell if he cannot live upto the expectations of his subjects and rule according to the principles of Dharma (righteousness and probity). The main source of income of a king is ‘tax collected from his subjects’, but if this tax is collected in an improper way, and if it is not utilized for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma which say that the main use of state revenue is to ensure that traders are given all facilities and protection for carrying out legitimate trade, are not looted by thieves, the subjects of the kingdom are given due protection and their interests are always kept ahead of everything else, and so on and so forth. So unless I acquire such powers and abilities by doing Tapa (penance), I will not accept the throne.’

When Sahastrabahu said this, the great sage Garg advised him that if he indeed wishes to do Tapa and acquire mytical powers to rule the vast kingdom in accordance to Dharma then he should go and serve Lord Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Dattatreya lived in a cave of Mt. SahyaParvat and did Tapa there (Markandeya Puran, Canto 18). So, Sahastrabahu went to Lord Dattatreya and began serving him diligently for a long period of ten thousand years.

According to Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12, when Dattatreya was pleased with his service and austerities, he granted him four boons: (i) First, the king asked for one thousand arms. (ii) Second, he wished that no one in his kingdom would even dare to think in an unrighteous and sinful way. (iii) Third, he wanted to conquer the whole earth and rule over it. (iv) Fourth, that if he has to die then it must be in the battle-field at the hands of a warrior who is superior to him in every way.

According to Markandey Puran, Canto 18, verse nos. 14-18, the king was granted ten boons as follows: (i) The powers and authority to rule over his subjects without acquiring sins. (ii) The ability to know the thoughts of others. (iii) No one should be able to face in the battle-field (i.e. he should become invincible). (iv) During a war he should have a thousand arms so as to fight his opponent with all of them at once. [This is also mentioned in Harivansha Puran, Canto 33, verse no. 14.] (v) He should have unhindered access to all places in the sky, water, earth, mountains and the nether world. (vi) If he has to die then it should be at the hands of someone stronger than him. (vii) If by chance he goes astray and falls on the wrong path, then he must have a chance to get good advice and company of saintly persons (i.e. he must be given an opportunity to mend his ways). (viii) He must have illustrious persons as his guests so that he can serve them and get their blessings. (ix) His wealth should never diminish even after liberal charities and giving of alms regularly; there should be no shortage of wealth in his kingdom. (x) The virtue of Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God) should be firm and perpetual in him.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 115, verse no. 12, it is said that by the grace of Dattatreya the king acquired an air-plane made of gold; that he ruled over the entire earth; and that no one could stop his chariot. He was a great Emperor who conquered the whole world and made liberal charities. He is also regarded as a great scholar of Tantra Shastra.

He was so powerful and mighty that when he bathed in the ocean and thrashed it with his thousand arms, he could turn the tide backwards. He would splash the water so heavily that marine creatures were tossed into the air like ninepins. [Brahm-Vaivarta Puran, Ganesh Khand, Canto 23-27.]

But the Laws of Creation are such that every good thing has to come to an end one day; nothing is eternal and permanent in this mortal gross world. This also applied to Sahastrabahu. As time passed, he became extremely haughty and cruel. He started subjugating even the Gods so as to remove all challenges to his authority and power. It is said that he ruled for eighty-five thousand years before he was killed by sage Parashuram.

Once he was asked by the Fire God for alms, and the noble king could not refuse. The Fire God used this grant to burn everything and cause havoc everywhere, because he was certain that Sahastrabahu would not stop him. During this burning spree, the Fire destroyed the hermitage of sage Aapava (who was later on known as sage Vasistha according to Brahm Puran during its description of the race of Yayaati). The sage cursed king Sahastrabahu that his arms, relying upon whose strength the Fire God had destroyed his hermitage and was wreaking havoc on earth, would be cut by sage Parashuram. [Refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 49, verse nos. 35-45; and Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12.]

One day, he was wandering along the shore of the ocean and out of his pride and haughtiness he covered it with thousands of arrows. The Ocean assumed a form and appeared before him to plead that he stop showering arrows into the water as all the marine creatures that live in the water would die. Sahastrabahu accepted the prayer but asked the Ocean to tell him about someone who could face him in battle, as he was itching for a face-off with anyone who could claim to be stronger than him as he wished to conquer the opponent and become an unchallenged warrior in this world. The Ocean told him to go sage Jamdagni whose son Parashuram would be fit opponent for him and would welcome him in battle. [Refer: Mahabharat, Ashwamegh Parva, Canto 29.]

Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. [This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Ashwamegha Parva, Canto 29.]

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

The story of Sahastrabahu and how Ravana, the king of the demon race who ruled in Lanka, was humiliated by him, is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahastrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in

forging a friendship between the two. This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.]

तासु बिरोध न कीजिअ नाथा । काल करम जिव जाकें हाथा ॥ ९ ॥

tāsu birōdha na kīji'a nāthā. kāla karama jiva jākēm hāthā. 9.

Oh Lord. It is not wise to oppose him whose hands command the destiny of the world by way of regulating the factors of time and death, the deeds done by all, and the fate of all living beings.

[To wit, Lord Ram is the Supreme Lord under whose command lie Kaal (time, death), Karma (deeds) and Jiva (the living being)¹.] (9)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 25 where we read that Marich too has advised Ravana the same thing; and once again in (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27 where Angad, Lord Ram's emissary, tells Ravana a similar thing.

'Kaal' or time is a factor that determines the lifespan of all things, animate and inanimate. 'Kaal' is also the name of the god of death who devours everything in creation.

'Karma' or the deed done by a living being is a factor that determines his fate.

'Jiva' or the living being, the creature, is under the control of both the Kaal and Karma, i.e. his lifespan is fixed by the factor of time, and his fate is determined by the deeds done by him.

And the Supreme Being controls all of them. Lord Ram is this Supreme Being.]

दो०. रामहि सौंषि जानकी नाइ कमल पद माथ ।

सुत कहूँ राज समर्पि बन जाइ भजिअ रघुनाथ ॥ ६ ॥

dōhā.

rāmahi saumpi jānakī nā'i kamala pada mātha.

suta kahūṁ rāja samarpi bana jā'i bhaji'a raghunātha. 6.

I advise you to give Janki (Sita) back to Lord Ram¹, and then after bowing reverentially at his lotus-like holy feet you should hand over the reins of the kingdom to your son (Meghnad) and head to the forest to (meditate and) worship Lord Raghunath (the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram). (Doha no. 6)

[Note—¹Earlier, the same advice was given to Ravana by Vibhishan, Malyawant and Shuk—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no 39 (a); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 40; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 57.

In both these cases, Ravana had become exceedingly wrathful. But now in the case of Mandodari, though he did not like her advice, yet he did not react so vehemently as he had done with Vibhishan and Malyawant.]

चौ०. नाथ दीनदयाल रघुराई । बाघउ सनमुख गाँ न खाई ॥ १ ॥
 चाहिअ करन सो सब करि बीते । तुम्ह सुर असुर चराचर जीते ॥ २ ॥
 संत कहहिं असि नीति दसानन । चौथेंपन जाइहि नृप कानन ॥ ३ ॥
 तासु भजनु कीजिअ तहँ भर्ता । जो कर्ता पालक संहर्ता ॥ ४ ॥
 caupāī.

nātha dīnadayāla raghurāī. bāgha'u sanamukha ga'ēṁ na khāī. 1.
 cāhi'a karana sō saba kari bītē. tumha sura asura carācara jītē. 2.
 santa kahahim̐ asi nīti dasānana. cauthēmpana jā'ihi nṛpa kānana. 3.
 tāsu bhajanu kīji'a tahaṁ bhartā. jō kartā pālaka sanhartā. 4.

My Lord; Raghurai (Lord Ram) is exceedingly kind, gracious, compassionate and merciful towards those who are humble, downtrodden and devoid of any resources (dīnadayāla).

The Lord has such stupendous mystical powers and majesty that if a tiger goes near him it will not be able to devour the Lord¹. (1)

You have done whatever you had wished to do and accomplish in your life. You have vanquished the gods and the demons; you have conquered the entire creation that consists of animate creatures and inanimate things. [So therefore, what more is left for you to desire? All your wishes of acquiring fame and glory have already been fulfilled.] (2)

Oh Ravana (“dasānana”; the ten-headed one)! Saints have laid down a principle that during the last quarter of a king’s life (“cauthēmpana”; the latter part of an ordinary person’s life when one crosses the age of 75 years), he ought to go to the forest. (3)

There (in the forest), he (the king) should worship the Lord God who the creator, the sustainer and the protector, as well as the concluder of this creation².

[To wit, in ripe old age a wise king should hand over the reins of his kingdom to his chosen and competent heir, and proceed to the forest by detaching himself from all worldly affairs. Once in the forest, he should do meditation and penances, undertake penitence for past sins, and generally prepare his soul for exiting this mundane gross world to attain final peace and rest. This phase of life has two divisions—(a) Vaanprastha Ashram, and (b) Sanyas Ashram.]³ (4)

[Note—¹This part of the verse has another interpretation though. It can also be read as follows: “Even a tiger, which is by nature a most ferocious animal, would not like to devour any creature if the latter goes and humbly submits itself before it, seeking protection and mercy.”

What Mandodari intends to say is this: If her husband Ravana heeds her advice and goes to make peace with Lord Ram, then she is absolutely sure that though he had committed such a grave error and a sinful deed as abducting Sita, the wife of the Lord, yet the Lord will certainly forgive him because it is his nature to forgive the

sinful and fallen creature if they are ready to repent, undertake penitence, and make a determination to change their bad nature.

She cites the example of a tiger which feels reluctant to kill another creature if the latter pleads before the former to spare its life. Well, it is believed that if a person is suddenly confronted by a tiger and instead of trying to run away or looking terrified he looks straight in the eye of a tiger fearlessly, without once shifting his gaze, then the tiger would stop in its track and gradually withdraw. It attacks only when its prey turns away and tries to flee.

There is another variation to this example. It is also believed that if a person suddenly confronts a tiger and falls to the ground to pretend to be dead, then the tiger would not kill him; the animal would come, smell the body, and thinking it to be a corpse would go away. The tiger hunts and kills its prey alive; it never feeds on dead bodies.

Here, Mandodari is simply citing the odd example of the tiger sparing the life of another creature to emphasize the fact if an otherwise cruel animal as a tiger would not like to kill someone who is bold enough to face it, or as she would like to say “has voluntarily submitted himself before it by lying prostrate on the ground”, as it would rather prefer to spare his life, then how can Lord Ram, who is by his inherent nature exemplarily merciful, kind and compassionate can ever think of harming someone who goes to him to surrender and seek his protection and grace.

So therefore, Ravana must not have any reservations in going to Lord Ram to make peace with him. He should approach Lord Ram with humility and prostrate himself before the Lord as a sign of surrender. If he does so, then he ought not to fear of being caught off guard and be captured by Lord Ram as his enemy; no such thing will happen for sure. But Ravana must be bold and courageous enough to go and face the Lord in spite of the huge bundle of sins he carries on his head; he must also throw away his inflated ego and be prepared to prostrate before the Lord.

²To wit, Mandodari advises her husband to follow tradition and hand over the reins of the demon kingdom to their son Meghnad, and then renounce all worldly attachment and head for the forest to prepare for final exit from this gross mundane world by doing meditation and repenting for his sins so that when the soul leaves this mortal body it can find its peace and rest.

³The life of a man was divided into four quarters by ancient sages, forefathers and patriarchs of the society. These four quarters are the following—Brahmcharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyas. Each quarter was of approximately 20-25 years.

The first quarter is when a man was supposed to study and learn the skills that are needed for the affairs of an adult life. This was ‘Brahmcharya Ashram’. The word literally means a celibate and one who exercises self-restraint. This was essential for study and inculcating skills which require focus of mind and heart. During this time, the man is young and is supposed to observe austerities while he studies and acquires knowledge to equip him to face the world when he grows up.

The second quarter is ‘Grihastha Ashram’. It is when the student enters the household phase of life. He marries, raises a family and carries on with his profession or vocation to increase wealth and progeny.

When a person becomes ripe in age, his working capacity decreases and he must prepare to pass on the baton to the next generation, to his heirs when they are ready to step in his shoes, and when he has done his bit for society. This is the ‘Vanaprastha Ashram’—the third phase of life when a person prepares to hand

the responsibilities of his worldly affairs to his heirs and mentally prepares himself to lead a calm and detached life so that he can get ready for the final phase of old age.

Though it literally means ‘heading for the forest’, but not necessarily it be so. Its primary function is to withdraw from playing an active role in the affairs of the world and give one’s mind and body rest and peace after the toil of the previous years. In ancient times though, it actually meant going to the forest and spending time in a serene place in some hermitage. But in modern times it is neither feasible nor advisable. The best avenue is to withdraw from active role and serve more as an advisor and guide for the next generation in a dispassionate manner.

The final and fourth quarter is called ‘Sanyas Ashram’ which clearly means absolute withdrawal from the world and its affairs. This is the time when the man is of about say 70 or more years of age. So he needs complete peace and should prepare to make an exit from the world without a fuss. He is expected to create such a situation that no one misses or wails for him nor anything suffers due to his absence. Thus, he dies peacefully and self-contentedly.

During the ‘Sanyas Ashram’ a person is expected to completely renounce the world and its entanglements, and instead spend the remaining part of his life in spiritual pursuit and searching ways for his spiritual liberation and deliverance.]

सोइ रघुबीर प्रनत अनुरागी । भजहु नाथ ममता सब त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥

मुनिबर जतनु करहिं जेहि लागी । भूप राजु तजि होहिं बिरागी ॥ ६ ॥

sō'i raghubīra pranata anurāgī. bhajahu nātha mamatā saba tyāgī. 5.
munibara jatanu karahim jēhi lāgī. bhūpa rāju taji hōhim birāgī. 6.

[And who is this “Lord God” whom one ought to worship in the forest? Mandodari answers this question:-] That Lord God is none other than Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave king in the family line of Raghu) who has great affection for those who prostrate before him (as a token of surrender and submission).

So oh Lord; I beg of you that you should worship and adore him by abandoning all your worldly attachments and turning away from them. (5)

He is the same Lord to attain whom great and illustrious sages and hermits undertake strenuous exercises of meditation and penances, and it is for him attaining him that great and famous kings of illustrious lineage renounce their homes and kingdoms to become mendicants. (6)

सोइ कोसलाधीस रघुराया । आयउ करन तोहि पर दाया ॥ ७ ॥

जौं पिय मानहु मोर सिखावन । सुजसु होइ तिहुँ पुर अति पावन ॥ ८ ॥

sō'i kōsalādhīsa raghurāyā. āya'u karana tōhi para dāyā. 7.
jaum piya mānahu mōra sikhāvana. sujasu hō'i tihum pura ati pāvana. 8.

It is the same Supreme Lord who has manifested himself as the ‘Lord of Kaushal’ (i.e. as the King of Ayodhya, a kingdom of which the capital city had the same name), and he is known as ‘Raghuraya’ (literally ‘a great king of the Raghu dynasty).

Indeed it is 'he' who has come to show his grace and mercy upon you. (7)

Oh my dear husband, if you pay heed to and accept my advice (which, as your beloved wife, I am giving you for your own good and welfare), then be sure that your glory and goodness would spread and be eternally established in all the three divisions of this creation (i.e. in the heaven, on the earth, and in the nether world).¹ (8)

[Note—¹Mandodari told her husband Ravana that he has a golden opportunity to attain eternal freedom from sins and their horrendous consequences, and attain eternal peace and bliss for his soul as well as ensure his salvation and emancipation without the least trouble because the Supreme Lord who can bless a creature with these boons has been so gracious and kind enough to have taken the trouble of coming to Ravana's own doorstep offering them to him. Now Ravana will be spared the trouble of having to undertake the difficult and most strenuous path by which a person can normally free himself of sins and attain emancipation and salvation for his soul by renouncing the world during the last quarter or phase of his life, and spend his time exclusively in doing penances, austerities, meditation, contemplation and prayers, as well as in worshipping the Supreme Being. The scriptures has prescribed this path for all human beings, whether he be a king or a sage.

Mandodari tells her husband that he is so exceedingly lucky and fortunate that the Supreme Being who is so difficult to access, to attain whom great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics do hard penances and austerities, for whom even great kings and emperors renounce their prosperous kingdoms and empires full of charmed life of pleasure and comfort, and head to the forest instead to do meditation and contemplation so that when they die their soul can attain eternal peace and rest, for whose sake the scriptures prescribe that a person should go on pilgrimage and do penances to clean his inner-self of all sins so that at the time of leaving his body the person's soul, his 'Atma', can attain deliverance and emancipation—the same Lord has been so merciful and compassionate and kind and graceful that he has decided to spare Ravana all these great troubles by coming himself to his doorstep to offer him a chance for repentance and redemption.

Hence, Mandodari says that Ravana would do the wisest thing in his life if he grabs this opportunity and goes to welcome Lord Ram, a manifested form of the Supreme Being, who is standing at his gate, waiting for Ravana to open the gates of his palace and meet his revered guest at the threshold. Be sure, she tells her husband, that he would be affectionately received by Lord Ram; he ought naught to have any doubt and misgivings on this count; he ought naught to fear for his safety at all.

If he accepts her advice then he will reap a rich harvest of both fame and glory in this world as long as he lives, as well as of eternal peace and rest for himself and his soul when his life comes to an end.]

दो०. अस कहि नयन नीर भरि गहि पद कंपित गात ।

नाथ भजहु रघुनाथहि अचल होइ अहिवात ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi nayana nīra bhari gahi pada kampita gāta.
nātha bhajahu raghunāthahi acala hō'i ahivāta. 7.

As Mandodari said these things, her eyes were filled with tears and her body trembled.

Unable to restrain herself, she made a final appeal to Ravana, pleading with him as follows: ‘Oh Lord! I plead with you that you must worship Lord Ram so that my union with you as your wife would last forever.’¹ (Doha no. 7)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 15-b.]

Mandodari has clearly hinted here that if Ravana does not pay heed to her good advice, then in the ensuing war he is certain to be killed. She loved her husband so much that while expressing her views she trembled and wept at the very thought of the prospect of his death.

On the other hand of the scale, if he does pay attention to her then his future would be safe and secure. While alive he would rule over his kingdom in peace and freed from the guilt of having abducted another person’s wife, and when he finally dies, which all living beings must, his soul would be liberated from his body of a demon and delivered from this world of transmigration to attain eternity. What more would anyone want? This glorious future is being offered to Ravana on a platter, so why should, and why would, he refuse it if any trace of sanity is left in him?

Mandodari knew her husband’s nature well, so she was very fearful he would not listen to her advice because it did not fit in well with what he has decided to do. That is why, fearing for doom and destruction, she wept and trembled.]

चौ०. तब रावन मयसुता उठाई । कहै लाग खल निज प्रभुताई ॥ १ ॥

सुनु तैं प्रिया बृथा भय माना । जग जोधा को मोहि समाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba rāvana mayasutā uṭhāī. kahai lāga khala nija prabhutāī. 1.

sunu taiṁ priyā br̥thā bhaya mānā. jaga jōdhā kō mōhi samānā. 2.

Then Ravana picked up Mandodari (who was the daughter of the demon Maye; “mayasutā”) who was lying on the ground at his feet. That evil fellow scoffed at her, and began boasting about himself and his abilities as follows— (1)

‘Listen my dear wife. You are unnecessarily worried and feeling so excessively affright. Tell me: is there any other warrior comparable to me in this whole world; so what makes you so scared about my safety and security?

[To wit, don’t you know that there is no one in this whole world who can match me in courage, strength, powers, valour and martial skills? So why on earth do you worry and feel so terrified about my safety, I don’t understand.] (2)

बरुन कुबेर पवन जम काला । भुज बल जितेउँ सकल दिगपाला ॥ ३ ॥

देव दनुज नर सब बस मोरें । कवन हेतु उपजा भय तोरें ॥ ४ ॥

baruna kubēra pavana jama kālā. bhuja bala jitē'uṁ sakala digapālā. 3.

dēva danuja nara saba basa mōrēm. kavana hētu upajā bhaya tōrēm. 4.

[Now, Ravana lists his achievements and military successes in an attempt to reassure Mandodari and dispel her fears.]

I have conquered all the Diggals (junior gods who are assigned different roles in this creation and act as custodians of the world in their respective domains)—such as Varun (the god of water), Kuber (the treasurer of the gods), Pawan (the wind god), Yam (the god of hell), Kaal (the god of death and the one who presides over a living beings lifespan)—well, I have vanquished all of them by the strength of my arms. [Don't you know about it?] (3)

Well, all the Gods and the Danuj (demons; non-gods) as well as the Nars (human beings) are under my control (don't you know that too?)¹.

So therefore, tell me what makes you so scared; why are you so sore affright about my safety (and my ability to face my enemy, Lord Ram)?' (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where Ravana asserts the same thing before Angad who was sent by Lord Ram as his emissary to see if some way could be found to avoid the bloody war.]

नाना बिधि तेहि कहेसि बुझाई । सभाँ बहोरि बैठ सो जाई ॥ ५ ॥
मंदोदरीं हृदयँ अस जाना । काल बस्य उपजा अभिमाना ॥ ६ ॥

nānā bidhi tēhi kahēsi bujhā'ī. sabhā'ñ bahōri baiṭha sō jā'ī. 5.
mandōdarīm hr̥daya'ñ asa jānā. kāla basya upajā abhimānā. 6.

Ravana tried to dispel Mandodari's fears and tried to comfort her in different ways, and then he went back to sit in his royal court¹. (5)

Meanwhile, Mandodari realized that her husband was highly deluded and mightily distracted in his mind as he was, by the fiat of Providence, in the throes of death, and that is why he has become so haughty and stubborn as well as out of his wits². (6)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that Ravana was in his royal court where he had received the shocking information about the bridge being built and Lord Ram landing on the shores of Lanka with his formidable army. Then he had left the assembly briefly and went to his palace to recover from this initial shock. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Ravana comforted his wife Mandodari and asked her to stop worrying about imaginary things. He seemed very confident about his own abilities and invincibility; he reassured her that everything would be alright, and there was no cause for the panic reaction she seems to portray.

“Look dear”, said he to her, “I very much appreciate your concern for me, but at the same time I don't understand what makes you so agitated and worried. Tell me, aren't you aware of my unparalleled strength, powers, valour and achievements; aren't

you aware that I have conquered the whole world, and even the so-called gods and digpals are terrified even by my name. They run away when they hear I am in a foul mood; they scamper for cover and run helter-skelter when I go to their places. What is this human prince called 'Ram' before my might? Why are you so confounded and shaken? Surely you must be under the influence of some evil spirit that has instilled so much fear in your noble and otherwise fearless heart. Look my dear; this sort of behaviour does not behoove of the wife of Ravana. You must be shameful of your attitude! So get up and cheer up. There is nothing at all to worry."

²She was certain that since 'death' is fast approaching her husband, his mind and its sense of wisdom and rationality have been clouded by the dark and negative forces of haughtiness and stubbornness. He seems to have lost his prudence, and is behaving arrogantly and irrationally. He is driven so insane by 'death', the mighty force of creation that leaves no one immune to its rule and spares no one from its grasp, that he is being drawn towards it involuntarily like a leaf being sucked in by a violently swirling whirlwind. She realized that the fiat of fate and the dictate of destiny has prevailed over her husband's mind so much so that he is driven more by his false pride of invincibility and strength than coming to terms with truth and acting with prudence in accordance with the ground realities.]

(ii) Sub-section 12.1.2 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it:-

Mandodari was very restless. She thought that perhaps her husband was not in the proper frame of mind to heed her request for the first time, so she must try again.

Meanwhile, the assembly was in a sort of stupor as all the courtiers were struck with fear and very uncertain of their future. All the developments, right from the time Hanuman had entered Lanka till now portended a calamity and hinted at some grave and dangerous future. For the first time in their lives the demons felt so helpless, alarmed, despaired and worried. Fear was writ large on their faces; there were obvious signs of internal agitation and a storm brewing in their minds and hearts. A dark pall of gloom descended upon the assembly like a thick veil of choking smoke so much so that Ravana thought it best to dismiss the assembly and ask everyone to retire to their homes. He went to his palace himself where Mandodari made her second attempt to try to persuade Ravana to discard his confrontationist attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with the latter.

Earlier she had told Ravana that Lord Ram was none but the Supreme Being himself (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7); now she elaborates on who this 'Supreme Being' is.

Mandodari tries to persuade her stubborn and haughty husband to abandon his belligerence and send Sita back to Ram. She tells Ravana that he must understand that Lord Ram is not an ordinary human prince whose wife he has brought home. The Lord was the cosmic Lord of creation, and therefore Ravana stands no chance of

overcoming him or defeating him in any war. It is then she narrates the ‘Viraat’ form of Lord Ram—i.e. the cosmic form of the Supreme Being whom Lord Ram represents.]

दसमुख देखि सभा भय पाई । बिहसि बचन कह जुगुति बनाई ॥ ३ ॥
 सिरउ गिरे संतत सुभ जाही । मुकुट परे कस असगुन ताही ॥ ४ ॥
 सयन करहु निज निज गृह जाई । गवने भवन सकल सिर नाई ॥ ५ ॥

dasamukha dēkhi sabhā bhaya pā'ī. bihasi bacana kaha juguti banā'ī. 3.
 sira'u girē santata subha jāhī. mukuṭa parē kasa asaguna tāhī. 4.
 sayana karahu nija nija gr̥ha jā'ī. gavanē bhavana sakala sira nā'ī. 5.

When the ten-headed Ravana saw that the assembly was overcome with an overwhelming air of excessive fear, he smiled wryly and tried to make light of the situation by giving a humorous twist to the development¹. (3)

He said, ‘Tell me, he whose heads have fallen so many times but proved to be a boon for him, how can the mere falling of a crown cause any harm or ill to him?’² (4)

Take a break now and go to your respective homes to sleep (and rest) peacefully.’³

All the assembled courtiers bowed their heads before him, took their leave and went home. (5)

[Note—¹It had so happened that Lord Ram had shot an arrow from his camp, and this arrow struck Ravana crown which fell to the ground. It was a very bad omen. So all the courtiers were struck with terror and alarmed about the future. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14}.

²Ravana refers to the time when he had offered his heads to Lord Shiva as a personal sacrifice. This voluntary cutting of his own head and offering them as a sacrifice to the Lord proved to be a boon for him for it pleased Lord Shiva so much that he granted Ravana many boons, including immunity from death by severance of the head, lordship of all the gods, demons and creatures, as well as invincibility and matchless glory. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 25.}

So he argued that the crown is merely a decoration of his head, a sort of head-gear. How does it matter if it falls by some accident as long as the heads are protected by Lord Shiva’s immortal boon? Hence, there is nothing to worry at all.

³Look, worrying unnecessarily for imaginary things is a waste of energy and time. I think you all are under some evil spell and suffering from some delusions that seems to have had the better of your senses and undermined your natural courage and dare devilry for which the demon race is so famed. What has happened to you all? It is better for all of us to take a break and sleep over the matter overnight. Tomorrow morning we’ll all have a fresh start and feel rejuvenated. Go, sleep soundly and peacefully. No hell’s breaking upon us right now. All of you need mental rest, so go home, relax and sleep, forgetting about imaginary fears.]

मंदोदरी सोच उर बसेऊ । जब ते श्रवनपूर महि खसेऊ ॥ ६ ॥
 सजल नयन कह जुग कर जोरी । सुनहु प्रानपति बिनती मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 कंत राम बिरोध परिहरहू । जानि मनुज जनि हठ मन धरहू ॥ ८ ॥

mandōdarī sōca ura basē'ū. jaba tē śravanapūra mahi khasē'ū. 6.
 sajala nayana kaha juga kara jōrī. sunahu prānapati binatī mōrī.
 kanta rāma birōdha pariharahū. jāni manuja jani haṭha mana dharahū. 4.

[Meanwhile, after dismissing the courtiers with these words of reassurance, Ravana himself got up and retired for the night to his palace where he found Mandodari once again in a state of utter fear. She had experienced some bad omen and was extremely upset about its implications. So for the second time straight she confronted Ravana as he entered the palace, begging him to see sense and overcome his egoist arrogance.]

Ever since the ear-ring of Mandodari had fallen to the ground¹, she was mentally very worried and extremely upset. (6)

When she saw Ravana she joined her hands in supplication and begged before him with tears in her eyes, pleading as follows: 'Listen my beloved husband who is the lord of my life and very dear to me (prānapati). Pray, please pay attention to my prayers; I sincerely and earnestly plead before you. (7)

My dear husband (kanta)! Please abandon your animosity with and a belligerence attitude towards Lord Ram in the erroneous belief that he is an ordinary human prince². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had shot an arrow from his camp as a signal to warn Ravana that he has arrived. It was the first arrow shot by the Lord in Lanka. This arrow had struck and fell three things—(i) The ceremonial umbrella over his heads that symbolized his authority and majesty as the king of the demon race, and of a king of; (ii) Ravana's crowns; and (iii) Mandodari's ear-ring. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 (a).}

²Refer also to Vibhishan's advice in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 5 that precede Doha no. 39 which is the same as that of Mandodari's.

No one in this creation can protect someone who is opposed to Lord Ram—Mandodari knows it as she has this information from her own network of spies that all those who had opposed the Lord had bit the dust.

There were many precedents—for instance, when the demons Marich and Subahu attacked sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice which Lord Ram stood guard to protect, the whole army accompanying these demons was demolished along with Subahu. Marich was spared then, but he was killed later on when he tried to cheat Lord Ram disguised as a golden deer. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-14 that precede Doha no. 27.}

When the demon forces of Khar and Dushan attacked Lord Ram, they too were all eliminated quickly. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20.}

Indra's son Jayant also faced this piquant situation when no one in the heaven was ready to give him shelter when he annoyed Lord Ram by pricking Sita's legs with his beak, leading to blood oozing out of the wound and Lord Ram deciding to punish him by plucking a blade of grass and shooting it at Jayant as an improvised arrow. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 2.}

Marich, Vibhishan and Shuk too had advised Ravana the same thing as Mandodari does now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25 (Marich); (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39 (Vibhishan); (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 56 and Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 57 (Shuk).

Hanuman too had a similar advice for Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22—to Doha no. 23.

A little later we shall read Angad's interaction with Ravana where the former also tried to persuade the latter on similar lines as Mandodari's: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 20 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

दो०. बिस्वरूप रघुवंस मनि करहु बचन बिस्वासु।

लोक कल्पना बेद कर अंग अंग प्रति जासु ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

bisvarūpa raghubansa mani karahu bacana bisvāsu.
lōka kalpanā bēda kara aṅga aṅga prati jāsu. 14.

My Lord! Believe my words that real form of the who is like a gem in the family of king Raghu (“raghubansa mani”; Lord Ram) is cosmic in nature inasmuch as the whole creation, the entire universe, is nothing but a manifestation of the Lord, and the Lord pervades uniformly in this creation as its essence (known as cosmic Consciousness).

Verily indeed, the Vedas (primary and most ancient of the scriptures) have envisioned that each pore of the cosmic body of the Lord is a universe in its own right. (Doha no. 14)

[Note—Mandodari says “Believe me my lord when I say that the gem of the Raghu dynasty, Lord Ram, is a manifested form of the invisible cosmic form of the Supreme Being of whom this entire world is an image. In other words, the original form of Lord Ram is known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the cosmic Male who has revealed himself in the form of this vast and myriad world, pervading intrinsically everywhere in it, present in every pore of it. In fact, this world is a gross visible form of subtle and invisible form of Lord Ram who is none but the Supreme Being known as Brahm or as the ‘Viraat Purush’.

The Vedas conceive that each limb and part of the body of this cosmic all-inclusive form of the Lord is the habitat of one or the other world that are known to

exist in this creation. To wit, there are different worlds that exist at different levels in creation at different points of time. All of them are lodged at some point on the cosmic body of the Lord like so many tiny pearls stitched and embroidered on a huge length of cloth as long and wide as the firmament.”

The cosmic all-pervading form of Lord Ram who is the Supreme Being, the cosmic form that is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, has also been described at various places in ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of sage Veda Vyas. Some of the instances relevant to our present reading are: (i) Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 31-45: prayer by Kabandha; (ii) Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 25-29: assertion by Vibhishan; (iii) Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 63-69: as affirmed by sage Agastya.]

चौ०. पद पाताल सीस अज धामा । अपर लोक अँग अँग बिश्रामा ॥ १ ॥

भृकुटि बिलास भयंकर काला । नयन दिवाकर कच घन माला ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

pada pātāla sīsa aja dhāmā. apara lōka aṅga aṅga biśrāmā. 1.

bhṛkuṭi bilāsa bhayaṅkara kālā. nayana divākara kaca ghana mālā. 2.

This feet of the cosmic form of Lord Ram are represented by the ‘Patal’ (the nether world or the subterranean world; the lower world), and the Lord’s head consists of the heavens where Brahma, the creator, lives.

The rest of the world that lies between these to extremes (i.e. between the foot and the head of the cosmic form of Lord Ram, a form also known as the Viraat Purush) is located or distributed in all other parts of the Lord’s cosmic body. (1)

The formidable power of ‘Kaal’ (death; the powerful forces of time that bring about epochal changes in this world, including destruction) is represented by the movement of the Lord’s eyebrows.

His eyes are represented by the Sun, and the dense dark clouds are his thick lock of black hairs. (2)

जासु घ्रान अस्विनीकुमारा । निसि अरु दिवस निमेष अपारा ॥ ३ ॥

श्रवन दिसा दस बेद बखानी । मारुत स्वास निगम निज बानी ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu ghrāna asvinīkumārā. nisi aru divasa nimēṣa apārā. 3.

śravana disā dasa bēda bakhānī. māruta svāsa nigama nija bānī. 4.

The twin gods known as ‘Aswini-kumars’ (who are the physicians of the gods) are the Lord’s two nostrils.

The day and the night are representatives of the blinking of the eyes of the Lord, with the day representing the open eyes, and the night standing for the closed eye. (3)

The Vedas have declared (asserted) that the Lord’s ears is represented by the ten directions or quarters of this world¹.

His breath is the wind, the Vedas (primary scriptures; the treasury of knowledge) are the Lord's words. (4)

[Note—¹The ten directions or quarters of the world are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

अधर लोभ जम दसन कराला । माया हास बाहु दिगपाला ॥ ५ ॥

आनन अनल अंबुपति जीहा । उत्पति पालन प्रलय समीहा ॥ ६ ॥

adhara lōbha jama dasana karālā. māyā hāsa bāhu digapālā. 5.
ānana anala ambupati jīhā. utapati pālana pralaya samīhā. 6.

'Lobha' (greed) represents the Lord's lips; the ferocious 'Yam' (god of death) represents his sharp teeth; 'Maya' (delusions) stands for the Lord's laughter or smile (because the Lord laughs at the way the world begins to hallucinate under its influence); and the 'Digpals'¹ (the powerful semi-gods who support the world and prevent it from collapsing) are representatives of the Lord's strong arms (that sustain and protect the entire creation). (5)

The Lord's tongue is represented by 'Anal' (fire)², and the tongue represents 'Ambupati' (the patron god of water)³.

Creation, sustenance and conclusion or destruction of this creation are his mere acts done effortlessly and in a causal manner; they are like his natural gestures⁴. (6)

[Note—¹The Digpals:— There are believed to be eight Digpals as follows:-

Indra who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, and is therefore called 'Sahastraaksha', Agni or the Fire God, Yam or the God of Dharma (i.e. the God responsible to ensure that the great tenets of righteousness and proper conduct are observed by the creatures, and to punish those who violate these laws), Nirritiya (also known as Nairritya/Nirriti), Varun or the Water God, Anil or the Wind God, Indu or the Moon God (often replaced by Kuber who is the treasurer of Gods), Ishan or Lord Shiva, Brahma the creator, and Anant who is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation (or Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods in a symbolic gesture to indicate that Lord Vishnu is responsible for taking care of this creation).

The eight Digpals are the divine forces of creation in a personified form of various Gods who are assigned the task of taking care of the entire creation. They are the following—(i) Indra who is the king of Gods and responsible for production of rain as well as to control all other Gods who are said to be represented by the various independent forces of Nature; (ii) Agni is the personified form of the fire element responsible for providing heat, energy, light, vitality, strength, vigour and vibrancy to creation; (iii) Yam is the personified form of death as well as assigned the duty to uphold the laws of Dharma (or the auspicious virtues of righteousness, nobility, propriety, probity etc.), and to punish those who violate it; (iv) Nirriti or Nairitya who is the God responsible for the actual death and punishment of the sinful and unholy creatures in creation; (v) Varun is the personified form of the most essential ambrosia of life known as the water element that provides nourishment and lubrication to this

creation, and is regarded as the basic element that harbours life in all its forms in its bosom; (vi) Anil is the personified form of the life-giving air or wind element which is also called Pran—literally meaning ‘life’ which is a proof of its importance and significance vis-à-vis this creation; (vii) Kuber is the treasurer of Gods and responsible to provide all the necessities of life to the inhabitants of this world; the Moon God is the custodian of the Amrit, the ambrosia of life and eternity which is a priceless asset for the creation; (viii) Ishan is Lord Shiva who is also known as Mahadev, the Great Lord, as well as the one who is responsible for maintain balance in this creation by controlling death, and hence is called the ‘concluder’; (ix) Brahma is the creator of the physical world as well as the body of knowledge known as the Vedas, and therefore assumes the role of a grand old patriarch of the family known as the world; and (x) Anant or Lord Vishnu who is so-called because he is eternal, infinite and endless, has infinite responsibilities, and is assigned the multi-prong duty of taking good care of the world in all respects. He is also called Anant as he is none but the eternal Brahm himself in the form of the Viraat Purush, the all-pervading, all-encompassing and almighty Lord of creation. In fact, even Brahma and Shiva are said to be born from this Viraat Purush. [Refer Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 38.]

These Digpals are responsible for the eight directions where they are worshipped as follows—

- (1) Indra (the king of Gods) is the custodian or guardian of the east direction.
- (2) Agni (the fire-God) is the custodian or guardian of the south-east direction.
- (3) Yama (the death-God) is the custodian or guardian of the south direction.
- (4) Nirriti or Nairitya is the custodian or guardian of the south-west direction.
- (5) Varun (the Water God) is the custodian or guardian of the west direction.
- (6) Vayu (the Wind God) is the custodian or guardian of the north-west direction.
- (7) Kuber (the treasurer of Gods) is the custodian or guardian of the north direction.
- (8) Ish (Lord Shiva; the chief amongst the Gods) is the custodian or guardian of the north-east direction.

²This is why we use the phrase “the tongue of fire” with leaping flames. It also refers to a person’s “fiery words” or a “heated argument” which can scorch or irritate others as much as a raging fire can do by its heat.

³That is why the tongue is always moist. It is a medical necessity because all food that we eat is moistened and softened by the saliva which is water-based. Besides this physical softening to make the food easy on the stomach, the enzymes that start the chemical process of digestion in the tongue itself work only when they are diluted with water. This is the reason why hastily eaten food that is gulped down directly into the throat without being properly chewed in the mouth and made into a semi-fluid form with the help of the water contents of the saliva secreted by the tongue that helps the food to be mixed with digestive enzymes that would help the stomach to further the process of digestion and extraction of the nutrients present in the food lies like a load in the abdomen and ruins health.

⁴The Lord can effect such great changes such as creating this world from virtually nothing, then sustaining it on such a huge and grand scale, and finally winding it up like one closing a book, needs no special effort or exertion to be done by the Supreme Lord. He merely gestures or wishes that it be so, and it happens to his liking.]

रोम राजि अष्टादस भारा । अस्थि सैल सरिता नस जारा ॥ ७ ॥

उदर उदधि अधगो जातना । जगमय प्रभु का बहु कलपना ॥ ८ ॥

rōma rāji aṣṭādasā bhārā. asthi saila saritā nasa jārā. 7.

udara udadhi adhagō jātanā. jagamaya prabhu kā bahu kalapanā. 8.

The eighteen principle species of the vegetable (botanical) kingdom, each having countless members of different types, are like the hairs on the body of the Viraat (the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is infinite in dimension).

The lofty mountains are its bones, and the many rivers and countless streams are the network of veins, arterioles and capillaries of this cosmic body. (7)

The measureless ocean is its stomach and abdomen, while the organs present in the lower part of this cosmic body (i.e. the excretory and genital organs) are represented by the hell (which is hot and tormenting; is an eternal inferno where everything is hot and burning).

In brief, this entire creation (universe) is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord (here referring to Lord Ram in his primary form as the Viraat Purush), and therefore it is futile to attempt to describe it or go into the details of this form and its mind-boggling revealed variations in the form of a creation that has no end, a creation in which no two units are alike though all of them have the same origin as they are all revelation of the same Supreme Lord.' (8)

दो०. अहंकार सिव बुद्धि अज मन ससि चित महान ।

मनुज बास सचराचर रूप राम भगवान ॥ १५ (क) ॥

अस बिचारि सुनु प्रानपति प्रभु सन बयरु बिहाइ ।

प्रीति करहु रघुबीर पद मम अहिवात न जाइ ॥ १५ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

ahaṅkāra siva bud'dhi aja mana sasi citta mahāna.

manuja bāsa sacarācara rūpa rāma bhagavāna. 15 (a).

asa bicāri sunu prānapati prabhu sana bayaru bihā'i.

prīti karahu raghubīra pada mama ahivāta na jā'i. 15 (b).

'Ahankar' (the element of pride) symbolizes Shiva (the concluder), 'Buddhi' (intellect; the faculty of reasoning and understanding) stands for Brahma (the creator), the 'Mana' (mind and heart) represents 'Chandrama' (the Moon God), and 'Chitta'¹ is the greatest of them all (citta mahāna) (as it represents Lord Vishnu).

Verily indeed and in all sooth, it is the Supreme Lord God, whose cosmic form includes all the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of this vast universe, who himself has assumed the form of a human being known by the name of 'Ram'. (Doha no. 15-a)

In the view of this, and keeping all these facts in mind, oh my beloved husband, you should abandon all animosity with the Lord (Sri Ram).

Inculcate devotion and have affection in the holy feet of Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) so that my good fortune as being your wife does not desert me (or, my union with you as your wife can last forever)². (Doha no. 15-b)

[Note—¹The word ‘Chitta’ stands for the sub-conscious mind. It is that faculty that works behind the scene to control the way a person thinks, behaves and acts. It is that aspect of the consciousness that governs a person’s personality and the quality of his inner self by storing all information that a creature receives by the medium of his sense organs of perception, and then using this information as a background upon which the creature relies to take decisions. It is a sort of a library of all information and experiences. Often times it is the sub-conscious mind that plays a crucial role in helping the creature to come at a conclusion and make a certain decision in a given situation where he has to make a choice from a given set of information. This we often refer to as relying on one’s ‘experience’.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 7.]

चौ०. बिहँसा नारि बचन सुनि काना । अहो मोह महिमा बलवाना ॥ १ ॥

नारि सुभाउ सत्य सब कहहीं । अवगुन आठ सदा उर रहहीं ॥ २ ॥

साहस अनृत चपलता माया । भय अबिबेक असौच अदाया ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bihaṁsā nāri bacana suni kānā. ahō mōha mahimā balavānā. 1.
nāri subhā'u satya saba kahahīm. avaguna āṭha sadā ura rahahīm. 2.
sāhasa anṛta capalatā māyā. bhaya abibēka asauca adāyā. 3.

When Ravana heard the words of his wife Mandodari, he laughed aloud in derision, and exclaimed, ‘Ah! How great and powerful is the power of infatuation and attachment that comes with true love!’ (1)

Forsooth, all great poets have rightly observed that a woman by nature always has eight faults or shortcomings in her character. (2)

These eight faults or shortcomings are the following: Recklessness and rashness (sāhasa); falsehood and deceit (anṛta); fickleness and transigency (capalatā); being prone to delusions and hallucinations (māyā); unwarranted fear and apprehensions (bhaya); ignorance and lack of knack in dealing with the practical problems of the world (abibēka); impurity of thought and lack of cleanliness of mind (asauca); and selfishness and lack of mercy (adāyā)². (3)

[Note—¹Here Ravana acknowledges that his wife loves him very dearly, and that is why she is so greatly worried at the prospect of harm coming to him, and mortally upset about his safety and security. Why, he had fought so many countless wars but never ever had she expressed such fear and anxiety for his safety, so therefore there is aught naught any reason now for her consternations.

However, it ought to be noted that in her zeal to protect her husband Ravana and to express her grave apprehensions, Mandodari has dared to cross the boundary of

decency, modesty, propriety and probity by openly praising another person, who happens to be her husband's arch enemy, right in front of him without bothering about its serious repercussions and grave consequences. She could be severely censored and jailed for open disloyalty and immodesty as well as for gross impropriety and misconduct by lavishing praise upon another man right before her husband; she could be thrown into a dungeon with charges of treason and sedition.

But true love is so great a moving force that the lover is not worried about his or her safety in order to safeguard the welfare of the beloved. Hence, Mandodari was ready to face all accusations if somehow her entreaties could persuade Ravana to abandon his aggressive nature and hostile attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with the Lord so that not only his life is spared but the doom of the entire demon race could be averted.

²Ravana has listed eight shortcomings in the character of a woman. Let us examine how they hold true for Mandodari.

(i) Even though she knows her husband's stubborn nature that once he decides to do something he would listen to nothing that is contrary to his decision, yet she tries four times to make him change his mind. She also knows how wrathful he becomes if contradicted, and how mercilessly he takes revenge. Yet she has the temerity to face him boldly and praise his enemy right before him. Is this not short of dare devilry? Her anxiety and restlessness could have boomeranged upon her and cost her very dear if Ravana had chosen to throw her into prison and be tortured for speaking against him.

She also knows that he would never give Sita back to Lord Ram and make peace with him, yet she repeatedly asks him to do so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 36; (b) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 6; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no 8 that precedes Doha no. 14, and Doha no. 15-b; and (d) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 3 that precede Doha no. 36 and Doha no. 37.

(ii) Ravana accuses her of speaking a lie and creating a smokescreen of delusions and falsehood that seems to portray Lord Ram as being more powerful than her husband Ravana.

(iii) She is of a fickle mind and uncertain of what to do and how to persuade her husband to change his mind—for she sometimes weeps, then at other times falls down at his feet, and then tries to scare him by painting a picture of his enemy Ram as someone who is the Supreme Being himself, whereas from all apparent signs he seems to be an ordinary prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya, for Lord Ram acts and behaves like one, showing no supernatural prowess or super-human powers. He ran like an ordinary man behind the golden deer; he lamented for his lost wife, began searching for her here and there in the wilderness, then prayed to the Ocean to let him cross it, and so many other developments that show he is an ordinary but courageous prince, and definitely not the Supreme Being that Mandodari makes him out to be before Ravana. This is the reason why “Ravana laughed derisively when Mandodari tried to tell him that Lord Ram was not an ordinary man but the Viraat Purush”.

(iv) And this is also the reason why Ravana accuses her of ignorance and utter lack of knowledge of the affairs of the world. She has become scared because for some reason, say lack of alertness on the part of the demons, a monkey (Hanuman) has managed to successfully cross the ocean and surreptitiously enter Lanka, and later burning it when he managed to escape from captivity, but that does not mean that the

same thing would be repeated in a war when the demon army is fully prepared and armed to the teeth to face any challenge.

(v) This is also why Ravana believes her to be deluded and hallucinating—as if doomsday is right around the corner. Has she forgotten about his might and prowess with which he had so easily subdued all the combined strength of the gods of heaven? They ran helter-skelter to save themselves as soon as they heard that Ravana is coming to attack them. So what is such an issue with a human being that has so much shaken Mandodari if it is not an imaginary ghost of doom and death that has scared the wits out of her?

(vi) Why is she so terrified of monkeys and bears of Kishkindha, and the two human princes Lord Ram and his brother Laxman who were thrown out of their own kingdom by their father (king Dasrath) and step mother (Kaikeyi), and who could not muster courage to claim their rights then? What will they do now regarding Sita; if they have the right over her, then let them claim her.

“When they couldn’t claim their right to the throne of Ayodhya, I wonder”, Ravana told Mandodari, “about their ability to exercise their right over Sita. Let them go ahead and retrieve her. But why are you so overcome with consternation and anxiety, this I can’t understand.”

(vii) Ravana also says that a woman is selfish and has no mercy. Well, he taunts Mandodari by this remark. Where was her concern, he seems to ask, about the sufferings of a woman captive when he had captured so many women-folk of the human race as well as of the gods, and brought them as trophies to Lanka. What is so special about Sita that worries Mandodari so much; Sita is already so weak and miserable that she does not stand any chance of recovery if he decides to cut-off her meagre ration of food and water if he becomes annoyed at Mandodari’s stance of siding with his prisoner. When all the gods together could not gather courage to free their women folk from him, what will two princes do?

Mandodari is accused of being ‘selfish’ because now she is so worried about Sita as she fears that Sita’s husband Lord Ram is very powerful and he is a danger for the safety of her own husband Ravana, but earlier she was not at all concerned about other women in Ravana’s captivity as she was confident that their respective husbands were no threat to her own husband Ravana. It is clearly a case of selfishness and self-centred expression of concern for the miseries of a prisoner.

(viii) Ravana calls Mandodari ‘impure and un-clean in mind’ because she praises his opponent. It is surely not a proper conduct and a modest behaviour for a wife to criticise her own husband and praise another woman’s husband, which in the present case Mandodari does by finding fault with her husband Ravana and glorifying Sita’s husband Lord Ram. This behaviour is not acceptable even in modern times, and may result in a sharp spat between a husband and a wife, the former accusing the latter of infidelity, and it may even culminate in a divorce.]

रिपु कर रूप सकल तैं गावा । अति बिसाल भय मोहि सुनावा ॥ ४ ॥

सो सब प्रिया सहज बस मोरें । समुझि परा प्रसाद अब तोरें ॥ ५ ॥

जानिउँ प्रिया तोरि चतुराई । एहि बिधि कहहु मोरि प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥

ripu kara rūpa sakala tairṁ gāvā. ati bisāla bhaya mōhi sunāvā. 4.
 sō saba priyā sahaja basa mōrēm. samujhi parā prasāda aba tōrēm. 5.
 jāni'uṁ priyā tōri caturā'ī. ēhi bidhi kahahu mōri prabhutā'ī. 6.

You have tried to frighten me by describing the cosmic and all-pervading form of my enemy (i.e. Lord Ram's 'Viraat' form, to tell me that he has supernatural powers that are possessed by the Supreme Being).

[To wit, you wish to scare me by saying that my opponent is exceptionally powerful and strong so that I buckle and surrender to him for fear of my life.] (4)

But me dear, all such forms (i.e. all the gods who represent one or the other form of the Supreme Being whose cosmic form you have invoked) are well under my control¹.

I am grateful to you that now I have realised what the reality is, and I also thank you very much indeed to remind me of my own immensity of powers and valour in this respect (so that I can face my enemy with renewed courage, vigour and enthusiasm)². (5-6)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-13 that precede it; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 8.

²To wit, you love me so much that at a time when I need some encouragement and a reminder of my own immensity of strength and power, you have been witty enough to step in and remind me about my abilities and majesty by invoking the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, because all the gods of heaven whom I have subdued by the strength of my arms are in reality manifestations of this Supreme Being who has assumed the forms of these many gods to carry out the different functions of creation. So therefore, you actually mean to tell me that in a way I have conquered the Supreme Being himself by vanquishing these gods.

So thank you very much indeed for this veiled encouragement! Well, when I could so easily conquer so many varied manifestations of the Supreme Being as represented by the individual and the combined might of so many gods of heaven, then say why should I worry for a single form that Supreme Being might have taken as Lord Ram? Cheer up; there's nothing to worry!

I do appreciate your ingenuity that you have employed this ruse to remind me of my own strength.]

तव बतकही गूढ़ मृगलोचनि । समुझत सुखद सुनत भय मोचनि ॥ ७ ॥
 मंदोदरि मन महुँ अस ठयऊ । पियहि काल बस मतिभ्रम भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

tava batakahī gūṛha mṛgalōcani. samujhata sukhada sunata bhaya mōcani. 7.
 mandōdari mana mahum̐ asa ṭhaya'ū. piyahi kāla basa matibhrama bhaya'ū.
 8.

Oh the one with beautiful eyes like that of a fawn (mṛgalōcani)! Your words are veiled or encrypted in secrecy, and they convey a message that is not apparent on the

surface. This veiled message though, when fully understood, gives comfort to think of it; it grants immense joy and happiness to the hearer; and it dispels all his fears'¹. (7)

Meanwhile, Mandodari concluded that her husband is under the influence of Kaal (death; doomed destiny) so much that his mind has become deluded and it has lost its rational way of thinking resulting in his wisdom and prudence becoming eclipsed². (8)

[Note—¹Ravana means two things here. Firstly, he thanks Mandodari to remind him that the Supreme Being has come himself to give him deliverance from this gross sinful body of a demon, and to liberate his soul that is trapped inside it. So therefore he is very fortunate as otherwise there was little hope of his ever finding redemption and salvation for his soul.

Secondly, he thanks her for reminding him of his own valour, power and strength by which he had conquered all the gods of the heaven who are one or the other manifestations of the Supreme Being. So he must not feel scared in facing Lord Ram.

He says that Mandodari's words are encrypted in secrecy because had she spoken straightforward in the way outlined herein above then it would seem that she is instigating her husband to wage a bloody war that might culminate in the ruin of the whole demon race. So she used a round about way of conveying her intent.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37.]

दो०. एहि बिधि करत बिनोद बहु प्रात प्रगट दसकंध ।

सहज असंक लंकपति सभाँ गयउ मद अंध ॥ १६ (क) ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi karata binōda bahu prāta pragatā dasakandha.
sahaja asaṅka laṅkapati sabhāṁ gaya'u mada andha. 16 (a).

In this way, the night was spent in jest and light talk. When the next day dawned, the ten-headed Ravana—who was accustomed to being fearless by his nature (sahaja asaṅka) and made blind with a sense of false pride of strength and invincibility that made him arrogant and haughty (mada andha)—went to attend his royal court as he used to do routinely (as if nothing serious has happened at all, and therefore there is aught naught to worry). (Doha no. 16-a)

सो०. फूलइ फरइ न बेत जदपि सुधा बरषहिं जलद ।

मूरुख हृदयँ न चेत जौं गुर मिलहिं बिरंचि सम ॥ १६ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

phūla'i phara'i na bēta jadapi sudhā baraṣahim jalada.
mūrukha hṛdayaṁ na cēta jaum gura milahim birañci sama. 16 (b).

Verily indeed, it is said that no matter how much it rains, but the reed never bears flowers or fruits.

Likewise, a fool (especially the one who is under the spell of death and doom) will never learn or understand anything (nor will he rectify his mistakes and change his wayward manners) even if he is advised and shown the correct path by the most learned of teachers, such as the Creator himself¹. (Sortha no. 16-b)

[Note—¹Here the ‘reed’ is used to mean Ravana. He was so stupid and had come under the influence of his doomed destiny that he did not listen to anyone who advised him to avoid a confrontation with Lord Ram as it would ruin him. None of Ravana’s advisors succeeded in bringing him to his senses.]

(iii) Sub-section 12.1.3 = Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35-b—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38:-

After Mandodari had failed in her three previous attempts to somehow persuade Ravana to abandon his haughtiness and ego that would lead to his ruin, and instead wake up to the realities and make peace with Lord Ram by sending his abducted wife Sita back to him, she felt awfully exasperated and frustrated as well as desperate. She decided to shame Ravana by debunking his boast and bluster of invincibility and infallibility with a list of his failures and weaknesses, asking him where was his valour and strength and courage during those moments where he had to bite dust and put himself to public shame and humiliation. She intended to point out to him that all his claim of invincibility and infallibility, of possessing matchless power and strength fall flat and sound hollow boast when considered in the backdrop of the listed events. She wished to boldly tell him how weak, fragile and ill-prepared he actually is, how deluded he has become by living in an illusionary world of his own dreams which he has managed to conjure up in his imagination just to satisfy is misplaced ego and a sense of false self-pride.

But unfortunately Ravana would not listen to any entreaty and reasoning as he was grabbed by the claws of the God of Death.

In the following verses we read how Mandodari makes a last-ditch effort to make her husband relent and avoid the bloody war with Lord Ram.

साँझ जानि दसकंधर भवन गयउ बिलखाइ ।
मंदोदरीं रावनहि बहुरि कहा समुझाइ ॥ ३५ (ख) ॥

sām̐jha jāni dasakandhara bhavana gaya'u bilakhā'i.
mandōdarīm rāvanahi bahuri kahā samujhā'i. 35 (b).

[After Angad, Lord Ram’s messenger, had humiliated Ravana in full court and called his bluff of invincibility and infallibility for all the naught it was worth, the demon

king was crestfallen and utterly dejected. He dismissed his court, and as it was twilight hours he retired to his palace.]

As evening fell, the ten-headed demon king Ravana went to his palace in a completely disconsolate and somber mood.

[Mandodari was highly upset by the recent developments, and when she observed that her husband Ravana was extremely perturbed she realized that the situation was truly very grave.]

As soon as Ravana entered the palace, Mandodari made another attempt to try and persuade him to abandon his arrogance, and make peace with Lord Ram. (Doha no. 35-b)

चौ०. कंत समुझि मन तजहु कुमतिही । सोह न समर तुम्हहि रघुपतिही ॥ १ ॥
रामानुज लघु रेख खचाई । सोउ नहिं नाघेहु असि मनुसाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kanta samujhi mana tajahu kumatihi. sōha na samara tumhahi raghupatihi.
(1)

rāmānuja laghu rēkha khacāī. sō'u nahim nāghēhu asi manusāī. 2.

She said, ‘My dear husband (kanta)! Ponder earnestly about the developments and think seriously about them in your mind. You ought to abandon your perversity as a confrontation between you and Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) is quite out of the place, for it would bring no glory to you, but only ignominy and shame. (1)

Lord Ram’s younger brother (Laxman) had marked a small circle (around Sita) which you dared not cross (at the time you abducted her)—such is your valour and courage, isn’t it¹? (2)

[Note—¹After all her previous attempts had failed, Mandodari decided to shame her husband by calling his boast a bluff in a final effort to make him realize his weaknesses, fears and failures by citing some instances that highlight his Achilles’ heel.

It seems in all probability that Mandodari chose to put her husband to embarrassment and disgrace by rebuking him and listing all the events that show him in a very poor light as being totally incompetent, impotent and cowardly inspite of his boast and bluster is because Ravana had rebuked her earlier by saying that she, being a woman, has eight faults or shortcoming or weaknesses in her character that are natural to her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 16.

Mandodari had felt intensely disgusted at Ravana’s above remark at that time because it was totally unwarranted, as her attempt to persuade him to avoid a war with Lord Ram was good intentioned and meant to avoid a calamity befalling her husband, and nothing more. She never meant to insult him or undermine his status as a great warrior whose valour and abilities were undoubted. But after Ravana’s chiding her and calling her weak in character, she decided to turn the tables on him—to prove to him that it was he who had so many weaknesses, instead of her.

The first instance she cites is of the moment when Ravana had gone to kidnap Sita at Panchavati. At that time, Laxman had made a circle on the ground by the tip of his arrow before leaving the hermitage on the insistence of Sita who had compelled him to go in the direction in which Lord Ram had gone pursuing the golden deer in order to help his brother. Laxman had infused this circle with magical charm that if anyone tries to overstep it and come inside he would be burnt. Sita would be safe within it.

Ravana did not dare to cross this cursed circle to grab Sita, so he employed a ruse of assuming the form of a mendicant and asking her for alms which she could give him only by stepping outside the circumference of the circle because Ravana was standing a little away from it. So, as soon as she stepped out of the circle to give him alms, Ravana grabbed her and ran away like a scared animal who has dared to steal a lion's kill in his absence and fears for his own life.

This incident of Laxman drawing a circle around Sita and Ravana not having the courage to cross it is mentioned in a little known book titled "Hanumanna Naatak", in its Canto 8, verse no. 36, and Canto 9, verse no. 9.]

पिय तुम्ह ताहि जितब संग्रामा । जाके दूत केर यह कामा ॥ ३ ॥
 कौतुक सिंधु नाघि तव लंका । आयउ कपि केहरी असंका ॥ ४ ॥
 रखवारे हति बिपिन उजारा । देखत तोहि अच्छ तेहि मारा ॥ ५ ॥
 जारि सकल पुर कीन्हेसि छारा । कहाँ रहा बल गर्ब तुम्हारा ॥ ६ ॥

piya tumha tāhi jitaba saṅgrāmā. jākē dūta kēra yaha kāmā. 3.
 kautuka sindhu nāghi tava laṅkā. āya'u kapi kēharī asaṅkā. 4.
 rakhavārē hati bipina ujārā. dēkhata tōhi accha tēhirī mārā. 5.
 jāri sakala pura kīnhēsi chārā. kahāñ rahā bala garba tumhārā. 6.

My dear (piya)! Do you hope that you can win him (Lord Ram) in a war whose humble messengers had done such marvelous deeds that were recently witnessed by all of us, and which defy imagination? (3)

A monkey (i.e. Hanuman) playfully (i.e. effortlessly) leapt across the mighty ocean and entered Lanka fearlessly as if he was a lion (moving boldly and fearlessly in the forest). (4)

Once here, he had laid to ruin your forest and killed its guards. When your son Akshay Kumar was sent by you to capture him, he too was killed even while you watched. (5)

Not only this, he (Hanuman) had burnt your city of Lanka to ashes¹. Tell me, where was your strength and power, of which you boast so much, at that time; what were you doing?

[Tell me, couldn't you stop Hanuman and prevent the devastation that he had unleashed right under your nose? What to talk of preventing the calamity that befell our city, you could not even punish Hanuman for what he did, for he went away from Lanka unharmed with no single demon warrior having the guts to stop him from escaping. And you could not garner the courage to summon those demon guards who

were assigned the duty of protecting the borders of the kingdom, and ask for at least an explanation from them.] (6)

[Note—¹These events are narrated in detail in the fifth Canto called ‘Sundar Kand’ of Ram Charit Manas.]

अब पति मृषा गाल जनि मारहु । मोर कहा कछु हृदयँ बिचारहु ॥ ७ ॥
पति रघुपतिहि नृपति जनि मानहु । अग जग नाथ अतुल बल जानहु ॥ ८ ॥

aba pati mṛṣā gāla jani mārahu. mōra kahā kachu hṛdayaṁ bicārahu. 7.
pati raghupatihi nṛpati jani mānahu. aga jaga nātha atula bala jānahu. 8.

Now my dear husband, do not boast unnecessarily and stop talking bluster; enough is enough. You must pay heed to my advice even now as it is still not too late to make amends. (7)

Oh my husband (pati)! Do not treat the Lord of the Raghus (“raghupati”; Lord Ram) as an ordinary human prince, but regard him as the ‘Lord of the whole world’¹, and one who has immense supernatural powers at his disposal. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

बान प्रताप जान मारीचा । तासु कहा नहिं मानेहि नीचा ॥ ९ ॥
जनक सभाँ अगनित भूपाला । रहे तुम्हउ बल अतुल बिसाला ॥ १० ॥
भंजि धनुष जानकी बिआही । तब संग्राम जितेहु किन ताही ॥ ११ ॥

bāna pratāpa jāna māricā. tāsu kahā nahim mānēhi nīcā. 9.
janaka sabhāṁ aganita bhūpālā. rahē tumha'u bala atula bisālā. 10.
bhañji dhanuṣa jānakī bi'āhī. taba saṅgrāma jitēhu kina tāhī. 11.

Marich was fully aware of the might and prowess of his (Lord Ram’s) arrows¹. When you had gone to him (Marich) to ask him to help you abduct Sita, he had tried to tell you the reality and dissuade you from being rash, but you treated him with utter contempt and disdain, not listening to his sane advice which was intended for your own welfare². [What was the result? Marich lost his life for no fault of his. You brought Sita to Lanka, and this led to Hanuman coming here and killing our son Akshay Kumar and setting the city of Lanka on fire. Is it not enough to make you alarmed?] (9)

In the royal court of king Janak, all the great kings and princes of the world had assembled, and you, who claim to possess huge strength and immense powers, were present there too (weren’t you)³. (10)

In that assembly, he (Lord Ram) had broken the bow (of Lord Shiva) and wed the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita)⁴. Why didn't you challenge him at that time and defeat him in order to claim the hands of Sita right then and there?⁵ (11)

[Note—¹When Marich and Subahu and other demons had gone to disrupt sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice which Lord Ram and Laxman were protecting, the Lord had killed all the other demons but spared Marich's life by shooting him with a headless arrow which struck Marich with such a force that he was immediately flung to a far away island in the middle of the ocean. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 292.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 292.

Aren't you ashamed of yourself? All other assembled kings and princes had at least shown the courage to rise in revolt against Janak, although they were subdued immediately because sage Parashuram had intervened angrily to protest the breaking of the bow. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 268.}

But you had chosen to escape silently without letting anyone know that you are gone. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 256.}

Tell me, where was your valour and courage and dare devilry then? Had you challenged Lord Ram for a duel at that time and defeated him, you would not only have got Sita as a trophy but would also have gained immense fame and world-wide recognition. Tell me, what stopped you from doing it? Instead of claiming Sita as your rightful prize, you stole her slyly like a thief. Is this how a brave warrior acts; is this the character of a brave soul that you pretend to be? Verily, the actual way you behaved shows you in a very poor light, more like that of a coward and a scoundrel than any warrior worth his name.]

सुरपति सुत जानइ बल थोरा । राखा जिअत आँखि गहि फोरा ॥ १२ ॥

सूपनखा कै गति तुम्ह देखी । तदपि हृदयँ नहिं लाज बिसेषी ॥ १३ ॥

surapati suta jāna'i bala thōrā. rākhā ji'ata āṁkhi gahi phōrā. 12.
sūpanakhā kai gati tumha dēkhī. tadapi hrdayaṁ nahim lāja bisēṣī. 13.

The son of the king of Gods (i.e. Jayant, who was the son of Indra) believed that he (Lord Ram) did not have much strength and powers. But though Jayant committed a grave impropriety yet the Lord spared his life by just blinding him in one eye¹. (12)

You have witnessed the miserable fate that Supernakha had suffered², and yet you aren't ashamed of anything. (13)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

Briefly it is this: Jayant doubted the might of Lord Ram, so he assumed the form of a crow and went to prick Sita with his sharp beak. When Lord Ram saw blood oozing out of the wound, he picked a blade of grass and shot it at Jayant. No one in the world dared to shelter him against Lord Ram's arrow. Finally he was advised by sage Narad to go and plead for mercy with Lord Ram. The Lord took pity upon him and said that since his arrow can't go in vain so it would take out one eye of Jayant and spare his life. Thus, the 'crow' was left blinded in one eye.

²This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 22.

Mandodari severely chides Ravana, saying sarcastically, "Supernakha happens to be your sister, and when she came wailing to you to complain that her nose and ears had been cut by Lord Ram, why did you not immediately go and attack him to take revenge and settle scores? Why couldn't you avenge her insult directly instead of taking recourse to deceit and falsehood by becoming a mendicant to steal Lord Ram's wife instead? Is your cowardly, lowly, stupid and mean act not enough to put you to shame?"

दो०. बधि बिराध खर दूषनहि लीलाँ हत्यो कबंध ।

बालि एक सर माख्यो तेहि जानहु दसकंध ॥ ३६ ॥

dōhā.

badhi birādha khara dūṣanahi līlāṁ hatyō kabandha.

bāli ēka sara māryō tēhi jānahu dasakandha. 36.

He (Lord Ram) had slayed, without the least effort as if it was a sporting activity for him, the demons named Viradha¹, Khar, Dushan² and Kabandha³. Not only this, he had slayed Baali⁴ (king of Kishkindha and the elder brother of Sugriv) with a single arrow.

Tell me oh Ravana ("dasakandha"; literally someone with 'ten shoulders', implying 'ten heads', one head over one shoulder)—don't you know about these developments? Aren't you yourself aware that these deaths cannot be caused by an ordinary person; hasn't this thought crossed your mind and caused a lot of alarm to you⁵? (Doha no. 36)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20; and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8; and Sortha no. 33-a.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 22 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-36 that follow it.]

चौ०. जेहिं जलनाथ बँधायउ हेला । उतरे प्रभु दल सहित सुबेला ॥ १ ॥
 कारुनीक दिनकर कुल केतू । दूत पठायउ तव हित हेतू ॥ २ ॥
 सभा माझ जेहिं तव बल मथा । करि बरूथ महुँ मृगपति जथा ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

jēhiṁ jalanātha baṁdhāya'u hēlā. utarē prabhu dala sahita subēlā. 1.
 kārunīka dinakara kula kētū. dūta paṭhāya'u tava hita hētū. 2.
 sabhā mājha jēhiṁ tava bala mathā. kari barūtha mahuṁ mṛgapati jathā. 3.

He (Lord Ram) had tied the ocean by constructing a bridge across it as if it were a sport for him (i.e. he achieved this stupendous feat of building a bridge across the turbulent surface of the mighty ocean, a feat never ever done heretofore, without the least effort)¹, and then landed in Lanka at Mt. Subel with his formidable army². [Were you asleep then; what were you doing? Why couldn't you stop him from building the bridge first, and then why couldn't you muster courage to stop him from landing in Lanka and pitching the camp for his huge army on Mt. Subel, right under your nose?]
 (1)

That merciful Lord (kārunīka) who is the flag-bearer of the glory of the Solar race (dinakara kula kētū) had been so kind and gracious that he chose to send a messenger of peace to your court keeping in mind your interests and welfare.

[To wit, Lord Ram decided to give a chance to peace by sending Angad as his messenger to you to explore the possibility of making peace and avoiding a war because he is so merciful that he did not wish to willingly become an instrument of your ruin, and instead forgive you for all your mischief in case you realized your mistakes and were willing to relent and make amends.]² (2)

In the middle of the full court that emissary had crushed your strength and trampled upon your honour fearlessly⁴ just like a brave lion enters a herd of elephants and vanquishes their pride by killing one of them⁵. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 17 where Lord Ram makes his intentions clear, at the time of sending Angad as his

emissary to Ravana, that he wants to act in a way that would be conducive for the good and welfare of the demon king although the latter was his enemy and was definitely at fault. The Lord instructs Angad that he should explore the possibility if any strategy can be devised by which whatever is done could be for the welfare and good of Ravana.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32—to Doha no. 35-a.

Briefly it so happened that Angad, who was sent by Lord Ram to see if something could be done to avoid the war and peace could be restored, and Ravana had a heated argument, each trying to out wit and embarrass the other and talk him down. Their interaction started on a softer note but soon degenerated into a no-holds barred acerbic verbal spat, with both of them shooting volleys of disparaging remarks and scalding taunts at each other, casting aspersions at each other's self-esteem, character, honour and integrity. Tempers rose sharply and the angry verbal dual became exceedingly bitter, sarcastic, caustic, acrimonious and hostile in nature by degrees, with both Ravana and Angad leaving no stone unturned at insulting and out-witting each other.

What started, therefore, as a formal dialogue between Angad and Ravana to explore the possibility of ending hostility by a negotiated settlement of outstanding issues, gradually descended into a dirty cesspool of nasty tit-for-tat involving personal attacks and disparaging comments on each other's character and integrity, leading to a rapid rise in temper, abrasiveness and impertinence of the words used, and the contemptuous tone in the speech employed in the exchange.

This melodramatic episode, with its singularly theatrical histrionics not found elsewhere in the entire story of the Ramayan, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 35.

At the climax however, when Angad realized that Ravana is not amenable as the latter was exceptionally stubborn and arrogant, as well as in the throes of death and destined for destruction, which had eclipsed his wisdom and blinded his reasoning, he became exasperated so much so that he finally decided to end this meeting by completely demolishing Ravana's pride and esteem, and proving to him that his time was up, and that all his talk of might and power and strength and invincibility was mere bluster and nothing but hollow sound of a drum, a sound that is louder from a drum which is equally large, with a big hollow in the inside.

Thus, before leaving Ravana's court Angad did two things that completely demolished the remnants of Ravana's esteem and dignity in full view of the demon court. The first deed was this: Angad thumped the ground with his clenched fists so violently that there was a minor quake and Ravana lost his balance. All his ten crowns toppled down and fell to the ground; some of these crowns were picked up by Ravana and put on his head, while some were kicked by Angad as if he was kicking a football, and these landed in front of Lord Ram who was sitting in his camp on Mt. Subel. This first deed of Angad to humiliate Ravana is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 32-a along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.

As if it was not sufficient enough to embarrass and humiliate his adversary Ravana and put him to abject shame in the front of his royal court, Angad did another remarkable thing of bravery and courage that cast a pall of gloom and despair to descend on the entire assembly, leaving Ravana morally defeated and emotionally depressed and dejected and forlorn like a vanquished warrior who has lost all hopes of victory. Angad stamped his foot on the ground with an open challenge to Ravana to

move it. The bet was that if Ravana could move Angad's foot then it would be deemed that Ravana has won and Lord Ram has lost, and on the other hand if Ravana could not move Angad's foot then he must concede defeat and surrender. Ravana and many of his demon warriors failed to move Angad's foot, either individually or exerting all their energy and might together. This event signified Ravana's total defeat and his complete moral subjugation; it demoralized him and subjected him to abject humiliation like the one he had never experienced before in his career. This second deed of Angad to humiliate Ravana is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35-a.

⁵The analogy is apt here because Ravana was surrounded by so many of his brave demon warriors whereas Angad was all alone. The lion is not afraid by a herd of elephants; it would pounce on the back of one of them to kill his prey even as other elephants may watch in vain.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 19.]

अंगद हनुमत अनुचर जाके । रन बाँकुरे बीर अति बाँके ॥ ४ ॥
तेहि कहँ पिय पुनि पुनि नर कहहू । मुधा मान ममता मद बहहू ॥ ५ ॥

aṅgada hanumata anucara jākē. rana bāṁkurē bīra ati bāṁkē. 4.
tēhi kahaṁ piya puni puni nara kahahū. mudhā māna mamatā mada bahahū.
5.

It is such an aggravated irony of a doomed fate that you are unable to see the reality that stares right in your face, and you have become blind to it. Why, don't you know that Hanuman and Angad are exceptionally able, strong and brave warriors who have no match in this world, who are so dauntless in battle?

The gentleman whom they serve so diligently, loyally, faithfully and obediently, how stupid it is for you to treat that person (i.e. Lord Ram) as an ordinary human being¹? Why do you wish to carry the burden of guilt on your head; why are you so driven by a false sense of pride and made irrational by arrogance that you can't see what is obvious.

[To wit, why don't you understand that there must be something unique and great in Lord Ram that these two mighty warriors Angad and Hanuman chose to serve him and seek his refuge? They don't raise their heads before Lord Ram, and do what they are told to do without as much as asking 'why'. Then say, why don't you come to terms with reality and end your hostility with Lord Ram?] (4-5)

[Note—¹Any great warrior worth his name would not like to serve anyone so humbly and obediently, without as much as even raising his head before the master or lord they serve or ask any question or requesting to be told the rationale behind any instruction issued by the master to him, like the way Angad and Hanuman serve Lord Ram.

Surely both Angad and Hanuman must have observed something unique in Lord Ram that convinced them he was not an ordinary human being but someone who possessed supernatural powers, someone who is divine and great, someone who is endowed with some extraordinarily great mystical powers.

So here Mandodari severely chides her husband Ravana why is he not able to see tell-tale signs that are self-evident. After all, did Ravana not see the prowess of Hanuman when he had killed his son Akshay Kumar and had fearlessly burnt Lanka and equally fearlessly went back from the city, with no one daring to stop him? Then once again, Angad has trounced his pride and crushed his honour and self-esteem in full view of the court, and like Hanuman he too went back unchallenged.

Are these not enough signs of their fearlessness, boldness, courage, valour, prowess, strength, invincibility and dare devilry that have surpassed even the combined might of the whole demon army that prides itself for these grand virtues that make for a great warrior?

Surely then there must be something special in Lord Ram that motivated and inspired both Angad and Hanuman to seek the Lord's blessing and patronage, and serve him so faithfully and diligently.]

अहह कंत कृत राम बिरोधा । काल बिबस मन उपज न बोधा ॥ ६ ॥

काल दंड गहि काहु न मारा । हरइ धर्म बल बुद्धि बिचारा ॥ ७ ॥

निकट काल जेहि आवत साई । तेहि भ्रम होइ तुम्हारिहि नाई ॥ ८ ॥

ahaha kanta kṛta rāma birōdhā. kāla bibasa mana upaja na bōdhā. 6.
kāla daṇḍa gahi kāhu na mārā. hara'i dharma bala bud'dhi bicārā. 7.
nikaṭa kāla jēhi āvata sālīm. tēhi bhrama hō'i tumhārihi nālīm. 8.

Alas my beloved husband (ahaha kanta)! It is so unfortunate and sad that inspite of being aware of all the above facts you still chose to be hostile to Lord Ram. It is because you are under the firm grip of 'Kaal' (the factor of 'time' that governs the span of a living being's life in this mortal world) so much that all your wisdom and intelligence and prudence have been eclipsed. (6)

Verily indeed, 'Kaal' does not kill anyone by hitting him with a baton, but it employs a subtle way of achieving that end, and that way is by robbing the doomed creature's goodness and virtues by which he might have done good deeds, acted righteously, practiced probity and propriety in life and his dealings with others, or by robbing his strength so quietly and imperceptibly that the affected creature is not even aware that he has become very weak till the time of testing his strength comes, or by clouding his wisdom, decimating his intelligence and the power to think rightly to such an extent that he is turned into a dumb-witted and worthless stupid fellow who is not even shadow of his former illustrious self. (7)

My lord (sālīm)! When Kaal comes calling near a creature then the latter becomes as deluded and overcome by hallucinations as has become of you.

[To wit, when the end of a person is near then he will do all the wrong things and take all the wrong decisions, and no matter how hard it is tried to show him that he is treading a wrong path that would lead to his ruin, he simply wouldn't listen. The same thing applies to you it certainly seem, for you too appear to be under the firm grip of Kaal so much so that your wisdom and intelligence seem to have totally abandoned you, leaving you sinking in a dark void of delusions and hallucinations that have prompted you to slide towards your own destruction. Alas, it is so sad and

dismaying that this seems to be the fiat of your fate and the writ of your destiny over which no one has any control whatsoever.] (8)

दो०. दुइ सुत मरे दहेउ पुर अजहुँ पूर पिय देहु ।
कृपासिंधु रघुनाथ भजि नाथ बिमल जसु लेहु ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

du'i suta marē dahē'u pura ajahuṁ pūra piya dēhu.
krpāsindhu raghunātha bhaji nātha bimala jasu lēhu. 37.

Two of you sons have died; your city has been burnt to ashes¹. Oh my dear husband (piya)! In spite of these calamities, your body is still whole, and you are unharmed as yet².

Oh Lord (nātha); worship Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram) who is like an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness. By doing this you will gain good fame and pure glory (as this act of yours would be auspicious, righteous and proper, and it would automatically have its due rewards)³. (Doha no. 37)

[Note—¹You boast so much of your valour and strength. Tell me—where were you and what had happened to you famed valour, strength and powers when your sons died and when your city of Lanka was burnt to ashes? Why didn't, and why couldn't, you stop these calamities happening right under your nose? Why couldn't you stop Kaal from carrying out these two things—killing your sons and having your city burnt? So how will you stop the same Kaal from killing you? Don't you realise that Kaal has been emboldened by your inability to stop him then, and so now this time around the Kaal will strike you harder, and with more confidence.

Who were the two sons of Ravana that Mandodari mentioned as being killed, and by whom were they killed?

The first son was Akshay Kumar, and he was slayed by Hanuman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 18 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

The second son was killed by Angad when he had gone as Lord Ram's emissary to Ravana. This son was as bad mannered as his father Ravana. He was playing when Angad met him. The interaction that followed between the two soon became heated and acerbic. Ravana's son, as was his habit, raised his leg to kick Angad, at which the latter grabbed him and smashed him to the ground, instantly killing Ravana's second son. This event occurred prior to Mandodari's fourth and last attempt to persuade Ravana to end his hostile attitude towards Lord Ram, and it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 18.

²To wit, though horribly frightening things have been happening here, yet you are still safe, and therefore you still have time to take precautionary steps that no further damage is done, and no personal harm comes to you. It is said that one must save the harvest while there is time. So you must take immediate remedial measures to avoid further damage.

³If you abandon hostility towards Lord Ram and return his wife Sita, whom you have wrongfully stolen, then be sure this deed of yours will give you immense fame and glory—because it is the right thing to do.

On the other hand, even if you manage to win the war, you will get nothing but infamy and ignominy as a person who was so highly pervert, sinful, evil and unscrupulous that he abducted another person's wife to satisfy his lust, and when that person came to free his wife you had the temerity to defeat him in battle just to prove that you are more powerful. But this proving of your might, even if it's successfully achieved, is not with some auspicious and righteous objective, but it is to satisfy your perversity, arrogance and rapacity.

How do you imagine that this thing would give you any good name? No, I must tell you that it would be a very shameful and ignominious victory even if you do become victorious in the war! I'd be myself ashamed to call you my husband in such a scenario.]

चौ०. नारि बचन सुनि बिसिख समाना । सभाँ गयउ उठि होत बिहाना ॥ १ ॥

बैठ जाइ सिंघासन फूली । अति अभिमान त्रास सब भूली ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāri bacana suni bisikha samānā. sabhāṁ gaya'u uṭhi hōta bihānā. 1.
baitha jā'i siṅghāsana phūlī. ati abhimāna trāsa saba bhūlī. 2.

The stern words of Mandodari that were shot at Ravana were like sharp arrows that wounded his pride and ego¹.

[The night passed, and—] The next morning Ravana went to his court. (1)

He forgot (or pretended to forget) all his worries and fears, and sat very proudly on his throne (putting up a bold face, and letting all the demons know that their king is fearless and not at all worried by the impending war)². (2)

[Note—¹Mandodari's scorching rebuke left Ravana squirming in embarrassment; he was stunned, peeved and exasperated all at once. But how much he may have become angry inside himself and appalled at his wife's audacity to tell him all the things that she boldly dared to say, things surely he wouldn't have like to hear, yet he still kept quiet as he knew that she was speaking the truth. It goes to Ravana's credit that he did not take any revenge against Mandodari throughout the war for speaking the truth on his face.

But why; why did he not take revenge on Mandodari? There are reasons for this: One reason is that whatever she told him, no matter how bitter it may have been, were said in private, in their personal apartment, and not in public as was the case with others such as his own brother Vibhishan, then again his other brother Kumbhakaran, and his trusted messenger Suka, as well as his aged courtier Malayawant. On all these occasions Ravana had shown his anger at the speaker because it was a public chiding of a kingdom's king, which obviously no sovereign would tolerate. The other reason is that Ravana loved Mandodari, and her repeated pleadings only proved to him that she too loved him intensely as she felt no hesitation in pointing out his weaknesses on his face inspite of being aware that all others who had advised him almost on the same lines were punished.

We read in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 36-61, that towards the end of the war Ravana has explicitly told Mandodari that she should stop worrying about him as he has willingly chosen to die at the hands of Lord Ram because he knows the Lord to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and by dying at the Lord's hands he would be able to free his soul (Atma) that is trapped inside his evil body of a demon. This would grant him deliverance, emancipation and salvation as well as eternal peace, bliss and beatitude all at one go. What better could it be! So, since he is fighting this war for his own good, as well as for the good of all other demons who would die before Lord Ram and are sure to find deliverance themselves, he must not be stopped, and neither will he.

Forsooth and without gainsay therefore, Ravana had not fought Lord Ram because the Lord was his worldly enemy whose wife he had wished to keep, as the world thinks, but because this fight was the only way by which Ravana's sacred Atma, his soul and pure consciousness that is eternally pure and holy, would be freed from his evil body of a demon which had become like a hard shell of a coconut or a walnut that is not easy to break. Just as these hard shells need an external medium to break them, Ravana's soul too needed an external medium to pierce his body so that his Atma could escape from the slit thus formed and find its freedom.

And Ravana had been correct in his thinking, for when he finally died his soul emerged from his body as a shaft of dazzling light and went straight to enter the body of Lord Ram, signifying the merger of the individual Atma with the cosmic Atma that Lord Ram represented. This fact has been clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 78-79.

The celestial sage Narad had made it absolutely clear to the assembled gods, who were very astonished at Ravana's soul merging with the Soul of Lord Ram, that even though the world recognized Ravana as an evil demon but he was pure and holy internally, and that he had fought the Lord not out of any animosity but with the sole objective of attaining liberation and deliverance of his soul, to find emancipation and salvation for his tormented self, for attaining eternal beatitude and felicity that is usually not available to even the most learned sages and ascetics. Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 80-87; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 114.

And what about others; what about the fate of Ravana's demon army and its individual soldiers who had laid down their lives in the battle-field? Well, they too attained deliverance and emancipation. This is explicitly said in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 114.

²This external show of confidence and defiance was a very necessary strategy for Ravana so as to keep the morale of his army high. If he had sulked and given the slightest hint that he is worried and upset then the war would have been lost even before its beginning. And if that happened, if his demons had deserted him in the beginning en masse, then all his planning of dying and finding liberation for his soul would have come to a naught.]

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Section 12.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

{Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand,
Canto 10, verse nos. 36-61}

Towards the end of the war, Ravana went to Sukracharya, the Guru or preceptor of the demon race, to advice him some way to win the war. On the latter's advice Ravana decided to do a fire sacrifice that would enable him to emerge victorious. When smoke from this sacrifice rose up into the sky and was spotted by Vibhishan, he became very alarmed. In order to stop Ravana from completing the fire sacrifice successfully, a detachment of monkey troops was sent. These soldiers disrupted the fire sacrifice, and in the melee that followed, Mandodari was dragged out of her palace and gravely insulted. Unable to restrain himself and continue with the ritual of the fire sacrifice any more in the face of such aggravated humiliation of his chaste and loving wife, Ravana got up, and this effectively disrupted the completion of the sacrifice.

Mandodari was lamenting and grieving very remorsefully. She regretted that all her attempts to persuade her husband to abandon hostility with Lord Ram had failed, culminating in her public insult and abject humiliation the like of which no queen was ever subjected to earlier. When Ravana observed her extremely sad countenance and saw that she was very dejected and dismayed, he decided to finally tell her the truth that whatever he has chosen to do, which was to fight this war with Lord Ram, was a conscious decision on his part.

Mandodari however tried for the last time to convince Ravana that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being whom he thinks he could win in battle. At that time, Ravana had cleared all doubts in her mind as to why he had chosen to fight the Lord and die at his hands—he confided with her that he fully knows that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and it is with this knowledge that he wishes to die at his hands, because it is the only way left for him to free his soul that is trapped inside his evil body of a demon. When he is killed by the Lord he will attain Mukti—i.e. his Atma or the 'true self' would find deliverance from this mortal gross world, and attain emancipation and salvation for itself. This death would grant him eternal peace and beatitude. So Mandodari ought naught to worry or lament; there is aught naught to grieve about anything at all. On the other hand, it is time for her to celebrate that her husband was finally on the threshold of attaining eternal liberation and deliverance from the ignominy of being an evil demon.

Ravana's discourse shows that he had a philosophical bent of mind and was well-versed in the principles of metaphysics.

This episode is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 36-61.

Now, let us read it.

रवणस्तु ततो भार्यामुवाच परिस्रान्त्वयन् ।
दैवाधीनमिदं भदे जीवता किं न दृश्यते ।
त्यज शोकं विशालाक्षि ज्ञानमालम्ब्य निश्चितम् ॥ ३६॥

अज्ञानप्रभवः शोकः शोको ज्ञानविनाशकृत् ।
अज्ञानप्रभवाहन्धीः शरीरादिष्वनात्मसु ॥ ३७॥

rāvaṇastu tato bhāryāmuṇvāca parisāntvayan ।
daivādhīnamidaṃ bhadre jīvatā kiṃ na dṛśyate ।
tyaja śokaṃ viśālākṣi jñānamālambya niścitam ॥ 36॥
ajñānaprabhavaḥ śokaḥ śoko jñānavināśakṛt ।
ajñānaprabhavāhandhīḥ śarīrādiṣvanātmasu ॥ 37॥

36-37. Ravana consoled his wife and said, 'Oh Bhadre (a term used for a noble lady)! All types of sorrow and joy are dependent upon one's destiny—is this not visible (or apparent, obvious) to a living being? [To wit, happiness and unhappiness come to a person because it is destined so. No one can help it, and therefore it is better to maintain internal peace and calmness in both the situations.]

So, oh the broad-eyed one, relying on this established wisdom and having this knowledge, you must stop lamenting and regretting, you ought to stop feeling so remorseful and sorrowful (36).

Sorrows, remorse, miseries, consternations, gloom, dismay etc. have their origin (or cause) in ignorance or unawareness of truthful knowledge of reality as well as in the absence of wisdom, and they in turn destroy one's ability to think rationally and wisely, using the faculty of discrimination and intelligence properly.

Having ego, pride and a sense (feeling, perception) of 'me, I, mine' etc. in the body, which is gross and 'non-Atma', is also due to ignorance and absence of wisdom and truthful knowledge¹. (37)

[Note—¹To wit, a living being's body is gross and non-conscious; it is separate and distinct from the person's true self which is known as his Atma. This Atma is pure consciousness and the 'true self' of a creature as compared to his physical gross body which is merely a habitat of the Atma. To regard the body and the Atma as one is nothing but stupidity. The Atma, the entity that is the 'true self' of all living beings, is eternal and imperishable, whereas the body is gross and mortal; the Atma never dies while the body is destined to die. So, where is the cause that makes you so sorry about my dying?

Well, the person for whose safety you worry so much is not my gross physical body that is visible to you; it is my Atma which you can't see. Rest assured that this Atma is safe and sound; it is eternal and imperishable. You ought to actually celebrate that your husband's 'true identity', i.e. his soul, will finally be freed from the horrors of being trapped inside the body of a demon, but it is an irony that you weep and lament. This proves that you are totally ignorant of the truth and reality about the principles of life and creation. Remember one thing: he who has been born with a gross body must certainly die, but this 'death' is limited to his gross body and not to his true self which is eternal. This 'self' merely leaves the old body to migrate to another. This cycle continues. But if the 'self' wants true freedom then there is only one way—which is to merge the individual's 'self', i.e. his Atma which is his soul and pure consciousness, with the Supreme Self known as the Parmatma, the cosmic Consciousness. It is like dropping the water of a small pot into the ocean—the microcosm merging with the macrocosm, which removes their distinction.]

तन्मूलः पुत्रदारादिसम्बन्धः संसृतिस्ततः ।
 हर्षशोकभयक्रोधलोभमोहस्पृहादयः ॥ ३८॥
 अज्ञानप्रभवा ह्येते जन्ममृत्युजरादयः ।
 आत्मा तु केवलं शुद्धो व्यतिरिक्तो ह्यलेपकः ॥ ३९॥

tanmūlaḥ putradārādisambandhaḥ saṁsṛtistataḥ ।
 harṣaśokabhayakrodhalobhamohasprhādayaḥ ॥ 38॥
 ajñānaprabhavā hyete janmamṛtyujarādayaḥ ।
 ātmā tu kevalaṁ śuddho vyatirikto hyalepakaḥ ॥ 39॥

38-39. This false ego or sense of belonging or identification of the soul with the external, gross body is at the root of all illusions (deceptive relationships) that one develops with other living beings in this world. To wit, all relationships that a person has with others in this world, such as treating another person as a son, a wife or any other kind kith and kin, is basically wrong as it is limited to a relationship that develops between the external gross bodies of two individuals; it has nothing to do with their 'true self' or 'true identity' which is Atma, the pure conscious soul.

This being the case, all sense of attachment that is based on worldly relationships that are limited to the physical gross body of two living beings are inherently wrong and fallacious.

The irony is that this sense of attachment, though fundamentally false and erroneous, becomes the cause of all troubles for a creature. It gives him joy and sorrows; it is the cause of all fears, anger, greed, infatuation, envy and jealousy that torment an ignorant person. (38)

The many aspects or facets of life of a person in this gross mortal world, such as birth, growth, death, disease etc., are all concerned and limited to his gross body, and not to his Atma.

[To wit, it is the body that takes birth, grows into an adult, becomes old and sick, and one day dies. The Atma is immune to all such changes, because it is immortal and a constant entity.]

Therefore, to grieve for a person's death or worry about his death is totally wrong and based on ignorance.

Verily indeed, the Atma is an independent entity, separate and distinct from the body as well as everything related to it, and hence it has no relationships of any kind.

[So therefore, why do you think that I am your husband and you are my wife? Why do you lament that I will die, for it is my gross body that will die and not my eternal Atma. Why don't you realize the truth and be glad that at last I, whom you love so much, am on the threshold of deliverance and salvation? Verily, you ought to rejoice and celebrate instead of grieving and lamenting.] (39)

आनन्दरूपो ज्ञानात्मा सर्वभावविवर्जितः ।
 न संयोगो वियोगो वा विद्यते केनचित्सतः ॥ ४०॥
 एवं ज्ञात्वा स्वमात्मानं त्यज शोकमनिन्दिते ।

इदानीमेव गच्छामि हत्वा रामं सलक्ष्मणम् ॥ ४१॥
 आगमिष्यामि नो चेन्मां दारयिष्यति सायकैः ।
 श्रीरामो वज्रकल्पैश्च ततो गच्छामि तत्पदम् ॥ ४२॥

ānandarūpo jñānātmā sarvabhāvavivarjitaḥ ।
 na saṁyogo viyogo vā vidyate kenacitsataḥ ॥ 40॥
 evaṁ jñātvā svamātmānaṁ tyaja śokamanindite ।
 idānīmeva gacchāmi hatvā rāmaṁ salakṣmaṇaṁ ॥ 41॥
 āgamiṣyāmi no cenmāṁ dārayiṣyati sāyakaiḥ ।
 śrīrāmo vajrakalpaiśca tato gacchāmi tatpadam ॥ 42॥

40-42. That Atma is an embodiment of pure bliss, peace, tranquility and happiness; it is pure; it has true knowledge and wisdom; it is free from all feelings, emotions or sentiments. That image or an embodiment of 'eternal truth' does not have a union or separation with anybody or anything (40).

Oh the eternal, blissful one¹! Forsake sorrows, lamentations, grieving, mourning and gloom of all kind! Realise the true nature of your soul (your Atma) and become cheerful. I am going right now—either I shall return after killing (overcoming and defeating) Lord Sri Ram and his younger brother Laxman (41), or Lord Ram will perforate me and cut me into pieces by his arrows which are as strong as Vajra (Indra's weapon). In the latter event I shall attain a stature that would make me as exalted as the Lord himself.

[To wit, if I die, if my physical gross body is killed by arrows shot by Lord Ram, then my Atma would be able to make its exit from it, and then it will merge with the cosmic Atma that Lord Ram represents. In this event, obviously 'I', that is my Atma which is my true self, shall attain an exalted stature as the Lord himself! So what is there to worry about?] (42).

[Note—¹Here Ravana is addressing Mandodari, but not her physical self in the form of her body but her Atma which is her 'true self'. This is why he calls her 'eternal and blissful' as these are the virtues the Atma, the soul.]

तदा त्वया मे कर्तव्या क्रिया मच्छासनात्प्रिये ।
 सीतां हत्वा मया सार्धं त्वं प्रवेक्ष्यसि पावकम् ॥ ४३॥
 एवं श्रुत्वा वचस्तस्य शवणस्यातिदुःखिता ।
 उवाच नाथ मे वाक्यं शृणु सत्यं तथा कुरु ॥ ४४॥

tadā tvayā me kartavyā kriyā macchāsanātpriye ।
 sītāṁ hatvā mayā sārdhaṁ tvaṁ pravekṣyasi pāvakam ॥ 43॥
 evaṁ śrutvā vacastasya rāvaṇasyātiduḥkhitā ।
 uvāca nātha me vākyaṁ śṛṇu satyaṁ tathā kuru ॥ 44॥

43-44. [Expressing his last wish, in case he dies in the battle-field, Ravana tells Mandodari—] 'Oh dear! By my command, by my orders, you must do one last thing

for me—you must kill Sita and enter the cremation fire with me (i.e. my dead body in case I am killed in the war with Lord Ram)¹.' (43).

Hearing these words of Ravana, Mandodari became very distressed, dismayed and gloomy. She said, 'Oh Lord! I tell you what is proper and truthful. Listen to it and act with wisdom and prudence (44).

[Note—¹Ravana's wish to have Sita killed and then Mandodari enter the fire to burn herself along with the dead body of her husband has many ramifications. Let us see why he instructed Mandodari to do so.

To begin with, there was nothing surprising in this wish of Ravana that Sita be killed if he lost the war. This is a standard military strategy of despots and tyrants—let not the enemy get what is considered a prized victory. By getting rid of Sita, Ravana wished to ensure that Lord Sri Ram would be wringing his hands in utmost disgust, abject frustration, distress and dismay after the initial euphoria of winning the battle when he finds out that Sita is dead. It would prove disastrous for Sri Ram—and in spite of having won physical victory over Ravana in the battle he would have, in effect, ultimately lost the war because Sita would not be found alive!

Though there seems to be no clarity in what exactly Ravana meant or intended, but it is quite possible that he meant that when Mandodari would try to carry out his orders she will discover the truth of what he was about to say in a few moments—that he knows that Sita was not an ordinary human being but a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, and therefore she can't be killed! This will go a long way to prove to his wife as well as the world at large that he was well aware of the divine nature of Sita even though he made a great show to the contrary.

By ordering Mandodari to burn herself along with his dead body he wished to ensure that Mandodari was not subjected to humiliation and insult and torture when the conquering army of Lord Ram finds out that Sita— for whom the whole war took place in the first place— is no more. It is very possible that they would wreak the severest form of vengeance upon Mandodari. Ravana's assumptions are not out of place after what Angad and his companions did to her just a while ago to disrupt Ravana's fire sacrifices as narrated in verse nos. 24-28 of this Canto no. 10. Ravana feared for the worst. But as it eventually happened, Mandodari did not keep his last wish. This is probably because Ravana had said so in a fit of disgust and rage, and not with a cool head. It was a reckless instruction given in the background of disruption of his fire sacrifice by the troops of Lord Ram. One is left to wonder the course the story of the Ramayana would have taken had Mandodari carried out Ravana's last wish of killing Sita and burning herself!

And was not Ravana's prophesy true as regards Mandodari, that her loyalty and chastity would be severely compromised if she does not die along with him? Yes, Ravana was proved correct—because his younger brother Vibhishan had later on kept Mandodari as his second wife or even as a mistress though he already had a wife named Sarma. {This is indeed a fact, and it is clearly hinted at in Tulsidas' classical book on the story of the Ramayana called 'Kavitawali Ramayan', in its Uttar Kand, verse no. 5, line no. 2.} Ravana wanted to avoid this situation; he did not want that his beloved wife should be kept either as a wife or as a mistress by his own younger brother. This is why he asked her to burn herself in his funeral pyre.

But Mandodari failed to keep either of Ravana's wish—she neither even attempted to harm Sita nor did she herself end her life after Ravana's death. This puts all claims of Mandodari of being loyal and faithful to her husband Ravana, and of

being wise and righteous and auspicious, fall flat on its face. She did not bother even to honour the last wishes of her husband!

But the question arises: Why was Ravana so determined to fight a war that he was apparently going to lose and die in? The answer is found in verse nos. 55-61 herein below which clearly state the reason why Ravana did not pay heed to Mandodari's entreaty and advice to cease hostility. It also shows that he was certain of death, even determined to embrace it, and lays down the reasons why he wished Mandodari to die with him. He wished that all those who were associated with him must be killed in the presence of Sri Ram who was the supreme Lord himself. With this thinking as a backdrop of the war, one concludes that Ravana was being very wise in all his actions and deeds. In fact, by getting the sinful demons killed at the hands of the Lord God (Sri Ram), he had ensured their spiritual well-being and eternal life. All their sins and vices were purged and they obtained deliverance from this mundane and sinful existence as a 'demon'.]

शक्यो न राघवो जेतुं त्वया चान्यैः कदाचन ।
रामो देववरः साक्षात्प्रधानपुरुषेश्वरः ॥ ४५॥
मत्स्यो भूत्वा पुरा कल्पे मनुं वैवस्वतं प्रभुः ।
ररक्ष सकलापद्भ्यो राघवो भक्तवत्सलः ॥ ४६॥

śakyo na rāghavo jetuṃ tvayā cānyaiḥ kadācana ।
rāmo devavaraḥ sāṅṣātpradhānapuruṣeśvaraḥ ॥ 45॥
matsyo bhūtvā purā kalpe manuṃ vaivasvataṃ prabhuḥ ।
rarakṣa sakalāpadbhyo rāghavo bhaktavatsalaḥ ॥ 46॥

45-46. [Mandodari said—] Raghav (Lord Ram) cannot be conquered by you or anybody else at any time. Lord Sri Ram is the supreme and the most exalted Lord, the chief supreme Purush (macrocosmic Soul or the Viraat Purush; the chief male aspect of creation), and the Lord of Gods (45).

Raghav (Lord Ram), who is the beloved of his devotees, and who is benevolent and munificent towards them, had assumed the form of the legendary Fish¹ (matsya) and protected Vaivastamanu from all his troubles at the beginning of this Kalpa (one cycle of creation and destruction; a epoch or an era) (46).

[Note—¹This refers to one of the earlier incarnations of Lord Vishnu. In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah's Arc.]

रामः कूर्मोऽभवत्पूर्वं लक्षयोजनविस्तृतः ।
समुद्रमथने पृष्ठे दधार कनकाचलम् ॥ ४७॥
हिरण्याक्षोऽतिदुर्वृतो हतोऽनेन महात्मना ।

क्रोडरूपेण वपुषा क्षोणीमुद्धरता क्वचित् ॥ ४८॥

rāmaḥ kūrmo'bhavatpūrvam lakṣayojanavistr̥taḥ ।
samudramathane pr̥ṣṭhe dadhāra kanakācalam ॥ 47॥
hiranyākṣo'tidurvṛtto hato'nena mahātmanā ।
kroḍarūpeṇa vapuṣā kṣoṇīmuddharatā kvacit ॥ 48॥

47-48. Lord Ram was the one who had become (i.e. manifested himself as) the legendary Tortoise in some ancient time (rāmaḥ kūrmo'bhavatpūrvam)¹. The Tortoise had a body extending up to 1 lakh (100 thousand) Yojans (i.e. eight hundred-thousand miles appx.). At the time of the churning of the legendary ocean, it was he (the Tortoise) who had borne (supported) the mountain called Sumeru on his back (47).

During another of the earlier times, he had assumed the form of the legendary Boar (kroḍarūpeṇa)² and this great soul had slayed the most wicked, mischievous and pervert demon named Hiranyaksha, while liberating the earth from his clutches (48).

[Note—¹The Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu—It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara, also known as Sumeru, which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

²The Boar incarnation of Vishnu—It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.]

त्रिलोककण्टकं दैत्यं हिरण्यकशिपुं पुरा ।
हतवान्नारसिंहेन वपुषा रघुनन्दनः ॥ ४९॥
विक्रमैस्त्रिभिरेवासौ बलिं बद्ध्वा जगत्त्रयम् ।
आक्रम्यादात्सुरेन्द्राय भृत्याय रघुसत्तमः ॥ ५०॥

trilokakaṇṭakaṁ daityaṁ hiranyakaśipuṁ purā ।
hatavānnārasimhena vapuṣā raghunandanah ॥ 49॥
vikramaistribhirevāsau balim baddhvā jagattrayam ।
ākramyādātsurendrāya bhr̥tyāya raghusattamaḥ ॥ 50॥

49-50. This Raghunandan (a son born in the family of the great king Raghu of Ayodhya; Lord Ram) had killed Hiranyakshipu, who was like a thorn for the three worlds (i.e. the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean worlds), by assuming the body of half-man half-lion known as Narsingha (or Nrisingh)¹ (49).

The same great Lord who is the most exalted in Raghu's family, i.e. Lord Ram, had tied king Bali, measured the entire world consisting of three divisions (as mentioned above) in three of his steps, and returned it to his devotee or servant or subordinate called Indra, the king of the gods. [This event refers to Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant.]² (50).

[Note—¹The Nrisingh/Narsingh or half man and half lion incarnation of Vishnu was done protect Prahalad, Lord Vishnu's child devotee, who was being tormented by his demon father named Hiranyakashipu because of his devotion for the Lord whom the demon by nature loathed. Lord Vishnu slayed the demon and freed Prahalad from the constant fear of death and harassment to which he was subjected.

After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. {Refer Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 8.} Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

²The Dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, which is called ‘Vaaman’—This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a ‘Vaaman’ or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali’s own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali’s head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called ‘Trivikram’—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali’s principles of keeping one’s words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali’s head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a

magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.

An episode is narrated in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' where Jamvant, the old bear chief, refers to this incarnation of Lord Vaaman and says that at that time he (Jamvant) was young and in his youthful days, and that he had performed seven rounds (clockwise circumambulations) of the colossus form of Lord Vaaman to pay his homage to the latter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

राक्षसाः क्षत्रियाकारा जाता भूमेर्भयवहाः ।
तान् हत्वा बहुशो रामो भुवं जित्वा ह्यदान्मुनेः ॥ ५१॥
स एव साम्प्रतं जातो रघुवंशे परात्परः ।
भवदर्थे रघुश्रेष्ठो मानुषत्वमुपागतः ॥ ५२॥

rākṣasāḥ kṣatriyākārā jātā bhūmerbharāvahāḥ ।
tān hatvā bahuśo rāmo bhuvaṃ jitvā hyadānmuneḥ ॥ 51॥
sa eva sāmpratam jāto raghuvaṃśe parātparah ।
bhavadarthe raghuśreṣṭho mānuṣatvamupāgataḥ ॥ 52॥

51-52. When the demons assumed the form of Kshatriyas and began tormenting the earth (because of their arrogance, haughtiness and powers), then the same Lord in his manifestation as sage Parashuram¹, killed them many times in battle, and having freed the earth from their domination (or clutches) he had handed it over to sage Kashyap (a Brahmin) (51).

Presently the Supreme Lord who is eternal, infinite, almighty and unconquerable has manifested himself as a man in the clan of king Raghu of Ayodhya as an exalted prince in that family for your (Ravana's) sake.

[To wit, Lord Vishnu who had assumed the form of sage Parashuram, a human form, has once again come down in a human form as Lord Ram. In the previous occasion it was to free the earth from the tyranny of Kshatriya kings, and in the present case it is to free the earth from the tyranny of your demon race. Why don't you understand this? Why do you willingly jump in the jaws of death by fighting Lord Ram inspite of being aware of the consequences?]² (52).

[Note—¹Parashuram or Ram with a battle-axe—This is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdaagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon

which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Shursena, the son of Kaartavirya-Arjuna, because the sage had refused to hand over the celestial cow known as Kapila to him. Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Kaartavirya-Arjuna.

²Mandodari had not realised what was in the mind of her husband. She was not privy to his thoughts that he had determined to attain emancipation and salvation by the only way and means he knew as a demon—to instigate Lord Ram so much that the Lord kills him; Sita was merely an excuse to help achieve this objective. There is no doubt as to this when we consider his conversation with Marich (Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 30-35), his instructions to demonesses (Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65), Ravana's thoughts (Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19) when he heard of the slaying of Khar and Dushan (Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61).

If still any doubt was left, Ravana removed it when he explicitly told Mandodari that he knows that Lord Ram is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and Sita of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu, and that he wishes to die at the hands of Lord Ram in order to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself. This is narrated herein below in verse nos. 55-61 by Ravana himself.]

तस्य भार्या किमर्थं वा हता सीता वनाद्धतात् ।
मम पुत्रविनाशार्थं स्वस्यापि निधनाय च ॥ ५३॥
इतः परं वा वैदेहीं प्रेषयस्व रघूत्तमे ।
विभीषणाय राज्यं तु दत्त्वा गच्छामहे वनम् ॥ ५४॥

tasya bhāryā kimartham vā hṛtā sītā vanāḍbalāt ।
mama putravināśārtham svasyāpi nidhanāya ca ॥ 53॥
itaḥ param vā vaidehīm preṣayasva raghūttame ।
vibhīṣaṇāya rājyaṁ tu dattvā gacchāmahe vanam ॥ 54॥

53-54. Why did you abduct his wife Sita from the Tapovan (Panchvati) to get my son killed¹ and to get yourself killed too? [I can't understand what sense it makes.] (53).

[My dear husband; it is still not too late if you will pay heed to me. I'll tell you what the best course of action now is that you ought to adopt.] You should send Vaidehi (Sita) to the most exalted Raghu (Sri Ram) even now; then crown Vibhishan on the throne (i.e. give him the kingdom of Lanka)², and then we (you and me) shall go to the forest (as 'Vanprastha'—forest dwelling mendicants, to spend the rest of our lives peacefully, observing austerity, doing penances, meditation and contemplation, and striving to clean whatever remnants of the taint of sin and evil that cling to our soul by living a clean and holy life till our time comes to exit this world).' (54).

[Note—¹Mandodari refers to the death of her son Akshay Kumar at the hands of Hanuman during the battle at Ashok garden—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 86-88.

²Another question is this: Why did Mandodari ask the crown of the kingdom to be given to Vibhishan instead of her son Meghanad even though she knew that her son was extremely brave, powerful and competent as a warrior, qualities that are essential to govern a vast empire like that of the demon race, an empire that needed to be ruled by an iron hand because its inhabitants, the demons, were not accustomed to civility, politeness and decency?

The answer is that she knew the character of both Vibhishan and Meghanad. She did not want any one to repeat the mistakes her husband Ravana had committed. If Meghanad ascended the throne then it would be worse than what it is during her husband's reign, because her son was more ruthless and reckless than his father, and he was sure to create worse mischief as compared to Ravana. This would undermine Mandodari's wish that peace and tranquility should prevail upon the demon race, as Meghanad's madness would surely invite the bloodshed and mayhem that she wants to avoid now.

On the other hand, if Vibhishan ascended the throne of Lanka then in due course of time peace and prosperity would come back to Lanka because he would follow the laws of Dharma (i.e. he will rule in a righteous manner according to the laws of probity, propriety, equity and justice), and wherever there is Dharma there is peace, prosperity and happiness. Vibhishan was by nature pious and saintly, a calm person who abided by the rule of law as laid down in the scriptures, as opposed to all others in the family who were truly 'demons' not only in their bodies but also in their minds, thoughts, attitudes, actions and deeds.

So if there was a choice to pick the next king of Lanka and to ensure its survival then it was essential that someone who is good and virtuous by nature is appointed to the job, and Vibhishan fit the bill perfectly instead of Meghanad.]

मन्दोदरीवचः श्रुत्वा रावणो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।
 कथं भद्रे रणे पुत्रान् भ्रातॄन् राक्षसमण्डलम् ॥ ५५॥
 घातयित्वा राघवेण जीवामि वनगोचरः ।
 रामेण सह योत्स्यामि रामबाणैः सुशीघ्रगैः ॥ ५६॥
 विदार्यमाणो यास्यामि तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ।
 जानामि राघवं विष्णुं लक्ष्मीं जानामि जानकीम् ।
 ज्ञात्वैव जानकी सीता मयानीता वनाद्धतात् ॥ ५७॥
 रामेण निधनं प्राप्य यास्यामीति परं पदम् ।
 विमुच्य त्वां तु संसाराद्गमिष्यामि सह प्रिये ॥ ५८॥

mandodarīvacah śrutvā rāvaṇo vākyamabravīt ।
 katham bhadre raṇe putrān bhrātṛn rākṣasamaṇḍalam ॥ 55॥
 ghātayitvā rāghaveṇa jīvāmi vanagocarah ।
 rāmeṇa saha yotsyāmi rāmabāṇaiḥ suśīghragaiḥ ॥ 56॥
 vidāryamāṇo yāsyāmi tadviṣṇoḥ paramam padam ।
 jānāmi rāghavam viṣṇum lakṣmīm jānāmi jānakīm ।

jñātvaiva jānakī sītā mayānītā vanādbalāt ॥ 57॥
 rāmeṇa nidhanam prāpya yāsyāmīti param padam ।
 vimucya tvām tu saṁsārādgamiṣyāmi saha priye ॥ 58॥

55-58. After hearing what Mandodari had to say, Ravana replied: 'Oh my noble lady (bhadre)! Having got my sons (i.e. Akshay Kumar, Meghnad etc.), brother (Kumbhakarn) and all the brave demons killed in the battle, how can I ever dream of spending my life in the forest as a forest dwelling mendicant¹? Now I shall also fight to the end with Lord Ram, and in this battle I shall get wounded and pierced by his swift and sharp arrows, as a result of which I shall die and go to the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu (i.e. to heaven).

I know and understand that Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) is Lord Vishnu himself, and Janki (Sita) is goddess Laxmi (the divine consort of Vishnu). And now listen to me: I have purposely brought Sita from the forest because I have this knowledge, for this is the only way, the only means by which I (i.e. my soul) can find liberation and deliverance, as surely bringing Sita would compel Lord Ram to come and kill me when I refuse to give her back. By being thus killed, my soul will get an opportunity to exit from my evil body and find its eternal peace, bliss and beatitude. This death will be my salvation; it will pave the way for my emancipation.

[Saying his last farewell to Mandodari, Ravana made an observation which is worth paying attention. He said—] Now the time has come. I am leaving you alone (to do what suits you or what you decide for your own future), and I shall go to fight the Lord alongside my remaining demon warriors so that we find deliverance together.

[To wit, like a great and magnanimous king who cares for his loyal subjects, it is my moral duty to share the fruits of spiritual welfare with my loyal subjects, the demons who chose to support me and side with me even when the going was tough and the times were bad. I am not concerned with those demons who deserted me, like my brother Vibhishan and his supporters, but I will ensure that who stood by me must also find deliverance, emancipation and salvation alongside me².] (58)

[Note—¹This episode of Ravana and Mandodari talking with each other as described in Canto 10 is towards the end of the war according to the sequence of events as narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, for after this they did not meet again, and in the battle that followed Ravana was killed as narrated in Canto 11.

This is the reason why Ravana bids his last farewell to Mandodari in verse no. 58 herein above.

²This shows Ravan's firm resolve to get all the male demons of fighting age or all the adults of the kingdom die along with him. And he had a noble reason for doing it—he wanted that the souls of all his loyal subjects could find liberation and deliverance from their evil bodies of being demons.

An interesting question that comes to mind is this: What happened to the female demons? Well, the majority of them had been burnt in the fierce fire lit by Hanuman, the fire that devastated the city of Lanka—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 43-44.

As a result, only the righteous amongst the race of demons survived Lord Ram's war with Ravana, and they were later on ruled by Vibhishan. Those demons, males and females both, who were sinful and evil, died in the war. The female

demons attained deliverance of their souls when their sinful bodies were burnt in the fire that raged in Lanka, and the male demons found their deliverance when they died like brave warriors in the battle-field.

An important thing that should not whitewashed and overlooked is that amongst those male demons who survived the war were many who were nothing but deserters and cowards. By ‘living’ they could not find emancipation and salvation for their souls which those demons who ‘died’ could. The truth is that they missed the golden opportunity of getting rid of the body of a demon and setting their souls free from its trap, but remained tied to this gross world and all its problems. Their future, their destiny and their fate would now onwards depend upon what they did for the rest of their lives, and surely it would have been very difficult for them to get rid of the burden of ignominy arising out of their cowardice and disloyalty that they were made to carry on their shoulders for all the rest of their lives.

Surely, those who did not die facing Lord Ram in the battle-field could not have attained heaven and beatitude like their compatriots who died fighting the Lord. This is abundantly clear because at the end of the war Lord Ram had asked Indra, the king of gods, to shower a rain of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, from the sky upon the dead demon warriors who were lying on the ground, for the merciful Lord Ram wished that they attain emancipation and salvation, that their souls attain beatitude, and that they go straight to heaven, which they actually did—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, and 6-10 that precede Doha no. 114.]

परानन्दमयी शुद्धा सेव्यते या मुमुक्षुभिः ।
तां गतिं तु गमिष्यामि हतो रामेण संयुगे ॥ ५९॥
प्रक्षाल्य कल्मषाणीह मुक्तिं यास्यामि दुर्लभाम् ॥ ६०॥

parānandamayī śuddhā sevyate yā mumukṣubhiḥ ।
tām gatiṁ tu gamiṣyāmi hato rāmeṇa saṁyuge ॥ 59॥
prakṣālya kalmaṣāṇīha muktiṁ yāsyāmi durlabhām ॥ 60॥

59-60. The supreme state of existence that is pure, eternally bliss, peaceful and tranquil that the seekers of emancipation and salvation enjoy, I shall get that exalted stature by getting killed at the hands of Lord Sri Ram (59).

In this manner, by washing all my sins, by cleaning all the negative consequences of my evil deeds done in life, I shall achieve the rarest of rare reward that a creature hopes to get, which is being liberated from the endless cycle of birth and death in this mundane world that is gross, entangling, mortal and full of delusions.

[To wit, by dying at the hands of Lord Ram, my Atma, my true self, my soul, will be able to find eternal peace and beatitude; I will obtain the reward of emancipation and salvation that is very rare to get.] (60).

वतेशादिपञ्चकतरङ्गयुतं भूमाद्वयं
दारात्मजाप्तधनबन्धुझषाभियुक्तम् ।
और्वानलाभनिजरोषमनङ्गजालं
संसारसागरमतीत्य हरिं व्रजामि ॥ ६१॥

kleśādipañcakatarāṅgayutaṃ bhramāḍhyaṃ
 dārātmajāptadhanabandhujhaṣābhiyuktam ।
 aurvānalābhanijaroṣamanaṅgajālaṃ
 saṃsārasāgaramatītya hariṃ vrajāmi ॥ 61॥

61. I shall cross this gross and mundane world which is like a vast ocean of delusions and entanglements. This symbolic ocean has waves that represent the five great tormentors¹ that give a lot of trouble to a living being.

The many types of delusions and doubts that a creature faces in this world are like the huge whirlpools of this ocean.

The many types of relationships that one develops in this world, such as treating others as his wife, son, kith and kin, friends and companions, are like the symbolic fish, both large and small, in this ocean.

The anger that burns inside a living being is like the great fire, known as ‘Badavanala’, that burns under the ocean. [To wit, ‘anger’ is something that burns a creature silently from the inside without his being aware of its damage just like the subterranean fire that keeps the water of the ocean warm, and often causes the water to boil as is found in the case of hot-water springs.]

And lastly, Kaam, which refers to the many types of worldly passions and desires that keep a creature trapped in their grip, are like a huge net spread under the surface of the ocean to catch fish and other marine creatures.

How fortunate I am that I will now be able to get across such a formidable ‘ocean’ and find my way to Lord God who is known by the name of Sri Hari. [To wit, now I shall finally find liberation from all worldly entanglements, I shall break free from all worldly fetters, and I shall free myself from all shackles to attain eternal deliverance for myself. After dying at the hands of Lord Ram, my Atma will not have to come back again in this world.]’ (61)

[Note—¹The five ‘tormentors’ are the following: ‘Avidya’ = ignorance; ‘Asmita’ = pride, ego, vanity, hypocrisy; ‘Raag’ = attachment, infatuation; ‘Dwesh’ = animosity, jealousy, envy; and ‘Abhinivesh’ = fixed ideas, worldly determinations, worldly purposes.]

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे दशमः सर्गः ॥ १०॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde yuddhakāṇḍe daśamaḥ
 sargaḥ ॥ 10॥

Thus ends the conversation between Lord Shiva and Uma, his divine consort, as narrated in Canto 10 of Adhyatma Ramayan.

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Section 12.3: Geetawali Ramayan

In Tulsidas' classic narration of the Ramayana, a Book titled "Geetawali" (also known as Geetawali Ramayan), we read about Mandodari's entreaty with Ravana in its Lanka Kand, verse no. 1 as follows:-

मन्दोदरी-प्रबोध
राग मारु
(6/1)

मानु अजहू सिष परिहरि क्रोधु ।
पिय पूरो आयो अब काहि, कहु, करि रघुबीर-बिरोधु ॥ 1 ॥
जेहि ताडुका-सुबाहु मारि, मख राखि जनायो आपु ।
कौतुक ही मारीच नीच मिस प्रगट्यौ बिसिष-प्रतापु ॥ 2 ॥
सकल भूप बल गरब सहित तोर्यो कठोर सिवचापु ।
ब्याही जेहि जानकी जीति जग, हर्यौ परसुधर-दापु ॥ 3 ॥
कपट-काक साँसति-प्रसाद करि बिनु श्रम बध्यो बिराधु ।
खर-दूषन-त्रिसिरा-कबंध हति कियो सुखी सुर-साधु ॥ 4 ॥
एकहि बन बालि मार्यो जेहि, जो बल-उदधि अगाधु ।
कहु, धौं कंत कुसल बीती केहि किये राम-अपराधु ॥ 5 ॥
लाँघि न सके लोक-बिजयी तुम जासु अनुज-कृत-रेषु ।
उतरि सिंधु जार्यो प्रचारि पुर जाको दूत बिसेषु ॥ 6 ॥
कृपासिंधु, खल-बन-कृसानु सम, जस गावत श्रुति-सेषु ।
सोइ बिरुदैत बीर कोसलपति, नाथ ! समुझि जिय देषु ॥ 7 ॥
मुनि पुलस्य जस-मयंक महँ कत कलंक हटि होहि ।
और प्रकार उबार नहीं कहँ, मैं देख्यो जग जोहि ॥ 8 ॥
चलु, मिलु बेगि कुसल सादर सयि सहित अग्र करि मोहि ।
तुलसिदास प्रभु सरन-सबद सुनि अभय करैंगे तोहि ॥ 9 ॥

mandōdarī-prabōdha
rāga mārū
(6/1)

mānu ajahū siṣa parihari krōdhu.
piya pūrō āyō aba kāhi, kahu, kari raghubīra-birōdhu.. 1..
jēhi tāṛukā-subāhu māri, makha rākhi janāyō āpu.
kautuka hī mārīca nīca misa pragaṭyau bisīṣa-pratāpu.. 2..
sakala bhūpa bala garaba sahita tōryō kaṭhōra sivaṇcāpu.
byāhī jēhi jānakī jīti jaga, haryau parasudhara-dāpu.. 3..
kapaṭa-kāka sām̐sati-prasāda kari binu śrama badhyō birādhu.
khara-dūṣana-trisirā-kabandha hati kiyō sukhī sura-sādhu.. 4..
ēkahi bana bāli māryō jēhi, jō bala-udadhi agādhu.

kahu, dhaurñ kanta kusala bītī kēhi kiyē rāma-aparādhu.. 5..
 lāṁghi na sakē lōka-bijayī tuma jāsu anuja-kṛta-rēṣu.
 utari sindhu jāryō pracāri pura jākō dūta bisēṣu.. 6..
 kṛpāsindhu, khala-bana-kṛsānu sama, jasa gāvata śruti-sēṣu.
 sō'i birudaita bīra kōsalapati, nātha! samujhi jiya dēṣu.. 7..
 muni pulasya jasa-mayaṅka mahaṁ kata kalaṅka haṭhi hōhi.
 aura prakāra ubāra nahīm kahuṁ, mairñ dēkhyō jaga jōhi.. 8..
 calu, milu bēgi kusala sādara sayi sahita agra kari mōhi.
 tulasidāsa prabhu sarana-sabada suni abhaya karaingē tōhi.. 9..

Mandodari's Entreaty

Verse no. 6/1—[Mandodari was the chief queen of the demon king Ravana. She had always been wary of the haughty, cruel and unrighteous ways of her husband. Being very wise and prudent, she was extremely worried and full of consternation as she watched the alarming developments in Lanka since Hanuman had burnt it. She repeatedly tried to persuade her husband on different occasion to abandon his reckless and senseless behaviour and come to see reason, so that a devastating war can be avoided, albeit he wouldn't pay any heed to her, even calling her a coward, of showing typical womanish nature of being too unnecessarily concerned and affright at trifles that were virtually non-issues with him.

There are many instances in Tulsidas' books where we come across Mandodari's earnest request to Ravana to avoid the war and return Sita to her husband.

Refer: (a) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5/23, stanza no. 3; verse no. 5/24, stanza nos. 1-3; Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/1.

(b) Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/17—6/29.

(c) Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 18; Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 37.]

Mandodari beseeched Ravana must urgently and earnestly (at a time when Lord Ram's army had landed on the soil of Lanka, and war was imminent), 'My dear! It is yet not too late. Listen to my advice and bid farewell to anger. Dear, you tell me yourself, who has benefitted by rebelling and going against Lord Ram? (1).

He had manifested and spread his glory and fame by killing the demoness Tadka¹ and the demon Subahu² even in his pre-adolescent days³, had protected sage Vishwamitra's fire-sacrifice⁴, and showed the might of his arrow by throwing Marich 800 miles away by a headless shaft⁵ (2).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6; verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 6; verse no. 1/67, stanza no. 2; verse no. 1/74, stanza no. 3; verse no. 1/83, stanza no. 2.

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/60, stanza no. 3; Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 208 (where Lord Ram's father

says that the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, are of a tender age at the time when sage Vishwamitra had sought them for the protection of his fire sacrifice); Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 256 (where Sita's mother also reiterates the view that Lord Ram is merely an adolescent boy at the time of breaking the bow).

³Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/60, stanza no. 3; verse no. 1/66, stanza no. 3.

⁴Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6; verse no. 1/67, stanza no. 2; verse no. 1/74, stanza no. 3; verse no. 1/83, stanza no. 2.

⁵Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/67, stanza no. 2; Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 210.]

Then, he vanquished the pride of all the assembled knights, princes and kings by breaking the strong, sturdy bow of Lord Shiva, and married Sita as a symbol of conquering the world⁶, besides pacifying the haughty and angry sage Parasuram⁷ (3).

[⁶This incident refers to Lord Ram breaking the Bow of Lord Shiva at Janakpur to marry Sita, the daughter of king Janak. It is narrated in detail in (a) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/89—to 1/96; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Doha no. 264.

⁷When the Bow was broken, sage Parashuram, who was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, came angrily to punish the prince who had insulted his Lord, Shiva, by doing so. He confronted Lord Ram, and after a lot of acrimonious exchange of words with Laxman, Lord Ram finally prevailed upon him and calmed the sage down. Refer: (a) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 7; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

He (Lord Ram) first punished Jayant⁸ (who had pricked Sita with his beak and injured her to test the might of the Lord), and then, when the latter came and surrendered himself before the Lord, seeking forgiveness and protection by taking refuge at the Lord's holy feet, he forgave him.

Then, by slaying the demons Viraadh, Khar-Dusan, Trishara and Kabandh⁹, playfully and without much effort, the Lord brought about peace and happiness for the Gods and sages and hermits (4).

[⁸Jayant's story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2. Briefly, Jayant, who was the son of Indra, the king of gods, decided to test the might of Lord Ram. So with his wicked intentions he assumed the form of a crow and pricked at Sita's feet. Annoyed, Lord Ram picked up a reed and shot it at him like it were a head-less arrow. Jayant ran to all corners of the creation to hide and seek shelter, but this arrow followed him everywhere. Terrified out of his wits, he met sage Narad who advised him to seek pardon from Lord Ram if he wants to survive. Jayant came and surrendered to the Lord unconditionally, whereat the Lord granted him his life, but took out one of his eyes because the Lord's arrow could not go in vain.

⁹The killing of these four demons are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 7 (Viraadh); (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20 (Khar, Dushan and Trishira); and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 34 (Kabandh).]

Then, he killed Baali¹⁰ who was an ocean of strength.

Say, my dear husband! Who can ever imagine his well-being by offending one such as Lord Ram? (5).

[¹⁰Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8.]

Even you, who prides himself to be the conqueror of the world, could not cross the line marked by Laxman at the time of abducting Sita¹¹.

How durst you imagine in your foolish mind to face him (i.e. Lord Ram) whose one single messenger leapt across the ocean and burnt the whole city of Lanka from end to end (and you couldn't stop him) (6).

[¹¹When Sita had forced Laxman to go after Lord Ram when she heard someone calling out Laxman's name at the time the Lord had gone to bring the golden-deer, who was none else but the demon Marich deployed by Ravana to lure Lord Ram away so that he can kidnap Sita, Laxman had drawn a circle on the ground and had asked Sita not to step out of it. When Laxman was gone, Ravana appeared disguised as a mendicant, seeking some alms. He stood at some distance from this circle drawn by Laxman as he dare not go near it. When Sita stepped out of this circle in order to give this imposter mendicant the alms he had sought, Ravana immediately caught hold of her and made good his escape.

This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36.]

The Lord's glories and praises are sung by Sheshnath (the legendary Serpent with a thousand tongues) and Sruti (the ancient scriptures, so-called because they were transmitted by the oral tradition of hearing and teaching from one to the next generation) with the words "Merciful Lord; One who is like a fire for the forest of rascals, scoundrels and wretches (*kṛpāsindhu, khala-bana-kṛsānu sama*)".

Oh Lord! Think in your heart (before it's too late to make amends): for in all sooth, the Lord whom Sheshnath and the Sruti praise so much is the same Lord who is famed the world over and renowned for his valour, courage and strength, and is known as the great King of Kaushal (i.e. 'Lord Ram', the king of Ayodhya, which is also known as the kingdom of Kaushal) (7).

Why are you willingly, adamantly and foolishly proving yourself a sinful scar in the moon-like fame of the race of sage Pulsastya¹²? I have searched the world for all options, but have come to the conclusion that your welfare lies in no other way than this (as suggested by me). [To wit, the only way you can escape certain annihilation is to make peace with Lord Ram.]¹³ (8).

[¹²Ravana traced his lineage to sage Pulastya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 20.

The birth and lineage of Ravana in the family of sage Puslastya has been elaborately narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 23—61.

¹³Mandadori's entreaties as narrated in the present verse no. 6/1 of Geetawali find an echo in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 7.]

Hence, I finally plead before you, with the greatest of stress, sincerity and humility that I can muster, that it will be in your own benefit and welfare if you immediately proceed to meet Lord Ram, accompanied by Sita, and putting me in the front to guard your entourage from any harm. This is the only way out for you and your welfare. The

Lord shall make you fearless as soon as he hears the word “I have come to seek refuge” from your mouth¹⁴ (9).’

[¹⁴Mandadori pleads with Ravana to immediately surrender Sita to Lord Ram and bow his head before the Lord as a token of surrender if he wished for his good. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 6.]

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Section 12.4: Kavitawali Ramayan

In one of Goswami Tulsidas’ classical narrative of the divine story of Lord Ram, known as ‘Kavitawali Ramayan’, we read that when Mandodari learnt that Lord Ram’s army has landed in Lanka, she made an earnest plea to Ravana to abandon his hostile attitude towards the Lord and make peace with him. This conversation is narrated in Kavitawali Ramayan’s Lanka Kand, verse nos. 17-29.

In the following pages we shall read them and see how Mandodari tried to convince her husband to be reasonable and come to terms with ground realities by not entering into a war that would ruin the whole of the demon race. She pointed out to him how this was being fought on a wrong premise and for a wrong cause, how he was no match for the strength and abilities of Lord Ram and his formidable army, and what options are left to him to make peace.

कनकगिरिसुंग चढ़ि देखि मर्कटकटकु,
 बदत मंदोदरी परम भीता ।
 सहसभुज-मत्तगजराज-रनकेसरी
 परसुधर गर्बु जेहि देखि बीता ।।
 दास तुलसी समरसूर कोसलधनी,
 ख्याल ही बालि बलसालि जीता ।
 रे कंत! तून दंत गहि ‘सरन श्रीरामु’ कहि,
 अजहुँ एहि भाँति लै सौँपु सीता ।। 17 ।।

17. kanakagirisuṅga caḍhi dēkhi markṭakṭaku,
 badata mandōdarī parama bhītā.
 sahasabhuja-mattagajarāja-ranakēsari
 parasudhara garbu jēhi dēkhi bītā..
 dāsa tulasī samarasūra kōsaladhanī,
 khyāla hīm bāli balasāli jītā.
 rē kaṇṭa! ṭṇa danta gahi ‘sarana śrīrāmu’ kahi,
 ajahuṁ ēhi bhāṁti lai saumpu sītā..17..

Verse no. 6/17—Mounting the top of the ‘Mountain of Gold’, Mandodari beheld the army of monkeys and became terribly afraid and upset. She said to her husband Ravana, ‘Parashuram was very proud of his invincibility and strength, and he had even subdued Shahastrabahu (a demon with one thousand arms) in the battle-field just like a lion subdues an elephant. But even he (Parashuram) was himself subdued when he faced the Lord of Kaushal (Ram) of whom Tulsidas is a humble servant.

Look, the same Lord as arrived on the battlefield with immense strength and powerful force. Look, he had conquered the brave and strong Bali playfully (i.e. without effort). Oh dear husband! I advise that you should even now put a straw between your teeth and take Sita and surrender her to Sri Ram, pleading ‘I have come to take refuge before you’.

रे नीच ! मारीचु बिचलाइ, हति ताइका,
भंजि सिवचापु सुखु सबहि दीन्ह्यो ।
सहस दसचारि खल सहित खर-दूषनहि,
पैटै जमधाम, तैं तउ न चीन्ह्यो ।।
मैं जो कहौं, कंत ! सुनु मंतु भगवंतसों
बिमुख ह्वै बालि फलु कौन लीन्ह्यो ।
बीस भुज, दस सीस खीस गए तबहिं जब,
ईसके ईससों बैरु कीन्ह्यो ।।18।।

18. rē nīca! māricu bicalā'i, hati tāṛakā,
bhañji sivaçāpu sukhu sabahi dīnhyō.
sahasa dasacāri khala sahita khara-dūśanahi,
paiṭhai jamadhāma, taim ta'u na cīnhyō..
mair̥m jō kahaur̥m, kanta! sunu mantu bhagavantasōm
bimukha hvai bāli phalu kauna līnhyō.
bīsa bhuja, dasa sīsa khīsa ga'ē tabahir̥m jaba,
īsakē īsasōm bairu kīnhyō..18..

Verse no. 6/18—‘Oh you wicked and evil one! Have you still not recognised him who has punished Marich (by using a head-less arrow, he threw Marich beyond the ocean), killed demoness Tadka, gave pleasure to everyone by breaking the bow of Lord Shiva (at Janakpur) and then killed Khar-Dushan along with his 14 thousand strong army of demons?

Oh Lord! Listen to my advice. What fruit (benefit) did Bali get by opposing the Lord (God)? All your 10 heads and 20 arms were deemed to have been destroyed the moment you had decided to oppose and creat enmity with the Lord of Shiva (Sri Ram).’

बालि दलि, काल्हि जलजान पाषान किये,
कंत ! भगवंतु तैं तउ न चीन्हें ।
बिपुल बिकराल भट भालु-कपि काल-से,
संग तरु तुंग गिरिसुंग लीन्हें ।।
आइगो कोसलाधीसु तुलसीस जेंहि
छत्र मिस मौलि दस दूरि कीन्हें ।
ईस बकसीस जनि खीस करु, ईस! सुनु,
अजहुँ कुलकुसल बैदेहि दीन्हें ।।19।।

19. bāli dali, kāl'hi jalajāna pāsāna kiyē,
 kanta! bhagavantu tairṁ ta'u na cīnhēm.
 bipula bikarāla bhaṭa bhālu-kapi kāla-sē,
 saṅga taru tuṁga girisṁga līnhēm..
 ā'igō kōsalādhīsu tulasīsa jēnhi
 chatra misa mauli dasa dūri kīnhēm.
 īsa bakasīsa jani khīsa karu, īsa! sunu,
 ajahuṁ kulakusala baidēhi dīnhēm..19..

Verse no. 6/19—‘It happened just yesterday (i.e. recently) that he (Lord Ram) had slayed Bali and constructed a float (a floating bridge) of stones on the surface of the ocean.

Oh Lord! Still you do not recognise that he is not an ordinary human but a divine Lord (Bhagwan; literally meaning Lord). With him are numerous death-like ferocious bears and monkeys, carrying huge trees and large mountains (as armaments), and who had symbolically pierced your 10 heads when his single arrow had toppled your crowns¹.

Be warned. The same Lord of Tulsidas, Lord Sri Ram, has arrived. Oh Lord, listen. Do not destroy this gift (the kingdom of Lanka) which you have received from Lord Shiva. Still your clan's welfare can be safe-guarded by sending back Sita to Sri Ram.’

[Note—¹This falling of the crowns refer to an incident before the start of the war. Lord Ram observed that the gem-studded golden crown of Ravana glittered and dazzled as he sat on a high pedestal in the fort of Lanka. So the Lord shot an arrow which toppled all the crowns and came back to enter his quiver. This had made Ravana convulse and squirm in frustration, anger, humiliation and dismay.]

सैनके कपिन को को गनै, अबुद्वै
 महाबलबीर हनुमान जानी ।
 भूलिहै दस दिसा, सीस पुनि डोलिहै,
 कोपि रघुनाथु जब बान तानी ॥
 बालिहूँ गर्बु जिय माहिँ ऐसो कियो,
 मारि दहपट दियो जमकी घानी ।
 कहति मंदोदरी, सुनहि रावन! मतो,
 बेगि लै देहि बैदेहि रानी ॥20॥

20. sainakē kapina kō kō ganai, arbudai
 mahābalabīra hanumāna jānī.
 bhūlihai dasa disā, sīsa puni ḍōlihairṁ,
 kōpi raghunāthu jaba bāna tānī..
 bālihūṁ garbu jiya māhirṁ aisō kiyō,
 māri dahapaṭa diyō jamakī ghānīṁ.
 kahati mandōdarī, sunahi rāvana! matō,
 bēgi lai dēhi baidēhi rānī..20..

Verse no. 6/20—‘Who can count the number of monkeys in his army? Consider them equivalent to millions of brave Hanumans. When Sri Ram would mount his arrow on the bow angrily, you would forget about the 10 directions, (over which you have lordship) and your 10 heads would tremble in fear. Even Bali had boasted like you—

but he was killed by him (Ram), completely ruined and crushed in the crushing machine (literally, jaws) of death.'

Mandodari continues, 'Oh Ravana! Listen to my advice. Go and give Sita back to Lord Ram soon.'

गहनु उज्जारि, पुरु जारि, सुतु मारि तव,
कुसल गो कीसु बर बैरि जाको ।
दूसरो दूतु पनु रोपि कोपेउ सभाँ,
खर्ब कियो सर्बको, गर्बु थाको ।।
दासु तुलसी सभय बदत मयनंदिनी,
मंदमति कंत, सुनु मंतु म्हाको ।
तौलौ मिलु बेगि, नहि जौलौ रन रोष भयो
दासरथि बीर बिरुदैत बाँको ।।21 ।।

21. gahanu ujjāri, puru jāri, sutu māri tava,
kusala gō kīsu bara bairi jākō.
dūsarō dūtu panu rōpi kōpē'u sabhām̐,
kharba kiyō sarbakō, garbu thākō..
dāsu tulasī sabhaya badata mayanandini,
mandamati kanta, sunu mantu mhākō.
taulaur̐ milu bēgi, nahi jaulaur̐ rana rōśa bhayō
dāsarathi bīra birudaita bām̐kō..21..

Verse no. 6/21—'A single monkey (Hanuman) who came as a messenger of your enemy (Lord Ram) had ruined your Ashok garden, burnt your whole city, killed your son and went away unscathed. And his second messenger (Angad) made an angry vow in your court, humiliated you all and crushed your combined pride.'

Tulsidas says that Mandodari fearfully but earnestly pleaded with Ravana, 'Oh you foolish Lord! Listen to my council. Before the most valorous, valiant and brave Lord Ram becomes angry in the battle-field (i.e. before it is too late), you must go and meet him (to strike a compromise deal and avoid the calamitous war).'

काननु उजारि, अच्छु मारि, धारि धूरि कीन्हीं,
नगरु प्रजार्यो, सो बिलोक्यो बलु कीसको ।
तुम्हैं बिद्यमान जातुधानमंडलीमें कपि
कोपि रोप्यो पाउ, सो प्रभाउ तुलसीसको ।।
कंत ! सुनु मंतु कुल-अंतु किउँ अंत हानि,
हातो कीजै हीयतें भरोसो भुज बीसको ।
तौलौ मिलु बेगि जौलौ चापु न चढ़ायो राम,
रोषि बानु काळ्यौ न दलैया दससीसको ।।22 ।।

22. kānanu ujāri, acchu māri, dhāri dhūri kīnhīm,
nagaru prajāryō, sō bilōkyō balu kīsakō.
tumhaim̐ bidyamāna jātudhānamaṇḍalīmēm̐ kapi
kōpi rōpyō pā'u, sō prabhā'u tulasīsakō..
kanta! sunu mantu kula-antu ki'ēm̐ anta hāni,
hātō kijai hīyatēm̐ bharōsō bhuja bīsakō.
taulaur̐ milu bēgi jaulaur̐ cāpu na caṛhāyō rāma,

rōśi bānu kāḍhyau na dalaiyā dasasīsakō..22..

Verse no. 6/22—‘You have already seen the strength, courage and valour of a single monkey (Hanuman)—he single handedly ruined your garden, killed Akshay Kumar and crushed his army and burnt the city. Even while you were present, the second monkey (Angad) had angrily and defiantly planted his foot firmly in the assembly of demons and no one could shake it—it was all the glorious effect of Sri Ram. Oh Lord! Listen to my advice—the destruction of the demon clan will be harmful to all (this shows that there were many inhabitants in Lanka, in the army, palace service, mistresses, concubines that were not demons by birth).

Hence, you should now stop depending (relying) upon the strength of your 10-arms, and before Sri Ram mounts his bow angrily and resolutely, and his arrows pierce your 10 heads, you should soon go and meet him (to surrender and make peace).’

‘पवनको पूतु देख्यो दूतु बीर बाँकुरो, जो
 बंक गढु लंक-सो ढकाँ ढकेलि ढहिगो ।
 बालि बलसालिको सो काल्हि दापु दलि कोपि,
 रोप्यो पाउ चपरि, चमूको चाउ चाहिगो ।।
 सोई रघुनाथु कपि साथ पाथनाथु बाँधि,
 आयो नाथ! भागे तैं खिरिरे खेह खाहिगो ।
 ‘तुलसी’ गरबु तजि मिलिबेको साजु सजि,
 देहि सिय, न तौ पिय! पाइमाल जाहिगो ।।23 ।।

23. ‘pavanakō pūtu dēkhyō dūtu bīra bāṁkurō, jō
 baṅka gaṛhu laṅka-sō ḍhakāṁ ḍhakēli ḍhāhigō.
 bāli balasālikō sō kāl’hi dāpu dali kōpi,
 rōpyō pā’u capari, camūkō cā’u cāhigō..
 sō’ī raghunāthu kapi sātha pāthanāthu bāṁdhi,
 āyō nātha! bhāgē tēm khiriri khēha khāhigō.
 ‘tulasī’ garabu taji milibēkō sāju saji,
 dēhi siya, na tau piya! pā’imāla jāhigō..23..

Verse no. 6/23—‘You have already seen his messenger, the matchless warrior Pawansut (sun of wind-God; Hanuman) who had demolished the invincible fort such as Lanka by a mere push, as it were. [This refers to the burning of Lanka].

Son of the brave Bali (Angad) had returned safely after he had angrily cast his foot firmly on the ground (which you couldn’t shake) and thereby crush your haughtiness and ego. Now the same Sri Ram (whose messengers did what they did as described above) has tamed and crossed the ocean along with his monkeys and landed on the soil of Lanka.

So, oh Lord, if you contemplate on running away now, you’ll have to bite dust literally. Therefore, abandon pride before it’s too late and prepare to meet him, and give Sita back. Otherwise, oh dear, you will be ruined.’

उदधि अपार उतरत नहिँ लागी बार
 केसरीकुमारु सो अदंड-कैसो डाँड़िगो ।
 बाटिका उजारि, अच्छु, रच्छकनि मारि भट
 भारी भारी राउरेके चाउर-से काँड़िगो ।।

‘तुलसी’ तिहारें बिद्यमान जुबराज आजु
कोपि पाउ रोपि, सब छूछे कै कै छाँड़िगो।
कहेकी न लाज, पिय! आजहूँ न आए बाज,
सहित समाज गढु राँड-कैसो भाँड़िगो।।24।।

24. udadhi apāra utarata nahim̐ lāgī bāra
kēsarikumāru sō adaṇḍa-kaisō ḍāmḍigō.
bāṭikā ujāri, acchu, racchakani māri bhaṭa
bhārī bhārī rā'urēkē cā'ura-sē kāmḍigō..
'tulasī' tihārēm̐ bidyamāna jubarāja āju
kōpi pā'u rōpi, saba chūchē kai kai chāmḍigō.
kahēkī na lāja, piya! ājahūṁ na ā'ē bāja,
sahita samāja garhu rāmḍa-kaisō bhāmḍigō..24..

Verse no. 6/24—‘See! That son of Kesari (Hanuman) crossed the vast ocean in no time and punished you and went back scot-free. He had laid to waste your Ashok garden, killed Akshay Kumar and other guards, and had beaten to pulp many of your great warriors; and even today, Angad had angrily planted his foot on the ground in your presence and left you all hollow (i.e. left all your boastful claims of strength and valour sound hollow).

Oh dear! You don't have any shame! You still do not learn (or wake-up). Today Angad has thoroughly inspected all nooks and corners of the fort as if it was a prostitute's den, and you couldn't stop him!’

जाके रोष-दुसह-त्रिदोष-दाह दूरि कीन्है,
पैअत न छत्री-खोज खोजत खलकमें।
माहिषमतीको नाथ साहसी सहस बाहु,
समर-समर्थ नाथ! हेरिए हलकमें।।
सहित समाज महाराज सो जहाजराजु
बूढ़ि गयो जाके बल-बारिधि-छलकमें।
टूटत पिनाककें मनाक बाम रामसे, ते
नाक बिनु भए भृगुनायकु पलकमें।।25।।

25. jākē rōśa-dusaha-tridōśa-dāha dūri kīnhē,
pai'ata na chatrī-khōja khōjata khalakamēm̐.
māhiśamatikō nātha sāhasī sahasa bāhu,
samara-samartha nātha! hēri'ē halakamēm̐..
sahita samāja mahārāja sō jahājarāju
būḍi gayō jākē bala-bāridhi-chalakamēm̐.
ṭūṭata pinākakēm̐ manāka bāma rāmasē, tē
nāka binu bha'ē bhṛgunāyaku palakamēm̐..25..

Verse no. 6/25—(Referring to Parashuram's defeat at the hands of Sri Ram at Janakpur, Mandodari says):- 'No Kshatriyas could be found on this earth due to the wrath of his (Parashuram's) intolerable anger; oh Lord! Just think in your heart—how courageous was Sahastrabaahu, the king of Mahishmatipur. But oh Lord, that great ship-like Sahastrabaahu had sunk, along with his kin, in the ocean of Parashuram's strength. [That is, even though Sahastrabaahu was the strongest, invincible and most formidable king and warrior of his time, he could not face the fury of Parashuram and

got vanquished by the latter along with his kith and kin. No one but Parashuram was able to subdue him. I (Mandodari) wish to tell you (Ravana) this thing to emphasise that Parashuram was no ordinary warrior, and he too was as proud of his valour and strength of arms as unfortunately you are. But do you not know what happened to Parashuram? Well—] It was the same Parashuram who had lost all his fame and reputation as an invincible warrior with valour and strength of arm that knew no barriers when Lord Sri Ram became slightly stern with him at the time of breaking of the bow (at Janakpur) so that finally Parashuram buckled in like a humble straw (and whereas he had come angrily determined to punish the Lord for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva, he not only surrendered meekly and bowed before Lord Ram but also gave him his own bow with which he had conquered the entire world earlier)?'

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 6 which also specifically refers to this episode of Sahastrabahu getting killed by Parashuram.

Mandodari alludes to the incident that occurred at the time of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita where the condition set for the marriage was the breaking of an old and worn-out bow of Shiva that was kept with her father king Janak. None of the assembled competing kings and princes could break it, individually or collectively. Then Lord Ram had very easily broken the bow as if was a sport. However, its breaking annoyed Parashuram when he got wind of it because he took it as an affront to Shiva, his patron god. Hence, Parashuram came to panting and huffing to the venue to take revenge and kill the offender. At the venue, he had jumped and yelled, but could actually do nothing more than that, conceding that no matter how hard he has tried his hand holding the battle axe refuses to oblige him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 280).

As it usually happens with fire and anger, over time when their fury is spent they calm down! So, finally Parashuram too calmed down like a punctured balloon and meekly surrendered before Lord Ram and asked for forgiveness. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

Mandodari has cited this instance in order to persuade her stubborn husband who seemed to hell-bent on confrontation with Lord Ram, thinking that no one is stronger and more powerful than him. Ravana told Mandodari that he has conquered gods and jailed them, so what do ordinary humans and monkeys count? Ravana's boast has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 8.]

कीन्ही छेनी छत्री बिनु छेनिप-छपनिहार,
कठिन कुठार पानि बीर-बानि जानि कै।
परम कृपाल जो नृपाल लोकपालन पै,
जब धनुहाई है मन अनुमानि कै।।
नाकमें पिनाक मिस बामता बिलोकि राम
रोक्यो परलोक लोक भारी भ्रमु भानि कै।
नाइ दस माथ महि, जोरि बीस हाथ, पिय!
मिलिए पै नाथ! रघुनाथ पहिचानि कै।।26।।

26. kīnhī chōnī chatrī binu chōnipa-chapanihāra,
kaṭhina kuṭhāra pāni bīra-bāni jāni kai.
parama kṛpāla jō nṛpāla lōkapālana pai,

jaba dhanuhā'ī hvaihai mana anumāni kai..
 nākamēm pināka misa bāmatā bilōki rāma
 rōkyō paralōka lōka bhārī bhramu bhāni kai.
 nā'i dasa mātha mahi, jōri bīsa hātha, piya!
 mili'ē pai nātha! raghunātha pahicāni kai..26..

Verse no. 6/26—(Referring to Parashuram, Mandodari continues):- 'He is the slayer of kings and had cleared the earth of all kings many a times (i.e. he had killed all the kings repeatedly). He has a hard and strong battle axe in his hands, and his temperament is like that of a warrior (though his external appearance is that of a hermit).

When Lord Sri Ram weighed the pros and cons of a confrontation with him, he realised that it would be disastrous for the world. [This is because, for one, Parashuram was in the form of a hermit and fighting with a hermit would send a very negative signal to the world, and secondly since Parashuram won't be able to face Lord Ram he would vent his anger on others, running amock and killing all those around, specially the thousands of kings and princes who had collected for the marriage ceremony at Janakpur).

So, Lord Ram showed mercy on the kings and guardians of the world (by not engaging Parashuram in a duel). Further, when Sri Ram saw that he (Parashuram) had his nose wrinkled and twitching menacingly because of the breaking of the bow, then in order to crush (remove) his (Parashuram's) ego and pride (that he was invincible), Sri Ram stopped his (Parashuram's) way to heaven. [That is, if Lord Ram would have per-chance fought and killed Parashuram in a one-to-one fight, it was sure that Parashuram's soul would have found liberation from his gross body and gone to heaven. But the Lord wanted him to live and regret and face ignominy for being unduly proud and haughty. So the Lord excused but extracted all his mystical powers in a token manner when Parashuram surrendered his own bow to the Lord, bowed his head before him and went to the mountain to do Tapa to regain his lost glory. This has been clearly affirmed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

So, oh dear! Recognise that he is the same Sri Ram (as being the Lord God) and put all your 10 heads on the ground before him, fold all your 20 hands in submission and meet him (i.e., prostrate yourself before him and ask for forgiveness).'

कह्यो मतु मातुल, बिभीषनहूँ बार-बार,
 आँचरु पसार पिय! पायँ लै-लै हौं परी।
 बिदित बिदेहपुर नाथ! भृगुनाथगति,
 समय सयानी कीन्ही जैसी आइ गौं परी।।
 बायस, बिराध, खर, दूषन, कबंध, बालि,
 बैर रघुबीरकें न पूरी काहूकी परी।
 कंत बीस लोयन बिलोकिए कुमंतफलु,
 ख्याल लंका लाई कपि राँड़की-सी झोपरी।।27।।

27. kahyō matu mātula, bibhīśanahūṁ bāra-bāra,
 āṁcaru pasāra piya! pāyaṁ lai-lai haum parī.
 bidita bidēhapura nātha! bhṛgunāthagati,
 samaya sayānī kīnhī jaisī ā'i gaum parī..

bāyasa, birādha, khara, dūsana, kabandha, bāli,
baira raghubīrakēm na pūrī kāhūkī parī.
kanta bīsa lōyana bilōki'ē kumantaphalu,
khyāla laṅkā lāī kapi rāmṛakī-sī jhōparī..27..

Verse no. 6/27—‘Your maternal uncle (Marich) advised you; Vibhishan repeatedly asked you, and oh dear, even I had begged you again and again, falling at your feet, that you should not oppose God.

Oh Lord! What was the fate of Parashuram at Janakpur is evident to all. [Hence you should not hesitate thinking that it would be inappropriate to surrender now after first creating enmity]. He (Parashuram) was clever enough to adapt himself to changed circumstances (and wise enough to surrender before Sri Ram). Jayant (the crow), Viradh, Khar, Dushan, Bali, Kabandh—none succeeded by opposing Lord Ram.

Oh Lord! The results of your evil thoughts are there before your twenty eyes to see that the monkey (Hanuman) playfully burnt Lanka as if it was a destitute whore's hut.'

राम सों सामु किउँ नितु है हितु, कोमल काज न कीजिए टाँटे।
आपनि सूझि कहौं,पिय! बूझिए, जूझिबे जोगु न ठहरु, नाटे।।
नाथ! सुनी भृगुनाथकथा, बलि बालि गए चलि बातके साँटें।
भाइ बिभीषनु जाइ मिल्यो, प्रभु आइ परे सुनि सायर काँटें।।28।।

28. rāma sōm sāmu ki'ēṁ nitu hai hitu, kōmala kāja na kiji'ē ṭāṁṭhē.
āpani sūjhi kahaum,piya! būjhi'ē, jūjhibē jōgu na ṭhāharu, nāṭhē..
nātha! sunī bhr̥gunāthakathā, bali bāli ga'ē cali bātakē sāṁṭhēm.
bhā'i bibhīśanu jā'i milyō, prabhu ā'i parē suni sāyara kāmṭhēm..28..

Verse no. 6/28—‘It is always beneficial to make-up (i.e., to befriend) with Sri Ram. Do not unnecessarily make difficult what is so simple a task. Oh dear! I tell you what I think is proper. Understand and realise it properly that this is the opportunity to withdraw, and not a proper place and circumstance to fight (i.e., make war). Oh Lord! You have already heard the story of Brighunath (Parashuram). The strong Bali ruined himself due to his ego. Your brother Vibhishan has also joined him (Sri Ram). Oh Lord! I hear that he has crossed the ocean and pitched his camp near the sea-shore.'

पालिबेको कपि-भालु-चमू जम काल करालहुको पहरी है।
लंक-से बंक महा गढ़ दुर्गम ढाहिबे-दाहिबेको कहरी है।।
तीतर-तोम तमीचर-सेन समीरको सूनु बड़ो बहरी है।
नाथ! भलो रघुनाथ मिलें रजनीचर-सेन हिउँ हहरी है।।29।।

29. pālibēkō kapi-bhālu-camū jama kāla karālahukō paharī hai.
laṅka-sē baṅka mahā gaṛha durgama ḍhāhibē-dāhibēkō kaharī hai..
tītara-tōma tamīcara-sēna samīrakō sūnu baṛō baharī hai.
nātha! bhalō raghunātha milēm rajanīcara-sēna hi'ēṁ haharī hai..29..

Verse no. 6/29—‘Oh Lord! The son of Wind-God (Hanuman) can protect the army of monkeys and bears even against Yam and the terrible Kaal (God of death and hell, and Death itself), he is very mischievous (i.e., active, restless) in destroying the impregnable fort of Lanka. He is like a huge falcon for destroying the partridge-like army of demons.

Oh Lord! It is wise to meet and make friendship with Sri Ram now, for the demon army’s morale has been broken and it’s shuddering in its heart.’

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Chapter 13

War Parleys in both the camps of Lord Ram and Ravana; Lord Ram sends Angad as an Emissary of Peace to avoid the Destructive War.

After the news arrived that Lord Ram and his great army of monkeys and bears have landed on the soil of Lanka, and soon after meeting Mandodari who failed in her first attempt to persuade Ravana to abandon his bellicose attitude and make peace with Lord Ram in order to avoid a calamitous war, Ravana went back to attend his court and consult his ministers about the next course of action. The majority of his courtiers spoke like what sycophants and yes-men would do, i.e. to speak what Ravana wished to hear—which was to boast of their own powers and strength, to treat the opponent with utter contempt as being totally incompetent and impotent against the might of the demon warriors, and therefore to rubbish all talks of surrender. But one of sons of Ravana boldly faced his father, and like Mandodari he tried to dissuade him from entering into a war with an adversary who was much stronger and powerful than the combined force of the demon race, and against whom Ravana has no chance of obtaining victory. But Ravana wouldn’t listen.

He angrily rebuked his son, and dismissing the court he went as usual to attend an evening programme of dance and music, as if nothing bothered him. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 8— to Doha no. 10.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram too was in consultation with his ministers on Mt. Subel. From this vantage point the Lord and his companions could see and hear the light and sound of Ravana’s programme being held in the distance in the city of Lanka. The Lord’s ministers were amazed at this fascinating sight which indicated that their enemy, the demon king Ravana, was not at all worried about the impending invasion, implying that he had some secret and dangerous plan which made him so incredulously confident of victory. So therefore, in order to instill confidence in his own army, as well as to warn Ravana that he should be ashamed of himself that he wants to enjoy sensual pleasures at a time when war is looming right at his doorstep, that if by a boisterous show of music and dance he wishes to convey the message that he is not

afraid of Lord Ram's strength and powers and abilities, treating the Lord with utter contempt as being incompetent and no match against his might and majesty, the Lord shot an arrow in the direction from where the light and sound came.

This arrow shot down Ravana's crowns, royal umbrella and other paraphernalia which fell to the ground. This greatly embarrassed the demon king and scared his courtiers, but he soon recovered his composure and acted defiantly, saying it was a non-issue because he lost his balance due to some reason. He dismissed the court and asked them to go and sleep peacefully, and forget what had happened.

This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.

The next morning, Lord Ram collected his advisors and sought their opinion about the best course of action to be followed. It was decided that a last attempt should be made to avoid the war, and the Lord readily conceded as he is so merciful and gracious that he wished to give all possible chances to Ravana to make peace and desist from a bloody conflict. It was decided to send Angad, the monkey prince, as Lord Ram's emissary to Ravana, with a clear mandate that all attempts should be made to convince the demon king to return Sita and end hostility. Angad's mission failed; it ended in an acrimonious note with Angad humiliating Ravana and all his chief warriors in full open court, which resulted in demoralizing the demons.

Angad thereafter triumphantly returned to Lord Ram, paving the way for the start of the war. This episode—of Angad being sent as an emissary and the heated verbal duel that took place between him and Ravana, culminating in Angad humiliating Ravana and putting him to shame by being unable to move Angad's feet from the ground as a bet of losing or winning the impending war—is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35-a.

This Chapter is divided into two Sections to enable us to read these episodes from (i) Ram Charit Manas, and (ii) Geetawali Ramayan as follows:-

Section 13.1 Ram Charit Manas, sub-sections 13.1.1—13.1.3
Section 13.2 Geetawali Ramayan

Section 13.1: Ram Charit Manas

(a) Sub-section 13.1.1: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Doha no. 10:-

सभाँ आइ मंत्रिन्ह तेहिं बूझा । करब कवन बिधि रिपु सैं जूझा ॥ ७ ॥
कहहिं सचिव सुनु निसिचर नाहा । बार बार प्रभु पूछहु काहा ॥ ८ ॥
कहहु कवन भय करिअ बिचारा । नर कपि भालु अहार हमारा ॥ ९ ॥

sabhāṃ ā'i mantrin̄ha tēhiṃ būjhā. karaba kavana bidhi ripu saim̄ jūjhā. 7.
 kahahiṃ saciva sunu n̄isicara nāhā. bāra bāra prabhu pūchahu kāhā. 8.
 kahahu kavana bhaya kari'a bicārā. nara kapi bhālu ahāra hamārā. 9.

Ravana went to his royal court where all his advisors and courtiers had assembled. He asked them how the war is to be fought; what strategy is to be adopted and how the army is to be deployed¹. (7)

All the ministers answered unanimously, in one voice, 'Oh the king of the demons (n̄isicara nāhā)! Listen: Why are you (so worried or confused that you are) repeatedly asking the same thing again²? (8)

To speak the truth, pray think and tell us what is there to be so scared for by us—because we are accustomed to devouring both the human beings and the monkeys; they are like fodder for us. [Is anyone afraid of his own food? So what is there to worry? We are hungry, and we shall devour the enemy like one munches one's meal.] (9)

[Note—¹We are by now acquainted with Ravana's character that he was not ready to heed any advice; he would not listen to anybody. So then what was the need to consult his advisors regarding the war? Well, there are three apparent reasons:

One is that he wished to ascertain who amongst them was totally committed and devoted to his cause, and who was in two minds.

Second, when the news of Lord Ram building the bridge and landing in Lanka had arrived a little while ago, he couldn't hide his astonishment and alarm (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 5). Then, his wife Mandodari had left him more uncertain of the future by her own entreaty asking him to abandon his hostile attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8). Both these things had left him confused and in a dilemma. Normally he would make his own decisions, but now his self-confidence was so much shaken and he was so confounded that he wasn't able to think coherently and cogently on his own. Therefore, he wished to take in the view of others so as to formulate a proper strategy for the impending war.

Third, he wished to impress upon his commanders and ministers that he has full faith in them, that he trusts them, that he gives their opinions great value and importance, that this war is to be fought jointly by all the demons, and that he is confident that they will be his faithful allies.

²Earlier you had asked us about our opinion when the news arrived that the army of Lord Ram has assembled on the other side of the ocean, and was preparing to cross it. At that time too we had told you that there is nothing to worry—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-9 that precede Doha no. 37.

To wit, why are you so worried that you do not know what our answer would be? Don't you know that we have faced such situations many times in the past, when we had launched attack on the gods or when some other enemy had attacked us? Have we ever felt afraid in the face of battle; have we ever had second thoughts about fighting our enemy boldly and bravely till he is completely vanquished? So what's new now that has made you doubt what our answer would be?]

दो०. सब के बचन श्रवन सुनि कह प्रहस्त कर जोरि ।
नीति बिरोध न करिअ प्रभु मंत्रिन्ह मति अति थोरि ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

saba kē bacana śravana suni kaha prahasta kara jōri.
nīti birōdha na kari'a prabhu mantrinha mati ati thōri. 8.

When Prahast heard what others had said, he stood up with his joined palms as a sign of prayerful submission before Ravana (because he did not agree with the advice given by the courtiers). He said, 'Oh Lord, you should not do anything that is not proper and against the laws of propriety. Your ministers are all ill-witted and they have a low intellect. (Doha no. 8)

[Note—Prahast was Ravana's son—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

चौ०. कहहिं सचिव सठ ठकुरसोहाती । नाथ न पूर आव एहि भाँती ॥ १ ॥
बारिधि नाघि एक कपि आवा । तासु चरित मन महुँ सबु गावा ॥ २ ॥
छुधा न रही तुम्हहि तब काहू । जारत नगरु कस न धरि खाहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahahim saciva saṭha ṭhakurasōhātī. nātha na pūra āva ēhi bhāntī. 1.
bāridhi nāghi ēka kapi āvā. tāsu carita mana mahum̐ sabu gāvā. 2.
chudhā na rahī tumhahi taba kāhū. jārata nagaru kasa na dhari khāhū. 3.

They are unable to grasp the gravity of the situation, and are speaking things which you wish to hear, like true sycophants and flatterers usually do, not which is good for you. But my Lord beware, such hollow talk will not be of any help to you when you have to face hard ground realities. (1)

One single monkey had come here by crossing the mighty ocean. His deeds were so marvellous and astounding that everyone here remembers them secretly in his heart, and even speak of them in private (as they are terrified to talk of it openly)¹. (2)

Why, weren't anyone of you hungry then that you couldn't grab and devour him (Hanuman) when he was burning Lanka²? (3)

[Note—¹To wit, what Hanuman had done here in Lanka is talk of the town; everyone speaks of it in a hushed tone and in private discussions because they are scared you might hear them speak of a subject that they fear you will not like to hear about. But that does not mean that anyone has forgotten about what Hanuman had done to Lanka.

²You all boast of not worrying about the monkeys and humans as they are staple food of demons (as said in Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 8 herein above). Well then, if this is the case then was no one hungry to catch hold of Hanuman and eat him

up to help save our city from being burnt to ashes? Why do you boast now and put yourselves to shame?]

सुनत नीक आगें दुख पावा । सचिवन अस मत प्रभुहि सुनावा ॥ ४ ॥
 जेहिं बारीस बँधायउ हेला । उतरेउ सेन समेत सुबेला ॥ ५ ॥
 सो भनु मनुज खाब हम भाई । बचन कहहिं सब गाल फुलाई ॥ ६ ॥

sunata nika āgēm dukha pāvā. sacivana asa mata prabhuhi sunāvā. 4.
 jēhim bārīsa baṁdhāya'u hēlā. utarē'u sēna samēta subēlā. 5.
 sō bhanu manuja khāba hama bhā'ī. bacana kahahim saba gāla phulā'ī. 6.

These flattering ministers have given your lordship an advice that seems so reassuring and pleasant to hear at its face value, but which would give you nothing but trouble and grief later on in the long run. (4)

He (i.e. Lord Ram) has been able to tame the mighty ocean as if it was a mere sport for him, and now he has landed on Mt. Subel with his large and formidable army. (5)

It is such an irony that now your ministers boast with a loud mouth by saying that they will eat this gentleman along with his army!¹ (6)

[Note—¹Well, will you tell me what were they doing while the bridge was being constructed, what were they doing when the enemy's army was crossing it, what were they doing when Lord Ram and his army landed on the shores of Lanka, and why could none of the demons could stop the march of the army from the shore and up Mt. Subel? Even a blind man can see through this airy talk and loud bluster that is hollow from the inside.]

तात बचन मम सुनु अति आदर । जनि मन गुनहु मोहि करि कादर ॥ ७ ॥
 प्रिय बानी जे सुनहिं जे कहहीं । ऐसे नर निकाय जग अहहीं ॥ ८ ॥
 बचन परम हित सुनत कठोरे । सुनहिं जे कहहिं ते नर प्रभु थोरे ॥ ९ ॥

tāta bacana mama sunu ati ādara. jani mana gunahu mōhi kari kādara. 7.
 priya bānī jē sunahim jē kahahim. aisē nara nikāya jaga ahahim. 8.
 bacana parama hita sunata kaṭhōrē. sunahim jē kahahim tē nara prabhu
 thōrē. 9.

My dear father (tāta)! Pay close attention to my words (advice), and don't think me to a coward or scared of anything. (7)

There are lots and lots of people who speak what is pleasant for the other person to hear, and similarly there is no dearth of people who like to hear only sweet things being told to them, things that they like to hear. (8)

But there are not many people who would like to speak or hear things that would seem unpleasant to hear or speak of, but are actually the hard truth and good for all.

[To wit, truth is often a bitter pill to ingest, but it is like a good medicine for everyone. Things that may initially seem harsh to hear may actually be good in the long run for both the speaker and the hearer. Truly, there are not many people who would gather courage to speak the truth, and similarly there are not many people who would calmly hear things that are unpleasant to hear but are meant for their own good in the long run.] (9)

प्रथम बसीठ पठउ सुनु नीती । सीता देइ करहु पुनि प्रीती ॥ १० ॥

prathama basīṭha paṭha'u sunu nīṭi. sītā dē'i karahu puni prīṭi. 10.

Now, listen to what is the proper thing for you to do: first send an emissary (to Lord Ram, conveying your desire to make peace), then send Sita back to the Lord, and finally make a treaty of peace, harmony and friendship with him. (10)

दो०. नारि पाइ फिरि जाहिं जौं तौ न बढाइअ रारि ।

नाहिं त सन्मुख समर महि तात करिअ हठि मारि ॥ ९ ॥

dōhā.

nāri pā'i phiri jāhim jaum tau na baḍhā'i'a rāri.

nāhim ta sanmukha samara mahi tāta kari'a haṭhi māri. 9.

If he (Lord Ram) returns after getting his wife back then it would be good for all and the end of the matter. If on the other hand he becomes ambitious and wants to conquer Lanka then you must face him boldly and gallantly in the battle-field, thrashing him without the slightest remorse and breaking his army to smithereens (because then you will be fully justified to do so). (Doha no. 9)

[Note—Any neutral observer would agree with Prahas't's advice; what he told Ravana is the most appropriate thing to do. The reason is discussed in a note appended to verse no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. यह मत जौं मानहु प्रभु मोरा । उभय प्रकार सुजसु जग तोरा ॥ १ ॥

सुत सन कह दसकंठ रिसाई । असि मति सठ केहिं तोहि सिखाई ॥ २ ॥

अबहीं ते उर संसय होई । बेनुमूल सुत भयहु घमोई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

yaha mata jaum mānahu prabhu mōrā. ubhaya prakāra sujasa jaga tōrā. 1.

suta sana kaha dasakaṇṭha risāī. asi mati saṭha kēhim tōhi sikhāī. 2.

abāhim tē ura sansaya hōī. bēnumūla suta bhayahu ghamōī. 3.

Oh my Lord; if you agree to this advice of mine then you will have glory and good fame in either of two situations¹.

[To wit, you will be appreciated in the world for your goodwill gesture of returning your enemy's wife and proposing peace to avoid a bloody war, and in case Lord Ram refuses your proposals then it will be good for you, for then the whole blame would fall squarely on the shoulders of your enemy, and you will be absolved of any misadventure that culminated in a destructive war. In the second scenario however, you will be justified to fight and crush your enemy mercilessly, beating the blue out of him, which you and your ministers boast of doing.]' (1)

The ten-necked (and therefore ten-headed) Ravana (*dasakanṭha*) became very angry at his son and sternly rebuked him, saying, 'Oh you stupid rascal; who has taught you to think this way?' (2)

You have started having doubts in the very beginning, when there is no action on the ground as yet. My son, you appear to be like a prickly plant that grows at the root of a bamboo tree (that destroys the entire cluster of bamboos).

[To wit, you have brought shame and a blot on the valour and glory of the entire demon race, and more specifically on my family by speaking like a scared coward who is terrified of facing an enemy in the battle-field, and therefore tries to cook up some excuse to avoid a battle to save his skin. Woe to you; shame to you. You have blackened my face with such a cowardly and reprehensible approach towards an enemy who has invaded our land, something I had never ever expected from my own son.]² (3)

[Note—¹What does Prahast mean that Ravana would gain good fame and acquire glory if he follows the advice given by him in Doha no. 9 herein above?

The answer is this: Since at present Ravana is at fault because he has abducted a chaste and loyal wife of another person who has the full right to free her from the clutches of her abductor by trying his best, which incidentally involves fighting a war since the lady's kidnapper refuses to relent and give her back to her husband, the blame for the ignominy, the bloodshed and the devastation that the war is sure to invite will lie squarely on Ravana's shoulders.

If on the other hand he returns Sita back to her husband Lord Ram, and takes the initiative of making peace by sending an emissary with a message of this intent, and then even after this his so-called enemy remains aggressive and hostile by declaring that he would invade Lanka and kill all the demons, then in this situation Ravana would be justified to defend himself and his race against an invader. In this case, the blame for fighting the war unnecessarily and its attendant horrors which could have been easily avoided would go to Lord Ram, and the world would denounce him instead of condemning Ravana. It's as plain and simple as that.

But unfortunately Ravana did not listen to his son Prahast. Instead of appreciating Prahast's wisdom and prudence, Ravana lost his temper and lambasted him for showing cowardice in the face of the enemy, and for being a shameful blot on the demon race and on the family of its king.

²Ravana's angry outburst at Prahast is in sharp contrast with the calm and docile way he reacted when Mandodari, his wife, too tried to persuade him to end confrontation with Lord Ram on four occasions, the last being just a while ago (apropos: Ram

Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8).

Probably Prahast's advice was ill-timed as it came when his father was already under immense emotional stress after what Mandodari had said to him just a little while before. Prahast's words therefore provoked him, and made him feel cornered and guilty; this unleashed his suppressed anger which he had somehow managed to keep contained before Mandodari.

As we have already observed earlier in the context of Mandodari, one of the primary reasons why Ravana did not show his anger at her while displaying utter contempt at all others who had tried to advise him on the same line as she did, is that while Mandodari's talking was in private, all the others had spoken in public. Ravana took this public pointing out of his faults as an affront to his majesty and authority, and surely this would annoy any king worth his name, for no king would approve that his own courtiers and family members criticise him or chastise him in front of others, in full public view.]

सुनि पितु गिरा परुष अति घोरा । चला भवन कहि बचन कठोरा ॥ ४ ॥
हित मत तोहि न लागत कैसें । काल बिबस कहूँ भेषज जैसें ॥ ५ ॥

suni pitu girā paruṣa ati ghōrā. calā bhavana kahi bacana kaṭhōrā. 4.
hita mata tōhi na lāgata kaisēm. kāla bibasa kahuṁ bhēṣaja jaisēm. 5.

When he (Prahast) heard his father speak so harshly to him, he felt exasperated himself and decided to go home. But before that, he retorted at his father in a sharp tone --- (4)

‘An advice that is for your own good is not liked by you just as a person who is in the throes of death cannot be cured even by the best of medicines.

[To wit, just like medicines fail to cure a person who is destined to die, all good advice seems to fail to have any effect on you. It is futile to try to show you the right path because you are doomed to die. So do whatever you wish to do; I have nothing more to say.]’ (5)

संध्या समय जानि दससीसा । भवन चलेउ निरखत भुज बीसा ॥ ६ ॥
लंका सिखर उपर आगारा । अति बिचित्र तहँ होइ अखारा ॥ ७ ॥
बैठ जाइ तेहि मंदिर रावन । लागे किंनर गुन गन गावन ॥ ८ ॥
बाजहिं ताल पखाउज बीना । नृत्य करहिं अपछरा प्रबीना ॥ ९ ॥

sandhyā samaya jāni dasasīsā. bhavana calē'u nirakhata bhuja bīsā. 6.
laṅkā sikhara upara āgārā. ati bicitra tahaṁ hō'i akhārā. 7.
baiṭha jā'i tēhiṁ mandira rāvana. lāgē kinnara guna gana gāvana. 8.
bājahiṁ tāla pakha'uja bīnā. nṛtya karahiṁ apacharā prabīnā. 9.

Observing that it was almost evening, Ravana retired to his palace, and on his way back he fondly and haughtily gazed at his twenty mighty arms¹. (6)

On the top of the summit of Lanka, there was a very fascinating and charming hall where regular programmes of dancing and singing competitions were used to be held. (7)

It was in this citadel that Ravana went to sit and enjoy the musical extravaganza. Soon, the Kinnars (court dancers and singers) began singing songs in his honour. (8)

Musical instruments such as cymbals, tabors and Indian lutes were played, and beautiful nymphs known as Apsaras, who were experts in dancing, began exhibiting their skills in this art². (9)

[Note—¹After all the chiding and rebuke by Prahast and Mandodari presently, and earlier by Vibhishan, Ravana was feeling very depressed, and he needed some kind of subtle psychological support for his sagging morale, something to bolster his courage and encourage him. So he now looked up and down his mighty arms, which he flexed and twisted and shook to remind himself that these were the same arms that had enabled him to conquer the world repeatedly. This was like insurance for him—that even if no one comes to help him, he alone was competent to take his enemy head-on, thanks to the might of his twenty arms.

²We come across such Apsaras and exhibition of their dancing skills elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—for instance, refer to: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 126. The context here is different however, for it was at the time when Kaam, the god of passion, was trying to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation.

The Apsaras are female dancers and singers, while the Kinnars are their male counterparts.]

दो०. सुनासीर सत सरिस सो संतत करइ बिलास ।

परम प्रबल रिपु सीस पर तद्यपि सोच न त्रास ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

sunāsīra sata sarisa sō santata kara'i bilāsa.

parama prabala ripu sīsa para tadyapi sōca na trāsa. 10.

Ravana used to indulge in sensual pleasures and luxuries that were equivalent to those that can be enjoyed by hundreds of Indras together¹.

It is such an irony that he had a formidably powerful enemy knocking right at his doorstep, yet he was neither worried nor afraid of this development. (Doha no. 10)

[Note—¹Indra is the king of gods; he is described in ancient mythological literature as someone who was very indulgent in sensual pleasures. From a metaphysical perspective, Indra represents the sense organs of a creature. These sense organs have a natural habit of getting attracted to their respective objects in this material world, and they will always like to enjoy them, they are invariably tempted by them. For instance, the 'tongue' would always like to taste delicious food, even if that food is harmful for the body. Likewise, the 'skin' would like to touch things that seem

pleasant to it and give sensual pleasure to the creature, even if such contact may lead to some grave consequences later on and land the creature in trouble.

The idea here is that Ravana was an exceptionally lustful and passionate individual who liked to wallow in luxury and remain engrossed in enjoying sensual pleasures. He was driven blind by his pervert nature so much so that he could not see the dark clouds of doom looming in the horizon. His over-confidence and a false sense of invincibility made him so haughty and arrogant that he thought that no harm can ever come to him, and that life is meant to be spent in enjoying sensual pleasures and worldly luxuries as much as is possible.

He firmly believed that as the King of Demons it was his birth-right to enjoy the privileges that come with the crown of Lanka and the fruits of kingship of the demon race. So therefore he was within his rights in enjoying these privileges and fruits; there was nothing wrong in enjoying sensual pleasures and luxuries.

Tentatively, however, he showed signs of alarm when his attention was drawn to the fact that a huge army of immense strength was next door, but this scary scene of an impending bloody war that may lead not only to the ruin of his entire kingdom but also to his own death had only a temporary effect on him, because he soon forgot all about it and reverted back to his old pervert ways.]

(b) Sub-section 13.1.2: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 11-b
— to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14:-

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and his army of monkeys and bears, who were also accompanied by Vibhishan, Ravana's brother who had surrendered before the Lord and joined his camp earlier, had arrived in Lanka and pitched camp on Mt. Subel—refer: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

Now we shall read what happened next.]

पूरब दिसा बिलोकि प्रभु देखा उदित मयंक ।

कहत सबहि देखहु ससिहि मृगपति सरिस असंक ॥ ११ (ख) ॥

pūraba disā bilōki prabhu dēkhā udita mayāṅka.

kahata sabahi dēkhahu sasihi mṛgapati sarisa asaṅka. 11 (b).

When night fell, Lord Ram looked in the eastern direction and saw the full moon rising. He addressed his companions and said, 'Look all of you at the moon. How bold it is, like a lion (is amongst other animals: mṛgapati sarisa asaṅka)! (Doha no. 11-b)

[Note—Why Lord Ram compares the full moon with a lion is explained below. Briefly he means that just like a lion is not scared of any animal, large or small, in the forest, the moon isn't bothered about other heavenly bodies, may they be small distant stars or nearby large planets such as Jupiter and Saturn. The moon dulls them and makes them lustreless with its brilliant light that spreads across the firmament as well as on the earth below.]

चौ०. पूरब दिसि गिरिगुहा निवासी । परम प्रताप तेज बल रासी ॥ १ ॥
 मत्त नाग तम कुंभ बिदारी । ससि केसरी गगन बन चारी ॥ २ ॥
 बिथुरे नभ मुकुताहल तारा । निसि सुंदरी केर सिंगारा ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

pūraba disi giriguhā nivāsī. parama pratāpa tēja bala rāsī. 1.
 matta nāga tama kumbha bidārī. sasi kēsārī gagana bana cārī. 2.
 bithurē nabha mukutāhala tārā. nisi sundarī kēra siṅgārā. 3.

This moon, which is like a lion, dwells in a mountain cave symbolised by the eastern direction just below the horizon¹. This metaphoric lion (i.e. the moon) has immense glory; it possesses grandeur and brilliance, and it is an embodiment of strength. (1)

This lion-like moon moves ahead boldly in the sky after rupturing the thick veil of darkness just like the case of a brave lion who jumps on the back of a wild elephant that may obstruct his path, and then fearlessly tears apart the top of the head of its victim to vanquish it². (2)

The stars that are scattered in the sky are like so many beautiful pearls that adorn the body of a lady represented by the night³. (3)

[Note—¹When the moon rises from below the horizon in the east as night falls it looks as if a lion is coming out from the mouth of a dark mountain cave where it had retired for the day.

²When the full moon rises in the sky it tears apart the veil of darkness by its brilliant light just like a lion that moves towards its prey and tears apart its body. The lion is so strong and powerful that it can win over the strongest animal in the forest, such as an elephant. Likewise, the light of the moon dulls even the brightest star in the dark night, showing that it too is bold and powerful.

³In these verses, the ‘night’ is a dark-skinned beauty (a lady); the ‘stars’ are the pearls that are worn by this lady to decorate herself; the ‘full moon’ is her face; and the ‘sky or the firmament’ is her body-wrapping apparel.

It is to be noted that the moon, no matter how much it shines, still has a dark hue to it as compared to the dazzling bright disc of the sun. Since the lady here is represented by the ‘night’, which is dark, her face is aptly compared to the ‘full moon’ because its disc also has a shade of dark in spite of its silvery light. This is in contrast to a fair-skinned lady whose face would be aptly compared to the ‘sun’.]

कह प्रभु ससि महुँ मेचकताई । कहहु काह निज निज मति भाई ॥ ४ ॥
 कह सुग्रीव सुनहु रघुराई । ससि महुँ प्रगट भूमि कै झाँई ॥ ५ ॥

kaha prabhu sasi mahum̐ mēcakatāī. kahahu kāha nija nija mati bhāī. 4.
 kaha sugrīva sunahu raghurāī. sasi mahum̐ pragaṭa bhūmi kai jhāī. 5.

Then the Lord turned to his companions and wished to know what they thought of the moon. So he said, ‘My brothers (bhāṭī)¹, tell me what each of you think in this matter (concerning the moon).’ (4)

[The first one to give his opinion was Sugriv, the king of the monkeys.] Sugriv said, ‘Oh Lord Ram (raghurāṭī), listen. The moon appears to be a bit dark because the shadow of the earth falls on its surface².’ (5)

[Note—¹The term ‘brother’ is endearing; it brings closeness between the speaker and the listener. By using this word of affection Lord Ram wishes to convey that he treats all his companions as his dear brothers. Such small gestures on the part of Lord Ram went a long way in forging a close bond between the Lord and the rest of his advisors and troops who developed personal rapport with the Lord which was based on affection and mutual respect that in turn ensured their loyalty, devotion and commitment towards the Lord and his cause. They became emotionally attached to Lord Ram; they became faithful to him and were ready to cheerfully lay down their lives for him.

This is in sharp contrast with Ravana’s attitude and his dealings with his ministers. He treated himself as their ‘king’, not as one of them. On the other hand Lord Ram treated all his ministers as if they were his ‘brothers’, as a close ‘friend’ (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 51).

²Sugriv was the king of Kishkindha. Therefore he must have had knowledge of basic science. His reply, that the shadow of the earth fall on the surface of the moon to make it look a bit dark instead of brilliant white, is quite in line with science. The moon has its origin in the earth, because in some ancient time a part of the earth was scooped out by a colliding heavenly body, such as a meteor or an asteroid. Though from a distance the moon appears to shine like silver, but when one gets close enough one discovers that its surface is as ordinary and rough and dark as that of the earth; it’s full of craters; and it’s surface has a coarse soil, and is littered with pebbles and stones and rocks of varying dimensions much like the surface of earth.

Besides this, Sugriv’s mind may have been preoccupied with land and expansion of his empire. So it is like: he always thought of ‘earth’; the earth came to his mind first even when talking of the moon.]

मारेउ राहु ससिहि कह कोई । उर महँ परी स्यामता सोई ॥ ६ ॥
कोउ कह जब बिधि रति मुख कीन्हा । सार भाग ससि कर हरि लीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥
छिद्र सो प्रगट इंदु उर माहीं । तेहि मग देखिअ नभ परिछाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

mārē'u rāhu sasihi kaha kō'ī. ura maham̐ parī syāmatā sō'ī. 6.
kō'u kaha jaba bidhi rati mukha kīnhā. sāra bhāga sasi kara hari līnhā. 7.
chidra sō pragaṭa indu ura māhīm̐. tēhi maga dēkhi'a nabha parichāhīm̐. 8.

Someone gave his opinion saying that the black spots seen on the surface of the moon has been caused by the wound inflicted upon it by Rahu (the severed head of a demon who is said to devour the moon during lunar eclipses) who had attached it¹. (6)

Someone else² proposed that when the creator was moulding the face of Rati, the beautiful consort of Kaamdeo (the patron god of beauty and passion), he could not find a suitable material to use for Rati's face, so he decided to scoop up some of the core matter from the charming face of the moon and use it to craft her face. The area from which this beautifying matter was scooped up by Brahma left dark spots on the surface of the moon. (7)

Since some matter was removed by Brahma from the heart or the core area of the moon, it became less dense there, and therefore one can faintly see the blue sky beyond it through this hole. This gives the visual impression that the moon's otherwise brilliantly illuminated surface is dark here and there. (8)

[Note—¹Rahu is the severed head of a demon who is believed to be responsible for causing the lunar eclipse. According to mythological accounts, a demon had surreptitiously entered the row of gods and sat between the moon god and the sun god when Amrit, the nectar of eternity that was obtained during the churning of the ocean, was being distributed between the gods and the demons. As soon as these two gods realised who he was, they raised an alarm. Lord Vishnu cut off the impostor demon's head, but it was too late as by that time some drops of the Amrit had already dropped into the mouth of this demon, making him immune to death. So the demon insisted that the creator Brahma must provide him some food that he can eat on a regular basis to survive. On being asked his choice he said that he should be allowed to eat the sun and the moon gods. It was granted. Henceforth therefore, this demon devours the moon and the sun occasionally, causing the eclipses. The moon enters through its mouth and escapes through the hole at the lower end from where the head was severed from the body of the demon.

The severed head of the demon is called 'Rahu', and the cut-off torso is called 'Ketu' which is seen as the comet in the night sky.

The beginning of the lunar or the solar eclipse starts when Rahu begins approaching its victim, causing the disc of the two celestial bodies gradually becoming darker. The actual eclipse is when these two celestial entities enter the mouth of Rahu, when they escape through the hole at the lower end of Rahu's severed head it marks the end of the eclipse. The darkness of the disc of the moon and the sun soon fades away, indicating that Rahu had gone away.

But it is believed that during this brief period Rahu manages to bite its victim and suck some of its blood. The wound thus created results in the dark spots seen on the surface of both the moon and the sun.

²Though it is not clear from these two verses who these other two persons were, but most probably there were Angad and Vibhishan respectively. The reason is that four persons were very close confidantes of Lord Ram, and remained by his side most of the time—they were Sugriv (the king of the monkeys), Angad (the crown prince of the monkeys), Vibhishan (Ravana's brother who had joined Lord Ram) and Hanuman (who had gone to Lanka and brought back Sita's news).

Sugriv had already expressed his opinion in verse no. 5 herein above. The next turn was that of Angad in order of seniority, so his idea is expressed in verse no. 6. His observations reflect his state of mind aptly because his father Baali was killed by an arrow in a battle with Sugriv. The wound on his father's heart must have been

fresh in Angad's mind when he tried to find a reason for the darkness on the moon's surface, for it reminded him of that dark patch of blood on the chest of his father.

The third in order of seniority was obviously Vibhishan, so verse nos. 7-8 can be attributed to him. He was kicked out of Lanka where he was forced to leave his wife Sarma. He remembered her fondly, and the moon reminded him of her beautiful face.

The last companion was Hanuman. He was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and this will soon be reflected when he expresses his opinion in Doha no. 12-a herein below.]

प्रभु कह गरल बंधु ससि केरा । अति प्रिय निज उर दीन्ह बसेरा ॥ ९ ॥

बिष संजुत कर निकर पसारी । जारत बिरहवत नर नारी ॥ १० ॥

prabhu kaha garala bandhu sasi kērā. ati priya nija ura dīnha basērā. 9.
biṣa sañjuta kara nikara pasārī. jārata birahavanta nara nārī. 10.

Lord Ram now made his own observation (almost on the line of his friends). He said that 'poison (garala)' is a dear brother of the 'moon' (bandhu sasi kērā ati priya). 'Poison' is so dear to the 'moon' that the latter has given it a place close to its own heart¹. (9)

The moon burns and scorches (i.e. torments) men and women who are separated from their beloved ones by spreading its rays laced with this poison upon them. [To wit, the rays of the moon prove to be like a spray of poison that further aggravates the grief of a person who is already suffering the agony of separation from his or her beloved.]² (10)

[Note—¹The poison known as Halala emerged from the ocean at the time of its churning by the gods and the demons. It is also believed that the moon too owes its origin to the ocean, because when a large chunk of earth was scooped out and thrown into the sky to form the moon, the cavity thus created was filled with water, thereby forming the ocean.

Hence, the 'poison' and the 'moon' both have the ocean as their father.

²Those who are suffering from grief at separation from their beloved ones, look up to the moon for some relief, and then sigh. The rays of the moon, which are normally soothing and comforting for others, makes those who are suffering from the grief of separation feel more sorrowful and much tormented as it reminds them of their separated beloved ones whom they are not certain to meet and see again. This is equivalent to spraying hot liquid on a wound, or is like spraying poison on an injury.

Lord Ram is suffering from grief due to separation from his beloved wife Sita. So like his companions Sugriv, Angad and Vibhihsan he too makes an observation that reflects his worldly state of mind and feelings. It is very apt for the Lord to speak in a language that fits with the line of thinking of his friends; the Lord wishes to convey to them that he is no different from them.

Let us remember one thing here—Lord Ram has always took the precaution to see that his commanders would feel that the Lord is very down-to-earth and practical, making them feel at home with him, treating him as one who is like them, and not a

Lord who is inaccessible and distant. In this context see Chaupai line no. 4 herein above where he addresses his companions as ‘brothers’.

So why is the moon tormenting Lord Ram by partnering with poison? Well, the Lord had threatened their father, the Ocean, when the latter had blocked his way. This annoyed the moon, and it decided to torment the Lord by lacing its rays with poison symbolizing the sorrows, the agony and the grief that torments a person who is separated from his beloved one—in this case it is Lord Ram who is suffering from separation with Sita.]

दो०. कह हनुमंत सुनहु प्रभु ससि तुम्हार प्रिय दास ।
तव मूरति बिधु उर बसति सोइ स्यामता अभास ॥ १२ (क) ॥
पवन तनय के बचन सुनि बिहँसे रामु सुजान ।
दच्छिन दिसि अवलोकि प्रभु बोले कृपानिधान ॥ १२ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

kaha hanumanta sunahu prabhu sasi tumhāra priya dāsa.
tava mūrati bidhu ura basati sō'i syāmatā abhāsa. 12 (a).
pavana tanaya kē bacana suni bihaṁsē rāmu sujāna.
dacchina disi avalōki prabhu bōlē kṛpānidhāna. 12 (b).

Then came the turn of Hanuman who said, ‘Listen my Lord! The moon is one of your dear servants (a faithful servitor; a loyal follower; an ardent devotee—“sasi tumhāra priya dāsa”)¹. [So it will not be proper to say that his is tormenting you by spraying rays laced with poison upon you.]

Your image is sacredly enshrined in the moon’s heart (because he loves you and is devoted to you), and this causes the shade of darkness that is seen on its surface.

[It is also possible that the moon is sad because you are sad. A true servant feels the same way his lord feels; if the lord is happy the servant will be happy, and if the lord is unhappy the servant too would feel unhappy. That is why the moon is dark as it feels sorry for you.]’ (Doha no. 12-a)

When the gentleman Lord Ram heard these wise and enlightened (and surely witty) words of the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) he smiled.²

The Lord, who is a treasury of grace and kindness, then looked in the south direction and said³ --- (Doha no. 12-b)

[Note—¹Why does Hanuman call the moon a servant or a devotee of Lord Ram? The answer is this: A monkey named Sushen is regarded as a manifestation of the moon god, and this Sushen is the father-in-law of Sugriv, who himself is Lord Ram’s close companion and confidante. So therefore, the moon god cannot be inimical to the Lord.

Another reason is that the crescent moon finds its abode in the lock of matted hairs on Lord Shiva’s head, and Shiva worships you. So how can the moon become your enemy; by no stretch of imagination this is ever possible.

This interpretation of Hanuman proves that he was a devotee of Lord Ram of the highest level. While others took a worldly view of why the moon has dark spots, Hanuman had an enlightened view of it.

²Lord Ram smiled at the smart and witty answer of Hanuman. It lent a completely different meaning to the whole discussion regarding the moon. The Lord marvelled at Hanuman's wisdom and level of enlightenment and presence of mind; it helped to further firm up the Lord's personal high opinion regarding Hanuman. Every little event added up to bring Hanuman more and more close to the Lord; each small thing that happened proved that amongst all the monkeys and bears and demons no one could match Hanuman in any field.

It is the reason why Lord Ram decided to retain only Hanuman in his service after returning from Lanka and being crowned as the King of Ayodhya.

³The Lord changed the subject. He now looked in the direction of the city of Lanka which was in the southern direction from Mt. Subel. There were more urgent things to discuss; the war was looming in the horizon and a strategy had to be devised soon. The talk of the moon was like an idle pastime; the mind had to be focussed on more important things now.]

चौ०. देखु बिभीषन दच्छिन आसा । घन घमंड दामिनी बिलासा ॥ १ ॥

मधुर मधुर गरजइ घन घोरा । होइ बृष्टि जनि उपल कठोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhu bibhīṣana dacchina āsā. ghana ghamanḍa dāminī bilāsā. 1.

madhura madhura garaja'i ghana ghōrā. hō'i br̥ṣṭi jani upala kaṭhōrā. 2.

Addressing Vibhishan, Lord Ram said, 'Vibhishan, look in the south direction. It appears that huge banks of dark clouds are emerging in the yonder sky. There are streaks of lightening glistening through these clouds, lending a special charm to them. (1)

The soft sound of these clouds rumbling and thundering in the distance is clearly audible. Would it rain, or is it possible that there would be a shower of hail coming down upon us?¹ (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram's army was under the open sky; there were no modern day tents to house the soldiers. So the possibility of an approaching thunderstorm worried the Lord. He consulted Vibhishan as he had lived all his life in Lanka, and therefore he would be in a better position to tell how the weather behaves in this far away alien land to which neither Lord Ram nor any of the others were in the least familiar with. Advance precautions had to be taken and preparations made before the fury of Nature befell upon the huge army. Should it begin to rain now when the war is to be fought the next day or in the days following, a lot of advance planning is required. A rainy day is quite a different proposition than a sunny day in the battle-field.

So, the prospects of rain or a hailstorm worried Lord Ram.]

कहत बिभीषन सुनुहु कृपाला । होइ न तड़ित न बारिद माला ॥ ३ ॥

लंका सिखर उपर आगारा । तहँ दसकंधर देख अखारा ॥ ४ ॥

kahata bibhīṣana sunahu krpālā. hō'i na taḍita na bārīda mālā. 3.
lañkā sikhara upara āgārā. tahañ dasakandhara dēkha akhārā. 4.

Vibhishan replied, ‘Listen of merciful and gracious Lord (sunahu krpālā)! This sight is neither of a bank of cloud nor of lightening. (3)

On the summit of Lanka there is a huge citadel (or a hall) where Ravana (the ten-shouldered and ten-headed one—“dasakandhara”) sits to watch competitions of dancing and singing, as well as other kinds of sports¹. (4)

[Note—¹This is the first instance among many others that will come during the unfolding of the war that Vibhishan had given the secrets of Lanka and Ravana to Lord Ram.

Amongst the most prominent ones are the following:

When Ravana was performing a fire sacrifice that would have made him invincible in the battle-field if completed successfully, Vibhishan had told Lord Ram about it. On getting this vital piece of intelligence, a small detachment of monkey troops was sent in Lanka. They destroyed Ravana’s fire sacrifice, paving the ground for his final defeat. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 85 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

Even the death of Ravana was due to Vibhishan as he was the one who had divulged the secret of Ravana’s life to Lord Ram, after which the Lord shot an arrow that culminated in Ravana’s death. Prior to that, all efforts to kill Ravana had failed. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 101-b—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

Vibhishan has always been regarded with contempt for his betrayal of his own race and family. His name has become a synonym for betrayal, treason, disloyalty and selfishness, for he had been instrumental in the destruction of his own race just to take revenge for his chiding by his elder brother Ravana who had been so kind and understanding towards him that he had let Vibhishan pursue his religious path of worship and devotion inspite of living right in the center of Lanka and in the middle of the demon race that was totally opposed to such practices. Ravana had even overlooked that Vibhishan has marked the name of Lord Hari on his front gate, and used to chant Lord Ram’s name the first thing in the morning—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 6.

But when Vibhishan realised that the future was not in the favour of his brother Ravana, he had no regrets in abandoning him and joining the camp of the arch enemy of his brother—i.e. Lord Ram. It is not denying the fact that Vibhishan secretly wished to save his own skin and was eying the future crown of Lanka when he joined Lord Ram—for he knew that if he stayed back in Lanka he would be forced to fight along with the rest of the demons, and sure enough he would be killed like the rest of them. So he was waiting for an opportunity, and as soon as he got one he escaped. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 41.>}

छत्र मेघडंबर सिर धारी । सोइ जनु जलद घटा अति कारी ॥ ५ ॥

मंदोदरी श्रवन ताटंका । सोइ प्रभु जनु दामिनी दमंका ॥ ६ ॥

chatra mēghaḍambara sira dhārī. sō'i janu jalada ghaṭā ati kārī. 5.
mandōdarī śravana tāṭaṅkā. sō'i prabhu janu dāminī damaṅkā. 6.

He (Ravana) has a large ceremonial umbrella spread over his head as a symbol of royalty, and this umbrella gives the impression of a huge bank of dark clouds when viewed at a distance from here. (5)

Mandodari has dazzling earrings dangling from her ears, and oh Lord, the brilliant flash of light that radiate from them as she moves her head appear to be like streaks of lightening in the clouds when they are viewed against the dark background of the ceremonial umbrella. [This is because both Ravana and Mandodari are attending the festivities, sitting close to each other, and the ceremonial umbrella is spread over their heads.] (6)

बाजहिं ताल मृदंग अनूपा । सोइ रव मधुर सुनहु सुरभूपा ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु मुसुकान समुझि अभिमाना । चाप चढ़ाइ बान संधाना ॥ ८ ॥

bājahim tāla mṛdaṅga anūpā. sō'i rava madhura sunahu surabhūpā. 7.
prabhu musukāna samujhi abhimānā. cāpa caṛhā'i bāna sandhānā. 8.

And the soft sound that appears to be the rumbling of distant clouds from here is actually the sound of clashing cymbals and the playing of the tabors, the musical instruments that are being used there.' (7)

When Lord Ram heard this, he smiled¹ because, overtly, the Lord interpreted the sight as indicating that Ravana was very haughty and arrogant, and was effectively mocking at the Lord by indulging in open festivities to show that he has no fear of either Lord Ram or his army, and he cares not a wee bit about the danger posed by them. [But what was the other, the more subtle reason for Lord Ram's smile? See note no. 1 below]

So, to literally teach Ravana a lesson, the Lord strung his bow and mounted an arrow on it². (8)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram 'smile'? One reason is given in the verse itself: The Lord smiled in a sarcastic and contemptuous way at Ravana because the latter was so haughty and proud that he took the news of the Lord's arrival too lightly, and he wasn't at all worried about the bloody war that loomed on the horizon of Lanka. This is not the proper attitude and a wise way for any king to behave in the face of an enemy. So the Lord wished to send Ravana a clear message about the fate that stares at his face by shooting an arrow that would dismantle the ceremonial umbrella of authority over his head, as well as fell his ten crowns along with the earrings of his wife Mandodari.

But there was another reason for Lord Ram's smile, and it is this: By specifically asking Vibhishan the reason for the appearance of dark clouds etc. in the southern direction where Lanka was located, Lord Ram wanted to ascertain what was in his mind. The Lord wished to check Vibhishan's fidelity; he wanted to know whether Vibhishan was willing to divulge the secrets of Lanka, whether or not he

would help Lord Ram and his army at crucial moments of the impending war. The Lord expressed his satisfaction at Vibhishan's reply by 'smiling' because the latter's answer proved that he was truly against Ravana and loyal to Lord Ram.

It was Vibhishan's first test of loyalty and integrity, and the Lord smiled because he had passed this test; now Vibhishan could be relied upon. If Vibhishan was not truly committed to serving the Lord he could have said so many other things to deflect Lord Ram's attention from the real cause of the sound and sight heard and seen in the southern direction. To wit, if Vibhishan had secretly wished that his brother Ravana was not put in harm's way he could have given a hundred other reasons to Lord Ram for the sight that was seen instead of pinpointing what caused it, and thereby putting his brother in the Lord's radar.

²A similar sight is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 42-44.]

दो०. छत्र मुकुट ताटंक तब हते एकहीं बान ।
 सब कें देखत महि परे मरमु न कोऊ जान ॥ १३ (क) ॥
 अस कौतुक करि राम सर प्रबिसेउ आइ निषंग ।
 रावन सभा ससंक सब देखि महा रसभंग ॥ १३ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

chatra mukuṭa tāṭaṅka taba hatē ēkahīm bāna.
 saba kēm dēkhata mahi parē maramu na kō'ū jāna. 13 (a).
 asa kautuka kari rāma sara prabisē'u ā'i niṣaṅga.
 rāvana sabhā sasaṅka saba dēkhi mahā rasabhaṅga. 13 (b).

The Lord took aim and shot this arrow. The arrow struck and fell to the ground the ceremonial umbrella and the crowns over the head of Ravana, as well as the earrings of Mandodari, one after another in quick succession, giving the impression that they fell simultaneously. It was done so suddenly, unexpectedly and in such a magical way that no one present could understand what had actually happened and for what reason¹. (Doha no. 13-a)

After accomplishing this unimaginable miraculous deed, the arrow returned to enter the quiver of Lord Ram².

Meanwhile, in Ravana's assembly there was total chaos. Everyone was shocked and taken aback at the sudden occurrence of this bad omen; they became sore affright and alarmed when the festivities were disrupted so abruptly. (Doha no. 13-b)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had two aims in mind—one of course is obvious: it was to warn Ravana that he is underestimating his enemy, that his enemy, Lord Ram, possesses certain skills of warfare that even Ravana isn't aware of, and that let him be warned that a bitter and scary fight stared him in the face and therefore it is not good for him to be careless now lest he would blame the Lord later on that he wasn't warned.

The second aim is subtle: Lord Ram wanted to warn Vibhishan not to play fools with him. The way the arrow was shot almost casually from a great distance, the way it hit and fell its target at one go, and, more importantly, the way it returned to

Lord Ram's quiver, must have left Vibhishan gaping in utter amazement, with an open mouth and eyes transfixed in sheer astonishment at the miraculous spectacle.

If Vibhishan may have had any doubts about Lord Ram's abilities and supernatural powers, because of the Lord acting and behaving almost like any other human being, then all such doubts evaporated in a fleeting moment. Vibhishan would now fear Lord Ram, and in case he had some secret thought of betraying the Lord and taking the side of his own brother if the tide of war went in the favour of Ravana, then now onwards he would be so scared for his own life that he would perish this thought. This scenario was quite possible because if Vibhishan could betray his own family and blood-relations with whom he had spent his entire life to join their enemy, and then help this enemy to vanquish his own kith and kin and conquer his own city, then it is not impossible to think that he wouldn't have changed sides again if this suited his selfish interests. But now he was so scared out of his wits that he wouldn't dare to do it!

²The way the arrow was shot, the way it struck and fell its targets that were not in a straight line, and then successfully came back to enter the quiver of Lord Ram shows that the science and technology used in weapons and their use were highly evolved during that period.

Lord Ram had shown this special skill once before too—it was when Sugriv had wished to test the Lord's abilities and prowess by asking him to fell seven tall palm trees with a single arrow, which the Lord did effortlessly. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 7.}

चौ०. कंप न भूमि न मरुत बिसेषा । अज सज कछु नयन न देखा ॥ १ ॥

सोचहिं सब निज हृदय मझारी । असगुन भयउ भयंकर भारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kampa na bhūmi na maruta bisēṣā. astra sastra kachu nayana na dēkhā. 1.
sōcahiṁ saba nija hr̥daya majhārī. asaguna bhaya'u bhayaṅkara bhārī. 2.

The earth hadn't shook (i.e. there was no earthquake), nor was there a strong wind or storm, and neither did anyone see any kind of weapon or missile¹. (1)

Everyone present was extremely alarmed, thinking inside their hearts that some very bad omen has occurred. (2)

[Note—¹The reason is that everyone was engaged in watching the performance of the many dances and listening to the different kinds of music. The arrow shot by Lord Ram came and left in a jiffy; it was done so suddenly and unexpectedly that only when the crowns and the ceremonial umbrella on Ravana's head as well as Mandodari's earrings fell to the ground with a loud thud that anyone could notice that something had happened. But by that time the arrow was gone.]

(c) Sub-section 13.1.3: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35-a:-

चौ०. इहाँ प्रात जागे रघुराई । पूछा मत सब सचिव बोलाई ॥ १ ॥
 कहहु बेगि का करिअ उपाई । जामवंत कह पद सिरु नाई ॥ २ ॥
 सुनु सर्बग्य सकल उर बासी । बुधि बल तेज धर्म गुन रासी ॥ ३ ॥
 मंत्र कहउँ निज मति अनुसार । दूत पठाइअ बालिकुमारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ihāṁ prāta jāgē raghurā'ī. pūchā mata saba saciva bōlā'ī. 1.
 kahahu bēgi kā kari'a upā'ī. jāmavanta kaha pada siru nā'ī. 2.
 sunu sarbagya sakala ura bāsī. budhi bala tēja dharma guna rāsī. 3.
 mantra kaha'uṁ nija mati anusārā. dūta paṭhā'i'a bālikumārā. 4.

Here meanwhile (i.e. on Mt. Subel), Lord Ram (raghurā'ī) woke up the next morning and called all his ministers to discuss and finalise the next course of action. (1)

He said to them, 'Tell me quickly what is to be done now.' At this, Jamvant (the aged chief of the bears and one of the wisest amongst the Lord's advisors) bowed his head before the Lord and replied, --- (2)

'Listen my Lord! You are all-knowing (sarbagya), and you know all about the thoughts of every living being as you reside in their heart (in the form of their Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness and their true self—"sakala ura bāsī"). [To wit, you are omniscient and omnipresent.]

Indeed, you are an embodiment of intelligence, strength, dynamism, and the virtues of righteousness, propriety and probity. (3)

I am advising you what I feel is the best course of action at present according to my thinking. We must send the son of Baali (i.e. Angad, the prince of the monkeys) as your emissary (to Ravana).¹ (4)

[Note—¹ Jamvant was very wise. To justify his advice that the Lord would do the right thing by first sending an emissary to Ravana to explore all avenues the make peace and avoid a destructive, and to stress that what he proposes is a genuine advice coming from his heart, he highlights the virtues of Lord Ram as said in verse no. 3.

To wit, since the Lord knows what is in the heart of a living being and all about his inner thoughts he would naturally know that the advice that Jamvant is giving is sincere and genuine as it is coming from his heart.

Secondly, since the Lord is an upholder of the laws of Dharma, he would agree that every chance must be given to one's enemy to make peace. It would be the right and the correct thing to do therefore to send a messenger to Ravana and exhaust this option first before launching any assault on Lanka.

An important question arises here: Why did Jamvant select Angad to be sent as an emissary? He wanted to ascertain whether or not Angad would remain faithful and loyal during the course of the war. Angad's father Baali was Ravana's friend, and he was killed by Sugriv, Angad's uncle, because the two brothers (elder brother Baali and his younger sibling Sugriv) were bitter enemies due to some misunderstanding of the past. Now by sending Angad directly to Ravana as an emissary an opportunity

was given to him to defect and take revenge upon his uncle Sugriv by joining Ravana's camp, just like Vibhishan, Ravana's brother, had defected to Lord Ram's camp.

If this thought was secretly present in somewhere in the mind and heart of Angad, and he was waiting for an opportunity to settle old accounts with Sugriv for being instrumental in the death of his father Baali, then he was sure to grab this golden chance and desert Lord Ram's camp now. It would be much better if Angad's intentions are out in the open now as compared to some nasty back-stabbing, treason and betrayal by him later on during the heat of battle, for that would be disastrous.

Jamvant hinted to Lord Ram about this when he said that the Lord knows the inner thoughts of all living beings—which was a veiled hint to the Lord to check what was inside the heart of Angad by sending him directly to visit Ravana. If Angad wished to escape Sugriv's camp then asking him to go to Ravana as an emissary would be like offering him something that he may have secretly wished in his heart. If Angad wished to escape Sugriv then there would be no better chance for him later on; and on the contrary if he wished to serve Lord Ram inspite of his bitter feelings for his uncle then he would come back, and this would make him favourite of the Lord just like Hanuman was. In this case, Sugriv would never dare to harm Angad because he would be protected by the Lord. This scenario is not imaginary, for Angad has acknowledged it that he is alive because of Lord Ram's mercy and grace and protection, otherwise his uncle would have already done something to get rid of him by now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.

There is another reason also. Jamvant was a fatherly figure for Angad who was orphaned by his father Baali's death. Previously Hanuman had gained Lord Ram's favour by going to Lanka and trouncing Ravana by burning Lanka. Perhaps this event had caused a bit of depression in the mind of Angad, that now everyone would treat Hanuman with more respect and awe not only because he had gained Lord Ram's favour but also because he had proved his might and mettle by achieving success in such a daunting task as crossing the ocean, entering the fort of the demons fearlessly alone, then fighting and winning the fracas that followed, and finally burning the well-protected city of Lanka, a deed unmatched in history.

So Jamvant gave Angad an opportunity to prove himself, to show everyone that he is in no way inferior to Hanuman—by going to Lanka alone, by killing one of Ravana's sons (apropos: Chaupi line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 18 herein below), by confronting Ravana in full court and humiliating him like Hanuman had done earlier, and then return triumphantly unharmed after having successfully accomplishing the mission.

And as the events unfolded, Angad did prove his integrity, abilities and skills.]

नीक मंत्र सब के मन माना । अंगद सन कह कृपानिधाना ॥ ५ ॥

बालितनय बुधि बल गुन धामा । लंका जाहु तात मम कामा ॥ ६ ॥

बहुत बुझाइ तुम्हहि का कहऊँ । परम चतुर मैं जानत अहऊँ ॥ ७ ॥

काजु हमार तासु हित होई । रिपु सन करेहु बतकही सोई ॥ ८ ॥

nīka mantra saba kē mana mānā. aṅgada sana kaha kṛpānidhānā. 5.

bālitanaya budhi bala guna dhāmā. laṅkā jāhu tāta mama kāmā. 6.

bahuta bujhā'i tumhahi kā kaha'ūṁ. parama catura mairṁ jānata aha'ūṁ. 7.
kāju hamāra tāsū hita hōī. ripu sana karēhu batakahī sōī. 8.

When everyone endorsed Jamvan't suggestion as being a good advice, Lord Ram, who is a treasury of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion (krpānidhānā)¹, called Angad and said, --- (5)

‘Oh the son of Baali (bālitānaya)! You are an embodiment of intelligence, wisdom, strength and virtues (budhi bala guna dhāmā). My dear (tāta), go to Lanka to do a job for me; to there on a mission on behalf of me². (6)

What much can I tell you, and there is no need for me to explain things much to you because I know that you are extremely wise, intelligent and clever (parama catura) in all matters so as to be able to tackle things on your own. (7)

My brief in simple words is this: Talk with him (Ravana) keeping in mind that my (or ‘our’—“hamāra”) objective is accomplished (which is to get Sita freed from his captivity), and at the same time my (or ‘our’) actions could be such that would be for his own good and welfare.³ (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has been described here as being a treasury of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion—i.e. as being “krpānidhānā”. This epithet is apt for the Lord as is clear in verse no. 8 where Lord Ram advises Angad to ensure that the Lord’s actions are for the good and welfare for his enemy. It is really a great quality and a sign of a noble heart for someone to think nice of his arch enemy, especially one who has kidnapped the person’s wife as Ravana had done with Lord Ram.

Ordinarily, if there was someone else in place of Lord Ram he would have asked his messenger to make it sure that his own interests are protected instead of worrying about the welfare of his enemy.

²This is a remarkable verse. Earlier Lord Ram had called Hanuman and chosen him, instead of Angad, to go on a mission to find Sita, and when Hanuman came back with the good news the Lord had lavished praises on him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 23; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

Angad felt very sad and depressed that the Lord had neglected him and thought him to be incompetent. Angad was emotionally hurt and thought that he was being sidelined by the Lord though he was the crown prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha. The reason is that his father Baali had personally entrusted the future of Angad to Lord Ram at the time of his death, and when Sugriv was appointed the next king of Kishkindha, Angad was anointed as the crown prince. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10; and (ii) Doha no. 11.}

Lord Ram, as has been already observed about him in verse no. 5 above, was a “treasury of mercy, compassion, grace and kindness”, and so he too felt sad when he saw that Angad was feeling dejected and forlorn. The Lord wanted to restore Angad’s pride-of-place in the hierarchy of the monkey race, and he wished to assuage Angad’s hurt feelings. So the kind Lord chose Angad over all others for this mission which was as much fraught with danger as the earlier mission of Hanuman.

But why did Lord Ram choose Hanuman and not Angad on the previous occasion when the search party was sent out to find Sita? The answer is clear: because the “all-knowing Lord” (refer: verse no. 3 herein above) knew that the qualities and skills needed for the successful completion of the mission was possessed by Hanuman alone. The first such requirement was to cross the ocean twice—once to go to Lanka, and then to come back from there. Angad lacked this ability; he himself has acknowledged it. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

Now that main hurdle—of crossing the ocean—was not there. So it was time to give Angad his due share of fame and glory. Angad’s choice as Lord Ram’s messenger and his resounding success in the mission would remove any doubts that may be present in the mind of others, including Hanuman, about his closeness with the Lord as well as his abilities. Lord Ram removed all doubts in this regard by addressing Angad with the affectionate word “*tāta*”—meaning ‘my dear’.

³Lord Ram told Angad, “Try to find out a way, if it is at all possible, to ensure Sita’s freedom peacefully so that a disastrous war can be avoided. I am not itching for a war at any cost to avenge Sita’s abduction; I am not a blood-thirsty conqueror. I do not have any greed for the crown of Lanka, and nor do I wish to put anyone to discomfort for me. I do not even expect Ravana to come to surrender; if he agrees to send Sita back then I shall return peacefully. I have no intention that anyone suffers due to me; I have no desire to unleash destruction and mayhem on the demon kingdom. Ravana can continue to rule his kingdom without any fear from me if he returns my wife honourably. Surely this is a noble proposition that no one can find fault with. Should Ravana agree, there will be peace and harmony; no one would blame me for causing unnecessary blood-shed and havoc on a prosperous country.

Nevertheless, this gesture of peace ought naught to be taken as weakness on my part personally, or of our army in general. So be careful in your talk with Ravana that no wrong interpretation is made by him. Warn him once again about the wrong path he is treading, and that such path would lead to his own ruin.

I leave the details of the talk, and the way it should be steered to a definite conclusion, upon you, for I know you are competent to handle it in an expert manner.”]

सो०. प्रभु अग्या धरि सीस चरन बंदि अंगद उठेउ ।

सोइ गुन सागर ईस राम कृपा जा पर करहु ॥ १७ (क) ॥

स्वयं सिद्ध सब काज नाथ मोहि आदरु दियउ ।

अस बिचारि जुबराज तन पुलकित हरषित हियउ ॥ १७ ॥ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

prabhu agyā dhari sīsa carana bandi aṅgada uṭhē'u.

sō'i guna sāgara īsa rāma kṛpā jā para karahu. 17 (a).

svayaṁ sid'dha saba kāja nātha mōhi ādaru diya'u.

asa bicāri jubarāja tana pulakita haraṣita hiya'u. 17 (b).

Angad cheerfully accepted the Lord Ram’s command. Bowing reverentially at the Lord’s feet, he rose to fulfil the task assigned to him.

Angad said, ‘Oh Lord Ram (īsa rāma)! He upon whom you show your grace and favour is surely an ocean of virtues and qualities. It’s indeed a rare privilege for one to gain the Lord’s confidence¹.’ (Sortha no. 17-a)

Angad was extremely happy. He thought that Lord Ram, who can do everything himself as he possesses immense mystical powers (because he is the Supreme Lord of the world), has graciously chosen him (Angad) for his job, which is indeed a rare privilege and honour that the Lord had been kind enough to bless him with.

This thought made the prince (“jubarāja”; Angad) thrilled in his body and exhilarated in his heart. (Sortha no. 17-b)

[Note—¹To wit, a person who is selected by the Lord for something is indeed very lucky and privileged because not only he gets an opportunity to serve the Lord but also because the Lord has seen some good quality in him to have chosen him for what the Lord wishes to get done. Indeed, this is a rare honour for the chosen person. Surely Lord Ram would not pick an incompetent person for a job, so therefore if the Lord chooses someone for a particular mission then that person is truly lucky; it also proves to the world that that person has certain qualities that others lack.

A person who is selected by a king becomes an envy of others; everyone would henceforth show great respect to this person because the king favours him—it is as simple as that.

Such thoughts cheered Angad and lifted his spirits.]

चौ०. बंदि चरन उर धरि प्रभुताई । अंगद चलेउ सबहि सिरु नाई ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु प्रताप उर सहज असंका । रन बाँकुरा बालिसुत बंका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bandi carana ura dhari prabhutāī. aṅgada calē'u sabahi siru nāī. 1.
prabhu pratāpa ura sahaja asaṅkā. rana bāṁkurā bālisuta baṅkā. 2.

Angad paid his obeisance at the feet of Lord Ram to seek his blessings, enshrined the Lord’s glory and might in his heart (to give him internal strength, courage and confidence), and then he departed on his assignment after bowing his head before all the rest who were present there (to courteously seeking their blessings too). (1)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, the son of Baali (i.e. Angad)¹ was truly brave, courageous and valiant by nature, one who could not be matched in the battle-field, and now with Lord Ram’s glory and blessings as an additional boon for him, he had become absolutely fearless, bold, invincible and formidable by all counts². (2)

[Note—¹Addressing Angad as “the son of Baali” is significant here. It is to remind everyone about the incident when his father Baali had once humiliated Ravana extremely by grabbing him and tucking him under his armpit because Ravana had gone to disturb Baali’s meditation. Ravana remained squeezed there for many days as Baali had gone to many pilgrim places as part of his religious practice. When Baali returned home and raised his arm to greet his wife and son (Angad), Ravana fell down on the ground, hungry, cramped in muscles, and sore affright. Baali kept him tied as a

plaything for Angad, but later on released him with a condition that Ravana would never disturb him any more in future. Angad remembered this incident and scornfully reminds Ravana of it too—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24.

The details of this incident would be narrated a little later when we read the above Doha.

²Ravana's wife Mandodari knew that both Angad and Hanuman possess these excellent qualities, and she had minced no words in telling her husband about it while sternly admonishing him for his unrelenting stubbornness and impractical approach in dealing with Lord Ram, for he had turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to all evidences that clearly indicate total rout and destruction of the demon race if Ravana remains adamant to wage a war with Lord Ram inspite of all attempts to dissuade him from doing so—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37.]

पुर पैठत रावन कर बेटा । खेलत रहा सो होइ गै भेटा ॥ ३ ॥
 बातहिं बात करष बढि आई । जुगल अतुल बल पुनि तरुनाई ॥ ४ ॥
 तेहिं अंगद कहूँ लात उठाई । गहि पद पटकेउ भूमि भवाँई ॥ ५ ॥

pura paiṭhata rāvana kara bēṭā. khēlata rahā sō hō'i gai bhēṭā. 3.
 bātaḥim bāta karaṣa baḍhi ā'ī. jugala atula bala puni tarunā'ī. 4.
 tēhim aṅgada kahuṁ lāta uṭhā'ī. gahi pada paṭakē'u bhūmi bhavā'ī. 5.

When Angad entered the city of Lanka he met Ravana's son who was playing around the place. (3)

First they talked casually, but soon the conversation turned into an acrimonious verbal spat because both were extremely brave and bold and had never known to be subdued or browbeaten by their opponent. The situation was aggravated further because both were princes of young age, and so they were habituated to lose their temper quickly when someone opposed them. (4)

He (Ravana's son) raised one of his legs at Angad (as a rude gesture to insult him by way of symbolic kicking)¹. Angad grabbed that leg and swung him around viciously before dashing him on the ground, killing Ravana's son instantly². (5)

[Note—¹Ravana' son had picked up this bad habit, of raising his leg to kick anyone who displeased him, from his father. Ravana was used to kicking others at the least provocation; anyone who annoyed him got kicked. He had kicked his brother Vibhishan, and then his own messenger Suka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 (Vibhishan); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 (Suka).}

²This was the death of Ravana's second son. The first son, Akshaya Kumar, was killed by Hanuman prior to the burning of Lanka when the former was sent by Ravana to capture him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18.]

निसिचर निकर देखि भट भारी । जहँ तहँ चले न सकहिं पुकारी ॥ ६ ॥
एक एक सन मरमु न कहहीं । समुझि तासु बध चुप करि रहहीं ॥ ७ ॥

nisicara nikara dēkhi bhaṭa bhārī. jahaṁ tahaṁ calē na sakahim pukārī. 6.
ēka ēka sana maramu na kahahim. samujhi tāsu badha cupa kari rahahim. 7.

All the demon guards who had accompanied the prince (i.e. Ravana's son) were stupefied with terror and dazed into inaction when they saw the great warrior (Angad) and what he did to their prince (who they were supposed to protect).

As soon as Ravana's son died, the demon guards ran helter-skelter, scampering away hastily from the scene without uttering a word¹. (6)

None of them dared to utter a single word to anyone about the developments; they chose to keep absolutely mum about the killing of the prince. (7)

[Note—¹The guards were terrified with fear, apprehending severe punishment. They were so petrified that they escaped from the site quietly, without uttering a word, so that no one would know they were present when Angad killed Ravana's son. They did not want to be produced as a witness of this killing. Surely they would be severely tortured and roasted alive.]

भयउ कोलाहल नगर मझारी । आवा कपि लंका जेहिं जारी ॥ ८ ॥
अब धौं कहा करिहि करतारा । अति सभित सब करहिं बिचारा ॥ ९ ॥
बिनु पूछें मगु देहिं दिखाई । जेहि बिलोक सोइ जाइ सुखाई ॥ १० ॥

bhaya'u kōlāhala nagara majhārī. āvā kapi laṅkā jēhim jārī. 8.
aba dhauri kahā karihi karatārā. ati sabhita saba karahim bicārā. 9.
binu pūchēm magu dēhim dikhāī. jēhi bilōka sō'i jā'i sukhāī. 10.

There was uproar in the city that the monkey who had burnt Lanka earlier has arrived once again¹. (8)

The citizens got into a huddle everywhere, wondering in fear what would happen next and about what the Creator's intention was. (9)

Meanwhile, Angad fearlessly moved into the city. Everyone stepped aside to give him passage. Anyone whom Angad glanced even casually became petrified with terror (fearing for his life)². (10)

[Note—¹Both Angad and Hanuman looked alike as they were of the same age. So when the news spread that one fierce monkey warrior has entered the city and has killed Ravana's son, the citizens thought he was Hanuman.

²Angad's passage through the city streets was like that of a conqueror. As soon as the demons saw him approach, they became silent and stood aside to give him right of

way. No one dared either to oppose him, or question who he was and why he had come. A deathly silence fell upon Lanka as Angad wend his way to Ravana's palace.]

दो०. गयउ सभा दरबार तब सुमिरि राम पद कंज ।
सिंह ठवनि इत उत चितव धीर बीर बल पुंज ॥ १८ ॥
dōhā.

gaya'u sabhā darabāra taba sumiri rāma pada kañja.
sinha ṭhavani ita uta citava dhīra bīra bala puñja. 18.

Remembering the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram (to assure himself that he has the blessing and protection of the Lord), Angad went to the palace and stood before the gates of its royal court.

He, who was an embodiment of bravery, courage, strength and valour, glanced around the place like a bold lion would survey its surroundings fearlessly. (Doha no. 18)

चौ०. तुरत निसाचर एक पठावा । समाचार रावनहि जनावा ॥ १ ॥
सुनत बिहँसि बोला दससीसा । आनहु बोलि कहाँ कर कीसा ॥ २ ॥
आयसु पाइ दूत बहु धाए । कपिकुंजरहि बोलि लै आए ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

turata nisācara ēka paṭhāvā. samācāra rāvanahi janāvā. 1.
sunata bihaṁsi bōlā dasasīsā. ānahu bōli kahāñ kara kīsā. 2.
āyasu pā'i dūta bahu dhā'ē. kapikuñjarahī bōli lai ā'ē. 3.

He (Angad) immediately sent a demon guard to inform Ravana of the news of his arrival, and about his intention to meet the latter. (1)

Ravana, the ten-headed one, smiled when he heard the news¹, and ordered the guard: 'Go and bring the monkey here. Let me see who he is and from where he has come.' (2)

As soon as the instruction was given, many messengers (demon guards) rushed out² to bring the monkey chief (i.e. Angad) to the court. (3)

[Note—¹There are two reasons why Ravana “smiled”. One is to give the impression that he is not at all worried or afraid of the visitor, even if he is some brave warrior sent by his arch enemy Lord Ram. This was done to instill confidence in his army and its commanders.

The second reason is that he thought now was his chance to settle scores with the intruder who had destroyed his city of Lanka earlier by burning it.

²Only one demon guard was sent by Angad to inform Ravana of his arrival. But when Ravana ordered Angad to be brought in, many guards went out to fetch him. Why? Because the news of a “monkey arriving to meet Ravana” aroused immense anxiety

and curiosity in the rank and file of royal guards present in the royal court of Ravana so that many of them rushed out to see who this monkey was. After their bitter experience with Hanuman on an earlier occasion they thought it fit to go in a group, rather than alone, to bring the new monkey visitor to the court; they feared that if only one guard went to bring the monkey in then there were fair chances that this poor fellow would be killed by that monkey, on some pretext or the other, while accompanying him to the court.]

अंगद दीख दसानन बैसैं । सहित प्रान कज्जलगिरि जैसैं ॥ ४ ॥
 भुजा बिटप सिर सृंग समाना । रोमावली लता जनु नाना ॥ ५ ॥
 मुख नासिका नयन अरु काना । गिरि कंदरा खोह अनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

aṅgada dīkha dasānana baisēm̐. sahita prāna kajjalagiri jaisēm̐. 4.
 bhujaṁ biṭapa sira sṛṅga samānā. rōmāvalī latā janu nānā. 5.
 mukha nāsikā nayana aru kānā. giri kandarā khōha anumānā. 6.

[These verses describe the image of Ravana that Angad had first glimpse of.]

The first impression that Angad got of the ten-headed Ravana was that of a huge dark mountain made of black soot sitting in a personified form. (4)

His arms were like gigantic trees, and his heads were like the top of these trees¹. The hairs on his body were like so many creepers hanging from these trees. (5)

His mouths, noses, eyes and ears appeared to resemble large dark caves and deep crevices on a huge mountain. (6)

[Note—¹We must remember that Ravana is said to have had ten heads and twenty arms. This is why the plural term “trees” has been used here.]

गयउ सभाँ मन नेकु न मुरा । बालितनय अतिबल बाँकुरा ॥ ७ ॥
 उठे सभासद कपि कहूँ देखी । रावन उर भा क्रोध बिसेषी ॥ ८ ॥

gaya'u sabhāṁ mana nēku na murā. bālitanaya atibala bāṁkurā. 7.
 uṭhē sabhāsada kapi kahuṁ dēkhī. rāvana ura bhā krōdha bisēṣī. 8.

The extremely bold and brave son of Baali (i.e. Angad) went to the court fearlessly. He was not the slightest bit afraid or hesitant on beholding the majesty and pomp of Ravana's court. (7)

When Angad strode in with a majestic gait fearlessly, all the courtiers present in the court stood up¹. This sight severely annoyed and angered Ravana². (8)

[Note—¹Why did the courtiers stand up when Angad stepped inside the royal court? First it was a sign that they were civilised enough to show due respect to a guest.

Angad had come directly as a guest, as a messenger, unlike Hanuman who was caught as an intruder wrecking the royal garden of Ravana (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 18).

Secondly, everyone was eager and anxious to have a glimpse of this new monkey, and to make a fair guess as to his identity. So to get a better view of Angad they all stood up at once and craned their necks to see him as he entered the royal court.

Thirdly, after their frightful experience with Hanuman they wished to play safe by standing up to greet the new monkey so that he would not find an excuse to pounce upon one of the courtiers who is caught sitting, because to keep sitting could be interpreted as showing disrespect to the visitor, thereby inviting his wrath which everyone wished to avoid at all costs.

Fourthly, the courtiers were amazed at the confidence and fearlessness with which Angad strode in the court teeming with fierce looking demons. He walked in like a lion faces a herd of wild elephants—see Doha no. 19 below. This sight filled the demon courtiers with awe and respect for Angad.

²Ravana's annoyance is understandable. He had not asked them to stand up, so they virtually defied his authority by standing without permission. Further, he hadn't expected that his courtiers would stand up to show respect to a monkey, especially when one such member of his tribe had caused so much devastation to Lanka earlier. So it was natural for him to show anger and annoyance.]

दो०. जथा मत्त गज जूथ महुँ पंचानन चलि जाइ ।

राम प्रताप सुमिरि मन बैठ सभाँ सिरु नाइ ॥ १९ ॥

dōhā.

jathā matta gaja jūtha mahum̐ pañcānana cali jā'i.

rāma pratāpa sumiri mana baiṭha sabhām̐ siru nā'i. 19.

Just like a brave lion enters a herd of wild elephants without any fear, Angad entered the demon while remembering the glory and majesty of Lord Ram in his heart and mind. Then he bowed his head before the assembly to show courtesy and good manners, and sat down. (Doha no. 19)

[Note—Angad was a prince of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, so he was well-versed with the etiquettes of royal courts. He observed that all the courtiers had stood up when he entered to show due respect to him, and so he wished to reciprocate their honourable gesture by bowing before the assembly before taking his seat.

Where did Angad sit? Well, every royal court has a seat where guests sit, and being a prince Angad knew it. He quickly glanced around the place and discerned that seat on which royal guests are expected to be seated. It is also quite possible that one of the guards who had ushered him in guided him to his seat.]

चौ०. कह दसकंठ कवन तैं बंदर । मैं रघुबीर दूत दसकंधर ॥ १ ॥

मम जनकहि तोहि रही मिताई । तव हित कारन आयउँ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha dasakaṇṭha kavana taim bandara. maim raghubīra dūta dasakandhara.

1.

mama janakahi tōhi rahī mitāī. tava hita kārana āya'uṃ bhāī. 2.

Ravana (“dasakaṇṭha”; literally one with ‘ten necks’, and hence has ten heads) asked, ‘Who are you monkey?’

Angad replied, ‘Oh Ravana (“dasakandhara”; literally one with ‘ten shoulders’, and hence has ten necks and ten heads)! I am a messenger of Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave prince of the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya). (1)

My father had friendship with you¹. So I have come here for the sake of your own good and welfare². (2)

[Note—¹The story of how Angad’s father Baali and Ravana became friends have been narrated in (i) Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34; (ii) Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in (iii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.

The story in brief is this: Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Vaali (also pronounced as “Baali”), had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana’s arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him.

This pact of friendship suited both the kings of Kishkindha and Lanka. For Baali, the king of Kishkindha, it meant that the demons of Lanka ruled by Ravana would not disturb his kingdom any longer, and it also ensured there would be no invasion from the south of Kishkindha. For Ravana, the king of Lanka, it was to ensure security for Lanka from the northern direction. Now there was no fear of any invasion from one of the powerful kingdoms that ruled in the north of the mainland, because Kishkindha, the kingdom of monkeys ruled by Baali, would act as a buffer between Lanka and the invading army from the north. Since the nearest landmass to the island kingdom of Lanka from which there was any fear of invasion was the mainland in its northern direction where Kishkindha was situated, a distance of merely 800 miles of ocean which could be crossed by a determined army, this pact of friendship between Baali and Ravana virtually made Lanka impregnable. On all the other sides of Lanka the ocean stretched literally interminably, for hundreds and thousands of miles. With the nearest kingdom becoming friendly, added with the additional protection provided by the ocean that circled the island of Lanka like a huge natural moat, the fort of the demon kingdom became safe and invincible.

This is the obvious reason why Ravana had become so confident that no power on earth could harm him.

²This was also Lord Ram’s instruction—that they must act in a way which is good for Ravana. {Aapropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17.}

उत्तम कुल पुलस्ति कर नाती । सिव बिरंचि पूजेहु बहु भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
बर पायहु कीन्हेहु सब काजा । जीतेहु लोकपाल सब राजा ॥ ४ ॥

uttama kula pulasti kara nātī. siva birañci pūjēhu bahu bhāmtī. 3.
bara pāyahu kīnhēhu saba kājā. jītēhu lōkapāla saba rājā. 4.

You are born in an illustrious family of sage Pulastya¹; you had worshipped and subsequently pleased Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma in a variety of ways². (3)

After obtaining boons from these exalted Gods, you had accomplished all that you had wished to do. Verily indeed, you had conquered even the greatest of gods and all the mighty kings of the world³. (4)

[Note—¹Ravan's birth in the family of sage Pulastya has been narrated in: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uttarkand, Cantos 1, verse nos. 25-57; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 9; (iii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 8-24.

²Ravana's worshipping of Lord Shiva and Brahma is narrated in: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uttarkand, Cantos 2, verse nos. 10-15; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 10, verse nos. 10-25½ ; (iii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 26-39; 47-53; and (iv) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178—to Doha no. 182.]

नृप अभिमान मोह बस किंबा । हरि आनिहु सीता जगदंबा ॥ ५ ॥
अब सुभ कहा सुनहु तुम्ह मोरा । सब अपराध छमिहि प्रभु तोरा ॥ ६ ॥
दसन गहहु तृन कंठ कुठारी । परिजन सहित संग निज नारी ॥ ७ ॥
सादर जनकसुता करि आगें । एहि बिधि चलहु सकल भय त्यागें ॥ ८ ॥

nṛpa abhimāna mōha basa kimbā. hari ānihu sītā jagadambā. 5.
aba subha kahā sunahu tumha mōrā. saba aparādha chamihi prabhu tōrā. 6.
dasana gahahu tṛna kaṇṭha kuṭhārī. parijana sahita saṅga nija nārī. 7.
sādara janakasutā kari āgēm. ēhi bidhi calahu sakala bhaya tyāgēm. 8.

Unfortunately, whether out of arrogance that you acquired by virtue of your ascension to the powerful title of being the king of the demon race, or out of your stupidity and delusions that made you think that you had the right to do whatever you wished to do irrespective of the probity and propriety of your actions—you had abducted Sita, a manifestation of the Supreme Goddess, who is the Mother of the World (sītā jagadambā). (5)

Nevertheless, things can still be sorted out and settled in your favour if you pay heed to me. Now, listen to my good and friendly advice which is for your own good and

welfare, and if you act accordingly then (be rest assured that) all your offences, all your mistakes and evil doings would be forgiven by the Lord (Sri Ram). (6)

[I'll tell you what to do.] Hold a twig in your mouth between the two rows of teeth, tie an axe around your neck so that its sharp blade is just below your throat¹, then collect all your family members, including your wives, and keeping Sita, the daughter of Janak, in the front, walk in a procession², without any kind of fear (to go and voluntarily surrender before Lord Ram). (7-8)

[Note—¹What is the significance of “holding a twig or a bunch of grass blades in the mouth”, and “an axe tied around the neck with its blade below the throat”? It is a symbolic way for Ravana of saying to Lord Ram that: (i) “I may be excused and forgiven for my offences because I am no better than an animal which grazes in the meadows, and therefore I deserve your mercy for my foolishness because like an animal I often times act rashly without thinking of the consequences of my stupid acts”; and (ii) “I am at your mercy; if you want you can cut my throat for I have an axe placed across it”.

When Lord Ram, who is reputed to be an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness, sees Ravana approaching him in the aforesaid manner, he is sure to forgive the latter and excuse him for all his follies.

²Collecting all the family members and walking in a peaceful procession with Sita in the lead would be a clear signal for Lord Ram that Ravana has come to make peace with a sincere mind and honest intentions.

Keeping Sita in the vanguard is most crucial and a must thing to do because she is the reason which had caused so much unnecessary and unexpected bitterness between Ravana and Lord Ram in the first place, and she is the reason why the war would be fought now. So therefore, if Sita is returned to Lord Ram then that ‘reason’ would no longer exist, and so there would be no reason why two great kings would be so inimical to each other that they would fight a war till death. Hence, the best thing to do is to remove the primary cause of all irritation, which is to return Sita to her husband; all other things were secondary in nature.]

दो०. प्रनतपाल रघुबंसमनि त्राहि त्राहि अब मोहि ।

आरत गिरा सुनत प्रभु अभय करैगो तोहि ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

pranatapāla raghubansamani trāhi trāhi aba mōhi.
ārata girā sunata prabhu abhaya karaigō tōhi. 20.

[Angad told Ravana—] As soon as you reach Lord Ram, prostrate yourself before him pitifully, pleading earnestly: “Oh the ‘Jewel of the Raghus’ (i.e. the most illustrious and the best king in the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya; “raghubansamani”)! I prostrate (and surrender) myself before you. Have mercy upon me; protect me and show your grace upon me (trāhi trāhi aba mōhi).”

When the Lord (Sri Ram) hears your plea for mercy, rest assured that he would grant you freedom from all kinds of fears. [To wit, have no doubt that Lord Ram will forgive you. Not only will the Lord forgive you, but he will also grant you

the boon of fearlessness as well as immunity from all punishment for your past misdeeds.]’ (Doha no. 20)

चौ०. रे कपिपोत बोलु संभारी । मूढ़ न जानेहि मोहि सुरारी ॥ १ ॥

कहु निज नाम जनक कर भाई । केहि नाते मानिए मिताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rē kapipōta bōlu sambhārī. mūrha na jānēhi mōhi surārī. 1.

kahu nija nāma janaka kara bhāī. kēhi nātē māni'ai mitāī. 2.

[Obviously Ravana would not agree to this way of surrendering before his enemy. Why only Ravana, no other king, big or small, who is worth his salt and has any self-esteem, would ever wish to surrender in this abject manner as Angad had proposed. So, Angad’s advice angered Ravana like putting oil to a smouldering fire. He burst out in indignation—]

‘Oh you dumb-witted son-of-a-monkey (kapipōta)! You stupid fellow; be careful in what you speak. Don’t you know my fame and about my reputation that I am an enemy of the gods¹. (1)

Well, come and tell me the name of your father, and why you think we have some kind of friendly relationship having its root in the past².’ (2)

[Note—¹How idiotic are you? Tell me, is it easy to conquer the powerful gods, and even if they are once conquered is it easy to be able to retain control over them for long? I have done all that, and here you are giving me a lecture on how to surrender! Woe to you, and shame to your father.

²Refer: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 20 herein above—where Angad has told Ravana that his father and Ravana were friends. This amazed Ravana as till now he was not acquainted with the identity of Angad, that the latter was the son of Baali, the erstwhile ruler of Kishkindha, with whom Ravana had had a peace treaty made in some ancient time. The relevant story is narrated as a brief note appended to the above mentioned verse. In fact, Ravana did not even know that Baali was dead—this is clear in his observation made in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 21 herein below.]

अंगद नाम बालि कर बेटा । तासों कबहुँ भई ही भेटा ॥ ३ ॥

अंगद बचन सुनत सकुचाना । रहा बालि बानर मैं जाना ॥ ४ ॥

aṅgada nāma bāli kara bēṭā. tāsōm kabahuṁ bhaī hī bhēṭā. 3.

aṅgada bacana sunata sakucānā. rahā bāli bānara maim jānā. 4.

Angad replied, ‘My name is Angad, and I am the son of Baali. Have you ever met him (my father, Baali)?’ (3)

When Ravana heard the words of Angad (i.e. when he heard Angad mention Baali), he felt uneasy (and probably shifted uncomfortably in his seat).

[After a moment of hesitation, he recovered his composure and said reluctantly—] ‘Yes, there was a monkey named Baali. I am acquainted with him¹. (4)

[Note—¹When Ravana heard the name of Baali, he recollected the bad memory of his past humiliation at the hands of the monkey king when the latter had kept Ravana tucked and squeezed under his armpit for quite a long time. This memory made Ravana squirm irritably in his throne, and perhaps he even had some beads of sweat making their appearance on his forehead.

In order to deflect the import and the gravity of this bit of information, and to give the impression that he was not bothered by any isolated instance that may have happened per chance of misfortune, as ups and downs are part of the game of life and should be taken in one’s stride without giving them undue importance, he pretended to have only a vague remembrance of some monkey by the name of Baali—to give an impression that Baali was like so many other creatures with whom he has had a chance to interact in the course of his life and conquests. So there was nothing special about Baali, and he was just a faded acquaintance.]

अंगद तहीं बालि कर बालक । उपजेहु बंस अनल कुल घालक ॥ ५ ॥

गर्भ न गयहु ब्यर्थ तुम्ह जायहु । निज मुख तापस दूत कहायहु ॥ ६ ॥

aṅgada tahīm bāli kara bālaka. upajēhu bansa anala kula ghālaka. 5.
garbha na gayahu byartha tumha jāyahu. nija mukha tāpasa dūta kahāyahu.
6.

Are you indeed the son of Baali? Woe to you for bringing shame to your family and its name. You were born to ruin your clan just like fire that is lit in a cluster of flourishing bamboos to burn it to ashes. (5)

Why did your mother not abort you while still in her womb, for it would have been better had she not given you birth. Shame to you for calling yourself a messenger of the hermit (Lord Ram)!

[To wit, you are like an ugly wart in your exalted family; you have brought immense infamy to it.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Ravana immediately recovered himself from the shocking news that Angad was the son of Baali who had once subjected Ravana to extreme humiliation.

He decided to use this bit of information—that Angad was Baali’s son—to turn the tables on Angad and cornering him by chiding and putting him to shame, saying that being a prince of the great kingdom of Kishkindha of which his illustrious father Baali was a king, it is an extremely disgraceful, dishonourable and ignominious thing to serve someone else by becoming the latter’s messenger, for being a messenger is a lowly job and an act that undermines the greatness of his stature and that of his family.

To wit, Ravana was playing on the emotions and sentiments of Angad, and trying to make him biased against Lord Ram by reminding him of his late father Baali who was killed by his uncle Sugriv in a duel in which Lord Ram took sides with

Sugriv, and by pointing out to him about his noble birth that does not fit well with the role that he chose for himself, i.e. to become a ‘messenger of a humble hermit’. It would have been alright for Angad to have come to Ravana with a message from his father Baali, the king of Kishkindha, which would be like a prince visiting another king with a goodwill message from his father who is a king himself. But for a noble prince to serve someone else like a mere servant and become his messenger is totally unworthy of him, and it is extremely demeaning and humiliating for the noble family and the kingdom to which he belongs.

Ravana thought that this reminder would kindle indignance in Angad for becoming a messenger for Lord Ram as it would arouse his sense of self-respect and the pride of his royal lineage.

But as it turned out, Angad was made of a sterner stuff. He wouldn’t betray his friends of Kishkindha, the monkeys and bears who constituted the army of Lord Ram, as well as the Lord himself who had been so kind and fatherly towards Angad since his father, Baali’s, death.

Why would Angad not betray Lord Ram? It is because of various reasons. For one, his father, Baali, had entrusted Angad in the care of the Lord at the time of his death, and the Lord had promised the dying Baali that he would take care of Angad as his own ward. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Further, Angad was not to be fooled so easily. He knew very well the rude nature and selfish character of Ravana, from the treatment meted out to Vibhishan as well as the spy named Suka, and also from what Hanuman had told about Ravana after his return from Lanka, that he would show outwardly favour to Angad as long as it served his purpose, and when the time comes he would put Angad to the sword, arguing that a person who is not loyal to his own kith and kin, his own race and companions, is not to be trusted, and as he is a betrayer of his own people he can as easily betray others with whom he has no blood ties. Such persons deserve nothing but death. Angad apprehended this fate if he joined Ravana’s side, and so even if he had had a remote thought of abandoning Sugriv that thought was immediately shaken off. Angad had seen very closely how graceful, amiable and affable Lord Ram was; he was also acquainted with the way Ravana treated those around him. The question of abandoning such a gracious Lord and betraying him in favour of a cruel and vulgar Ravana was therefore obviously out of the question.

Angad had observed that Lord Ram possessed certain supernatural mystical powers, as was proved by the way the Lord had slayed huge demon armies earlier as was done in the case of Khar and Dushan¹, and also in the case of Marich and Subahu earlier still², and the way he had felled seven tall coconut trees that were not in a straight line³, and the way his arrow had demolished the ten crowns over the heads of Ravana, dismantled his parasol and felled the earrings of Mandodari⁴. Angad had also heard of the miraculous way a rock was transmuted into a divine lady named Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, when Lord Ram touched the said rock with his foot⁵; he had also heard how the Lord had swiftly, and without the least effort, broken the tuff bow of Lord Shiva to marry Sita⁶. Well, he concluded, none of these events could have been made possible by an ordinary human being.

Compared to these singular events that subtly point to Lord Ram’s might and prowess, there was Ravana who only boasted of his powers and strength but who could not even avenge his son Akshaya Kumar’s death at the hands of Hanuman⁷, nor prevent the latter from burning the city of Lanka to ashes⁸.

{¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20-a.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 7.

⁴Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

⁵Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 211 along with Chaupai line nos. 11-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede it.

⁶Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.

⁷Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18.

⁸Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.}

Angad was therefore convinced that in the forthcoming war, Ravana stood no chance of victory against the almighty Lord Ram. Surely then it would be height of stupidity and foolishness on Angad's part to bite the bait that Ravana cunningly threw at him by way of reminding him that he was unfaithful to his father Baali by joining hands with those who had been instrumental in his death—as clearly said by Ravana here in verse line nos. 5-6.

So, Angad firmly decided to rebuke Ravana for his effort to make his mind biased against Lord Ram, for it would be betrayal of the trust that the Lord had put in him, and it would be forfeiting his claim for protection by the almighty Lord Ram which the latter had promised to Angad's father at the time of his death. Angad therefore determined that he and his future were safer in the hands of Lord Ram.]

अब कहु कुसल बालि कहँ अहई । बिहँसि बचन तब अंगद कहई ॥ ७ ॥
 दिन दस गाँ बालि पहि जाई । बूझेहु कुसल सखा उर लाई ॥ ८ ॥
 राम बिरोध कुसल जसि होई । सो सब तोहि सुनाइहि सोई ॥ ९ ॥
 सुनु सठ भेद होइ मन ताकें । श्रीरघुबीर हृदय नहि जाकें ॥ १० ॥

aba kahu kusala bāli kahañ aha'ī. bihañsi bacana taba aṅgada kaha'ī. 7.
 dina dasa ga'eñ bāli pahim jā'ī. būjhēhu kusala sakhā ura lā'ī. 8.
 rāma birōdha kusala jasi hō'ī. sō saba tōhi sunā'ihī sō'ī. 9.
 sunu saṭha bhēda hō'ī mana tākēm. śrīraghubīra hṛdaya nahim jākēm. 10.

Now tell me about the welfare of Baali. Where is he?¹

Hearing this, Angad laughed (sarcastically) and replied (in a taunting manner),
 --- (7)

‘You will go and meet him in the course of the next ten days (i.e. very soon), and then embrace your dear friend (Baali) and ask about his welfare yourself. (8)

What kind of good comes to a person who is opposed to Lord Ram, he (Baali) will himself tell you all about it. (9)

Listen you wicked fellow! Those who do not have the presence of Lord Ragubir (Lord Ram) in their hearts (i.e. those who are not totally loyal and devoted to the Lord, and are not convinced by the divine nature of the Lord) can be swayed by doubts and influenced by attempts to make them disloyal to the Lord by creating a wedge between them and their Lord (Ram)².’ (10)

[Note—¹This statement of Ravana indicates two things: either he was not aware of Baali’s death, or he had tried to stoke hidden anger in the heart of Angad by reminding him of his late father who was killed by Sugriv, Angad’s uncle under whom he works now, and in this killing Lord Ram had sided with Sugriv by aiding him in Baali’s death.

If Ravana was really not aware of Baali’s death, then it implies that his network of spies and informers, who were assigned the task of keeping Ravana abreast of the developments in the world around him, had failed him miserably, either because of their incompetence or because they had laid down their guards due to exaggerated sense of over-confidence and invincibility of their lord Ravana. This cocoon of ignorance that made Ravana believe that there is no one to challenge him as well as his supremacy, authority and sovereignty in the world was the primary cause of his downfall as a king; it made him live in an imaginary world where he ruled one and all, where there was no one to challenge him, and where he alone called the shots. This airy castle made him arrogant and haughty, and oblivious of the gravity of the danger lurking in his own backyard in the form of the mighty army of Lord Ram coming and pitching camp right on the soil of Lanka, at Mt. Subel.

By enquiring about Baali in a causal manner he wished to convey the idea that he cherished his friendship, and that he was not uneasy by the mention of Baali’s name which may have reminded him of the past episode when he was humiliated by the latter.

On the other hand, if Ravana had recalled his friendship with Baali inspite of knowing about his death then it clearly means that he was trying to win over Angad’s loyalty by touching a sensitive nerve of his by reminding him that he was doing a shameful and ignominious thing by betraying his own father and showing immense disrespect to the departed soul by serving those who were responsible for his death, i.e. both Sugriv and Lord Ram. See also a note appended to verse nos. 5-6 herein above.

²Angad tells Ravana that he would fail to sway his loyalty, devotion and commitment to Lord Ram by trying to play on his sentiments and emotions by feigning ignorance about his father Baali’s death by asking about his old friend’s welfare, with a clear intention of reminding Angad of his late father, and why he was killed and by whom. Ravana had hoped that when Angad recalls how his father was killed in a battle with his uncle Sugriv, and how Lord Ram had sided with Sugriv to become instrumental in his father’s death, most likely he would be stirred sufficiently enough to revolt against both Lord Ram and Sugriv, and to avenge Baali he would choose to join Ravana.

That would be god-sent boon for Ravana because Angad would help him with all the secrets of the army of Lord Ram, now, as well as in the future during the course of the war. Nothing would be better from the military angle as far as Ravana was concerned.

The way Angad answered Ravana clearly hinted to the latter that his trick had failed; that it was not possible to win over Angad's loyalty and make him betray or desert Lord Ram.]

दो०. हम कुल घालक सत्य तुम्ह कुल पालक दससीस ।
अंधउ बधिर न अस कहहिं नयन कान तव बीस ॥ २१ ॥
dōhā.

hama kula ghālaka satya tumha kula pālaka dasasīsa.
andha'u badhira na asa kahahirṁ nayana kāna tava bīsa. 21.

[Angad continued—] 'Oh you ten-headed one (dasasīsa)! Really I am one who has been a cause of ruin and shame of my family, and you have been one who has made your family flourish and gain fame.

How absurd and incongruous a statement is this (because it is contrary to the truth and facts)! Even a person who is blind and deaf wouldn't be so stupid as to say such a rubbish, but you have twenty eyes and ears (instead of just two, and so such a ridiculous observation was never expected from you)! (Doha no. 21)

[Note—A blind person can know things to some extent by hearing of it; and a deaf person likewise can know things to some extent by seeing it. But if both these faculties are lacking in a person, if he can't see or hear, there is no way he can know what is happening around him, except to some extent by touching or tasting anything or by some rare gift of the sixth sense, but such knowledge would be extremely limited and cannot give a truthful account of anything. Hence, such persons can't be relied upon.

So, Angad scorns at Ravana, saying that Ravana calling him as one who has been an ugly wart in his family, one who has ruined the good name and reputation of his father Baali's family is nothing but rubbish and utter nonsense. Angad would elaborate upon this in the verses that follow herein below.]

चौ०. सिव बिरंचि सुर मुनि समुदाई । चाहत जासु चरन सेवकाई ॥ १ ॥
तासु दूत होइ हम कुल बोरा । अइसिहुँ मति उर बिहर न तोरा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

siva birañci sura muni samudāī. cāhata jāsu carana sēvakāī. 1.
tāsu dūta hō'i hama kula bōrā. a'isihuṁ mati ur bihara na tōrā. 2.

Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma, as well as the community of saints, sages and ascetics—all of them are willing and eager to have an opportunity to serve his (Lord Ram's) holy feet. (1)

And here you are ridiculing me by saying that by being a messenger of such an exalted Lord I have shamed my family and drowned its good name and fame! Alas; even after having such a deadwood in lieu of intelligence, it is a matter of great wonder, truly, that your heart does not rupture and burst under your chest.

[To wit, it is such an irony that instead of realising how lucky and privileged I am that Lord Ram, whom the greatest of gods and sages wish to serve cheerfully, has chosen me to become his messenger, you deride me and call me an ugly wart in my family and a shame to the name of my great father. It shows that you have not even an iota of wisdom and intelligence left in you. If this is the case, why does your dry-as-soil heart not burst out of its cage in your chest and fall apart just like the dry soil under an old deadwood tree heaves and crumbles into dust?]' (2)

सुनि कठोर बानी कपि केरी । कहत दसानन नयन तरेरी ॥ ३ ॥
खल तव कठिन बचन सब सहँ । नीति धर्म मैं जानत अहँ ॥ ४ ॥

sunī kaṭhōra bānī kapi kērī. kahata dasānana nayana tarērī. 3.
khala tava kaṭhina bacana saba saha'ūṁ. nīti dharma mairi jānata aha'ūṁ. 4.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard the Kapi's (Angad's) sharp rejoinder, he scowled at the latter with eyes full of scorn and wrath. (3)

Ravana shot back, 'Oh you wretch of a fellow (khala)! I cope with your nasty, provocative and insulting words only because I wish to follow the principles of righteousness, propriety and probity.

[You are a messenger, and a messenger enjoys certain privileges, such as immunity from punishment, prosecution or imprisonment. That is why I am forced to tolerate your impertinent and irreverent talking. Otherwise you know, I would have immediately got you arrested and severely punished. But mind you; don't take this as my weakness. Rather, you must appreciate my noble character and high thinking that I follow established principles and adhere to norms of decency and courteous behaviour when dealing a messenger, irrespective of whose messenger he is. So don't give me a lecture on what is right and what is not. Do you hear?]' (4)

कह कपि धर्मसीलता तोरी । हमहुँ सुनी कृत पर त्रिय चोरी ॥ ५ ॥
देखी नयन दूत रखवारी । बूढ़ि न मरहु धर्म ब्रतधारी ॥ ६ ॥

kaha kapi dharmasīlatā tōrī. hamahuṁ sunī kṛta para triya cōrī. 5.
dēkhī nayana dūta rakhavārī. būṛi na marahu dharma bratadhārī. 6.

The monkey ("kapi"; i.e. Angad) retorted in a most scornful and contemptible way, 'Yes indeed, I too have heard about how great an expert you are in the laws of Dharma (probity, propriety, righteousness and ethics), and how diligently you follow them when I came to know that you had stolen another person's wife¹. (5)

As if that was not enough, I have also seen how you extend your hospitality and protection to a messenger².

Oh you pretentious upholder of Dharma; why don't you drown yourself to death for such falsehood and pretensions of righteousness and noble conduct (for your deeds squarely speak against you and demolish your claims regarding your upright nature)³. (6)

[Note—¹This refers to abduction of Sita by Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 28.

²This refers to the treatment meted out to Hanuman, who was also a messenger of Lord Ram, sent to find Sita and give the Lord's message to her. Ravana had ordered first that he be killed or severely beaten so that his body suffers grave wounds, but on second thoughts ordered that his tail be set on fire—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 13 and 21; (b) Doha no. 24 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-10 that precede it.

³You speak as if you are a holy, pious and noble soul who lives by what is right and proper, but what you actually do is quite the opposite. You stole Sita like a thief; is this righteous conduct? You ordered that Hanuman be killed, beaten and burnt alive—is this the correct way to treat a messenger?]

कान नाक बिनु भगिनि निहारी । छमा कीन्हि तुम्ह धर्म बिचारी ॥ ७ ॥
धर्मसीलता तव जग जागी । पावा दरसु हमहुँ बड़भागी ॥ ८ ॥

kāna nāka binu bhagini nihārī. chamā kīnhi tumha dharma bicārī. 7.
dharmasīlatā tava jaga jāgī. pāvā darasu hamahuṁ baṛabhāgī. 8.

Truly, when you saw that your sister's nose and ears had been chopped off, surely I believe you had forgiven the person who had brought such abject humiliation to your family because of your gracious and forgiving nature, is it not?¹ (7)

Really indeed, your fame as an upholder of the excellent moral virtues coming under the umbrella of the term 'Dharma' are so famous in the world that I feel it is my honour to have an opportunity to meet you in person!' (8)

[Note—¹Angad teases Ravana by drawing his attention to the episode of Supernakha whose nose and ears were cut by Laxman on the orders of Lord Ram as she was attempting to play foul with the Lord and make him break his vows of remaining loyal to his chaste wife Sita by cajoling him to marry her. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 22.

Angad says, "Well, if you really are so courageous, brave and bold as well as an upholder of Dharma, then tell me why didn't you immediately seek revenge by attacking Lord Ram who had deformed your sister and bring him to justice; why did you went home quietly, worried and in a depressed mood? Oh yes sure, you did not decide to punish the perpetrator because you wanted to forgive him!

Well, if you are such a great upholder of the laws of Dharma that you wished to forgive the person who had committed this atrocious act of cutting off the nose and ears of your sister because you are so gracious, magnanimous, benevolent and kind-hearted, then will you please tell me why you went like a thief and abduct the wife of this person, putting him to extreme grief and forcing him to come here searching for her, even risking his life in the process, instead of challenging him to a duel to punish

him for his deed of wounding your sister right on the spot? This clearly debunks your claim of being a ‘holy cow’.”]

दो०. जनि जल्पसि जड़ जंतु कपि सठ बिलोकु मम बाहु ।
 लोकपाल बल बिपुल ससि ग्रसन हेतु सब राहु ॥ २२ (क) ॥
 पुनि नभ सर मम कर निकर कमलन्हि पर करि बास ।
 सोभत भयउ मराल इव संभु सहित कैलास ॥ २२ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

jani jalpasi jaṛa jantu kapi saṭha bilōku mama bāhu.
 lōkapāla bala bipula sasi grasana hētu saba rāhu. 22 (a).
 puni nabha sara mama kara nikara kamalanhi para kari bāsa.
 sōbhata bhaya'u marāla iva sambhu sahita kailāsa. 22 (b).

Extremely upset by Angad’s scorching comments that directly hit at his self-esteem and dignity, Ravana vehemently hit back in an angry tone, ‘Oh you rascal monkey, a useless creature who is no better than an insect. Don’t babble incoherently like someone who is hallucinating.

Look here at my majestic, robust and strong arms; they are strong and powerful enough to vanquish the might and pride of all the Lokpals (the gods who take care of the welfare of the world) at once just like Rahu who can devour many moons simultaneously. (Doha no. 22-a)

[Listen more about the majesty, the might and the stupendous powers of my arms.] Further, Lord Shiva looked like a swan in the heavenly lake represented by my cupped palms as he rested on Mt. Kailash which I had once held up in my hands¹. (Doha no. 22-b)

[Note—¹This episode where Ravana had held the whole of Mt. Kailash, where Lord Shiva is said to have his abode in the heaven, aloft in his hands, is narrated briefly in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse no. 40.]

चौ०. तुम्हरे कटक माझ सुनु अंगद । मो सन भिरिहि कवन जोधा बद ॥ १ ॥
 तव प्रभु नारि बिरहँ बलहीना । अनुज तासु दुख दुखी मलीना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tumharē kaṭaka mājha sunu aṅgada. mō sana bhirihi kavana jōdhā bada. 1.
 tava prabhu nāri birahaṁ balahīnā. anuja tāsu dukha dukhī malīnā. 2.

[In the following verses, Ravana lists all the great warriors of Lord Ram’s army, including the Lord himself, one-by-one, and pointing out how each one of them stands no chance against him and his might.]

Ravana said with rebuke and contempt in his voice, 'Listen Angad! Which warrior in the rank and file of your army is capable of facing me in the battle-field? Tell me, is there anyone amongst you who is strong and brave enough to stand in front of me? (1)

Your lord (i.e. Lord Ram) has already been weakened by grieving for his wife, and his brother (i.e. Laxman) too has become weak and gloomy because of the distress that has overcome him when he sees his brother sad and grieving constantly.

[Hence, both of them have lost their original vigour and strength to withstand the rigours of warfare. They lack the energy and the stamina needed to fight a battle. Surely, protracted grief must have sapped their energy to such an extent that they won't stand a wee bit chance against my might and punch in the battle-field.] (2)

तुम्ह सुग्रीव कूलद्रुम दोऊ । अनुज हमार भीरु अति सोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
जामवंत मंत्री अति बूढ़ा । सो कि होइ अब समारूढ़ा ॥ ४ ॥

tumha sugrīva kūladruma dō'ū. anuja hamāra bhīru ati sō'ū. 3.
jāmavanta mantrī ati būrḥā. sō ki hō'i aba samarārūḥā. 4.

You and Sugriv are like plants or trees that grow on the edge of the bank of a river or the shore of the sea¹. As far as my younger brother (Vibhishan) is concerned, he is a very cowardly person who is scared out of his wits². (3)

Jamvant (the chief of the bear community) has become old and infirm. Can he ever stand his ground in the aggressive environment of the battle-field where exceptional agility, stamina and vigour are needed (which he obviously lacks due to his old age)? (4)

[Note—¹Trees and plants that grow near flowing water, such as rivers and seas, can't find firm ground for their roots because the soil near the banks of rivers and shores of seas is soft and prone to being swept away by swift currents. Such trees or plants can fall very easily; they are uprooted with a swift current that undercuts their roots. If there is a flood accompanied with a strong wind, the trees on the edge of the river bank would topple over into the water.

Ravana compares both Angad and Sugriv to such plants and trees that look big on the outside but have no strong foundation to keep them permanently rooted. To wit, when the war actually starts, Angad and Sugriv would be felled without the least effort just like the trees and plants growing on the edge of rivers and seas.

²Vibhishan is in a precarious state; he is weakened by worry. He is not sure of his own fate. On the one hand he has made his own people, the demons, his enemy, and on the other hand he is living amongst alien people who are arch enemies of his demon race, and so he can never be certain about them, about what they would do to him once their objective was fulfilled. Surely, in this uncertain situation Vibhishan must be living a worried and terrified life like someone living between the two sharp edges of a sword.]

सिलिय कर्म जानहिं नल नीला । है कपि एक महा बलसीला ॥ ५ ॥

आवा प्रथम नगर जेहिं जारा । सुनत बचन कह बालिकुमारा ॥ ६ ॥

silpi karma jānahim̐ nala nīlā. hai kapi ēka mahā balasīlā. 5.
āvā prathama nagaru jēhim̐ jārā. sunata bacana kaha bālikumārā. 6.

The two, Nala and Neela, are skilled in the art of construction; they are not expected to know anything about the martial art of warfare.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that there is only one monkey amongst you who possesses great strength. (5)

He is the one who had come earlier to Lanka and had burnt the city¹.

When the son of Baali (“bālikumārā”; Angad) heard these words (that referred to Hanuman), he immediately seized the opportunity to turn the table on Ravana by snapping back sarcastically, --- (6)

[Note—¹Ravana is referring to Hanuman here.]

सत्य बचन कहु निसिचर नाहा । साँचेहुँ कीस कीन्ह पुर दाहा ॥ ७ ॥
रावन नगर अल्प कपि दहई । सुनि अस बचन सत्य को कहई ॥ ८ ॥

satya bacana kahu nisicara nāhā. sāṁcēhuṁ kīsa kīnha pura dāhā. 7.
rāvana nagara alpa kapi dhaī. suni asa bacana satya kō kahaī. 8.

‘Oh the king of demons (nisicara nāhā)! Tell me honestly, is it really true that a monkey had burnt (your fabulous city of) Lanka? (7)

Who will believe that it is true that a humble monkey would ever be able to burn the great city of Ravana¹? (8)

[Note—¹Angad scorned at Ravana and put him to shame by turning his own words against him when he said something to this effect: “It seems incredulous and out of imagination that a city so well protected by a mighty demon king of the name of Ravana, who claims to have vanquished all the gods and conquered all the creatures of the Creator’s creation, could be burnt down by a lonely monkey, all by himself. Why, this seems absolutely impossible. But you have acknowledged yourself that this was done by that diminutive-looking monkey. Prey, tell me, what were you doing then; why didn’t you stop him from causing such havoc to your beloved city; what were your warriors doing; where was your strength and valour, of which you boast so much, at that time?”] (8)

जो अति सुभट सराहेहु रावन । सो सुग्रीव केर लघु धावन ॥ ९ ॥
चलइ बहुत सो बीर न होई । पठवा खबरि लेन हम सोई ॥ १० ॥

jō ati subhaṭa sarāhēhu rāvana. sō sugrīva kēra laghu dhāvana. 9.
cala'i bahuta sō bīra na hō'i. paṭhavā khabari lēna hama sō'i. 10.

Look Ravana; that monkey whom you have praised yourself so much for his valour and strength and courage is merely an ordinary messenger in the service of Sugriv¹. (9)

That he came here alone after covering a great distance (across the ocean) would not make him a great warrior, for actually it was us who had sent him on this mission². (10)

[Note—¹Angad calls Hanuman a messenger of Sugriv because it was Sugriv, being the king of the monkeys and the kingdom of Kishkindha, who had summoned and dispatched all the monkeys, including Hanuman, in all the directions to search for Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 22.

Angad's observation that "Hanuman was serving Sugriv in an ordinary way" shows that there was not much of a formal hierarchy in the kingdom of Kishkindha, and all the monkeys mingled with each others as brothers and compatriots of equal status. This informal relationship helped to bind the community closely in a bond of brotherhood and friendship.

²Hanuman was one amongst so many other monkey messengers sent by Sugriv in all the directions to search for Sita. Sugriv had not particularly directed Hanuman to go in a specific direction, such as to Lanka.

It was later on when the party, of which he was a member, reached the shore of the ocean that it became necessary for someone to go across the ocean to Lanka if they were to be successful in their mission of finding Sita. At that juncture, Angad and Jamvant, who were the leaders of this team, decided to send Hanuman on this job. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

To wit, Hanuman had no instructions to burn Lanka; his mandate was to find Sita. If he could achieve the feat of burning Lanka and destroying a large section of its army which had tried to catch him, it was his personal choice.

Angad wanted to drive home the point that if a single monkey could cause such a tremendous damage to Lanka, what would happen when the might of the whole monkey army unleashes its fury on the demon kingdom—has Ravana considered it?]

दो०. सत्य नगरु कपि जारेउ बिनु प्रभु आयसु पाइ ।

फिरि न गयउ सुग्रीव पहिं तेहिं भय रहा लुकाइ ॥ २३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

satya nagaru kapi jārē'u binu prabhu āyasu pā'i.

phiri na gaya'u sugrīva pahim̐ tēhim̐ bhaya rahā lukā'i. 23 (a).

[Angad continued—] It's true that the Kapi (the monkey; i.e. Hanuman) had burnt Lanka without an express order to do so from Lord Ram, and that is the reason why,

now I understand from hindsight, he did not go back directly to report boldly to Sugriv (about the success of his mission to Lanka to find Sita), but preferred to hide himself out of fear¹. (Doha no. 23-a)

[Note—¹Angad said: “Since Hanuman had burnt Lanka on the spur of the moment, without any order either from Lord Ram or from Sugriv, he was afraid of severe reprimand from his chief, Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. So he was reluctant to go to him straight upon return, and hid himself. I first went and told Sugriv about the good news, that Sita has been found, and this good news cheered up Sugriv and helped me to win his good humour and favour sufficiently enough to ensure that he would overlook or neglect Hanuman’s deed of burning Lanka without orders. Then I told Hanuman that there was nothing to fear, and I took him with me to Sugriv, who in turn took him to Lord Ram. The Lord of course was waiting for him, and he affectionately and warmly welcomed Hanuman, and appreciated his actions.

The point to note here is this: Hanuman was scared of Sugriv, and not Lord Ram. This is because Sugriv was a king, and a king would, in all likelihood, become annoyed if his orders are violated. Sugriv orders were clear: the monkeys and bears who were dispatched from Kishkindha were to search and find Sita, and come back to report within a month’s time; they were not expected to do anything more. And here Hanuman had run wild by fighting and killing a large number of demons, ruining their king’s royal garden called Ashok Van, had even killed Akshaya Kumar, the son of Ravana, and then lost his cool to become violent and burn the whole city of Lanka. This was not his mandate, and as such Hanuman was scared of facing Sugriv because he feared punishment.

But there was no such fear from Lord Ram—for everyone knew that the Lord was very kind, compassionate, loving, forgiving and accommodating. That’s why Hanuman had no reservations in disclosing his deeds to the Lord.

Presently, Angad tells Ravana all these things to drive home the point that Hanuman, whom Ravana acknowledges as being exceptionally brave, bold and courageous, was actually very humble and docile, and he didn’t have the courage and the boldness to face his king, Sugriv, and disobey his orders. This means that Sugriv was more powerful than Hanuman, for otherwise the latter would have no fear of him.

This was done to remind Ravana that he is fooling himself by thinking that only Hanuman is the ‘brave one’ in the whole of the monkey army, for he has yet not met and tested the others. It was to debunk Ravana’s general perception that the monkeys as a whole are a weak, inept and incompetent lot of clumsy and fickle minded creatures, and they stand no chance against his valour, courage, strength and power.]

सत्य कहहि दसकंठ सब मोहि न सुनि कछु कोह ।

कोउ न हमारें कटक अस तो सन लरत जो सोह ॥ २३ (ख) ॥

satya kahahi dasakaṇṭha saba mōhi na suni kachu kōha.
kō'u na hamārēm kaṭaka asa tō sana larata jō sōha. 23 (b).

Truly Ravana, what you say is right¹, and I am not offended by your comments. In all sooth, really, there is no one in our rank and file who would feel glad and honoured to be able to fight with you!² (Doha no. 23-b)

[Note—¹Angad refers to what Ravana has said about all the monkey warriors in the previous verse nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 23-a herein above.

²Angad here refers to Ravana's assertion in verse no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23-a herein above that "there is no one in the monkey army who would be able to fight Ravana". Angad gives the reason for it in the next Doha no. 23-c.

Here he is taunting Ravana in a contemptuous way by saying that it is true that none of his friends and compatriots would like to fight with him, not because they can't fight him as they are weak, or are afraid to face him in the battle-field for fear of defeat, but because they would feel it is demeaning and insulting for their own honour and pride, as fighting with Ravana, who is a false warrior, a mere pretender full of loud boast and bluster without anything of substance in him, would put them to shame for having wasted their time and energy, their valour, courage, marital skills, strength and powers on a good-for-nothing, loud-mouthed crook. It would be like trying to kill a mosquito by using a gun against it, or employing a battering ram to fall a puppet, or wasting energy by repeatedly punching a rubber dummy thinking it to be a living giant.]

प्रीति बिरोध समान सन करिअ नीति असि आहि ।

जौं मृगपति बध मेडुकन्हि भल कि कहइ कोउ ताहि ॥ २३ (ग) ॥

prīti birōdha samāna sana kari'a nīti asi āhi.

jauṁ mṛgapati badha mēḍukanhi bhala ki kaha'i kō'u tāhi. 23 (c).

It is an established norm for mutual engagement that one should develop any kind of relation, either friendly or hostile, only with those who are almost of the same stature and have almost the same standing as his own.

[To wit, both the sides should be on almost the same level; they should be at par with each other; there should be a balance between them. Great disparity between the two sides is not conducive to any worthwhile relationship, whether friendly or hostile. There should be a level playing field for both the sides as it helps to sustain long-term relationships in case of friendship, and to decide who is the actual winner in the case of hostility.]

For instance, if a lion kills a frog, will anyone in his right senses call it a good thing, an act of bravery on the part of the lion¹?

[Definitely and doubtlessly, the answer is "no". Similarly, if a strong man subdues a weakling by using physical force, it is a matter of shame for the former instead of praise.] (Doha no. 23-c.)

[Note—¹Angad clarifies why he considers that none of his friends should fight Ravana by citing the example of a "lion killing a frog", which is a shameful act for the lion. Here, he compares the monkey warriors to the 'lion', and Ravana to the 'frog'.

We can observe how the debate is becoming more and more acerbic, abrasive and personal in a gradual manner, how it is descending lower and lower in the scale of decency and decorum. Both Ravana and Angad have used denigrating and deprecating language for the other, stoking mutual anger, and enhancing bitterness and repugnance further.]

जद्यपि लघुता राम कहूँ तोहि बधें बड़ दोष ।
तदपि कठिन दसकंठ सुनु छत्र जाति कर रोष ॥ २३ (घ) ॥

jadyapi laghutā rāma kahum̐ tōhi badhēm̐ baṛa dōṣa.
tadapi kaṭhina dasakaṇṭha sunu chatra jāti kara rōṣa. 23 (d).

So therefore, oh Ravana, it is true that it would be too lowly and demeaning for Lord Ram to slay you, for it would be a great error on the part of the Lord to do so¹, but mind you, oh the ten-necked one (*dasakaṇṭha*), that the anger of the Kshatriya race (the ‘warrior race’ to which Lord Ram belonged) is very dangerous, and the accompanying wrathful fury is hard to overcome². (Doha no. 23-d)

[Note—¹Angad has just cited the instance of “a lion killing a frog” to stress that it is not a good thing for a great person of abilities and wisdom to use force to kill those who are too weak, humble and lowly in front of him. So therefore it would not be worthy for Lord Ram, the great and almighty Lord of the world, to stoop to such a low level as to employ his powers and strength to vanquish and slay someone as lowly and worthless as Ravana, who is no comparison whatsoever, by any measure, to the Lord’s exalted stature, majesty and greatness.

The world would look down upon Lord Ram for waging a bloody war and causing the death of so many creatures (demons) just for retrieving his wife from Ravana’s clutches—for it was an easy task for the almighty Lord. The world would say that Lord Ram could have simply subdued Ravana, make him give Sita back, exact some tribute from him if he wished to punish the demon king, impose certain strict strictures upon him so that he does not misbehave in the future, and then release him with stern warning not to disobey the Lord’s words.

Instead of this approach, when the Lord’s objective could have been achieved by more peaceful method, the Lord chose to fight a fierce war that led to so much devastation and havoc just in order to kill Ravana to punish him for stealing Sita.

This will surely be a blot on the Lord’s good reputation for ever. But the thing is that anger is a very bad proposition. So if Ravana continues with his wild and arrogant ways, refusing to relent and make peace with the Lord, and consequently forcing the war on the Lord, then his anger would be ignited, and once this fire is kindled, there is no way it can be put out.

²Lord Ram belonged to the Kshatriya race, the noble warrior race that was famous for its valour, courage, boldness, marital skills, bravery and strength. The kings of ancient times usually belonged to this race. The main job of this race was to give protection to the rest of the society.

One characteristic of this race was that while they were usually kind and magnanimous and forgiving, but if a limit of tolerance was passed and their anger was ignited then it was quite impossible to subdue them. Once they decided to achieve an objective, they would accomplish it no matter what happened.

Angad alludes to this unique character. He tells Ravana that though it is correct to say that it would not be a proper thing for Lord Ram to kill him, but if things spin out of control then there would be no stopping the Lord either, in spite of the

fact that the consequences may not be conducive for the Lord's reputation as being merciful, kind, gracious, forgiving, compassionate, magnanimous and benevolent.

So therefore Angad advised Ravana not to test Lord Ram's patience; and that he ought naught to do anything that would precipitate disaster.]

बक्र उक्ति धनु बचन सर हृदय दहेउ रिपु कीस ।
प्रतिउत्तर सड़सिन्ह मनहुँ काढ़त भट दससीस ॥ २३ (ड) ॥

bakra ukti dhanu bacana sara hr̥daya dahē'u ripu kīsa.
prati'uttara saṛasinha manahuṁ kāṛhata bhaṭa dasasīsa. 23 (e).

The words of the Kapi (literally the 'monkey'; here referring to Angad), which were shot like sharp arrows mounted on a bow represented by sarcastic speech, pierced deep into the heart of the ten-headed Ravana, who made desperate attempts to heal his wounds (i.e. his ego, self-respect and dignity) by taking these arrows out using a tong symbolised by his equally sharp rejoinders and rebuffs (made to Angad)¹. (Doha no. 23-e)

[Note—¹Here, the sharp answers that Ravana gave to Angad for each of his taunts have been likened to a wounded person trying to heal his wounds by plucking out the sharp projectiles, shot by his enemy, that have dug deep into his body, and then throwing them vigourously back at his opponent in a tit-for-tat reaction so that some kind of injury could be inflicted on the latter, as far as it was possible.

This will be more evident in the following verses where we shall read that the sarcasm, the taunt and the contempt for each other will reach a crescendo, with quick, biting and witty responses being shot back and forth by both the sides.]

हँसि बोलेउ दसमौलि तब कपि कर बड़ गुन एक ।
जो प्रतिपालइ तासु हित करइ उपाय अनेक ॥ २३ (च) ॥

haṁsi bōlē'u dasamauli taba kapi kara baṛa guna ēka.
jō pratipāla'i tāsū hita kara'i upāya anēka. 23 (f).

Then the ten-headed Ravana laughed (to indicate that he isn't offended, nor does he take Angad seriously) and said, 'One of the good characters of a monkey is that he will always try to serve his master, who takes care of him and feeds him, in the best way he can, and do doing whatever is within his means to support the master's cause'¹. (Doha no. 23-f)

[Note—¹Ravana effectively said this: "I appreciate your enthusiasm in supporting the cause of Lord Ram and for serving Sugriv. Yes, it is the nature of the monkeys in general that they would diligently serve him who feeds them. This habit is evident when one observes how a monkey obeys a monkey-charmer; the monkey would obey his master's commands, without asking questions, by doing all the tricks he is ordered to do to please the spectators who gather to watch the show, because the monkey knows that the charmer gives him food, lodging and protection, and if he does not

obey him then the master would not only beat him but may even cut-off his ration. And, worse, if the master gets angry beyond a limit, he would let the monkey loose, and there are so many predators waiting to grab him and kill him, by stoning him, beating him, or in some other way.

A domesticated monkey usually becomes servile, weak and docile as he loses most of his natural vigour, aggressiveness, and the many skills that are possessed by his peers who live a free life in the forests where they have to fend for themselves because they have no patrons like the monkey-charmer who would feed them, protect them, and give them a shelter to rest.

You live a comfortable life of a prince of the monkey kingdom. You owe your life's privileges to your uncle Sugriv because he has made you a 'prince', as well as to Lord Ram, for it is the Lord who ensures your safety at the hands of your father's bitter enemy, your uncle Sugriv, and has compelled the latter to let you live in peace.

Well, I am not at all surprised that you would sing the song of praises for the two, Sugriv and Lord Ram, because they feed you and allow you to enjoy the privileges of prince-hood. Woe to you; shame to you, for being a servile servant of those who eliminated your noble father and the great monkey named Baali; you have dishonoured yourself by serving them and dancing to their tune, inspite of being the son of the great and fearless monkey warrior king named Baali!"

The following verses reiterate and endorse the above view.]

चौ०. धन्य कीस जो निज प्रभु काजा । जहँ तहँ नाचइ परिहरि लाजा ॥ १ ॥

नाचि कूदि करि लोग रिझाई । पति हित करइ धर्म निपुनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhan'ya kīsa jō nija prabhu kājā. jahaṁ tahaṁ nāca'i parihari lājā. 1.
nāci kūdi kari lōga rijhā'ī. pati hita kara'i dharma nipunā'ī. 2.

[Ravana invokes the example of the monkey-charmer to support his comment made in Doha no. 23-f above.]

Ravana continued, 'Hats off to a monkey who dances, everywhere and anywhere, in the service of his master, without feeling even a wee bit shy or having the least amount of shame or regret for the acts his master orders him to do. (1)

He (the pet monkey) would play a perfect role of a joker, dancing and jumping and hopping (besides making funny faces and uttering ridiculous sounds) in order to entertain and please the spectators who gather around him to watch his antics, for the pecuniary benefit of his master. Forsooth, you monkeys are truly honest followers of the law of Dharma (right conduct).

[It is because you are being faithful to your master who feeds and lodges you. You serve your patron, your master, the monkey-charmer, very diligently and honestly, to the best of your abilities, which surely is a good character. I will readily agree that you are great as far as this virtue goes, and I would applaud it. Surely, this is excellent conduct, and so I say that you monkeys are "followers of Dharma at least in one respect".]¹ (2)

[Note—¹The reference to a ‘monkey-charmer’ is very obvious. The poor, pet monkey performs all sorts of cheap tricks that his master orders him to do to please the crowd that had collected around to watch his antics, and the better role of a joker the monkey plays the greater is the money that is flipped towards him by the appreciative spectators by way of donation or alms. This money provides for the bread and butter of the monkey-charmer, who in turn takes care of the needs of the monkey. This is the monkey-charmer’s only livelihood, and since the monkey helps his master earn his bread and support his dependants with his little pranks, he is doing a noble act by serving his lord faithfully and obediently to the best of his ability.

A monkey-charmer may have more than one monkey as pets, but he would naturally favour that monkey who is a better performer of tricks as it translates into more revenue. It is a symbiotic relationship between the monkey-charmer and the monkey, which benefits both. The charmer depends upon his monkey to earn his livelihood, and the monkey depends upon the charmer for food, lodging and safety.

Ravana cites this example to imply that Angad serves his masters, Sugriv and Lord Ram, because he derives benefit by doing so. Angad is able to enjoy the privileges of a prince because he keeps his uncle Sugriv in good humour, and he serves Lord Ram to ensure that the Lord continues to protect him against the envy of his uncle who was so jealous of his father Baali that he killed him to grab the throne of Kishkindha, and who may harbour a secret desire to get rid of Angad too.

In doing so, though he gets credit for being loyal and diligent in his service to his lords, he forgets that he is dancing, in a servile manner, to the tune of those who were instrumental in his father Baali’s death. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 11.}

Why was Angad chosen as a messenger by Lord Ram? It is because he was a ‘better performer’ as compared to others in the camp of Lord Ram. He was loud-mouthed, he could counter his opponent with quick wit and biting humour without waiting to consider the aptness of his reply, he was an expert debater and a colloquial speaker who could speak extempore without a break for great lengths of time, he was bold and proud, he was immune to any personal emotions that his opponent may attempt to rouse to deflect his attention while arguing his case in favour of his master (as proved by Angad remaining unruffled by Ravana’s attempt to remind him of his father Baali who was killed by Sugriv with the aid of Lord Ram in order to sow the seed of revenge inside Angad’s heart), and he would never accept defeat in an argument for he could cook up some or the other story so convincing that it would stymie his adversary.

Ravana means that like the monkey-charmer who favours that pet monkey of his who is able to entertain the crowd of spectator better than the others in his brood, Lord Ram chose Angad as he would certainly achieve the objective—which was to insult Ravana and humiliate him to such an extent that even if he had a secret wish to make a compromise to avoid the war it would be washed away, because Angad would make him so angry and provoke him so much with his antics and disparaging remarks that it would be impossible for Ravana to save his honour and grace by a peaceful mean, and he would be compelled to slug it out in the battle-field. And in that, surely, Angad would succeed.]

अंगद स्वामिभक्त तव जाती । प्रभु गुन कस न कहसि एहि भाँती ॥ ३ ॥

मैं गुन गाहक परम सुजाना । तव कटु रटनि करउँ नहिं काना ॥ ४ ॥

aṅgada svāmibhakta tava jātī. prabhu guna kasa na kahasi ēhi bhāṁtī. 3.
mairṁ guna gāhaka parama sujānā. tava kaṭu raṭani kara'uṁ nahiṁ kānā. 4.

Angad, your race is reputed to be loyal to whosoever is its lord and master. So there is no wonder that you are lavishing so much praise on your own lord (i.e. Lord Ram). (3)

I am wise, prudent, sagacious and pragmatic enough to know that this sort of behaviour is expected of you (as praising the master and the lord is a habit of the monkey race), and this is why I have not paid much attention to your incoherent babblings.

[To wit, I have excused you for your impudence and the audacity that you have shown by speaking in front of me in the rash manner that you chose to follow, because, being a monkey, I can't expect you to show basic decency and civility expected from a messenger.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Ravana is putting himself on high moral ground by playing cool and telling Angad that he appreciates his good virtue of being loyal to his Lord (Sri Ram) and praising him in front of his adversary (Ravana).

Ravana tries to put Angad on the back foot by showing that it is the latter who is at fault by not paying due respect to a sovereign to whom he has come as a messenger. It is certainly not a good thing, especially for a messenger from another king, to speak in an insulting tone to a king to whom he has brought a message from his master, for such rudeness of behaviour of the messenger shows the king who had sent him in very poor light.

Ravana had tried to hide his own uneasiness, and at the same time to manoeuvre the discussion towards civility and a more amiable environment by showing that he has not taken offence at Angad's rude answers. But Ravana failed in his intentions to calm tempers, for Angad continued with his sarcasm and acerbic tirade relentlessly, provoking Ravana to hit back vehemently. Angad's intent was to make Ravana take some step that would be against his own interest by giving the former (Angad) an excuse to completely demolish whatever pride and respect that was still left with the latter (Ravana).]

कह कपि तव गुन गाहकताई । सत्य पवनसुत मोहि सुनाई ॥ ५ ॥

बन बिधंसि सुत बधि पुर जारा । तदपि न तेहिं कछु कृत अपकारा ॥ ६ ॥

सोइ बिचारि तव प्रकृति सुहाई । दसकंधर मैं कीन्हि ढिठाई ॥ ७ ॥

देखेउँ आइ जो कछु कपि भाषा । तुम्हरेँ लाज न रोष न माखा ॥ ८ ॥

kaha kapi tava guna gāhakatā'ī. satya pavanasuta mōhi sunā'ī. 5.
bana bidhansi suta badhi pura jārā. tadapi na tēhiṁ kachu kṛta apakārā. 6.
sō'i bicāri tava prakṛti suhā'ī. dasakandhara mairṁ kīnhi ḍhiṭhā'ī. 7.
dēkhē'uṁ ā'i jō kachu kapi bhāṣā. tumharēm lāja na rōṣa na mākhā. 8.

[Referring to Ravana's affirmation that he is wise, prudent, sagacious and pragmatic, Angad retorted scornfully—]

Angad said with intense irony in his voice: ‘Yes, your sense of wisdom, prudence, sagacity and pragmatism is real. The son of the wind god (“pavanasuta”; i.e. Hanuman) was right when he told me about it (upon his return from Lanka). (5)

When he (Hanuman) had destroyed your favourite garden known as ‘Ashok Van’, had killed your son (Akshaya Kumar), and had burnt your city (of Lanka)—you did not feel he has done you any harm, so wise, prudent, pragmatic and sagacious you are indeed!¹ (6)

Oh the ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara)²! I acted in such an insolent manner as I had known of your amiable nature (that you are not offended by any insinuation, no matter how insulting and abrasive your interlocutor may be). (7)

In all sooth and without gainsay, I have now witnessed myself what the Kapi (Hanuman) had said about you—that you have not a trace of shame, no anger, or a sense of resentment (at being publicly humiliated by a monkey who would destroy, with impunity, your garden as well as your city, and also kill your son, and then leave your kingdom, unchallenged and unharmed).³ (8)

[Note—¹Angad scorned at Ravana tauntingly: “Well, tell me, if you were offended by any of these things, why did you not punish him for the crime; why did you allow him to go back from Lanka, alive and unscathed? Surely, you possess such a high level of graciousness, magnanimity and benevolence as your virtues that such destructions were of no consequence to you because you wished to forgive a messenger and were averse to taking revenge or harming a creature as it would be sinful act. Is it so?

Or is it perhaps because your wisdom told you to keep quite and forgive the perpetrator as he was a messenger or too small a creature to seek revenge from, or perhaps, in your pragmatism, you decided that it would be better to keep quiet because that intruder would cause you more damage if you confronted him, and your prudence was that it was better to contain any further havoc, which you wouldn’t be able to prevent from happening, by letting that monkey leave Lanka as soon as he could.”

²Ravana had ‘ten heads’, and that implies he had ‘ten necks’ and ‘ten shoulders’.

³After first using soothing words like “you have wisdom, sagacity, prudence, pragmatism”, which may have calmed down Ravana a wee bit, Angad stoked the fire of Ravana’s anger once again by saying “you have no shame, and no anger or resentment either, at being insulted, and your property being damaged by an intruder”.]

जौं असि मति पितु खाए कीसा । कहि अस बचन हँसा दससीसा ॥ ९ ॥
 पितहि खाइ खातेउँ पुनि तोही । अबहीं समुझि परा कछु मोही ॥ १० ॥
 बालि बिमल जस भाजन जानी । हतउँ न तोहि अधम अभिमानी ॥ ११ ॥

jauṁ asi mati pitu khā'ē kīsā. kahi asa bacana haṁsā dasasīsā. 9.
 pitahi khā'i khātē'uṁ puni tōhī. abahīm samujhi parā kachu mōhī. 10.

bāli bimala jasa bhājana jānī. hata'uṃ na tōhi adhama abhimānī. 11.

Ravana retorted with vehemence, 'Oh you monkey (kīsā); such lowly and corrupt is your wisdom and intelligence that there is no wonder you have devoured your father.

[To wit, you are truly shameless and dumb fellow, a blot on your family, because you are not at all concerned about the death of your father, Baali, at the hands of those whose cause you have come to espouse. Woes betide upon you, oh you ungrateful and unfaithful son!]

Saying this, Ravana laughed derisively with all his ten heads (haṃsā dasasīsā). (9)

Angad shot back, 'Yea, I would have devoured you after having devoured my father.

[To wit, since I am being accused of condoning my father's death by keeping silent about it and professing the cause of those who got him killed¹, I would have lived up to my reputation by now either killing you myself or getting you killed by them who had got my father Baali killed.]

But for the moment I would prefer to desist from doing this because a thought occurred to me. (10)

Well, I desist from slaying you lowly, sinful, haughty and arrogant fellow just because you were forgiven (for your mischief) and was promised favour by Baali (my father)².

[And therefore, by harming or killing you I would be insulting the honourable memory of my respected father. So, I prefer to overlook your impudence. Instead of thanking me for sparing your life in the honourable memory of my father, you are so foolish as to think I am sparing you because of any other reason, such as being afraid of you.] (11)

[Note—¹Angad is referring to his uncle Sugriv who had killed his father Baali in a duel in which Lord Ram took the sides of Sugriv.

The important question is this: Why did Angad prefer to keep silent about Sugriv killing his father Baali, and Lord Ram taking sides with Sugriv?

The answer is: One, Angad felt that his father was at fault for he had wrongly expelled his uncle after severely beating him for no fault of his, and even kept Sugriv's wife as a mistress^a, which in themselves were wrong things to do.

Second, Lord Ram supported Sugriv because he the Lord felt he had been wronged, and being a true friend it was his moral duty to help Sugriv^b.

Third, Angad was of a young age, and he felt that the community of the monkeys in Kishkindha was not happy with Baali with the treatment he had meted out unjustly to his innocent younger brother Sugriv. Actually Sugriv was compelled to accept the crown of Kishkindha by a joint decision of all the ministers, though he was not willing to do so, as the rightful heir was Angad, being the son of the king Baali. But Angad was of an immature age, and so he could not be made a king in the absence of his father Baali. There was obviously no choice, except to anoint Sugriv on the throne. But when Baali came back after a long time when he had finally eliminated a demon named Mayawi, he found Sugriv on the throne. Without enquiring the circumstances in which Sugriv had ascended the throne, and without giving him a chance to step down, Baali thrashed him mercilessly, chased him away from the kingdom, and kept his wife as a mistress, something that is unacceptable.

Lord Ram took the side of Sugriv for these reasons—as the Lord felt grave injustice has been done to him.

The genesis of the bitterness between Sugriv and Baali is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-13 that precede Doha no. 6.

Angad knew the whole story, and since his father was at fault he preferred to remain silent. Besides this, there was nothing else he could do. He knew that his uncle saw him as thorn by his side, someone who has the right to the throne. Lord Ram was the saviour of Angad because Baali had entrusted his son in the care of the Lord at the time of his death^c. So Angad knew very well that as long as the Lord favoured him he had nothing to fear^d.

{^aApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 6.

^bApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 7.

^cApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

^dApropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 26.}

²The story of Baali and Ravana in brief is as follows: Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Vaali (also pronounced as “Baali”), had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana’s arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him.

The story of Ravana suffering humiliation at the hands of Baali and his subsequent friendship with him is narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34; Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.]

कहु रावन रावन जग केते । मैं निज श्रवन सुने सुनु जेते ॥ १२ ॥

बलिहि जितन एक गयउ पताला । राखेउ बाँधि सिसुन्ह हयसाला ॥ १३ ॥

खेलहि बालक मारहि जाई । दया लागि बलि दीन्ह छोड़ाई ॥ १४ ॥

kahu rāvana rāvana jaga kētē. mair̥m nija śravana sunē sunu jētē. 12.

balihi jitana ēka gaya'u patālā. rākhē'u bāṁdhi sisunha hayasālā. 13.

khēlahim̐ bālaka mārāhim̐ jāī. dayā lagi bali dīnha chōṛāī. 14.

Well, tell me Ravana, how many Ravanaes are there in this world? I have heard of a few of them, and now let me tell you about some of them. (12)

There is one Ravana who had gone to the nether world to vanquish king Bali. On that occasion, the children had caught hold of him and (to play with him they had) tied him in a horse-stable. (13)

The boys played with him as if he was a novelty, a toy-horse, often kicking him merrily, in jest (to derive pleasure when he screeched and groaned). At that time, Bali took pity on Ravana and got him released from captivity¹. (14)

[Note—¹This story in brief is this: Once Ravana went to the nether world (or the subterranean world where he saw the brilliant city of Bali. The gates of Bali's palace was guarded by Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Ravana overlooked the Lord and forcibly entered the palace of Bali, where he found him playing a board game. Bali saw Ravana standing from the corners of his eyes, but neglected him. The dice with which Bali was playing slipped from his hand and fell at a distance. Treating Ravana as one of his other attendants, Bali asked him to fetch the dice. Ravana tried all his might but could not even move the dice a bit. On the contrary, his fingers got crushed under the weight of the dice and he cried in pain, bleeding profusely. Then, one of the ordinary lady attendants of Bali went and brought back the dice, releasing Ravana's fingers also. When Bali heard Ravana's cries, he chided him in most humiliating way, and ordered him to be ejected out of the palace. Outside, Bali's guards, soldiers etc. caught him and enslaved him. They used to feed him with left-over food and assigned him the job of cleaning the royal horses' stable, where Ravana had to collect dung and throw it out. The children of the royal guards found in him a toy to play with, and they enjoyed kicking and mocking at him.

Fed up with this agony and incarceration, once when he went out to dump his collection of horse dung he pleaded with Lord Vaaman, who was standing guard at the gates, to have mercy on him and help him escape. At this, Vaaman flung him with the tip of his big toe, and Ravana flew into the sky like a mosquito, landing in Lanka. He felt glad as if he has been born again.

This story is narrated in: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 102-116.]

एक बहोरि सहस्रभुज देखा । धाड़ धरा जिमि जंतु बिसेषा ॥ १५ ॥

कौतुक लागि भवन लै आवा । सो पुलस्ति मुनि जाइ छोड़ावा ॥ १६ ॥

ēka bahōri sahasabhuja dēkhā. dhā'i dharā jimi jantu bisēṣā. 15.

kautuka lāgi bhavana lai āvā. sō pulasti muni jā'i chōṛāvā. 16.

Then I have heard of another Ravana who was once seen by the thousand-armed king named Sahastrabahu. Thinking Ravana to be a strange creature (with his ten heads and twenty arms), he (Sahastrabahu) rushed forward and caught hold of him. (15)

Out of curiosity, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana home (just like a person would bring home some new specimen he discovers somewhere, to keep him as a show-piece in his palace). At that time, sage Pulastya had come to Ravana's rescue by going to Sahastrabahu and getting him freed¹. (16)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 where Hanuman too cites this episode concerning Sahastrabahu and Ravana.

This story is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu, meaning 'someone with a thousand arms', was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahastrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in forging a friendship between the two. {This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.}]

दो०. एक कहत मोहि सकुच अति रहा बालि कीं काँख ।

इन्ह महुँ रावन तैं कवन सत्य बदहि तजि माख ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

ēka kahata mōhi sakuca ati rahā bāli kīṁ kām̐kha.

inha mahum̐ rāvana taim̐ kavana satya badahi taji mākha. 24.

[Angad continued with his taunts—] I feel hesitant and reluctant to speak of one other of such Ravana who was kept tucked under the arm pit of Baali (my father)¹.

Now, I prithee, please tell me which of the above Ranas I have mentioned are you? Leave aside deceit and pretensions, and be honest in informing me about your true identity; about who you actually are amongst the Ranas I have cited herein above?' (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 22 where Hanuman too cites this episode concerning Baali and Ravana.]

चौ०. सुनु सठ सोइ रावन बलसीला । हरगिरि जान जासु भुज लीला ॥ १ ॥
 जान उमापति जासु सुराई । पूजेउँ जेहि सिर सुमन चढ़ाई ॥ २ ॥
 सिर सरोज निज करन्हि उतारी । पूजेउँ अमित बार त्रिपुरारी ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

sunu saṭha sō'i rāvana balasīlā. haragiri jāna jāsu bhuja līlā. 1.
 jāna umāpati jāsu surāī. pūjē'uṁ jēhi sira sumana caṛhāī. 2.
 sira sarōja nija karanhi utārī. pūjē'uṁ amita bāra tripurārī. 3.

[Stung by Angad publicly raking up the darker and humiliating side of his past, Ravana felt exasperated and provoked. He decided to counter Angad by highlighting his astounding achievements and exceptional valour by listing all his stupendous feats that had no parallel in history, one by one, the deeds of his which had amazed the whole world and hold it in thrall of Ravana, with awe and fear.]

Ravana lashed back at Angad with a sharp tone, 'Listen you stupid rascal (sunu saṭha). I am a Ravana with exceptional strength, courage, power and valour, the abilities of whose strong arms and the singularly brave deeds that he had done are well known to Lord Shiva as I had lifted the mountain on which the Lord has his abode (i.e. Mt. Kailash)¹. (1)

I am the Ravana whose courage and bravery are known to Lord Shiva, the husband of goddess Uma (umāpati), whom I had worshipped by offering my heads in lieu of flowers². (2)

I have worshipped Lord Tripurari (i.e. Lord Shiva)³ by offering my heads number of times. (3)

[Note—¹Ravana refers to an incident in the past when he had lifted Mt. Kailash along with Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati in order to bring them to his city of Lanka. This episode is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 36-40, 84-89; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-56.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 179.

²This incident is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 26-39, 84-89.

³The word “tripurārī” is an honourable name of Lord Shiva for the following reasons: (i) The word indicates that Lord Shiva is the Lord of the whole world consisting of three divisions, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether; (ii) He had slayed a demon by the name of Tripura, hence called “Tripurari”.]

भुज बिक्रम जानहिं दिगपाला । सठ अजहूँ जिन्ह कें उर साला ॥ ४ ॥
 जानहिं दिग्गज उर कठिनाई । जब जब भिरउँ जाइ बरिआई ॥ ५ ॥
 जिन्ह के दसन कराल न फूटे । उर लागत मूलक इव टूटे ॥ ६ ॥

bhuja bikrama jānahim digapālā. saṭha ajahūṁ jinha kēm ura sālā. 4.
 jānahim diggaja ura kaṭhināī. jaba jaba bhira'uṁ jā'i bari'āī. 5.
 jinha kē dasana karāla na phūṭē. ura lāgata mūlaka iva ṭūṭē. 6.

Oh you wicked fellow (saṭha)! The Dikpals (custodians of the world; the junior gods)¹ know the valour and the strength of my arms, because their hearts are still burning and feeling hurt by the terror I had struck in them². (4)

Not only that; the many Diggajs (legendary elephants who support the earth by holding it aloft from underneath it)³ know how tuff and impenetrable my chest is, for whenever I went to clash with them [5], they tried to strike me and pierce my heart with their long and strong tusks, only to discover that their sharp tusks failed to pierce my chest but themselves broke up into small fragments [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹There are said to be 10 Dikpals (also called Digpals), the junior gods, who are assigned the task of caring for the part of the world under their care:

According to the Purans and Ram Purvatapiniyopanishad, canto 4, verse no. 38-39, there are ten Dikpals who are the Gods who act as the guardians or custodians or protectors of the ten directions of the world. These legendary figures support the world from all the directions of the compass. They have been described in Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse nos. 38-39. Let us see what this Upanishad has to say—

“Canto 4, verse no. 38 = These ten Dikpals are the following—Indra who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, and is therefore called ‘Sahastraaksha’, Agni or the Fire God, Yam or the God of Dharma (i.e. the God responsible to ensure that the great tenets of righteousness and proper conduct are observed by the creatures, and to punish those who violate these laws), Niritiya (also known as Nairitya), Varun or the Water God, Anil or the Wind God, Indu or the Moon God, Ishan or Lord Shiva, Brahma the creator, and Anant or Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods and upon whom the supreme Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean (the word also refers to Vishnu himself in his infinite form as the Viraat Purush) (38).”

According to some versions, there are eight Dikpals. In this version, only the Brahma who is the patron deity of the zenith, and Anant or Vishnu who takes care of the nadir direction are removed.

Hence, out of the ten Dikpaals, only eight are counted. These are the custodians or protectors of the eight directions as follows—Indra (the king of Gods) takes care of the east, Yama (the God of death) takes care of the south, Varun (Water God) takes care of the west, Kuber (the Gods’ treasurer) takes care of the north, Agni (the Fire God) takes care of the south-east, Surya (the Sun God) takes care of the south-west, Vayu (the Wind God) takes care of the north-west, and Ishan (Shiva) takes care of the north-east.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 182.

³The Diggajs: There are said to be 8 ‘Diggaj’ who support the earth from eight directions or corners. These Diggajs are believed to be strong and muscular ‘elephants’ stationed at eight strategic points in eight directions of the earth to support it from rolling or toppling over. The word ‘Diggaj’ itself means anyone who is very strong and muscular.

According to the Purans, these eight directions and their respective Diggajs are the following—(i) in the north, the Diggaj (elephant) is known as ‘Saarvabhoum’; (ii) in the north-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Suprateek or Saptateek’; (iii) in the east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Airaawat’; (iv) in the south-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pundareek’; (v) in the south, the Diggaj is known as ‘Vaaman’; (vi) in the south-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Kumud’; (vii) in the west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Anjan’; and (viii) in the north-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pushpa-danta’.

However, according to Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 14, 18, 20 and 22, when king Sagar’s sons went to dig the earth in search of the horse of the sacrifice that had gone missing, they saw only four Diggajs as follows—(i) in the east they saw the Diggaj named ‘Virupaaksha’, (ii) in the south, the Diggaj named ‘Maha-padma’, (iii) in the west, the Diggaj named ‘Saumnas’ (pronounced as Saw+um+nus), and (iv) in the north, the Diggaj named ‘Bhadra’.

These Diggajs are referred to in Tulsidas’ epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 254 as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 260 in the context of Lord Ram breaking the bow. In the first instance, when Laxman became angry, these Diggajs shifted from the place out of fear, and in the second instance Laxman alerted them to be careful and hold the earth properly so that it does not topple over when Lord Ram prepared to lift and break Lord Shiva’s bow in order to marry Sita.]

जासु चलत डोलति इमि धरनी । चढ़त मत्त गज जिमि लघु तरनी ॥ ७ ॥
सोइ रावन जग बिदित प्रतापी । सुनेहि न श्रवन अलीक प्रलापी ॥ ८ ॥

jāsu calata ḍōlati imi dharanī. caṛhata matta gaja jimi laghu taranī. 7.
sō'i rāvana jaga bidita pratāpī. sunēhi na śravana alīka pralāpī. 8.

I am that Ravana who makes the earth shake whenever he walks on its surface¹ just like a boat that rocks on the water at the time a wild elephant steps into it. (7)

Mind you, I am that world famous Ravana of whom I have told you just now.

Oh you loud-mouthed and vain fellow who talks in an incoherent and delirious way about irrelevant things that have no substance in them (alīka pralāpī)! Say, have you never heard of me and my glories (that you babble about nonsense things)!? (8)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 182.]

दो०. तेहि रावन कहँ लघु कहसि नर कर करसि बखान ।

रे कपि बर्बर खर्ब खल अब जाना तव ग्यान ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi rāvana kahaṁ laghu kahasi nara kara karasi bakhāna.
rē kapi barbara kharba khala aba jānā tava gyāna. 25.

How durst thou call that Ravana small, inept and inconsequential, and instead choose to praise the glories of a human being?

Oh you uncivilised, lowly, wicked and ignorant monkey (kapi barbara kharba khala)! Now I have realised how much knowledge and intelligence you have!

[To wit, now I understand that you are good for nothing, a complete idiot who does not even know what he is speaking about.]’ (Doha no. 25)

चौ०. सुनि अंगद सकोप कह बानी । बोलु सँभारि अधम अभिमानी ॥ १ ॥

सहसबाहु भुज गहन अपारा । दहन अनल सम जासु कुठारा ॥ २ ॥

जासु परसु सागर खर धारा । बूड़े नृप अगनित बहु बारा ॥ ३ ॥

तासु गर्ब जेहि देखत भागा । सो नर य्यों दससीस अभागा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

sunī aṅgada sakōpa kaha bānī. bōlu saṁbhāri adhama abhimānī. 1.
sahasabāhu bhuja gahana apārā. dahana anala sama jāsū kuṭhārā. 2.
jāsū parasu sāgara khara dhārā. būrē nṛpa aganita bahu bārā. 3.
tāsū garba jēhi dēkhata bhāgā. sō nara kyōm dasasīsa abhāgā. 4.

When Angad heard what Ravana had to say, he became extremely enraged and struck back vehemently at Ravana, ‘Mind your words and what you say, oh you fallen and boastful fellow (adhama abhimānī). (1)

[Now, Angad would cite an incidence where the great sage Parashuram—known for his fiery anger and quick temper, as he used to cut-off the head of anyone with whom he was annoyed, with his famed battle-axe—had come, fretting and fuming, to take revenge upon Lord Ram for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva which culminated in his marriage with Sita, but he had to finally surrender before the Lord as he was unable to vent his wrath upon him, surely because of Lord Ram’s majesty as well as some supernatural powers and divine aura that he possessed which prevailed upon Parashuram to make him submissive and docile, and finally yield before the Lord. This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

He (a reference to sage Parashuram) whose battle-axe was like a wild fire that could burn the dense forest symbolised by the thousand arms of Sahastrabahu¹, --- (2)

--- And countless great warrior kings had drowned in the rapid current of the ocean symbolised by the sharp edges of whose battle-axe², --- (3)

--- Even his (i.e. sage Parashuram's) pride of being an invincible warrior before whom no one could stand his ground (for the sage's wrath was fiery as the fire, and his battle-axe was like the mighty ocean during a fierce storm that could capsize the largest of ships)—well even his pride was chased away (i.e. it was vanquished; subdued; neutralised) when he saw him (Lord Ram).

[To wit, when sage Parashuram tried his best to raise his battle-axe to strike at Lord Ram and his brother Laxman to punish them, his strength failed him; his arms would not rise with the axe. This surprised the sage, and he wondered what may have caused him to fail to vent his ire. Surely there must be some mysterious reason which he initially failed to comprehend, but which gradually dawned upon his mind. By-and-by he realised who Lord Ram actually was, that he was not a human prince but the Supreme Lord himself in a human form, and with this realisation he immediately surrendered before the Lord and regretted for his angry behaviour.]³

Oh you unfortunate ten-headed Ravana (*dasasīsa abhāgā*)! Is such a person a human being as you think and claim him to be?

[To wit, don't you have any intelligence in you to understand what is obvious? Are you so stupid? You call me stupid, but I think it is you who is one such. Well, tell me, if Lord Ram is an ordinary human being as you profess him to be, then would he have escaped the wrath of sage Parashuram who was famous for not sparing anyone whom he decided to punish? Parashuram had himself boasted of it when he said that he had eliminated countless kings who offended him by killing them in the battle-field, with his battle-axe. Say, would he have spared Lord Ram, especially when he had come with the express purpose to punish him for breaking Lord Shiva's bow⁵? Since Parashuram failed to harm the Lord—and he had himself wondered that there is surely some mystical reason why he is unable to harm the Lord, why his arms fail him in raising his axe against the Lord—surely then there must be some reason behind it. Are you so big a fool that you are unable to add two and two together to arrive at an obvious conclusion, which is so evident that even a blind man would see it, that Lord Ram is surely and definitely not a human being, but a manifested form of the Supreme Being.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 272.

The story in brief is as follows: There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as 'Sahastraarjun' or 'Arjun with a thousand hands'. Once he approached the Ocean and asked who was stronger than him. The Ocean told him that sage Jamdagni's son Parashuram was a fit match for him and would welcome him in battle. Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he

immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat's Aashwamedhik Parva.}

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriyas to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

A slight variation of this story appears in Mahabharat, Vanparva. According to this version, when the thousand-armed king known as 'Sahastraarjun' had taken away Jamdagni's all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu, Parashuram rushed to cut all the arms of Sahastraarjun as punishment. Sahastraarjun's kith and kin came back to the hermitage of Jamdagni when Parashuram was not there, and took revenge by killing the sage. Parashuram's mother grieved and wailed. When Parashuram came back and discovered what had happened, he promised his mother that he would take revenge, and vowed to kill all the Kshatriya kings on the surface of the earth to avenge Sahastraarjun's killing of his father. So in this way he had also fulfilled the wishes of his mother.

Sage Parashuram had avenged his father's death by killing the Kshatriya kings because one of the members of this race, king Sahastraarjun, had killed his father sage Jamdagni.

In Mahabharat, Shantiparva, Canto 49, verse nos. 45-47 it is mentioned that it was Sahastraarjun's son who had stolen the Kamdhenu cow, and not Sahastraarjun himself.

It ought to be noted that 'Sahastraarjun' is also known as 'Sahastrabaahu' because he had a thousand arms.

Now, after unnecessarily killing so many innocent Kshatriya kings, who had committed no offence, just to avenge his father's death at the hands of Sahastraarjun, sage Parashuram was severely criticized by the community of Brahmins, which made the sage contrite and full of guilt. So, with a somber and disgusted mood, he went to the forest to do penance. At that time, sage Vishwamitra's grandson named Paraivasu came to him and teased him, saying, 'A fire sacrifice was done recently in which so many countless Kshatriya kings had come. But you did not kill any of them, thereby disobeying the promise you had made to your mother and have also violated your own vows. This is a sin in itself.' Peeved and instigated, Parashuram rose immediately and went berserk, killing and hacking all the kings and their kith and kin at random. Their pregnant wives somehow escaped by hiding here and there. After this, Parashuram performed a Horse Sacrifice known as the 'Ashwamedh Yajya', and gave the entire land (earth) that he had snatched from the kings to sage Kashyap as donation or gift during this sacrifice.

Sage Kashyap was wise, and he was worried that if some way out is not found then one day Parashuram will create such a situation by repeatedly killing kings that there would be no one to take care of the creatures who inhabit the planet, because the main function of the Kshatriya kings was to look after the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms and protect the earth from marauding savages.

So Kashyap told Parashuram, 'Now that you have given me this earth as a gift, it belongs to me, and henceforth you have no right to kill any of its inhabitants

(including of course the kings). You go to the shore of the southern ocean and do Tapa there.’ After this, Parashuram lived on the shore of the southern ocean during the day, and left the earth during the night.

This version of the story is clearly mentioned in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 25-26, and Canto 76, verse nos. 13-14.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

राम मनुज कस रे सठ बंगा । धन्वी कामु नदी पुनि गंगा ॥ ५ ॥

पसु सुरधेनु कल्पतरु रूखा । अन्न दान अरु रस पीयूषा ॥ ६ ॥

rāma manuja kasa rē saṭha baṅgā. dhanvī kāmu nadī puni gaṅgā. 5.
pasu suradhēnu kalpataru rūkhā. anna dāna aru rasa pīyūṣā. 6.

[Chiding Ravana for calling Lord Ram an ordinary human, Angad uses some obvious analogies in the following four verses to drive home his point—that Lord Ram is not an ordinary man but a divine Being.]

Oh you obstinate and arrogant rascal (saṭha baṅgā)! How come Lord Ram is a human being? Tell me, is Kamdeo (the patron god of passion) an ordinary warrior who holds a bow¹? Is the river Ganges an ordinary river²? [The obvious answer is a firm ‘no’, that they aren’t so.] (5)

Is it not foolish to call any sundry animal as being a ‘Sura-dhenu (the holy cow of the gods)³, or to say that the evergreen tree known as ‘Kalpa-taru’ has dried up⁴?

Similarly, is giving food as alms (to the hungry) equivalent to an ordinary charity⁵, and is the ambrosia of life known as Amrit an ordinary juice (or liquid)⁶? (6)

[Note—¹Kamdeo is the mythological god of love and passion. He holds a mystical bow symbolised by hidden passions in a creature, and he shoots arrows laced with passion, love and lust to subjugate the prey, the target, represented by the beloved whom the lover, the holder of the symbolic bow and the shooter of the arrow, wishes to capture.

Kamdeo’s bow is made of a creeper bearing colourful flowers, and the flowers are the arrows themselves. Kamdeo does not hunt his prey by using hard bow or sharp arrows made of metal. So, it is wrong to equate him with an ordinary hunter or a warrior who would use conventional bow and arrow to shoot down the target.

²River Ganges is regarded as a holy river descending from the heaven; it is the river of the gods. Therefore, it is not an ordinary terrestrial river like the rest of them. Hence, to call Ganges as merely a river will be undermining its holy character, and therefore wrong.

³Sura-dhenu is also known as ‘Kamdhenu, the holy cow of the heaven which fulfils all wishes if worshipped and served with faith. So to compare it with an ordinary cow or any other four-footed animal would be nothing but stupidity.

⁴The Kalpa-taru is the tree of heaven. It is an evergreen tree that grants everything one desires from it. It never dries up. So to say that the Kalpa-taru is dry is height of nonsense.

⁵Food sustains life; it is the basis of life; it has a divine element in it. No other gift is as precious as giving food to the needy. So therefore, to equate ‘food’ with other ordinary forms of gifts or alms such as cloth, material goods etc., is foolish.

⁶Amrit is the ambrosia that grants eternity; it has mystical powers to heal. So it cannot be likened to any other kind of juice or liquid.]

बैनतेय खग अहि सहसानन । चिंतामनि पुनि उपल दसानन ॥ ७ ॥
सुनु मतिमंद लोक बैकुंठा । लाभ कि रघुपति भगति अकुंठा ॥ ८ ॥

bainatēya khaga ahi sahasānana. cintāmani puni upala dasānana. 7.
sunu matimanda lōka baikunṭhā. lābha ki raghupati bhagati akunṭhā. 8.

Is the son of Vintaa (“bainatēya”; i.e. Garud, the legendary bird who is a mount of Lord Vishnu) an ordinary bird¹?

Is the Sheshnath (the legendary celestial serpent who holds the universe on his thousand hoods) an ordinary serpent²?

And oh the ten-headed³ Ravana, is ‘Chintamani’ (a unique gem that eliminates all worries) an ordinary stone⁴? (7)

Oh you dull-witted fellow with an abysmally low intellect (matimanda)! Listen to me: Is Vaikuntha (the eternal heaven; the abode of Lord Vishnu; from where there is no coming back to this mortal world) an ordinary place or habitat⁵?

Is having devotion for Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) an ordinary reward or benefit that one can expect to have in this world⁶? (8)

[Note—¹It is erroneous to call Garud an ordinary bird. It is derogatory to do so.

²Likewise, it is absolutely inaccurate and unacceptable to liken the Sheshnath with an ordinary serpent.

³Angad has called Ravana as a ‘ten-headed’ one to mean that a person with one head would not say such foolish things, but you have ten instead of just one head, which means you ought to be ten times more intelligent and wise than others, yet you are so dumb as to think and talk of such nonsense.

⁴The Chintamani is a rare gemstone which removes all sorts of wants and worries in a person who possesses it. So it is surely not an ordinary gemstone.

⁵Vaikuntha is the heaven where the soul finds eternity. It is a place where there is beatitude and bliss. It is the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Brahm, the Supreme Being. Hence it cannot be compared to any other habitat, whether in this mortal world or even to other lower levels of heaven.

⁶No, it isn't. Having 'Bhakti' or devotion for the Supreme Being, manifested as Lord Ram, is a very special spiritual blessing that only a few fortunate persons are able to avail.]

दो०. सेन सहित तव मान मथि बन उज्जारि पुर जारि।

कस रे सठ हनुमान कपि गयउ जो तव सुत मारि ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

sēna sahita tava māna mathi bana ujāri pura jāri.

kasa rē saṭha hanumāna kapi gaya'u jō tava suta māri. 26.

Oh you stupid and wicked fellow (saṭha)! Is Hanuman an ordinary monkey who had trashed and crushed your (false sense of) pride and ego along with the (imagined) might of your (so-called invincible) army, besides ruining your favourite garden (called the Ashok Van), burning your city (of Lanka), and killing your son (Akshaya Kumar)¹? (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹To wit, you claim that you had vanquished the Diggals and the Diggajs very easily, and they are terrified of you (Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 25), and the earth trembles like a rocking boat on a rough sea when you move about in anger (Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 25), well tell me then, where was all your valour and strength and courage and the might of your arms, of which you boast so much, and of which you are so proud, at that time when Hanuman had caused so extensive damage to Lanka, trounced your army, crushed your pride and self-esteem, destroyed your garden, and worse, killed even your son?

Well, why couldn't you stop him; why couldn't you punish him; why did you let him go unharmed from Lanka; where were your famed valour and strength and courage and might of arms at that time? Was it ever possible that Hanuman would have mustered courage to do what he did, and be successful in doing it all alone, inspite of the overbearing presence of your mighty self as well as your mighty army that surrounded him from all sides, if he was an ordinary 'monkey' as you think him to be? How dumb-witted and block-headed are you as to not see what is obvious and staring you in the face?]

चौ०. सुनु रावन परिहरि चतुराई । भजसि न कृपासिंधु रघुराई ॥ १ ॥

जौं खल भएसि राम कर द्रोही । ब्रह्म रुद्र सक राखि न तोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu rāvana parihari caturāī. bhajasi na kṛpāsindhu raghurāī. 1.

jauṁ khala bha'ēsi rāma kara drōhī. brahma rudra saka rākhi na tōhī. 2.

[Angad continued—] Listen Ravana, to my (good and friendly) advice. Say, why don't you worship and adore Lord Ram ("raghurāṭī"; the Lord of the Raghu's line of kings of Ayodhya), who is like an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (krpāsindhu), after abandoning your stubborn nature, your obstinate hypocrisy, and your pretensions of being very clever and wise (parihari caturāṭī)¹? (1)

Oh you rascal (khala)! [I warn you that—] If you remain opposed and hostile to Lord Ram, then no one would be able to protect and save you, not even the creator Brahma nor Lord Rudra (Lord Shiva's that angry form which brings an end to creation)². (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 200.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 23, where a similar warning has been given to Ravana by Hanuman.]

मूढ़ बृथा जनि मारसि गाला । राम बयर अस होइहि हाला ॥ ३ ॥
तव सिर निकर कपिन्ह के आगें । परिहहिं धरनि राम सर लागें ॥ ४ ॥
ते तव सिर कंदुक सम नाना । खेलिहहिं भालु कीस चौगाना ॥ ५ ॥

mūṛha bṛthā jani māraṣi gālā. rāma bayara asa hō'ihī hālā. 3.
tava sira nikara kapinha kē āgēm. parihahim dharani rāma sara lāgēm. 4.
tē tava sira kanduka sama nānā. khēlihahim bhālu kīsa caugānā. 5.

Oh you utter fool (mūṛha)! Don't brag and unnecessarily talk boastfully in a vain manner. If you are hostile to Lord Ram (and are determined to be so) then your fate will be that --- (3)

--- Your heads would be cut off by Lord Ram's arrows, and they will fall to the ground in front of the monkeys (and bears, that constitute the Lord's army) --- (4)

--- And the bears and the monkeys (bhālu kīsa) will use your fallen heads as balls to play a game of football. [To wit, the bears and monkeys would kick your severed heads all around the battle-field like two teams play a game of football in a sports stadium.] (5)

जबहिं समर कोपिहि रघुनायक । छुटिहहिं अति कराल बहु सायक ॥ ६ ॥
तब कि चलिहि अस गाल तुम्हारा । अस बिचारि भजु राम उदारा ॥ ७ ॥
सुनत बचन रावन परजरा । जरत महानल जनु घृत परा ॥ ८ ॥

jabahim samara kōpihi raghunāyaka. chuṭihahim ati karāla bahu sāyaka. 6.
taba ki calihi asa gālā tumhārā. asa bicāri bhaju rāma udārā. 7.
sunata bacana rāvana parajārā. jarata mahānala janu ghṛta parā. 8.

When Lord Ram (*raghunāyaka*) becomes angry in the battle-field and shoots volleys of many sharp arrows (at you) --- (6)

--- Tell me, will your boast and bluster work then; will you be able to save yourself by vain bravery and false valour?

Think of it. Consider this matter seriously before it is too late. Be wise and prudent to realise that it will be in your own interest to pay homage to Lord Ram, who is gracious, charitable, magnanimous and benevolent by his very nature (*rāma udārā*)¹. (7)

When Ravana heard these words (of Angad), he flared up vehemently in anger, as if oil was poured in an already lighted fire. (8)

[Note—¹Angad basically advises Ravana to abandon his animosity and hostility with Lord Ram, to make amends and make friendship with him. Ravana ought not to have any doubts if Lord Ram would forgive him for the evil things he had done in the past, because the Lord is large-hearted and very kind and gracious; he is benevolent and magnanimous. So he will welcome Ravana without reservations, and the Lord will not do any thing that would embarrass Ravana in the least.

But if Ravana continues with his foolishness and stubbornness to go ahead to fight Lord Ram, then he is surely and definitely doomed.

There are other places in the Text of 'Ram Charit Manas' where these glorious virtues of Lord Ram are highlighted—e.g. in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57, Ravana's spy named Suka also tells him exactly the same thing.]

दो०. कुंभकरन अस बंधु मम सुत प्रसिद्ध सक्रारि ।

मोर पराक्रम नहिं सुनेहि जितेउँ चराचर झारि ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

kumbhakarana asa bandhu mama suta prasid'dha sakrāri.
mōra parākrama nahiṁ sunēhi jitē'um carācara jhāri. 27.

[Ravana shouted back at Angad. He angrily said—] 'I have a famous brother by the name of Kumbhakaran (literally one whose ears are large like a big pitcher or jar)¹, and an equally famous son (named Meghanad) who had vanquished Indra (the king of gods)².

Have you not heard of my valour and achievements that I have conquered all the gods as well as every other creature in this creation³? (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 180.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

The story of Meghanad (so called because his voice was as loud and resounding as the clap of thunder) vanquishing Indra is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 78-81; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka

Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 50-54. Since Meghanad had conquered Indra, he is also called 'Indrajeet', one who has won Indra.

This story in brief is this: Once, after conquering Varun (God of water) and Yama (God of hell), Ravana attacked Indra (the king of Gods). Indra captured Ravana and took him as a prisoner. When Meghanad heard of his father's imprisonment by Indra, he attacked heaven and not only freed his father Ravana but took Indra as a prisoner and brought him to Lanka. The creator Brahma then went to Lanka and prevailed upon Meghanad to free Indra by granting him (Meghanad) many boons to make a deal for freedom of Indra.

³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-13 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

चौ०. सठ साखामृग जोरि सहाई । बाँधा सिंधु इहइ प्रभुताई ॥ १ ॥

नाघहिं खग अनेक बारीसा । सूर न होहिं ते सुनु सब कीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saṭha sākhāmṛga jōri sahā'ī. bāṁdhā sindhu iha'i prabhutā'ī. 1.
nāghahim khaga anēka bārīsā. sūra na hōhim tē sunu saba kīsā. 2.

Ravana scornfully tried to prove Angad's glorification of Lord Ram as completely contrary to facts by saying, tauntingly, 'You blockhead (saṭha)! Is collecting a motley crowd of 'monkeys' (here the term is used in a derogatory sense) and getting a ramshackle bridge built over the surface of the ocean (to cross it) called valour, bravery, and a gallantry deed¹? (1)

Why, so many ordinary birds can easily cross the same ocean by simply flying over it, and none of these humble creatures do a great deed of bravery or gallantry by doing so. So therefore, what is the great deal in it (i.e. in Lord Ram crossing the ocean on a rickety bridge put in place by monkeys throwing boulders and rocks in the water, blocking its flow)²? (2)

[Note—¹Ravana continued to use derogatory remarks for Lord Ram and undermine his greatness by arguing that certain events that recently happened certainly go to prove that the Lord was just an ordinary human being like the rest of them, and not the divine Being as he is portrayed to be by his loyal and sycophantic messengers, now Angad and previously Hanuman.

All of Angad's assertions about Lord Ram's glory, majesty and greatness are hollow, and nothing but a biased effort at exaggeration and bending of facts to suit one's view of the world, and to gloss over the dark reality by painting things with a colourful brush that lacks even the colour that is imagined to be painted.

The term "monkey" is obviously used in a derogatory sense here, to mean jokers and foolish creatures who make a lot of vain noises, and who would jump and hop to please their masters.

²To wit, Ravana asked Angad: "Tell me, what great achievement has been accomplished in getting across the ocean with the help of a bridge put in place by "monkeys"? There are so many birds who cross the ocean almost daily, and it is

natural to them to do so. So will anyone call a bird brave for doing some gallantry deed for merely flying across the surface of the ocean, which is a matter of habit for them?

If your Lord, whom you praise so much in lavish terms and are in some much awe of, actually had some divine and mystical powers, as you claim him to possess, then why couldn't he just stand on the shore of the ocean, raise his two hands in the direction of Lanka, and order the ocean to part in the middle to form a pathway in this direction, by which he and his army could simply walk across? Or else, why couldn't he use his so-called fiery and invincible arrows to just dry up the ocean or kill its deity, forcing the ocean to surrender, instead of pleading for a way across it, as he had actually done?

Tell me, why could he not simply tell everyone to close their eyes for a while, wave his arms in a circle like a magician swings his wand to invoke some magical charm, and create the bridge by magic, using his mystical powers, so that when everyone opened their eyes they would see the bridge already built!?

Well, well; don't try to gloss over facts and turn them on their heads just to support things of your imagination, things that are conjured up by your hallucinating mind, things which are just that—colourful imaginations of a delirious mind—and nothing else.

To wit, you fellows have been so conditioned to believe that your master, Lord Ram, is a divine Being, some supernatural Power; so you go around the world parroting the things you have been taught to believe, that you have become habituated to believe, without using your own brains to see whether what you are saying makes any sense or not. That is why I call your crowd a collection of 'monkeys', a jostling crowd of cheap jesters and silly pranksters!"]

मम भुज सागर बल जल पूरा । जहँ बूड़े बहु सुर नर सूर ।। ३ ।।

बीस पयोधि अगाध अपारा । को अस बीर जो पाइहि पारा ।। ४ ।।

दिगपालन्ह मैं नीर भरावा । भूप सुजस खल मोहि सुनावा ।। ५ ।।

mama bhuja sāgara bala jala pūrā. jahaṁ būrē bahu sura nara sūrā. 3.

bīsa payōdhi agādha apārā. kō asa bira jō pā'ihī pārā. 4.

digapālānha mairṁ nīra bharāvā. bhūpa sujasa khala mōhi sunāvā. 5.

Mind you; my strong arms are also like the mighty ocean, and they are filled with an immense reservoir of water symbolising the immensity and the greatness of my gallantry, strength, valour and powers. Countless gods and humans, who were brave, powerful, valiant and gallant in their own right, had been drowned in this ocean¹.

[To wit, I have vanquished, subdued and crushed all the powerful forces of this creation by the might of my arms. No one worth his name, who would like to call himself a brave, courageous and valiant warrior, has escaped me and whom I have not conquered.] (3)

I have twenty such arms, and you can imagine the combined strength and power that they together possess. Well, where in this world is that brave warrior, who may boast of his valour and gallantry, that he would be able to measure up to the combined strength and majesty of my all the twenty arms, who could stand his ground before me and my might? [Surely there is none.]² (4)

I have got this ‘ocean’ (symbolised by my arms) filled with water by forcing the mighty Dikpals (the many gods who are the custodians of the world) into submission³.

And here you are, a wretched fellow, making me listen to false glories of a human king (i.e. of Lord Ram)⁴! (5)

[Note—¹Here, Ravana compares his arms to the ocean, and their immense strength to the immeasurable volume of water that is present in the physical ocean.

²The meaning of the analogy of the ‘ocean’ that Ravana uses is evident. He means that if Lord Ram could not overcome the obstacle created by an ordinary ocean, if he could not cross an ordinary reservoir of water known as the ocean that so many birds cross almost on a daily basis, how could the Lord imagine that he would be able to overcome (cross) another mighty ‘ocean’, symbolised by the combined might of Ravana’s powerful arms, that is twenty times more formidable and difficult to overcome (to get across) than the ordinary water-filled reservoir that the world prefers to call an ocean? To wit, it’s impossible; it’s nothing but wild imagination.

³“I have continuously vanquished one god after another, adding one feather after another to my glory, adding up to my tally of victories and gallantry deeds. The more conquests I make, the more power I add to my arms, because more number of gods are under my orders, and they would be forced to fight with me as my allies in any conflict. This means each victory over gods adds to my strength and power as a king and ruler of the world.”

⁴“Here I am who had forced the mighty gods into submission, and you are compelling me to listen to your vain lecture lauding the imaginary glories of an ordinary human king whom you believe to be the supreme Lord. Woe to you and to your intelligence. I indeed pity you and your sick wisdom.”]

जौं पै समर सुभट तव नाथा । पुनि पुनि कहसि जासु गुन गाथा ॥ ६ ॥

तौ बसीठ पठवत केहि काजा । रिपु सन प्रीति करत नहिं लाजा ॥ ७ ॥

हरगिरि मथन निरखु मम बाहू । पुनि सठ कपि निज प्रभुहि सराहू ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ pai samara subhaṭa tava nāthā. puni puni kahasi jāsu guna gāthā. 6.
tau basīṭha paṭhavata kēhi kājā. ripu sana prīti karata nahim lājā. 7.
haragiri mathana nirakhu mama bāhū. puni saṭha kapi nija prabhuhi sarāhū.
8.

If your Lord, whom you repeatedly praise so much in glowing terms, is really as brave, strong, powerful and courageous as you claim him to be (or make him out to be), why then, tell me, is he sending a messenger. Ain’t he ashamed of himself and his valour for trying to make peace with an arch enemy?¹ (6-7)

Oh you stupid monkey (saṭha kapi)! First look here at my robust and powerful arms that had moved even the mighty heavenly abode of Lord Shiva, known as ‘Mt. Kailash’, and then praise your (weak and imbecile) Lord (Sri Ram)². (8)

[Note—¹“Is your so-called brave, powerful and bold Lord not ashamed to send an emissary to try to make peace with someone who has abducted his wife, and who refuses to give her back? Is this not enough an evidence of his cowardice and false pretensions of valour? How great a fool you are not to understand this?

Why is your Lord, of whom you say that he is very brave and powerful, sending a peace emissary to his arch enemy; isn't he ashamed to strike a deal with someone who has stolen his wife? Why does he not straightforward come and fight with me and take away his wife by trouncing me in an honourable fight, instead of attempting a shameful truce? Surely it indicates he is afraid of facing me in the battle-field, and so is trying to find a face-saving formula.”

Angad answers this sarcastic remark later on in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 30 which we shall be reading soon.

²“Indeed, if you look at my robust arms and understand how strong and powerful they are, had you known that I had easily lifted Mt. Kailash where Lord Shiva lives, which obviously is not a joke, surely you would not have boasted about the glory of your own Lord (Sri Ram). So, either you don't know who I actually am or about my achievements, or you are a completely good-for-nothing blockhead.”]

दो०. सूर कवन रावन सरिस स्वकर काटि जेहिं सीस ।
हुने अनल अति हरष बहु बार साखि गौरीस ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

sūra kavana rāvana sarisa svakara kāṭi jēhiṁ sīsa.
hunē anala ati haraṣa bahu bāra sākhi gaurīsa. 28.

Where is another brave and courageous person in this world who can compare himself with Ravana because he had voluntarily, and cheerfully, offered his own heads as a sacrifice in the sacred fire¹? Lord Shiva, the husband of Gauri (goddess Parvati; “gaurīsa”), is a witness of this remarkable heroic deed of his. (Doha no. 28)

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 49-50.]

चौ०. जरत बिलोकेउँ जबहिं कपाला । बिधि के लिखे अंक निज भाला ॥ १ ॥
नर केँ कर आपन बध बाँची । हसेउँ जानि बिधि गिरा असाँची ॥ २ ॥
सोउ मन समुझि त्रास नहिं मोरें । लिखा बिरंचि जरठ मति भोरें ॥ ३ ॥
आन बीर बल सठ मम आगें । पुनि पुनि कहसि लाज पति त्यागें ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jarata bilōkē'uṁ jabahiṁ kapālā. bidhi kē likhē aṅka nija bhālā. 1.
nara kēṁ kara āpana badha bāñcī. hasē'uṁ jāni bidhi girā asāñcī. 2.
sō'u mana samujhi trāsa nahiṁ mōrēm. likhā birañci jaraṭha mati bhōrēm. 3.

āna bīra bala saṭha mama āgēṁ. puni puni kahasi lāja pati tyāgēṁ. 4.

[Ravana continued—] ‘At the time when my severed heads (that I had voluntarily offered to the fire sacrifice to please the creator Brahma) were being roasted in the sacrificial fire, I saw that Brahma (the creator of the world, and the god who determines the destiny of all living beings) had subtly written on my forehead¹ that I shall die at the hands of a human being. When I read it, I laughed to myself as it would make a liar of Brahma himself, because it would prove that Brahma’s words were false and inconsequential². (1-2)

Even though I had read it yet I wasn’t alarmed, for I was sure that Brahma had written this by mistake because he is old³, and one who is advanced in age usually commits errors⁴. (3)

Oh you stupid and blockhead of a fellow (saṭha)! How durst you repeatedly sing praises of another warrior before me by abandoning all traces of shame and remnants of self-respect that you might have⁵?’ (4)

[Note—¹It is believed that the destiny of all creatures is written by the creator Brahma on an individual’s forehead at the time of birth. This ‘writing’ is like an edict etched or engraved on stone, and it cannot be either changed or erased.

²Here Ravana is twisting facts to suit him. Actually it was Ravana himself who had asked the creator Brahma to exempt the humans from the list of those from whom he wished to have protection—such as from the gods, spirits, other creatures in the world, including the demons etc.

This episode is narrated in: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 177; (b) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 49-52; (c) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 10-15; and (d) Valmiki’s Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 10-26½.

The story in brief is this: When Brahma was pleased by Ravana’s sacrifice, in which he had offered his own heads as offerings to the sacred fire, and appeared before him to ask him to seek boons of his choice, he (Ravana) had demanded invincibility and immunity from death at the hands of almost all living beings of virtually all denominations who he thought could overcome and kill him. Brahma thought to himself that this is impossible, because everyone who has taken birth in this mortal world must die; even the gods of heaven, including Brahma himself, has a fixed time of lifespan. No one except the Supreme Being known as ‘Brahm’, who is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, is eternal, imperishable and infinite.

Brahma thought over the matter quickly, and he quietly summoned Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and speech, and as quietly instructed her to exercise her mystical powers immediately for the sake of the good of this creation by casting her spell of delusions over Ravan’s mind and intellect. So, Ravana’s wisdom got warped, and he invited his own doom by thinking that if all the great powers in this world, such as the gods, both senior and junior, and the demi-gods such as Yakshas (spirits), Naagas (the lords of the subterranean world) etc, as well as the demons who had similar strength and powers as these entities, in short all the worthwhile powers-that-be in this creation could harm him any longer, how does the human race, whose members are by nature physically weak and scared of facing even ordinary wild animals in the forest, matter?

So, in his overconfidence and arrogance, that after Brahma's boons—and once he had conquered the gods after being protected by these boons—there would be no one left in this creation who would dare face him, he exempted the humans from the list of those from whom he wished to acquire immunity from death, or from whom he had any kind of fear. He regarded the humans as inconsequential and irrelevant like a small piece of twig or blade of grass that could be easily trampled upon, crushed and squashed under his mighty foot which would squeeze the valour and strength and power out of everyone of any worth in this creation, such as the gods and the demons.

Put simply, Ravana thought that if he conquered the powerful gods of heaven, there would be no fear from the human race because these humans themselves seek the blessing and protection of gods in whatever they do. So if their benefactors and patrons and protectors are conquered, the naturally docile and inherently coward human race will feel helpless and unprotected, and would therefore its members, the humans, would durst never oppose Ravana or pose any kind of threat to him, nor create any problem for him.

This exemption of the humans from the list of those from whom Ravana sought protection and immunity from any harm was like him putting the nail to his own coffin, for this little chink in his armour, which he himself made, laid the foundation of his ultimate death. Later on Lord Vishnu would assume the human form of Lord Ram and exploit this loophole in Ravana's defences to get rid of him in the Epic War of Lanka.

This episode of Lord Vishnu assuring the gods and mother earth that he would come down to earth as a human being, in the form of Lord Ram, to eliminate the scourge of Ravana, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 188.

³Ravana acknowledges that alarm bells are ringing inside his heart; that he fears that the exemption to the human beings that he granted at the time when Brahma was giving him boons has now come to haunt him as a ghost, a spectre of the Death God.

But he tries to hide his fear by deceiving himself, making himself believe that perhaps Brahma had made some errors in putting it in 'writing'—that he will die at the hands of a human being—while fixing his fate and penning the document of his destiny. It was an error on the part of Brahma to do so, because Ravana had merely 'exempted' the human being from the list of those from whom he demanded protection, but that does not mean he said 'let me be killed by a man'. Of course not, for it was not, and would never be, his intention to die at the hands of a humble creature like a man when he wanted immunity from death from all the mighty powers-that-be in this world. It would be ridiculous to expect, and a height of nonsense to believe, that Ravana would invite his own death by asking Brahma in specific terms that 'a man could kill me' when he had sought a blanket immunity from death from all the mighty and powerful entities of creation, such as the gods, the demons, the spirits, and the rest of the creatures, small and big.

⁴Brahma is depicted as an aged patriarch of creation, a great-grandfatherly figure. So Ravana says that probably Brahma had made a mistake in 'writing' something down as being asked by Ravana himself, when the fact was that he had merely said that he 'exempted' the humans from the list of those from whom he seeks protection. That does not mean that he sought 'death from humans'.

⁵Ravana tries to shame Angad and put him on the defensive by emphasising that the latter does not know the might of the former that he chooses to sing laurels of a human being, here meaning Lord Ram.

As we have observed earlier in this discussion, Brahma had instructed goddess Saraswati to cast her magic spell that created delusions in Ravana's mind and intellect. Hence, he continued to remain in a world of illusions, a world of his own imagination, thinking that Lord Ram is a human being inspite of being warned to the contrary on various occasions.]

कह अंगद सलज्ज जग माहीं । रावन तोहि समान कोउ नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 लाजवंत तव सहज सुभाऊ । निज मुख निज गुन कहसि न काऊ ॥ ६ ॥
 सिर अरु सैल कथा चित रही । ताते बार बीस तैं कही ॥ ७ ॥
 सो भुजबल राखेहु उर घाली । जीतेहु सहसबाहु बलि बाली ॥ ८ ॥

kaha aṅgada salajja jaga māhīm. rāvana tōhi samāna kō'u nāhīm. 5.
 lājavanta tava sahaja subhā'ū. nija mukha nija guna kahasi na kā'ū. 6.
 sira aru saila kathā cita rahī. tātē bāra bīsa taim kahī. 7.
 sō bhujabala rākhēhu ura ghālī. jītēhu sahasabāhu bali bālī. 8.

Quoth Angad (as a sharp rejoinder as a step to the final showdown, employing the same sarcastic and contemptuous tone as used by Ravana) to lambaste Ravana, 'Oh Ravana; surely there is no one in this world who has more shame and greater self-respect than you have! (5)

Indeed, to be modest and humble is your inherent nature, and truly you never boast of your achievements with your own mouth! (6)

Surely then, it is perhaps for this reason (that you are modest and never boast of your achievements) that you have repeatedly spoken, twenty times¹, of the tale concerning your heads (that you had cut repeatedly) and the mountain (i.e. Mt. Kailash that you had lifted)² which you had remembered.

[To wit, since these were the only two achievements you had, and none else whatever which you could cite or recall, you have repeatedly spoken about them umpteen number of times. Surely this is being modest; surely also you have a lot of self-respect that you wish to keep reminding yourself, and remind others as well, about these fantastic successes that no one else in this creation had achieved.] (7)

And why have you concealed in your bosom about the failure of the same strength of your arms that had failed you when you had faced and were humiliated by Sahastrabaahu (the one with a thousand arms)³, Bali (the king of the subterranean world)⁴ and Baali (Angad's father)⁵?

[To wit, why couldn't you employ your mighty arms by which you had lifted Mt. Kailash, or the valour and the courage with which you had cut-off your heads, at the time when you were subjected to abject humiliation at the hands of the three great warriors mentioned here? You prefer to speak repeatedly about lifting Mt. Kailash and offering of heads to the fire sacrifice, then why not even once of how you fared in your face-off with these three great warriors I have named above?] (8)

[Note—¹“Speaking twenty times about anything” is a figure of speech to mean that a person repeatedly tells the same old thing over and over again, making a mockery of himself and giving the impression of a vain man who talks ridiculous things. It looks like a big joke upon himself.

This is to answer Ravana’s taunt that Angad is repeatedly praising Lord Ram before him—apropos: verse no. 4 herein above.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 25; and (b) Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-16 that precede Doha no. 24.

⁴Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 24.

⁵Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24.]

सुनु मतिमंद देहि अब पूरा । काटें सीस कि होइअ सूर ॥ ९ ॥
इंद्रजालि कहूँ कहिअ न बीरा । काटइ निज कर सकल सरीरा ॥ १० ॥

sunu matimanda dēhi aba pūrā. kātēm sīsa ki hō'i'a sūrā. 9.
indrajāli kahuṁ kahi'a na bīrā. kāṭa'i nija kara sakala sarīrā. 10.

Listen oh you blockhead and one with an abysmally low intellect (matimanda)! Answer me: Does anyone become a great warrior, and acquire fame and honour, by getting his head cut off?

[To wit, it is something to be highly ashamed of and extremely derogatory for a gallant and courageous warrior to speak of his own head being cut off. It is the most dishonourable and ignoble of things to ever happen to any man of dignity and respect. But the irony is that you, Ravana, boast of it; you speak as if it is something very great to have happened to you, instead of being ashamed of it.] (9)

Look, a magician performing tricks too cuts off his head with his own hands as part of his act, but does anyone call him a great warrior¹? (9)

[Note—¹Angad has used this logic of a magician cutting off the head of an actor, say his assistant, on stage while performing his usual tricks to entertain the audience, to prove that Ravana’s boast of cutting his heads is no great deal. Everyone knows that the head cutting by the magician is illusionary, but during the course of the act it appears to be real-life.

Similarly, Ravana seems to living in a fool’s paradise if he feels that the world is very impressed by this act of cutting off his own head. Probably he had cut them in an act of illusion to cheat Brahma to grant him boons. Yes, it is possible that he may have done so because demons are known to have magical powers by which they could do things others couldn’t.]

दो०. जरहिं पतंग मोह बस भार बहहिं खर बृंद ।
ते नहिं सूर कहावहिं समुझि देखु मतिमंद ॥ २९ ॥

dōhā.

jarahim̐ patar̐ga mōha basa bhāra bahahim̐ khara br̐nda.
tē nahim̐ sūra kahāvahim̐ samujhi dēkhu matimanda. 29.

Oh you coxcomb, blockheaded fellow (matimanda), think for yourself. So many moths get attracted towards a flame (of a candle or lamp), because of their love for its brilliant light, and get burnt as a consequence; and donkeys carry burden on their backs (thinking that their master loves them and has preferred them over others to serve him, and it's a sort of tribute to their strength and stamina)¹.

Ponder over the matter and tell me: are they (the moths and the donkeys) doing some valiant deed, are they heroes to be acclaimed and sung for their marvellous achievement?¹ (Doha no. 29)

[Note—¹To wit, would anyone not like to call the moths fools to get themselves thus burnt, and the donkeys laughable for breaking their backs and wearing themselves out for nothing that would actually benefit them? Neither of them, the moth or the donkey, are doing something great that would invite honour and applause. Rather, both of them, the moth and the donkey, are making a fool out of themselves, the moth by going to the flame and dancing around it to die by getting roasted alive, and the donkey by trudging along the path, tiring out its legs and breaking its back, bearing heavy load on its back. Say, if the moth chirps and the donkey brays proudly that they have been valiant, and had done a gallant and glorious deed, wouldn't one laugh at their stupidity and call them utterly dumb?

Similarly, no case is made out in Ravana's favour, quoth Angad, to showcase his valour and glory that deserve any kind of applause and honour by the two proofs he has given, one of cutting his heads, and the second of lifting Mt. Kailash. It is just like moths voluntarily jumping in the fire to burn themselves because the creator had destined their death in this ignominious manner, and the donkeys lifting burdens because they are meant to do so by the creator who made them beasts of burden.

Angad uses this analogy of the moth and the donkey to deflate Ravana's inflated ego and ridicule him for his false self-praise.]

चौ०. अब जनि बतबढ़ाव खल करही । सुनु मम बचन मान परिहरही ॥ १ ॥
दसमुख मैं न बसीठीं आयउँ । अस बिचारि रघुबीर पठायउँ ॥ २ ॥
बार बार अस कहइ कृपाला । नहिं गजारि जसु बधें सूकाला ॥ ३ ॥
मन महुँ समुझि बचन प्रभु केरे । सहेउँ कठोर बचन सठ तेरे ॥ ४ ॥
नाहिं त करि मुख भंजन तोरा । लै जातेउँ सीतहि बरजोरा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

aba jani batar̐bhāva khala karahī. sunu mama bacana māna pariharahī. 1.
dasamukha mair̐m na basīṭhīm̐ āya'uṁ. asa bicāri raghubīra paṭhāya'uṁ. 2.
bāra bāra asa kaha'i kṛpālā. nahim̐ gajāri jasu badhēm̐ sṛkālā. 3.
mana mahum̐ samujhi bacana prabhu kērē. sahē'uṁ kaṭhōra bacana saṭha

tērē. 4.

nāhim ta kari mukha bhañjana tōrā. lai jātē'um sītahi barajōrā. 5.

[After countering Ravana's boastful assertions of his gallantry and glory, Angad told him bluntly why he had come to his court.]

Angad said, 'Oh you wicked fellow (khala)! Don't prolong the vain arguments any further; stop futile wrangling, and listen to me. Abandon your haughtiness and arrogance. [Stop useless loud talking and wasting your time and energy; cool down and be practical.] (1)

Oh ten-mouthed Ravana (dasamukha)!¹ Mind you, I have not come as a humble messenger to pitifully plead with you. [Don't think that I have come to request you for some concession because we are scared of you, or we are in awe of your might, that we don't want to fight with you. Perish the thought if, per chance, you have it. Don't be deluded into thinking that we are cowards, and when we discovered how mighty and powerful you are after landing in Lanka, by the sight of your mighty army, we are trying to wriggle out of a sticky situation in which we have landed by putting up a brave face, but internally are sore afraid of you. So we are making feverish attempts to settle the dispute and avoid the war, and it is for this reason our Lord Ram has sent me². No, no, not at all. The reason for my coming here is quite different. It is this—]

I have been sent by the brave Lord of Raghus ("raghubīra"; i.e. Lord Ram) because he thought [2]; why yes indeed, the gracious and compassionate Lord (krpālā) has repeatedly said that "A lion does not get any glory by killing a jackal"³! [3]. (2-3)

Keeping in mind the words of my Lord (Ram), I am constrained, you wicked fellow (saṭha), to tolerate your sharp, nasty and impertinent words (sahē'um kaṭhōra bacana). (4)

Had it not been for that reason⁴, I would have smashed your face (and all your ten mouths with it), and then I would have forcibly taken Sita back with me (to restore her to Lord Ram). (5)

[Note—¹The use of the word "dasamukha", meaning ten mouths, is significant. It means Ravana was speaking very loudly and rambling on in a confusing manner, speaking with all his ten mouths at the same time, making it difficult to comprehend as to what he was saying. Angad ridiculed him for speaking thus, for it made a joker out of him.

Speaking with ten mouths simultaneously also means Ravana was ten times more boastful and haughty as compared to anyone else.

²Angad refers to the earlier taunt of Ravana when the latter asked him: "Why is your Lord, of whom you say that he is very brave and powerful, sending a peace emissary to his arch enemy; isn't he ashamed to strike a deal with someone who has stolen his wife? Why does he not straightforward come and fight with me and take away his wife by trouncing me in an honourable fight, instead of attempting a shameful truce? Surely it indicates he is afraid of facing me in the battle-field, and so is trying to find a face-saving formula." {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 28.}

³Here, Ravana is likened to a ‘jackal’, and Lord Ram to the ‘lion’. Angad means that Lord Ram wishes to avoid slaying Ravana because it would be a shameful thing for him to do so. So Angad was sent to find out a way if this killing of Ravana could be avoided in an honourable way, because the Lord thought that Ravana’s killing would be too mean a deed for him to do, for Ravana had no stature and standing, by any measure, when compared to Lord Ram. It is an established principle that one gets glory and acclaim only when one defeats his enemy who is of the same strength, has the same stature as a nobleman and warrior, and occupies the same social status and moral standing as himself. To fight and defeat someone lowly in any measure of way will bring nothing except infamy and ridicule upon the conqueror or the victor; his victory would be worse than his defeat at the hands of a contender of equal stature.

⁴Angad poured boiling oil on injured Ravana’s self-respect when he mocked at him, saying sarcastically: “Oh you haughty rascal! Had it not been improper for a great warrior to kill a lowly fellow as you are, just like it is improper for a lion to kill a jackal as my Lord Ram had said, or if it would not have violated my dear Lord Ram’s injunction against doing it, I would have crushed you and viciously smacked your faces, and then I would have taken Sita back to Lord Ram even while you would have been wiggling in pain and making feeble sounds of agony while licking your wounds like a wounded jackal.”]

जानेऊँ तव बल अधम सुरारी । सूनें हरि आनिहि परनारी ॥ ६ ॥
 तैं निसिचर पति गर्ब बहूता । मैं रघुपति सेवक कर दूता ॥ ७ ॥
 जौं न राम अपमानहि डरऊँ । तोहि देखत अस कौतुक करऊँ ॥ ८ ॥

jānē'um̐ tava bala adhama surārī. sūnēm hari ānihi paranārī. 6.
 taim̐ nisicara pati garba bahūtā. maim̐ raghupati sēvaka kara dūtā. 7.
 jaur̐ na rāma apamānahi ḍara'ūṁ. tōhi dēkhata asa kautuka kara'ūṁ. 8.

[Berating Ravana and ridiculing him further, Angad continued—]

Oh you sinful and fallen enemy of the gods (adhama surārī)! Verily, I have come to realise how strong, courageous, powerful and valiant you are indeed: for you had stolen another person’s wife when you found her alone¹! (6)

[There is no comparison between you and me. Do you know why? Well, I shall tell you—] Oh the king of demons (nisicara)! You are very haughty, egoist and arrogant. I, on the other hand, am a (humble) messenger of him (Sugriv) who himself is a humble servant of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram²). (7)

If I had not been afraid of doing anything that would amount to causing an insult to Lord Ram for violating his injunctions, for it is outrageous for me to even think of anything of the sort, then mind you, I would have done something so exceptional and fantastic that it would have amazed you a lot. (8)

[Note—¹Angad's observation is obviously laced with heavy sarcasm. Only a jackal would steal meat from a lion's prey when the lord of the jungle is not paying attention. If Ravana was as brave and powerful as he claims himself to be, why didn't he fight with Lord Ram face-to-face and defeat him to claim the Lord's wife as a trophy if he was indeed bent in bringing her to Lanka, instead of hiding and stealthily abducting her while her husband was away hunting. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-16 that precede it.}]

²To wit, all of us who serve Lord Ram are modest, humble, unpretentious and gracious. My lord is Sugriv, and he is the king of the monkey race like you are the king of the demon race. But unlike you, fortunately Sugriv is not haughty and arrogant, nor is he a pretentious and boastful person who speaks in vain. We are all humble servants of our supreme Lord, Sri Ram. We have learnt to practice the virtues of modesty and humility by being with Lord Ram and serving him, for the Lord does not like these negative traits in his followers and companions.]

दो०. तोहि पटकि महि सेन हति चौपट करि तव गाउँ ।
तव जुबतिन्ह समेत सठ जनकसुतहि लै जाउँ ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

tōhi paṭaki mahi sēna hati caupaṭa kari tava gā'uṁ.
tava jubatinha samēta saṭha janakasutahi lai jā'uṁ. 30.

[Do you wish to know what I would have done? Listen then—]

I would have, oh you wicked rascal (saṭha), dashed you to the ground (tōhi paṭaki mahi), killed your entire army (sēna hati), and after destroying your village (place; Lanka; “caupaṭa kari tava gā'uṁ”), I would have taken all your women (in a procession) to Lord Ram, with the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita) leading them from the front (tava jubatinha samēta saṭha janakasutahi lai jā'uṁ). (Doha no. 30)

चौ०. जौं अस करौं तदपि न बड़ाई । मुएहि बधें नहिं कछु मनुसाई ॥ १ ॥
कौल कामबस कृपिन बिमूढ़ा । अति दरिद्र अजसी अति बूढ़ा ॥ २ ॥
सदा रोगबस संतत क्रोधी । बिजु बिमुख श्रुति संत बिरोधी ॥ ३ ॥
तनु पोषक निंदक अघ खानी । जीवत सब सम चौदह प्राणी ॥ ४ ॥
अस बिचारि खल बधउँ न तोही । अब जनि रिस उपजावसि मोही ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ asa karaūṁ tadapi na baṛāī. mu'ēhi badhēm nahim kachu manusāī. 1.
kaula kāmabasa kṛpina bimūṛhā. ati daridra ajasī ati būṛhā. 2.
sadā rōgabasa santata krōdhī. biṣṇu bimukha śruti santa birōdhī. 3.
tanu pōṣaka nindaka agha khānī. jīvata sava sama caudaha prānī. 4.
asa bicāri khala badha'uṁ na tōhī. aba jani risa upajāvasi mōhī. 5.

In all sooth, I desist from doing all this (as I said I would have done in Doha no. 30 herein above) because I shall gain no fame by doing it; I am reluctant to do what I would have liked to do for it is no great deal to do things that aren't up to the standard. Say, what gallantry is there, what glory is to be gained by killing someone who is already on the verge of death; what bravery is shown by slaying a dying person, for he will die nevertheless? (1)

[I shall now list certain categories of persons killing whom is a highly shameful act.] Those who follow decadent forms of worship (**kaula**)¹, those who are pervert and lustful (**kāmabasa**), those who are great misers and greedy (**kr̥pina**), those who are extremely foolish and ignorant (**bimūr̥hā**), those who are excessively poor and poverty-stricken (**ati daridra**), those who are tainted with ill-fame and scarred by ignominy because of some infamous misdeed (**ajasī**), those who are very old (**ati būr̥hā**) [2], ---

--- Those who are always sick (**sadā rōgabasa**), those who remain always angry (**santata krōdhī**), those who are opposed to Lord Vishnu (“**biṣnu bimukha**”; i.e. those who don't believe in Lord God; atheists), those who defy and are hostile to the Vedas (scriptures) as well as saintly persons (**śruti santa birōdhī**) [3], ---

--- Those who are so selfish, foolish or ignorant that they are only interested in taking care of their own gross mortal body (i.e. who are so stupid that they are not bothered about the welfare of their soul, which is their ‘true self’ instead of the body; and are so selfish that they do they think about the welfare of others in the society) (**tanu pōṣaka**), those who habituated to find faults with others (and never see anything good in them) (**nindaka**), and those who a veritable mine of sins and evilness (**agha khānī**).

These above fourteen categories of people are as good as dead bodies even though they are still alive, and therefore it is not worth the while to kill any of them². [Angad likens Ravana with these fallen people, and says he is reluctant to kill him for this reason.] [4] (2-4)

Oh you wicked fellow (**khala**)! That is why I am not killing you. Don't provoke me any further and don't stoke my anger any longer (because I may lose my patience).’ (5)

[Note—¹The word “**kaula**” refers to those who indulge in morally bad practices in the name of worshipping their deity, such as drinking liquor, killing other creatures on the excuse of making animal sacrifice, eating meat of the sacrificed poor animal pretending that it is sanctified food, and indulging in sexual orgies in the guise of saying they are on a high because they are possessed by some spirit. Killing such people is in itself a sinful deed, for they are so full of evil that spilling their blood would spoil one's own hands.

²It is because such people are so deep a mine of evil and sinfulness, or a fountainhead from where negativity emanates and spreads forth in the surrounding world, that they are like stinking dead bodies. A dead body starts decaying soon and becomes so harmful that if one remains for a long time near it, one would show signs of some serious illness, such as nausea and vomiting, because of the foul stink emanating from

the decaying body, and the whole atmosphere gets so polluted that infectious diseases are caused if the corpse is not disposed off soon.

The idea is that the people belonging to the categories listed here are no better than maggots in the society; they are like a corpse which only creates problems instead of being of any good to others. How mad and ugly would it look for a man if goes to dismember a dead body, to kill his enemy who has already turned into a corpse!

Angad says that even if he thought of finding some way of killing Ravana—and later on explaining his deed by finding some excuse to convince his Lord Ram that the killing of Ravana had become imperative in a particular situation—still he would not commit this evil deed as it would be a very lowly thing for him to do. He likens Ravana with all the fallen creatures listed here.]

सुनि सकोप कह निसिचर नाथा । अधर दसन दसि मीजत हाथा ॥ ६ ॥

रे कपि अधम मरन अब चहसी । छोटे बदन बात बड़ि कहसी ॥ ७ ॥

कटु जल्पसि जड़ कपि बल जाकें । बल प्रताप बुधि तेज न ताकें ॥ ८ ॥

sunī sakōpa kaha nisicara nāthā. adhara dasana dasi mījata hāthā. 6.
rē kapi adhama marana aba cahasī. chōṭē badana bāta baḍi kahāsī. 7.
kaṭu jalpasi jaṛa kapi bala jākēṁ. bala pratāpa budhi tēja na tākēṁ. 8.

[Hearing the contemptuous and scornful way Angad rebuked Ravana (in full demon court), the latter became furious (for Angad's words seemed like molten lead being poured into the ears of Ravana).]

Ravana, the lord of the demons (nisicara nāthā), was filled with excessive wrath and bitterness, bit his lips with his teeth and wringed his hands in utter indignation, and thundered with a fiery tone, --- (6)

‘Oh you lowly and vile monkey (rē kapi adhama), woe betide you, for it seems certain that you wish to die (marana aba cahasī). You are small and inconsequential, but you have crossed all limits of decency and decorum by speaking with a big mouth. (7)

Oh you dumb-witted and vulgar monkey (jaṛa kapi)! He (Lord Ram), on whose strength you have so boastfully uttered such sharp and nasty words (kaṭu), has no real strength, glory, intelligence and majesty at all.’ (8)

दो०. अगुन अमान जानि तेहि दीन्ह पिता बनबास ।

सो दुख अरु जुबती बिरह पुनि निसि दिन मम त्रास ॥ ३१ (क) ॥

जिन्ह के बल कर गर्ब तोहि अइसे मनुज अनेक ।

खाहिं निसाचर दिवस निसि मूढ़ समुझु तजि टेक ॥ ३१ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

aguna amāna jāni tēhi dīnha pitā banabāsa.
 sō dukha aru jubatī biraha puni nisi dina mama trāsa. 31 (a).
 jinha kē bala kara garba tōhi a'isē manuja anēka.
 khāhim nisācara divasa nisi mūrha samujhu taji tēka. 31 (b).

[Now, Ravana justifies his assertion made in the last verse herein above, implying that Lord Ram is of no consequence for him.]

[Ravana continued—] ‘His (Lord Ram’s) father (king Dasrath of Ayodhya) had sent him to forest exile because he felt that his son was worthless and had no good qualities in him, that he was unfit to ascend the throne and rule the kingdom, and that he would bring only infamy to the family (if he is anointed as a king).

On the one hand he (Lord Ram) is smarting from the grave insult and disrepute that this disinheritance by his own father as brought to him, added to it is the misery from intense grief caused by losing his wife, and his misfortunes are further compounded by the knowledge of the immensity of my valour, majesty, strength and powers which have instilled a mortal fear of me in his bosom¹. (Doha no. 31-a)

The demons are accustomed to devouring, on a routine basis, every day and night, so many human beings like the one whom you praise so much. [This is a reference to Lord Ram.]

Oh you complete fool (mūrha)! Understand it², and leave aside your stubbornness (which is misleading you by clouding your reasoning and intellect).’ (Doha no. 31-b)

[Note—¹Ravana told Angad: “Listen you fool. All the misfortunes that have befallen your Lord must have sapped his energy and killed his desire to live an honourable life. Is it not a matter of shame that one’s father throws him out of the house; is it not a further matter of shame that his wife is stolen by someone and he is unable to protect her? This most unfortunate person, who is already suffering from excessive grief and pain caused by an injury to his self-respect, would first try his best to recover his wife, so he makes desperate attempts to trace her. He goes here and there frantically, and even gets a lead about her whereabouts. Then he reaches the place where he is informed his beloved wife is kept. But then he faces an insurmountable obstacle, for to get her back he has to overcome her captive who is so powerful and strong that the poor fellow dares not confront him out of fear of his own life.

This in a nut-shell is the story of your famed Lord! All the misfortunes and miseries and grief that has overwhelmed him must have by now sapped all his energy and weakened his resolve; he must have lost all courage and strength to bear any more of it. Surely and certainly, he must have lost his will to fight me to reclaim his wife.

Initially he may have gathered courage to wander in the forest to search for her in the hope of finding her somewhere, and I acknowledge that he persevered enough to collect a ramshackle army of untrained monkeys and bears to build a bridge across the ocean and land in Lanka. But though he had managed to keep a brave face externally, internally he is full of doubt and uncertain of himself when he came to know of me and my reputation, that it was I who had taken away his wife, and that he has to fight with me to get her back. At this very thought he must have balked; the idea must have seemed an impossible objective for him to achieve.

Thus, having so lost his courage and confidence internally, he wishes now to find a face-saving formula, and that is why he sends a messenger to explore the

possibility of getting his wife back without having to face me in the battle-field. He is so obsessed with the fear of me that he won't have the courage to stand his ground in the battle-field.

And you (Angad) are so big a blockhead that you can't piece two and two together to make four. Oh you fool; why don't you see through the things, and why are wasting your energy trying to advocate for a lost cause."

²"Don't you know anything about the demon race? Humans are our staple food, and tell me yourself is anyone afraid of what he eats? But still you go on and on in a rambling manner heaping praises on a human being, without realizing that the human race is a staple food for the demons. We chomp them like carrots and radish; we munch at them for snacks and meals. Are you so great a fool not to understand that the demon army, which is ferocious by its nature, would become more fierce when it is hungry, and when I unleash my starved demon warriors on you fellows, what will happen then? If we, the demons, don't give two hoots for the human race, which is the most advanced and powerful in the hierarchy of all living beings, what would we care for monkeys and bears? Why don't you consider these things?

Listen; your father Baali and I were friends, and that is why I don't wish to push you into the jaws of death. But it looks to me that you are being drawn to it by your own reckoning, by being unreasonable and obstinate, and unwilling to understand anything. Wake up to the reality and stop espousing a lost cause."]

चौ०. जब तेहिं कीन्हि राम कै निंदा । क्रोधवंत अति भयउ कपिंदा ॥ १ ॥

हरि हर निंदा सुनइ जो काना । होइ पाप गोघात समाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaba tēhim kīnhi rāma kai nindā. krōdhavanta ati bhaya'u kapindā. 1.

hari hara nindā suna'i jō kānā. hō'i pāpa gōghāta samānā. 2.

When he (Ravana) used disparaging word critical of Lord Ram and his glory, when he used crass language for Lord Ram, when he showed his grossness, the monkey chief ("kapindā"; Angad) lost his patience; he became furious and shook with anger. (1)

This is because to listen criticism of, and hear derogatory words used for Lord Hari and Lord Har (Vishnu and Shiva respectively; the two Gods of the Trinity) invites the blot of committing a grave sin that is equivalent to killing of a cow¹. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is the second God of the Trinity and is the protector and caretaker of this creation, while Lord Shiva is the third God who is responsible for the conclusion of this creation. Lord Ram is believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. So when Ravana used insulting words for the Lord, compelling Angad to hear them, the latter felt he was forced to commit a grave sin against his wish, and he had never ever imagined in his life that one day he would be forced by circumstances to be made a party to such a sacrilegious deed. This infuriated him immeasurably.]

कटकटान कपिकुंजर भारी । दुहु भुजदंड तमकि महि मारी ॥ ३ ॥

डोलत धरनि सभासद खसे । चले भाजि भय मारुत ग्रसे ॥ ४ ॥

kaṭakaṭāna kapikuñjara bhārī. duhu bhujaḍaṇḍa tamaki mahi mārī. 3.
ḍōlata dharani sabhāsada khasē. calē bhāji bhaya māruta grasē. 4.

The great monkey chief ground his teeth so viciously that a sound of crushing stones was heard (kaṭakaṭāna) even as he waved his arms angrily in the air, and clinching his fists he struck the ground violently with them. (3)

This caused a tremor that shook the earth, and as a result of this sudden jolt the courtiers present there fell to the ground. They were so overcome with great terror that they ran away madly from the court as if driven by a strong gust of wind symbolising fear¹. (4)

[Note—¹The scene is reminiscent of a sudden storm with high wind speed that fells things and sweeps them away along its path. As soon as Angad hit the ground angrily with his clenched fists, there was a tremor, and the demon courtiers were caught off guard. They slipped from their seats if they were sitting, and lost foothold on the ground if they were standing. They lost balance and fell down; then fearing an earthquake that would crush them under the debris of the demolished court building, they shrieked in fear and ran helter-skelter. The air in Ravana's court was already grave and heavy, but this sudden development lead to total chaos.]

गिरत सँभारि उठा दसकंधर । भूतल परे मुकुट अति सुंदर ॥ ५ ॥

कछु तेहिं लै निज सिरन्हि सँवारे । कछु अंगद प्रभु पास पबारे ॥ ६ ॥

girata saṁbhāri uṭhā dasakandhara. bhūtala parē mukuṭa ati sundara. 5.
kachu tēhiṁ lai nija siranhi saṁvārē. kachu aṅgada prabhu pāsa pabārē. 6.

The ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) almost fell down to the ground, but he managed to quickly recover himself just in time. Nonetheless, his crowns tumbled over from his head and fell to the ground¹.

[To wit, though Ravana managed to get up himself, yet his crowns slipped from his heads and fell to the ground.] (5)

Ravana could pick up some of these crowns, while the rest were kicked by Angad like balls in the direction of where Lord Ram was.

[To wit, Ravana failed to replace all his ten crowns on his head, so Angad got an opportunity and kicked the remaining crowns² like one kicks at a ball. He kicked these crowns so violently that they flew in the air like balls flying in the direction of Lord Ram's camp.] (6)

[Note—¹This was the second instance of Ravana's crowns falling to the ground. The first was when Lord Ram had shot an arrow in the direction of the citadel of Lanka where Ravana and his entourage were watching some musical performance; at that time too all his crowns had tumbled to the ground. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Angad got a cue from this incidence, and he decided to serve his dear Lord Ram by doing something better, which was to place Ravana's crowns directly at the Lord's feet as a token of the demon's king abject surrender. And Angad thought his action would be alright also, and the Lord would not mind it because he himself had fell Ravana's crowns earlier. This will bring Angad closer to Lord Ram and become his favourite just as Hanuman's gallant deeds had done for him.

There was another strategic military reason for Angad's actions. He wished to break whatever confidence and remnants of morale the demon army still possessed after the events when Lanka was burnt by Hanuman, by making their seemingly invincible and powerful king Ravana swoon and lose his balance and fall down in front of their very eyes. When an army's confidence and morale is low, the battle is three-fourths won by the enemy; if the demon army led by Ravana loses its courage and will to fight with vigour and confidence of attaining victory, then the fate of the war was deemed to be decided in favour of the monkey army led by Lord Ram.]

²And how many crowns did Angad kick? The answer is 'four'. See verse no. 8 herein below.]

आवत मुकुट देखि कपि भागे । दिनहीं लूक परन बिधि लागे ॥ ७ ॥
की रावन करि कोप चलाए । कुलिस चारि आवत अति धाए ॥ ८ ॥

āvata mukuṭa dēkhi kapi bhāgē. dinahīm lūka parana bidhi lāgē. 7.
kī rāvana kari kōpa calā'ē. kulisa cāri āvata ati dhā'ē. 8.

When the monkeys and bears in the camp of Lord Ram saw these crowns flying towards their camp and landing on the ground with a loud thud, they were all alarmed and ran here and there to escape being hit by these missiles. They wondered, 'Oh God, is this a shower of comets or meteors or asteroids raining down from the sky in the middle of the day! (7)

Or, are these four shining missiles¹ shot by Ravana at us, for they seem to come with great speed from the direction of his court.' (8)

[Note—¹The crowns were shining as they were made of polished gold and studded with gems.

That they were four in number shows that Ravana had managed to pick up and replace only six of his fallen crowns back on his head, and the remaining four out of the total ten were kicked by Angad.]

कह प्रभु हँसि जनि हृदयँ डेराहू । लूक न असनि केतु नहिं राहू ॥ ९ ॥
ए किरिट दसकंधर केरे । आवत बालितनय के प्रेरे ॥ १० ॥

kaha prabhu haṁsi jani hṛdayaṁ dērāhū. lūka na asani kētu nahīm rāhū. 9.
ē kirīṭa dasakandhara kērē. āvata bālitanaya kē prērē. 10.

The Lord (Sri Ram) smiled in amusement, and reassured his troops, ‘Don’t be at all afraid of these things. They are neither a comet nor a meteor, nor a asteroid or a missile; they aren’t either Rahu or Ketu. [There is nothing to be afraid of; so don’t panic. They are not some bad omen symbolised by comets or falling stars, and they are neither some kind of weapon shot by Ravana to harm us.] (9)

These are Ravana’s crowns, and they have come here because Angad has kicked them in our direction.’ (10)

दो०. तरकि पवनसुत कर गहे आनि धरे प्रभु पास ।

कौतुक देखहिं भालु कपि दिनकर सरिस प्रकास ॥ ३२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

taraki pavanasuta kara gahē āni dharē prabhu pāsa.

kautuka dēkhahim bhālu kapi dinakara sarisa prakāsa.32 (a).

The son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) immediately jumped up and grabbed these crowns; then he brought them and kept them near Lord Ram (i.e. at his feet).

The crowns were shining with a brilliance that was reminiscent of the splendour of the sun. All the monkeys and bears gathered around and watched them with amazement¹. (Doha no. 32-a)

[Note—¹It was a rare spectacle for them to behold. All the warriors of the Lord’s army had one objective, which was to defeat the Lord’s enemy Ravana, and when they saw their enemy’s crowns come rolling all by themselves and placed at the feet of their own Lord Ram, it was surely a very astonishing and welcome sign—for it marked the defeat and surrender of their enemy, because when a king is defeated in battle, and the victor wishes not to slay him, then the crown of the vanquished is placed at the feet of the vanquisher as a token of surrender and acceptance of defeat by the former.

So, the monkeys and bears rejoiced that their enemy has already surrendered in a symbolic way. This was very a very encouraging sign and a definite morale-booster for the Lord’s army prior to the actual action in the battle-field, as much as it was discouraging, a crusher of morale and the breaker of the spirit of the demon army.

The monkeys and bears were fascinated at the sight of not one, not two, not three—but ‘four shining crowns’ lying at the feet of their revered Lord Ram. It was a way of prophesising to them that their victory in the forthcoming war is four times as assured and certain as any other circumstances under which they may have fought and won any other war earlier on in their lives. The omens were in their favour; the gods were in their favour.]

उहाँ सकोपि दसानन सब सन कहत रिसाइ ।

धरहु कपिहि धरि मारहु सुनि अंगद मुसुकाइ ॥ ३२ (ख) ॥

uhāṃ sakōpi dasānana saba sana kahata risā'i.
dharahu kapihi dhari mārahu suni aṅgada musukā'i. 32 (b).

Meanwhile, back in the court of the demons, Ravana became exasperated and yelled angrily at everybody present, 'Catch hold of this monkey and kill him.'

Angad smiled wryly and sneered when he heard this frustrated outburst of Ravana (because he realised that the endgame was very near). (Doha no. 32-b)

चौ०. एहि बधि बेगि सुभट सब धावहु । खाहु भालु कपि जहँ जहँ पावहु ॥ १ ॥
मर्कटहीन करहु महि जाई । जित्त धरहु तापस द्वौ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

ēhi badhi bēgi subhaṭa saba dhāvahu. khāhu bhālu kapi jahaṃ jahaṃ pāvahu.

1.

markaṭahīna karahu mahi jā'i. ji'ata dharahu tāpasa dvau bhā'i. 2.

[Besides ordering his demon warriors to immediately slay Angad, he also instructed them to rush forward aggressively and devour all the rest of the monkeys and bears wherever they found them, to vent their anger at the invaders and start decimating them that very instant.]

Ravana ordered his demon warriors, 'Oh my brave and competent warriors (subhaṭa)! Rush forth immediately in all the directions, and grab and devour any and all monkeys and bears that you may find anywhere. (1)

Go forthwith and proceed to make the earth free of the monkey race (by killing one and all of them; don't spare any single fellow)! Go and catch hold of the two hermit brothers (Lord Ram and his brother Laxman) (as soon as you can, and bring them all tied up in shackles)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Ravana let loose his ferocious demons like a pack of wild wolves let loose among pigeons, or at least he thought so, for he wanted them to go berserk and ferociously tear apart the enemy without mercy, sparing none. Yes indeed, he thought that his demon warriors would go amok and smash the monkey army as they had been doing during his many campaigns around the world, especially when he had conquered the gods in heaven and chased away their mighty army.

But he had misjudged the might and strength of his enemy this last time. He had thought that they would be like easy fodder before the ferocious demons lunging at them with their drawn mouths from which sharp teeth protruded like those of a hungry lion ready to pounce upon its prey. The demons were accustomed to this sort of hunting their prey, but till now they had faced only those creatures who were humble and docile, who became terrified at the very sight of demons approaching them, creatures whose blood chilled at the very thought of a demon, who trembled when they heard the name of a demon, so there was no question of them mustering courage to fight back: such was the great and enviable fame of the demons, that they found no opposition whatsoever and no challenge worth the name to their authority and sway anywhere in the world, for no living being dared to do it.

This had made Ravana mad with an extreme sense of false pride that had filled him with extravagant haughtiness, excessive arrogance and unwarranted over-confidence in his abilities, thinking that there was no one to challenge him in this world. This had also made his demons think that they can have their way till the end of creation. And this false sense of security and majesty paved the way for their downfall.]

पुनि सकोप बोलेउ जुबराजा । गाल बजावत तोहि न लाजा ॥ ३ ॥

मरु गर काटि निलज कुलघाती । बल बिलोकि बिहरति नहिं छाती ॥ ४ ॥

puni sakōpa bōlē'u jubarājā. gāla bajāvata tōhi na lājā. 3.

maru gara kāṭi nilaja kulaghātī. bala bilōki biharati nahim chātī. 4.

The prince (“jubarājā”; i.e. Angad) retorted sharply, ‘Aren’t you ashamed to speak vainly with a big mouth (that has large jaws). (3)

Oh you vile and shameless fellow who does not have even rudimentary modesty in him, and who will go down in history as the destroyer of his own race and family (nilaja, kulaghātī)! Cut your own neck and die. [Well, you have been boasting that you had severed your head ten times to offer them to the fire sacrifice. Why don’t you repeat your fantastic deed once again? Let me see it and be convinced of its veracity. Go ahead and cut off your ugly heads here and now!]

Even after witnessing my strength and courage, why has your bosom not cracked (i.e. why hadn’t you had a heart attack out of awe and fear of me)? (4)

[Note—¹Angad lashed out vehemently at Ravana, severely chiding and ridiculing him scornfully: “Why, you are a totally dumb fellow; it’s certain you have no trace of dignity and honour worth the name in you. Can’t you see that I don’t have any fear of you in spite of being alone in your assembly, and why don’t you realise that surely there must be some cause for my bravery. And haven’t you just a while ago witnessed how your crowns were kicked by me and sent flying into the sky. Can’t you understand the sort of courage I have when I have so bluntly and boldly answered you on your face, back and forth, even while your so-called brave demons, renowned for their fierceness, watched helplessly. And despite of all this, you continue howling, madly and vainfully.”

रे त्रिय चोर कुमारग गामी । खल मल रासि मंदमति कामी ॥ ५ ॥

सन्यपात जल्पसि दुर्बादा । भएसि कालबस खल मनुजादा ॥ ६ ॥

rē triya cōra kumāraga gāmī. khala mala rāsi mandamati kāmī. 5.

san'yapāta jalpasi durbādā. bha'ēsi kālabasa khala manujādā. 6.

Oh you stealer of women (triya cōra)! Oh you fallen one treading on a sinful path (kumāraga gāmī)! You are indeed a blockhead to the hilt (mandamati). You are verily an embodiment and a treasury (rāsi) of vices such as wickedness, perversion, lust, lasciviousness, and other moral depravities (khala mala --- kāmī). (5)

You are under the influence of a severe fever that causes delirium (*san'yapāta*) because it makes you talk incoherently and babble senselessly (*jalpasi durbādā*).

Oh you rascal demon (*khala manujādā*)! It is very clear that you are under the spell of the god of death (*bha'ēsi kālabasa*) by the way you speak.

[To wit, it seems your death is near because your delirious talk clearly indicates it. When a person is suffering from high fever and is about to die, he starts talking nonsense as you are doing now.] (6)

याको फलु पावहिगो आगें । बानर भालु चपेटन्हि लागें ॥ ७ ॥
 रामु मनुज बोलत असि बानी । गिरहिं न तव रसना अभिमानी ॥ ८ ॥
 गिरिहिं रसना संसय नाही । सिरन्हि समेत समर महि माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

yākō phalu pāvahigō āgēm. bānara bhālu capētanhi lāgēm. 7.
 rāmu manuja bōlata asi bānī. girahim na tava rasanā abhimānī. 8.
 girihahim rasanā sansaya nāhīm. siranhi samēta samara mahi māhīm. 9.

Nevertheless, it doesn't matter for the time being, for you will get the punishment you deserve a little later on when you will be bashed and pilloried by hordes of monkeys and bears (who would take turns in kicking and slapping you). (7)

Oh you haughty and arrogant fellow (*abhimānī*)! “Lord Ram is a human being¹”—why does your tongue not fall down from your mouth when you pronounce such insinuating words, I wonder? (8)

But oh yes, there is no doubt that your tongues will fall down together with your heads (at the appropriate time) when they are chopped off in the battle-field (by Lord Ram's arrows). (9)

[Note—¹Angad refers to what Ravana had said in Doha no. 31 herein above.]

सो०. सो नर १०यों दसकंध बालि बध्यो जेहिं एक सर ।
 बीसहुँ लोचन अंध धिग तव जन्म कुजाति जड़ ॥ ३३ (क) ॥
 sōraṭhā.

sō nara kyōm dasakandha bāli badhyō jēhim ēka sara.
 bīsahuṁ lōcana andha dhiga tava janma kujāti jaṛa. 33 (a).

Tell me, oh you one with ten shoulders (bearing ten necks and ten heads; *dasakandha*), why, and how come, he (Lord Ram), who has slayed Baali with a single arrow, a human being¹?

Oh you stupid blockhead who is born in a vile race (*tava janma kujāti jaṛa*)! Fie to you and your evil birth (*dhiga tava janma*)! Can't you see this obvious thing with your twenty eyes²? (Sortha no. 33-a)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

Why is this thing, killing of Baali with a single arrow, so significant that Angad cites it to justify his assertion that someone, a reference to Lord Ram, who could kill Baali with a single shot is surely not an ordinary human being like the rest? The answer is this: Baali had a boon that when he is attacked by anyone, half of his opponent's strength would come to him, leaving his adversary weakened by half. That is why his brother Sugriv failed to subdue him in the duel they fought.

Lord Ram watched the proceedings quietly from behind a tree and observed that Sugriv was being beaten mercilessly by Baali, and the latter lost half of his strength to Baali due to the boon, leaving him severely wounded and on the verge of collapse. Earlier, the Lord had promised Sugriv that he would extend his support to him if he decides to reclaim his lost rights, rights that were snatched by his elder brother Baali from him. When the Lord realised his friend Sugriv was losing, he was compelled to intervene to keep his promise. But the problem was Baali's boon; if the Lord faced him directly then half of the Lord's strength would have gone automatically to Baali. So therefore he had to shoot the arrow incognito from behind the tree.

That was not all. Since Baali was protected from being killed by any human being who attacked him directly, and humans usually attacked with a weapon that could be shot, e.g. an arrow, so it also meant that a man's arrow would not kill him if he was shot by any weapon used by his attacker from a distance.

Angad uses this rationale to assert that Baali's death with one arrow shows that the shooter of that arrow was not an ordinary human warrior, for under ordinary circumstances Baali would have automatically attracted half of his attacker's strength by the virtue of the boon he had.

But why did Baali fail to attract Lord Ram's half strength into himself whereas he could do it with all other opponents? It's probably based on the principle of a stronger energy field attracting a weaker one towards its self, or being neutralised when faced with a field stronger energy than its own. It could be like magnetic field, or electric field or any other kind of field of energy. Baali possessed an exceptionally strong and powerful field of spiritual energy and dynamism that attracted and pulled towards itself the field of his opponent which was weaker than his.

To wit, Baali's strong spiritual field and the dynamic waves of energy generated by his 'consciousness', known as the Atma, were vibrant and powerful enough to neutralise those of his adversary. In the case of Lord Ram, however, the reverse was true, because the Lord was a personified form of the cosmic energy that is inherent in super Consciousness that Lord Ram embodied. Hence, instead of Angad attracting Lord Ram's strength, it happened the other way round.

Baali had himself acknowledged the divinity of Lord Ram, first to his wife Tara when she tried to dissuade him to fight with Sugriv as he had the Lord's protection, and later on during the last moments of his life when he surrendered his soul to the Lord and sought his refuge and blessings so that he can attain deliverance and beatitude. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (a) Doha no. 7; (b) Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

²Ravana had 'ten heads', and therefore obviously he had 'twenty eyes', for each head had two eyes.

Angad meant that even a person with two eyes would be able to see what is obvious, but Ravana was so extremely stupid and dumb-witted that he could not see it

with ‘twenty eyes’, which means using ten heads, which carried these twenty eyes, applying their wisdom and intelligence simultaneously. To wit, Ravana was so big a fool that he could not deduce the right things even though he possessed ten heads working together to help him do so. In effect, he was dumber than others with just one head and two eyes. It was a scathing attack on Ravana’s personality and majesty; it showed that he had an abysmally poor wisdom; it was an assessment of Ravana’s level of intelligence that downgraded it to the lowest possible standard for this faculty that one can imagine.]

तव सोनित कीं प्यास तृषित राम सायक निकर ।

तजउँ तोहि तेहि त्रास कटु जल्पक निसिचर अधम ॥ ३३ (ख) ॥

tava sōnita kīm pyāsa tṛṣita rāma sāyaka nikara.

taja'uṁ tōhi tēhi trāsa kaṭu jalpaka nisicara adhama. 33 (b).

Oh you fallen demon with a bitter tongue that bites when it speaks (kaṭu jalpaka nisicara adhama)! [To wit, your tongue is poisonous like a snake’s, and it is equally stinging.]

Nevertheless, I leave you alone (i.e. I spare you from death at my hands) because Lord Ram’s arrows are thirsty for your blood, and I don’t want to deprive them of their favourite drink which they wish to have to their hearts’ content. (Sortha no. 33-b)

चौ०. मैं तव दसन तोरिबे लायक । आयसु मोहि न दीन्ह रघुनायक ॥ १ ॥

असि रिस होति दसउ मुख तोरौं । लंका गहि समुद्र महुँ बोरौं ॥ २ ॥

गूलरि फल समान तव लंका । बसहु मध्य तुम्ह जंतु असंका ॥ ३ ॥

मैं बानर फल खात न बारा । आयसु दीन्ह न राम उदारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

mairṁ tava dasana tōribē lāyaka. āyasu mōhi na dīnha raghunāyaka. 1.

asi risa hōti dasa'u mukha tōraurṁ. laṅkā gahi samudra mahauṁ bōraurṁ. 2.

gūlari phala samāna tava laṅkā. basahu madhya tumha jantu asaṅkā. 3.

mairṁ bānara phala khāta na bārā. āyasu dīnha na rāma udārā. 4.

I have the ability to clobber you and break all your teeth, but I am constrained from doing it because Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) has not given me such orders. (1)

I am so annoyed by you and seething with anger that otherwise I would have willingly yanked off all your ten (hideous) heads, and uproot your city of Lanka from its very foundation, and then dump it into the ocean. (2)

In all soothfastness, Lanka is like a fruit of the wild fig tree (gūlari phala) in which you demons move about like tiny worms. (3)

I (as you repeatedly like to address me) am a ‘monkey’, and being a ‘monkey’ it is very easy for me to bite through this fruit and eat (destroy) it (as is the wont of

monkeys)¹. But unfortunately, the magnanimous Lord Ram hasn't given me permission to do so (so I have to restrain myself).²' (4)

[Note—¹Angad told Ravana bitterly: "Look you vile fellow. You stupid ones are like so many worms that infect the fruit of the wild fig tree. And you enjoy calling me a 'monkey'. Well and good; I would have proved you right that I was indeed a 'monkey', for monkeys are in the habit of jumping from tree to tree and destroying their fruits by nibbling some, biting others, chewing this fruit, and munching and spitting out the next, eating a few and breaking the rest from their branches, and then throwing them to the ground to destroy the whole garden, orchard, grove or forest. I would have thoroughly enjoyed in this pastime, but you are lucky because I don't have permission from Lord Ram to indulge in this pleasure. I have come here on serious business, and not to play games with you. Mind you, don't provoke me any further, don't compel me to lose my patience, because who knows that I may begin to show my true colour as a 'monkey'. Then, god forbid, whatever is left of Lanka would be obliterated for good, as I would sweep it and dump it into the ocean to clean the ruin left behind by my good friend Hanuman."

²Angad said: "You know Ravana; I would have clobbered you and pinned you to the ground. But my Lord Ram is very benevolent and has a kind heart for he does not want me to hurt you, but give you ample time and space to think things over and make timely amends. The magnanimous Lord does not wish to precipitate things and give you a chance to say that you weren't given an opportunity to rectify your mistakes and take corrective actions. So the Lord prohibited me from taking any physical action that may hurt you, though I am on the edge of tolerance now, and a little more provocation from you will compel me to go over this edge."

By-and-by it so happened that no matter how much Angad tried to convince Ravana to abandon his bellicose attitude and hostility towards Lord Ram by making peace with the Lord and returning Sita to him, Ravana bluntly refused, and the atmosphere progressively became extremely bitter and acrimonious. Finally, when Angad determined that it was absolutely futile to make further arguments as Ravana was stubborn and obstinate, he decided to do something singularly memorable and remarkable before returning to Lord Ram.

So Angad decided that though he could not thrash Ravana and crush his pride in physical terms yet he must do it in a symbolic way. He planted his foot on the ground and challenged Ravana to move it with the condition that if the latter succeeded in doing so he would be deemed to be the winner, and if he failed to move Angad's foot then he loses the war in a symbolic way. As it was destined by destiny and was the fiat of fate, Ravana failed to move Angad's foot even by a fraction of a measurement. Angad thus managed to crush Ravana's self-respect and esteem completely.

To wit, though Angad did not physically clobber Ravana and thrash him viciously in public as he would have very much liked to do, but couldn't because of Lord Ram's restraining orders, yet he did satisfy his boiling anger by doing something far worse by making Ravana kneel down before him and touch his feet in order to move them, for it was a token-gesture of submission, because for a great warrior loss of his honour, dignity and self-respect in full public gaze is far worse than physical death. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35.}}

जुगुति सुनत रावन मुसुकाई । मूढ़ सिखिहि कहँ बहुत झुठाई ॥ ५ ॥
बालि न कबहुँ गाल अस मारा । मिलि तपसिन्ह तैं भएसि लबारा ॥ ६ ॥

juguti sunata rāvana musukā'ī. mūrha sikhihi kahañ bahuta jhuṭhā'ī. 5.
bāli na kabahuñ gāla asa mārā. mili tapasinha tair̥ bha'ēsi labārā. 6.

Hearing this horny but witty retort of Angad, Ravana sneered sarcastically, saying, 'Oh you dumb fellow (mūrha)! Tell me, from where have you learnt to speak such bundle of lies. [Say, how have you learnt to speak such big lies?]' (5)

Baali (your noble father) had never boasted so much, and he had never chattered in vain with a loud mouth (as you do). Surely, you have acquired this nasty habit of boastful bluster, speaking lies and vain talking due to your company with those hermits (Lord Ram and Laxman)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Ravana in effect told Angad that he should mind the reputation of his noble father Baali by reminding him of the latter. Ravana hinted to Angad that since he holds Baali in high esteem and treats him as one of his friends, he is willing to treat Angad also favourably, as the son of a close friend. If Angad says he refrains from hitting Ravana and destroying Lanka because he has no such express mandate from his Lord, Ram, then Ravana says that he too refrains from hitting and punishing Angad severely for all the insults and insinuations he had cast upon him (Ravana) just because he remembers his old friend Baali and restrains from hitting his friend's only son (Angad), but it should not be taken as his weakness. Rather, Angad must realise that his father was Ravana's friend, and in deference to his father's memory he must at least be polite enough to say 'sorry' to Ravana.

Ravana wished to provoke Angad's anger and stoke his emotions by making him remember his dead father Baali repeatedly, on one pretext or the other, so that he is incited to revolt against Sugriv, his uncle and the king of the monkey kingdom, and Lord Ram, who had befriended Sugriv and sought his help to launch a campaign on Lanka to retrieve his stolen wife Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana.

Ravana wished to tell Angad thus: "Why don't you understand that on the one hand here I am your father's dear friend who will be more committed to care for your future since you are orphaned, and on the other hand there is your selfish uncle Sugriv, and his protector Lord Ram, who had caused his death. Why can't you (Angad) judge for himself and weigh the two options to see that his good lies in joining me (Ravana), instead of living in perpetual fear under the reign of your jealous uncle? You call me a fool; but it is you who is a fool. Wake up from delusions and join hands with me against the enemy of your father."

Ravana's comments also throw light on the state of society at that time. It shows that people usually held hermits in low esteem, as ones who spoke of impossible things and falsely boasted of their spiritual achievements.]

साँचेहुँ मैं लबार भुज बीहा । जौं न उपारिउँ तव दस जीहा ॥ ७ ॥
समुझि राम प्रताप कपि कोपा । सभा माझ पन करि पद रोपा ॥ ८ ॥
जौं मम चरन सकसि सठ टारी । फिरहिं रामु सीता मैं हारी ॥ ९ ॥

sāmcēhuṃ mairiṃ labāra bhuja bīhā. jaum na upāri'uṃ tava dasa jīhā. 7.
samujhi rāma pratāpa kapi kōpā. sabhā mājha pana kari pada rōpā. 8.
jaum mama carana sakasi saṭha ṭārī. phirahirṃ rāmu sītā mairiṃ hārī. 9.

Angad yelled back at Ravana, saying, ‘Yes truly, oh you one with twenty arms (bhuja bīhā), I would have been a boaster who talks in vain if I couldn’t tear out all your ten tongues.

[But mind you, you vile fellow; I have already told you why I refrain from doing it to prove that you are wrong in your assessment of me and my abilities. Haven’t I told you that I desist from it only because my revered Lord Ram hasn’t instructed me to harm you physically; I can’t disobey him.¹]’ (7)

Remembering Lord Ram’s greatness, majesty and glory, Angad decided that enough was enough. [To prove to Ravana that he was not boasting till now—] He planted his foot firmly on the ground, and threw a challenge. (8)

[What was the challenge?] Angad proclaimed: ‘Oh you wicked and vile fellow (saṭha)! If you can move my foot, then Lord Ram shall return (back from Lanka) and I would be deemed to have lost Sita!’² (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-5, 8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 34.

²Angad was sent by Lord Ram as his emissary to negotiate Sita’s release. As an ambassador of the Lord, Angad was vested with the authority to decide the matter and adopt a course of action according to the situation, subject to the condition that the main objective was not defeated, which was to ensure that the path was cleared for Sita’s release from Ravana’s captivity.

Angad concluded that Ravana was not open to negotiations; he was not ready to listen, he was not ready to yield his ground because of his obstinate nature and a false sense of invincibility, and therefore he was not ready to make any compromises. What added fuel to the fire was Ravana’s persistent insinuations and use of derogatory language for Angad as well as Lord Ram. Angad decided that, if after hearing all the nasty things that Ravana blurted out like lava pouring out of a crater of a volcano, if he went away without doing some outstanding deed of bravery and exemplary courage, something that would completely demoralise the demons as a race and humiliate Ravana excessively, then it would not be his dignified departure from the meeting. He wanted to do some spectacular thing, but though he would have preferred pulling down Ravana physically from his throne and giving him a sound thrashing, yet he couldn’t do it because, as he himself asserts, it would violate Lord Ram’s injunction not to harm Ravana physically.

So Angad decided on a stratagem that would bring Ravana to his knees without even touching him, and without him being aware of what he was about to do. Hence, Angad planted his foot on the ground and asked Ravana to move it if he can. In order to move Angad’s feet, obviously Ravana would have to kneel down before him and touch his foot, which would be a visual treat for the whole demon court—that their mighty king who had made the greatest of gods kneel before him has today knelt before a ‘monkey’. Verily indeed and without gainsay, what a ridiculous situation would it be; what a sight to behold it would be—the mighty and invincible Ravana,

whom the gods feared, bending over on his knees and holding the foot of Angad in a symbolic gesture of abject surrender and humiliating submission!

Angad betted that if Ravana refused to accept this challenge, then it would be equivalent to his accepting defeat in the war even before it actually began, and the consequent acknowledgment that Sita had to be given to Lord Ram because it was for her release that the war was to be fought. If however Ravana accepted the challenge thrown by Angad, then the latter's objective would be fulfilled—which was to make the mighty king of the demons bow before him!

And as to taking such a serious risk as betting the whole outcome of the war and the fate of Sita on one single premise of success or failure at moving Angad's foot by Ravana, Angad was so confident of Lord Ram's mystical powers and his divinity, as well as his own loyalty and devotion for the Lord, that he was absolutely sure that when he throws a challenge by invoking the grace and blessings of Lord Ram then there is no power in this creation which would make him regret that he made a wrong decision, no power that would defeat him in his own challenge, to make him seem ridiculous and a vain person.

Lord Shiva, the principal narrator of this magnificent Story, has himself asserted that there was no wonder that Angad was confident that Ravana would be unable to move his legs in this challenge for he knew the mystical powers that Lord Ram possessed, as he was the almighty Supreme Lord of creation who can, if he so wishes, transform a humble twig into a powerful and strong weapon known as Vajra, and vice versa. Hence, any action taken in the name of the Lord can't fail, no matter what happens, especially when the objective is noble and righteous. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 35.}]

सुनुहु सुभट सब कह दससीसा । पद गहि धरनि पछारहु कीसा ॥ १० ॥

इंद्रजीत आदिक बलवाना । हरषि उठे जहँ तहँ भट नाना ॥ ११ ॥

झपटहिं करि बल बिपुल उपाई । पद न टरइ बैठहिं सिरु नाई ॥ १२ ॥

sunahu subhaṭa saba kaha dasasīsā. pada gahi dharani pachārahu kīsā. 10.

indrajīta ādika balavānā. haraṣi uṭhē jahaṁ tahaṁ bhaṭa nānā. 11.

jhaṭaḥiṁ kari bala bipula upā'ī. pada na ṭara'i baiṭhaḥiṁ siru nā'ī. 12.

Exasperated and peeved beyond measure, Ravana ordered his demon warriors angrily, 'Listen all of you excellent warriors (sunahu subhaṭa saba)! Hold this monkey by his legs and dash him to the ground.' (10)

Indrajeet (i.e. Meghanad, Ravana's son) along with other great demon warriors gladly rose from their seats to accept the challenge and carry out Ravana's orders. [They relished the thought of getting an opportunity of beating Angad black and blue to vent their anger which they had suppressed till now.] (11)

All of them, singly and together, lunged at Angad with all their muscle and might, making many deft attempts to try to move his foot, but they failed miserably and completely. Defeated, dejected and crestfallen, they returned to their respective seats and sat down with lowered heads (full of shame). (12)

पुनि उठि झपटहिं सुर आराती । टरइ न कीस चरन एहि भाँती ॥ १३ ॥
पुरुष कुजोगी जिमि उरगारी । मोह बिटप नहिं सकहिं उपारी ॥ १४ ॥

puni uṭhi jhapaṭahim sura ārātī. ṭara'i na kīsa carana ēhi bhāntī. 13.
puruṣa kujōgī jimi uragārī. mōha biṭapa nahim sakahim upārī. 14.

[These two verses quote Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, who too had narrated this Story to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu. Their discourse is included in Ram Charit Manas in its Uttar Kand (i.e. the last Canto no. 7), from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 125.]

Sage Kaagbhusund said to Garud, the enemy of serpents (uragārī), ‘The tormentors of the gods (“sura ārātī”; i.e. the demons), after some pause to gather courage, once again dashed towards Angad to try and move his foot, and it was repeated a number of times, but each time they failed miserably.

Verily oh Garud, the enemy of the serpents, Angad’s (literally the ‘monkey’s’; “kīsa”) foot did not budge from its position even a fraction just like an incompetent person (who is indulgent in affairs of the gross world and overcome with delusions) is unable to uproot the tree of attachment and infatuation¹.’ (13-14)

[Note—¹A person who remains engrossed in the world and finds enjoyment in its sensual pleasures cannot get over his worldly desires and his attachment with the things of the world. He is incompetent to do so. Only a person who is spiritually realised and enlightened will see the futility of this pursuit, leading him to develop renunciation.

Similarly, though the demon warriors made several attempts to fell Angad and fling him by his legs, they failed; these sinful demons were unable to defeat Lord Ram’s devotee and break his resolve.

A similar scene prevailed long back in Janakpur during the Bow-breaking ceremony organised for Sita’s marriage. At that time too none of the assembled kings and princes succeeded in moving Lord Shiva’s bow. They too had rushed to try and lift the bow, singly as well as in a group, they too had tried repeatedly and failed, and they too returned to their seats with lowered head and sat down crestfallen. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251.}]

दो०. कोटिन्ह मेघनाद सम सुभट उठे हरषाइ ।
झपटहिं टरै न कपि चरन पुनि बैठहिं सिर नाइ ॥ ३४ (क) ॥
भूमि न छाँड़त कपि चरन देखत रिपु मद भाग ।
कोटि बिघ्न ते संत कर मन जिमि नीति न त्याग ॥ ३४ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

kōṭinha mēghanāda sama subhaṭa uṭhē haraṣā'i.
jhapaṭahim ṭarai na kapi carana puni baiṭhahim sira nā'i. 34 (a).
bhūmi na chāṁṛata kapi carana dēkhata ripu mada bhāga.

kōṭi bighna tē santa kara mana jimi nīti na tyāga. 34 (b).

Countless numbers of excellent demon warriors, who were like Meghanad (Ravan's son) in their valour, strength, courage, marital skills and gallantry, cheerfully got up from their seats and lunged forward excitedly towards Angad, but no matter how hard they tried and what tactic they employed yet none of them were able to move his feet. At last, they returned to their seats and sat down (with a sullen face, a lowered head and a broken spirit that comes with abject defeat that was not at all expected, leaving all the demon warriors despondent, gloomy, dejected, crestfallen and ashamed of themselves). (Doha no. 34-a)

It was a profound mystery and a cause of great wonder for the demons that the monkey's legs did not move a bit from the earth on which they were planted. When the enemy ("ripu"; i.e. Ravana and his demons) observed all this development, its pride, ego and haughtiness ran away (i.e. was crushed and vanquished)¹.

Angad's feet did not move, but remained firmly planted on the ground, just like the case of a saint who remains steady in following his principles, and whose mind and heart (Mana) do not abandon the path of righteousness and auspiciousness, a path that is right and correct, inspite of all the provocations, adversities and hurdles he faces in life². (Doha no. 34-b)

[Note—¹To wit, when Ravana and all others saw that they could not move Angad's feet even for a fraction of measurement from the ground inspite of employing all their might, force and skill, their ego and pride were crushed; they felt utterly humiliated at their inability to move a leg of as humble a creature as a 'monkey'. To add salt to their wounds, this humiliation and defeat was made starker because they had pooled their strength and force to move a single challenger's legs, and surely the pushing, pulling and hauling must have been done with great energy and zeal, but yet they failed miserably. However the demons tried and tried, Angad's legs did not budge from their position on the ground.

The demons who prided themselves with possession of stupendous strength and powers against which not even the might of the gods survived, were, for the first time in their lives, faced with a situation that proved to them that there were forces stronger and mightier than them in this creation, and that for the first time they were up against a formidable adversary who presented a grave danger to their very existence, an adversary who was far more superior and powerful than them.

Hence their ego was crushed; their pride bit dust; their haughtiness was blown away like dried leaven in a storm; their strength and valour crumbled like nine-pins; and their morale sank in a deep dark pit of hopelessness, gloom and dejection.

²An exactly similar idea is expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, e.g. in (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; and in (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.]

चौ०. कपि बल देखि सकल हियँ हारे । उठा आपु कपि कें परचारे ॥ १ ॥

गहत चरन कह बालिकुमारा । मम पद गहें न तोर उबारा ॥ २ ॥

गहसि न राम चरन सठ जाई । सुनत फिरा मन अति सकुचाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kapi bala dēkhi sakala hiyaṁ hārē. uṭhā āpu kapi kēṁ paracārē. 1.
 gahata carana kaha bālikumārā. mama pada gahēṁ na tōra ubārā. 2.
 gahasi na rāma carana saṭha jāī. sunata phirā mana ati sakucāī. 3.

Seeing the Kapi's (Angad's; literally "monkey's") stupendous strength (which defied the combined strength of all the mighty demon warriors who had tried to move his leg), everyone felt defeated and gloomy in their hearts.

Meanwhile, Ravana now himself got up from his seat in a flurry (unable to contain his anger and frustration at his warriors who had put his honour to shame) to hold Angad by his legs and dash him to the ground¹. (1)

At the moment when Ravana caught Angad's foot (in an attempt to lift it), the latter sharply scorned at him and taunted: 'Look, you will not save yourself (and gain nothing) by holding my feet. (2)

Oh you big fool (saṭha)! Why don't you go and hold Lord Ram's feet instead!?'

Hearing these scornful words of Angad that were said with a grave tone, Ravana felt extremely peeved and ashamed of himself; he then somehow recovered himself from the shock and returned to his seat, ashen-faced and despondent². (3)

[Note—¹Surely enough, when Ravana saw what had happened, he must have burnt with anger inside himself. He must have cursed his warriors vehemently, and called them vile names. It was the greatest humiliation of his life, and he was unable to restrain himself. He was so overpowered by wrath and felt so much provoked and frustrated by the developments that his natural wisdom and prudence abandoned him, for he could not properly analyse the situation and what it meant. He ought to have pondered why none of the demon warriors could move Angad's feet; definitely there must be a mystery behind it, and the situation was very serious, and therefore it had to be handled very diplomatically and skilfully so that whatever was left of his honour could be salvaged.

When Death stares in one's face, when Providence frowns upon an unfortunate creature, when his Time seems to be up, then all his intelligence and wisdom and sense of judgement go for a toss. So, instead of exercising restraint and showing prudence by avoiding to put himself directly in harm's way and getting embroiled in a situation that would eliminate a last chance at face-saving, Ravana unfortunately decided, in a fitful frenzy of anger that eclipsed his wisdom, to jump into the same horrifying pit which had just a moment ago trounced all his predecessors, leaving them all scarred, defeated and humiliated like never before, without considering about the consequences of his rash decision.

²Angad had achieved his objective; Ravana hadn't foreseen it coming. At last, Angad succeeded in making Ravana—who had never ever bowed before anyone, but who had instead made the whole world bow before him—kneel down and touch his feet in order to move it from the ground.

This situation was akin to a defeated person kneeling down and praying for mercy by touching the feet of another person who had vanquished him; it is a token gesture that symbolises surrender and submission by someone who has been defeated by his opponent.

Ravana fell into this trap himself. Whatever little grace and honour and self-respect and dignity and majesty that were still available to him were now gone for

good. Anger and delusions had clouded his mind so much that he couldn't think rationally. When Angad reminded him that he had fallen into the trap, with his taunting words, "you will not benefit by touching my feet, rather you should have gone to touch Lord Ram's feet", Ravana suddenly realised what grave mistake he had made. He regretted intensely and immensely at his own reckless actions, but by now it was too late to make any amends. The colourful balloon of honour, majesty, valour and pride had been punctured irreparably, and it cannot be inflated again to regain its earlier glory.

Ravana returned to his throne with a lowered head and a sulking countenance. His frame appeared like an old demon past his prime. He dragged his legs to take him to his seat. All the others in the assembly had their heads low, and even if some of these demons had raised their heads and eyes slyly to watch Ravana's daring, when they saw what happened they immediately fixed their eyes on the ground before them once again to pretend they had not witnessed Ravana's humiliation. Why? Because these demons knew Ravana's nature, that he would vent his anger and frustration at them, and in all probability if his eyes caught any one of them looking up at him then he would get that demon's eyes gouged out.

To wit, a deathly silence descended on the court of the demons. The developments so terrified and horrified all the demons that they were out of their wits; not one of them moved from his seat, as they remained sitting stone-still like so many statues that don't breathe.]

भयउ तेजहत श्री सब गई । मध्य दिवस जिमि ससि सोहई ॥ ४ ॥

सिंघासन बैठेउ सिर नाई । मानहुँ संपति सकल गँवाई ॥ ५ ॥

bhaya'u tējahata śrī saba gaī. madhya divasa jimi sasi sōhaī. 4.
siṅghāsana baiṭhē'u sira nāī. mānahuṁ sampati sakala gaṁvāī. 5.

Ravana's faces¹ that normally glowed with radiance that comes naturally to a person with exceptional power, majesty and self-confidence attained by great achievements and countless successes that he had obtained in life, which in their wake bring great glories and honours to him, had now turned dark and gloomy with a thick shadow of despondency, despair and hopelessness hanging over them. His faces lacked their original shine and glory just like the case of the moon which loses its radiance and charm when viewed during the day time². (4)

He (Ravana) sat down on his throne with drooping heads (and lost spirits) as if he had lost all his wealth and possessions³. (5)

[Note—¹Remember: Ravana had 'ten faces'.

²The moon looks so attractive and splendid during the night, but the same moon seems a faded image of its self when seen during the day time. Why so? It is because during the day the splendour, radiance and brilliance of the sun suppresses the shine of the moon, making it appear faded and overcast.

The analogy is remarkable here: Angad's trouncing of Ravana and his success in the mission for which he was sent by Lord Ram was reflected by the radiance and glow effusing from his proud face like the brilliant shine of the sun, while the gloomy

thoughts clouding the mind of Ravana and the dejection of his spirits are indicated by the dark shadows of loss, despair and hopelessness showing on his faces as if they were veiled by dark clouds that reminded an observer of the moon which loses its shine in the presence of the brilliant midday sun.

³The countenance of Ravana was like that of a warrior who has lost the battle, or of a tradesman who has lost all his tools and assets. He had never tasted such humiliation in his life; for a great warrior of his stature there could have been nothing worse and more humiliating than being unable to meet such a simple challenge as the requirement of moving an adversary's legs. It was a ridiculous and a hilarious way of accepting defeat for as great a warrior as the king of the demon race whose mere name struck terror in the hearts of the entire world. It was the greatest ignominy and infamy that could have ever come to Ravana because he personally failed to meet Angad's simple challenge of moving his feet, something that required no great skill, power, gallantry and valour like it is required to face a challenge in the battle-field. So it was shame compounded many times over.

Even the burning of Lanka and the killing of his son Akshaya Kumar by Hanuman earlier had not caused such extreme distress in Ravana as this symbolic defeat for not being able to move Angad's foot, because this defeat was his personal defeat, it undermined his personal prestige, dignity and honour unlike on the previous occasion when he was spared this ignominy on the ground that his personal abilities and powers were not challenged and tested.

Verily, there is nothing worse for a warrior in his life, there is no greater loss that he can ever fear from in his life than to abjectly lose a challenge thrown by his opponent in the way Ravana miserably lost Angad's singularly simple-looking challenge of moving his foot from the ground, which by means was required any show of great marital art and valour.

For a warrior king, his self-respect, honour, dignity, majesty, strength and powers, as well as a grand reputation that he always wins a challenge and no one can defeat him, are his greatest assets and a matter of pride for him; if they are gone he has lost everything.

Ravana's shame was further compounded in the background of his boasting about his stupendous strength and astounding powers and great attainments and exalted position in this world just a few moments ago, for this inability to move Angad's foot blew away all his boast and bluster about his might and majesty like dry leaves in a storm. He felt crestfallen and humiliated like a defeated warrior, or a tradesman who has lost everything in a deal he was confident he would win hands down, but which, unfortunately for him, went sour.

Had he been more modest and restrained in his approach then perhaps his loss of face wouldn't have been so marked, but now it was in sharp contrast with his own tall claims. So therefore, Ravana's gloom and dejection are understandable.]

जगदातमा प्रानपति रामा । तासु बिमुख किमि लह बिश्रामा ॥ ६ ॥

उमा राम की भृकुटि बिलासा । होइ बिस्व पुनि पावइ नासा ॥ ७ ॥

तून ते कुलिस कुलिस तून करई । तासु दूत पन कहु किमि टरई ॥ ८ ॥

jagadātamā prānapati rāmā. tāsu bimukha kimi laha biśrāmā. 6.
umā rāma kī bhṛkuṭi bilāsā. hō'i bisva puni pāva'i nāsā. 7.

ṭṛṇa tē kulisa kulisa ṭṛṇa kara'ī. tāsu dūta pana kahu kimi ṭara'ī. 8.

[Lord Shiva, the principal narrator of this magnificent Story, observed—] ‘Verily indeed, Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Soul of this creation (jagadātamā) and the Lord of Life (prānapati). How can anyone who is opposed to such an exalted and divine Lord ever expect to have peace for himself¹? (6)

Oh Uma (Shiva’s consort and the listener of this Story)! The whole world can be created or destroyed by the mere movement of Lord Ram’s eyebrows. Verily, it can be created anew and ended repeatedly by the Lord’s mere wish indicated by the movement of his brows implying that he wants change.² (7)

He (Lord Ram) who can transform a humble twig (or a soft blade of grass) into Vajra (something exceptionally hard and strong, such as rock, stone or diamond), and vice versa, say how is it possible to sway the vow and determination made by his chosen messenger?³ (8)

[Note—¹These few verses are sort of a pause in the flow of the current narrative as they refer to the observations made occasionally by Lord Shiva, who was the primary narrator of this glorious Story of the Ramayan, to his consort Uma who was listening to this narration.

Hence, it was Lord Shiva who said: “Well, Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being and the merciful Lord of the world; so say how anyone can hope to find happiness and peace if he opposes his own Lord?”

²To wit, since Lord Ram is the Supreme Being he is also the creator and lord of this universe. Therefore it is he alone who decides how long he wishes to keep this creation in its present shape. Should he decide to bring an end to his playful and creative activity, which in the first place had brought this creation into existence, he can do so as he is the only Lord and Master of this universe, one who had envisioned this creation, and to give effect to his ideas he then put the different elements together to give shape to this world, and when he so decides, by-and-by, to create a new world of a new kind, he would simply first end his earlier creation and start afresh.

The phrase “he can create and end the world by merely moving his eyebrows” is a symbolic way of saying that everything depends upon his wishes. If he frowns upon something he would end it; if he raises his brows it means some change is inevitable.

³A messenger, an ambassador, or an emissary represents his Lord and Master who has sent him. He has the same authority and discretionary powers as his Principal whom he represents. Anything the emissary does and any decision that he takes is deemed to be done by his Lord and Master, and the latter must honour all that his emissary does on his behalf. This is the accepted principle of state diplomacy. It can’t be a one-sided game—that the Master would honour his emissary’s actions if they are pleasing to him, and dishonour the actions if they displease him.

Therefore, whatever Angad did, whether right or wrong, were deemed to have been done by Lord Ram, because Angad represented the Lord and was acting on his behalf. Hence, Angad’s challenge—that if Ravana could move his foot then the latter would deem to have won the war, and as a consequence he would lose Sita and go back—had the same weight as a challenge thrown by Lord Ram himself by default.

The word used by Angad when he threw the aforementioned challenge was actually “I”. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 34.}

This is very significant in the context of what is said currently. It proves that when Angad challenged Ravana and staked the outcome of the war on it, he was well aware of the fact that he is doing it not in his personal capacity but as the one who physically represents Lord Ram by default. Angad embodied the authority and the powers to make decision that Lord Ram possessed because the Lord had himself vested Angad with them. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 17.}

This is why Ravana failed to move Angad’s foot, for otherwise it would have been equivalent to defying Lord Ram’s sacrosanct supremacy and authority in this world as its Supreme Lord. Ravana was not pitted against ‘a member of the monkey race whose name happened to be one Angad’, but he faced the authority and the might and the power of the ‘Supreme Being whom Angad represented in physical form’. Therefore, the prospect of Ravana ever being able to move Angad’s legs was simply unimaginable, simply unthinkable and simply impossible; the very idea that Ravana could move Angad’s foot is simply incongruous, simply incredulous, and simply outrageous.]

पुनि कपि कही नीति बिधि नाना । मान न ताहि कालु निअराना ॥ ९ ॥

रिपु मद मथि प्रभु सुजसु सुनायो । यह कहि चल्यो बालि नृप जायो ॥ १० ॥

puni kapi kahī nīti bidhi nānā. māna na tāhi kālu ni'arānā. 9.

ripu mada mathi prabhu sujasu sunāyō. yaha kahī calyō bālī nrpa jāyō. 10.

Even at this late stage, the Kapi (i.e. Angad) tried to advise Ravana in various ways to be reasonable and stop his belligerence. But as his (Ravana’s) death was nearing, he refused to listen to anything¹. (9)

[Finally Angad gave up his attempts.] After crushing the pride, arrogance, honour, dignity and self-respect of the enemy and making him hear the glories of Lord Ram, Angad prepared to leave the demon court and go back to the Lord. But before his departure, he said, --- (10)

[Note—¹This verse shows that after what had just happened, i.e. after the failure of all the demons to move Angad’s foot, he remained in the demon court for some more time, making a last effort to somehow make Ravana mend his ways. Angad hoped that after such a great humiliation as he had just faced, Ravana would come to his senses and realise that things are going against him, that the tide of time is not in his favour. But unfortunately, like a man destined to die refuses to take medicines, Ravana obstinately refused to listen anything Angad had to say.

From Ravana’s perspective it was expected that he would not listen anymore to Angad. After the humiliation and insult that Ravana suffered at the instance of Angad, it was impractical to expect the former that he would now heed to what the latter proposed, no matter how earnest Angad might have been, as it would be like Ravana putting salt with his own hands on his raw wounds. No one of any rudimentary self-respect and trace of dignity in him would accept a proposal from his

adversary in an ugly, dishonourable and undignified situation in which Ravana found himself vis-à-vis Angad.]

हतौं न खेत खेलाइ खेलाई । तोहि अबहिं का करौं बड़ाई ॥ ११ ॥
 प्रथमहिं तासु तनय कपि मारा । सो सुनि रावन भयउ दुखारा ॥ १२ ॥
 जातुधान अंगद पन देखी । भय व्याकुल सब भए बिसेषी ॥ १३ ॥

hataum na khēta khēlā'i khēlā'ī. tōhi abahim kā karaum baṛā'ī. 11.
 prathamahim tāsū tanaya kapi mārā. sō suni rāvana bhaya'u dukhārā. 12.
 jātudhāna aṅgada pana dēkhī. bhaya byākula saba bha'e bisēṣī. 13.

I will not boast of anything (like you have been doing) until the time when I play around with you (kicking and punching you repeatedly) in the battle-field, before finally ending the game by killing you¹. (11)

When Ravana heard for the first time that his son had been killed by the Kapi (Angad)², he was overwhelmed with grief and felt extremely sad. (12)

Meanwhile, all the demons present on the occasion were greatly alarmed and felt immensely distressed due to fear when they heard Angad's vow (that he will kick Ravana around the battle-field till he dies)³. (13)

[Note—¹Angad said to Ravana: “My friend, I am not in the habit of talking much bluster and make tall claims like you. So it would not look good for me to say what I shall be doing to you in the battle-field to compensate for what I couldn't do now. Didn't I say a while ago that I would have liked to clobber you and bash all your ten heads and then dash you to the ground, and then throw your city of Lanka into the ocean had it not been for the restraint imposed upon me by Lord Ram, for he hasn't given his permission to do any such thing? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

You seem to take me lightly; you think I am boasting; you think I am a pretentious and vain fellow who lies and talks too much as you are accustomed to doing. Ain't it? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

Well, wait for some time till the war actually starts, and then you will see for yourself in the battle-field how boastful and pretentious I am. I promise you an exciting game when we two will face each other. At that time, play well and hard, for we have to prove ourselves; do you know what I shall be doing? I shall be chasing you around the battle-field just like a footballer chases the ball towards the goal, all the while kicking the poor ball with the tip and side of his boots. And do you know what or where the goal is where I will drive you? Well, it's to your death. But remember, it's going to be a painful death, and a humiliating one to boot. Do you know why? Would it not be a shameful thing for the 'mighty Ravana', whose mere name chilled the blood of the gods in their veins, to run around terrified in the battle-field, screaming and yelping in pain, breathless and panting, as he is chased by a humble 'monkey' by the name of Angad who would be breathing down his neck, kicking and punching him left and right, backward and forward, till the 'goal' is

reached, when one final vicious kick by Angad will end the game for all times to come for Ravana?

My dear Ravana. What you've witnessed till now was just a glimpse of what is yet to come. You see, both of us are great warriors, and a good warrior worth his name and honour of his family is one who would like a level playing field with his opponent to decide who among the two is the winner in a duel. Your demon court is not surely a level playing field, for here you are a king sitting on a kingdom's throne, and I a mere messenger who stands before you to convey a message from my Lord Ram. The battle-field, on the other hand, is a completely different proposition, for it is an arena where there are the two challengers on the ground at the center, and they are surrounded by cheering spectators standing around them in a circle. Well, when we meet next in the battle-field, the demon army will be cheering for you, and I will be cheered by my friends in the Lord's army. It will be the time for us to showcase our respective skills and valour.

So now come on, brace yourself for the real game; girdle yourself for the real challenge. Moving my foot was an impossible task for thee here in the middle of your power center in your own palace, so I wonder what would thou doest when this power center would be an open field.

Mind you comrade; don't collapse out of exhaustion in the battle-field; keep your wits together and don't baulk when you see me in front of you then. Remember: all those whom you had kicked around and trounced all your life will be watching this game, and so be careful not to give them a chance to purse their lips in merriment and whistle at you, and hoot you at the top of their voices at the cost of your discomfort. So get ready to play hard-ball with me.

Your life has truly come full circle; first it was my father Baali who had trounced you, then in the interim period that followed that incident you had managed to reach for the sky in fame and glory, and now it's the time for Baal's on, that's me, to repeat what my father had done to you to show you your place under the sun by trouncing you once again and ending this game for good.

Goodbye for now; go and have a good night's sleep and relax. Get up refreshed tomorrow morning, for I shall be meeting you again in the arena of the battle-field."

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 18. We note that all those demons who had witnessed the death of Ravana's son at the hands of Angad preferred to keep quiet because they feared a backlash from Ravana if he heard this bad news. They feared that Ravana was sure to punish all those demons who did not oppose Angad as he was kicking and dashing his son to death. So no one wanted to become a witness to this event.

Nevertheless, sooner or later the news had to reach Ravana through his spies. But by this time Angad had already crushed the dignity and pride and self-respect of all the mightiest of demons in Ravana's court, along with Ravana himself.

It may have been possible that the spy who took the news of death of Ravana's son to the court reached at a time when the high-pitched drama involving Angad was unfolding; so he preferred to keep quiet as the moment was not good for breaking this bad news. When he saw that Angad has left the court and a pall of gloomy silence has descended upon the assembly, he quietly went to Ravana and disclosed that his son had been killed by Angad before he came in his presence.

Ravana was already reeling from the thunderbolt that had struck him a moment ago, and this bad news of his son's death was like hitting a body that is

already lying unconscious after being struck hard by the thunderbolt. He squirmed uncomfortably a bit, took a deep breath, and it was some time before the gravity of the bad news sank in his heart and affected his conscious mind. But he was, by this time, so shocked and smarting by the latest developments that his senses were dulled and rendered so unresponsive that he merely sulked and grieved instead of showing external signs of vicious anger or making an emotional outburst or expressing any outrage at the news that his son was killed by an intruder while none of the demons present at the time ventured to protect him. This was unpardonable.

Ordinarily, Ravana would have lost his temper and ordered immediate slaying of all the demons who were assigned the task of escorting his son as he went around the city. But this was no ordinary time. The wounds inflicted by Angad on Ravana's honour, majesty, pride and self-respect were so deep and grave that the news of his son's death was like another wound by the side of the others. Ravana was already suffering so intensely from grief and distress and despondency arising out of abject humiliation and insult and defeat that one more bad news didn't much aggravate anything for him.

He didn't yell and scream at the demon who broke the news of his son's death. He merely sulked further and sank deeper in grief.

Meanwhile, this verse clearly indicates that after warning Ravana of his fate in the battle-field, Angad had left the demon court to go back to Lord Ram. The spy, who brought the news of death of Ravana's son and was quietly waiting till the current proceedings of the court ended, then approached Ravana, and after excusing himself politely, he whispered the bad news in his ears.

Ravana sighed in distress and grieved at his son's death. What could he do? Misfortunes were lashing at him in endless waves, one after another, each graver than the previous one.

³In this testing time, each demon was concerned about his personal fate; everyone was submerged in his own gloomy thoughts so much that the bad news of the death of Ravana's son passed unnoticed, without arousing a tumult. At the most it was another sign of what was in store for all of them in the context of Angad's prophesy—that portended complete rout of the demon army and death to their chief commanders, including their king Ravana.

But this news—of death of another of Ravana's sons at the hands of Angad—was nothing new as previously another son of Ravana, named Akshaya Kumar, had also died in a similar way when he was killed by Hanuman. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18.}

Therefore, this bad news did not cause much of a commotion in the court, as by this time Ravana as well as his courtiers had become accustomed to hearing worse news.]

दो०. रिपु बल धरषि हरषि कपि बालितनय बल पुंज ।

पुलक सरीर नयन जल गहे राम पद कंज ॥ ३५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

ripu bala dharaṣi haraṣi kapi bālitanaya bala puñja.
pulaka sarīra nayana jala gahē rāma pada kañja. 35 (a).

After having completely crushed the strength, power and valour (as well as the majesty, the dignity and the honour) of the enemy (Ravana), the Kapi—who was an embodiment of strength, courage and gallantry (bala puñja) and a son of Baali (“kapi bālitanaya”; i.e. Angad)—went back and submitted himself humbly at the feet of Lord Ram.

Buoyed by success, his (Angad’s) body was thrilled; his eyes were filled with tears (of joy); and he felt exceedingly exhilarated (at being able to fulfil the mandate given to him by the Lord)¹. (Doha no. 35-a)

[Note—¹When Hanuman had returned from Lanka after successful completion of the mission assigned to him—which was to find the whereabouts of Sita—a similar sight was witnessed; for Hanuman too had submitted himself humbly before the feet of Lord Ram, and his body was thrilled and exhilarated. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}]

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Section 13.2: Geetawali Ramayan

Now we shall take a pause to rewind a little bit by way of seeing how one of other Tulsidas’ great works known as ‘Geetwali Ramayan’ describes this conference between Angad and Ravana in its Lanka Kand, verse nos. 2-4 as follows:-

अंगदका दूतकर्म
राग कान्हरा

(6/2)

तू दसकंठ भले कुल जायो ।
ता महेँ सिव—सेवा, बिरंचि—बर, भुजबल बिपुल जगत जस पायो ॥ 1 ॥
खर—दूषन—त्रिसिरा, कबंध रिपु जेहि बाली जमलोक पढायो ।
ताको दूत पुनीत चरित हरि सुभ संदेस कहन हौं आयो ॥ 2 ॥
श्रीमद नृप—अभिमान मोहबस, जानत अनजानत हरि लायो ।
तजि ब्यलीक भजु कारुनीक प्रभु, दे जानकिहि सुनहि समुझायो ॥ 3 ॥
जातें तव हित होइ, कुसल कुल, अचल राज चलिहै न चलायो ।
नाहित रामप्रताप—अनलमहेँ है पतंग परिहै सठ धायो ॥ 4 ॥
जद्यपि अंगद नीति परम हित कह्यो, तथापि न कछु मन भायो ।
तुलसिदास सुनि बचन क्रोध अति, पावक जरत मनहु घृत नायो ॥ 5 ॥

aṅgadakā dūtakarma
rāga kānharā

(6/2)

tū dasakaṇṭha bhalē kula jāyō.
tā maham̐ siva-sēvā, birañci-bara, bhujabala bipula jagata jasa pāyō.. 1..
khara-dūṣana-trisirā, kabandha ripu jēhi bālī jamalōka paṭhāyō.
tākō dūta punīta carita hari subha sandēsa kahana haur̐ āyō.. 2..
śrīmada nṛpa-abhimāna mōhabasa, jānata anajānata hari lāyō.
taji byalīka bhaju kārunīka prabhu, dē jānakihi sunahi samujhāyō.. 3..
jātēṁ tava hita hō'i, kusala kula, acala rāja calihai na calāyō.
nāhita rāmapratāpa-analamaham̐ hvai pataṅga parihai saṭha dhāyō.. 4..
jadyapi aṅgada nīti parama hita kahyō, tathāpi na kachu mana bhāyō.
tulasidāsa suni bacana krōdha ati, pāvaka jarata manahu ghṛta nāyō.. 5..

Angad as an Emissary of Lord Ram in the court of Ravana-I

Verse no. 6/2—[Lord Ram himself wished to avoid the bloody war at all costs. So he sent Angad, Sugriv's nephew and one of the chief commanders of the Lord's army and his faithful follower, as a diplomatic emissary in a last-ditch attempt to see if the war can be avoided and Sita can be retrieved without bloodshed.

The conversation between Angad and Ravana was very acrimonious and full of vitriol. It is narrated here in (i) Geetawali, Lanka Kand, in verse nos. 6/2—6/4, as well as in (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35 ka; and (iii) Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/9—6/16.

When Angad entered Lanka, its citizens were terrified to their bones, as everyone thought that the fellow who had burnt the city earlier (i.e. Hanuman) has come again. He was given a clear way to the court of Ravana, as no one dared to resist him for fear of his life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 18.

Once there, what transpired is being narrated herein below.]

Addressing Ravana, Angad said—‘Oh Ravana! You are born in a good race and clan (because Ravana was born in the Brahmin race in the clan of sage Pulastya). Besides this, you have received a boon from Lord Brahma by worshipping him, and you have also acquired great fame in this world by worshipping Lord Shiva, and also through the various victories achieved by the means of your arm's strength¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 20.]

I am a messenger of Lord Hari who has an excellent character and noblest of virtues (punīta carita hari). The Lord is the one who has slayed the demon such as Khar, Dushan, Trishara and Kabandha etc., and enemies such as Baali², and has sent them to the abode of the God of death known as Yam.

I have come to convey the Lord's auspicious message to you. [It is for your good, and its content is in accordance with the principles of probity and propriety.] (2).

[²Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/1, stanza nos. 4-5.]

Either due to ignorance, or misled due to false pride of your fame and your crown (kinghood of Lanka), you have kidnapped Sita³.

Now you should heed my advice and return her to Lord Ram, and setting aside all deceit and mischief, chant the holy name of Sri Hari (Lord Ram) who is all merciful⁴ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 20 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.]

By doing this you will benefit, your clan will have welfare and be alright, and your kingdom would become invincible and stable. Otherwise, oh you fool, you demons will burn yourselves in the fire of Lord Ram's valour and glory (and his wrath)⁵ (4).'

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 27.]

Though Angad gave sane and wise council to Ravana, but he did not like it. Tulsidas says that he grew furious as if clarified butter (or ghee) had been added to a raging fire, making it burn more viciously and ferociously. [To wit, Ravana took umbrage at what Angad said.]⁶ (5).

[⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

(6 / 3)

तैं मेरो मरम कछू नहिं पायो ।
 रे कपि कुटिल ढीठ पसु पाँवर! मोहि दास-ज्यों डाटन आयो ॥ 1 ॥
 भ्राता कुंभकरन रिपुघातक, सुत सुरपतिहि बंदि करि ल्यायो ।
 निज भुजबल अति अतुल कहौं क्यों, कंदुक ज्यों कैलास उढायो ॥ 2 ॥
 सुर, नर, असुर, नाग, खग, किंनर सकल करत मेरो मन भयो ।
 निसिचर रुचिर अहार मनुज-तनु, ताको जस खल! मोहि सुनायो ॥ 3 ॥
 कहा भयो, बानर सहाय मिलि, करि उपाय जो सिंधु बँधायो ।
 जो तरिहै भुज बीस घोर निधि, ऐसो को त्रिभुवनमें जायो ? ॥ 4 ॥
 सुनि दससीस-बचन कपि-कुंजर बिहँसि ईस-मायहि सिर नायो ।
 तुलसिदास लंकेस कालबस गनत न कोटि जतन समझायो ॥ 5 ॥

(6/3)

taiṁ mērō marama kachū nahim pāyō.
 rē kapi kuṭila ḍhīṭha pasu pāmvara! mōhi dāsa-jyōm ḍāṭana āyō.. 1..
 bhrātā kumbhakarana ripughāṭaka, suta surapatihi bandi kari lyāyō.

nija bhujabala ati atula kahaurṁ kyōm, kanduka jyōm kailāsa uṭhāyō.. 2..
 sura, nara, asura, nāga, khaga, kinnara sakala karata mērō mana bhayō.
 niscara rucira ahāra manuḥa-tanu, tākō jasa khala! mōhi sunāyō.. 3..
 kahā bhayō, bānara sahāya mili, kari upāya jō sindhu baṁdhāyō.
 jō tarihai bhuja bīsa ghōra nidhi, aisō kō tribhuvanamēm jāyō?.. 4..
 suni dasasīsa-bacana kapi-kumjara bihaṁsi īsa-māyahi sira nāyō.
 tulasidāsa laṅkāsa kālabasa ganata na kōṭi jatana samajhāyō.. 5..

Angad as an Emissary of Lord Ram in the court of Ravana-II

Verse no. 6/3—[When Angad had praised the glories of Lord Ram and pleaded with Ravana not to be so reckless and boisterous, and plunge into a destructive war for no reason or rhyme, and to give Sita back to the Lord and make peace with him, Ravana retorted haughtily and talked about his own strengths, valour, powers and glories, as if to answer Angad and warn him that this time his Lord, of whom he has glorified so much, has met his match, and that he, Ravana, is not a meek straw as to be carried away or bend with the slightest draft of wind. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21; (ii) Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (iii) Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

[Ravana replied to Angad—] ‘Oh you wicked, stubborn and lowly monkey (rē kapi kuṭila ḍhīṭha). You have not at all realised my influence and powers. Oh you lowly and sinful animal (pasu pāṁvara)! This is why you have come to admonish and discourse me with a lecture as if I were your slave (or servant, subservient to you)¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21.]

Don't you know? My brother is Kumbhakarn, who is a renowned destroyer of enemies, and my son (called Indrajeet) had captured and brought the king of Gods (Indra) himself bound in shackles. What much can I say about my matchless strength of arms which had lifted Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) like it were a mere ball² (2).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 27.]

Gods, humans, demons, serpents (and all the creatures of the subterranean and nether worlds), and the Kinnars (a special type of demi-gods who are said to be celestial singers and dancers)—all of them follow my wishes³.

Oh you wicked rascal (khala)! The human body is a staple and delicious food for the demons. And you are trying to make me hear his (Sri Ram's) glories and fames (whose body is naught aught but of a human being)⁴ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 8; (ii) Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (iii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 27.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 8.]

Even if he has taken the help of monkeys, made efforts and has crossed the ocean, so what; how and what does it matter? But (the ocean your Lord has crossed is merely a body of water, but tell me) who has been born in any of the three worlds (tribhuvana) who could cross the ocean represented by (the valour and strength of) my 20 arms⁵? (4).’

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 28.

The “three worlds” known as “tribhuvana” consists of the three levels of this creation—viz. the heavens, the earth, and the nether world.]

Hearing these arrogant, haughty and irreverent words of Ravana, Angad, who was the lion amongst monkeys (kapi-kumjara), smiled and bowed his head to (i.e. marveled at) the delusory powers of the Supreme Being (bihaṁsi īsa-māyahi sira nāyō)⁶.

Tulsidas says that Angad tried millions of ways (i.e. all possible methods and arguments were employed by him) to make Ravana see reason (and return Sita, make peace with Sri Ram, and avoid a calamitous war), but under the influence of death (Kaal) as he was, Ravana did not pay any attention (5).

[⁶Angad sighed and felt amused at the delusions that the Lord creates. The power of the Lord makes a creature hallucinate and have a false notion of his own grandeur and majesty as well as of his invincibility and strength inspite of clear evidence to the contrary. Ravana, being a king of the demon race, was supposed to be intelligent, wise and practical enough, as all kings are expected to be, to have realised the consequences of fighting a war of which the result was a foregone conclusion. He should have been alarmed especially after having experienced what havoc Hanuman had earlier caused to Lanka by burning it to ashes. He had also known how the other demons who had tried to act smart with Lord Ram earlier had met their death: there were a number of them, viz. Tadaka, Subahu, Marich, Khar, Dushan, Kabandh, Viradh etc. (refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/1).

But even in the face of such obvious and incontrovertible signs of impending devastation, Ravans remains stubborn under delusions of his own strength and invincibility. Instead of being prudent and making peace with Ram, he adopted a stubborn and a confrontational attitude.]

(6 / 4)

सुनु खल ! मैं तोहि बहुत बुझायो ।
 एतो मान सठ ! भयो मोहबस, जानतहू चाहत बिष खायौ ॥ १ ॥
 जगत-बिदित अति बीर बालि-बल जानत हौ, किधौ अब बिसरायो ।
 बिनु प्रयास सोउ हत्यो एक सर, सरनागतपर प्रेम देखायो ॥ २ ॥
 पावहुगे निज करम-जनित फल, भले ठौर हठि बैर बढ़ायो ।
 बानर-भालु चपेट लपेटिन मारत, तब हैहै पछितायो ॥ ३ ॥
 हौं ही दसन तोरिबे लायक, कहा करौं, जो न आयसु पायो ।
 अब रघुबीर-बान-बिदलित उर सोवहिगो रनभूमि सुहायो ॥ ४ ॥
 अबिचल राज बिभीषनको सब, जेहि रघुनाथ-चरन चित लायो ।
 तुलसिदास यहि भाँति बचन कहि गरजत चल्थो बालि-नृप जायो ॥ ५ ॥

(6/4)

sunu khala! mair̥m tōhi bahuta bujhāyō.
 ētō māna saṭha! bhayō mōhabasa, jānatahū cāhata biṣa khāyau.. 1..
 jagata-bidita ati bīra bāli-bala jānata hau, kidhaur̥m aba bisarāyō.
 binu prayāsa sō'u hatyō ēka sara, saranāgatapara prēma dēkhāyō.. 2..
 pāvahugē nija karama-janita phala, bhalē ṭhaura haṭhi baira baṛhāyō.
 bānara-bhālu capēṭa lapēṭina mārata, taba hvaihai pachitāyō.. 3..
 haur̥m hī dasana tōribē lāyaka, kahā karaur̥m, jō na āyasu pāyō.
 aba raghubīra-bāna-bidalita ura sōvahigō ranabhūmi suhāyō.. 4..
 abicala rāja bibhīṣanakō saba, jēhi raghunātha-carana cita lāyō.
 tulasidāsa yahi bhāṁti bacana kahi garajata calyō bāli-nṛpa jāyō.. 5..

Angad as an Emissary of Lord Ram in the court of Ravana-III

Verse no. 6/4—[In stanza no. 5 of verse no. 6/3 herein above, we have read how Angad smiled and bowed his head at the delusions that the Lord creates in the minds of those who are in the final throes of death. In this verse we read Angad's angry reply to Ravana. In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 24 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-16 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 34; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede Doha no. 35.]

Angad said once again (as a rebuke and retort to Ravana's haughty talk), 'You wicked rascal, listen (**sunu khala**)! I tried to make you see reason (which would have saved you from destruction), but out of delusion you have become so haughty and arrogant that you willfully wish to eat poison (1).

Don't you remember the world famous warrior Baali, or have you forgotten him? Look, Lord Ram killed him by a single arrow¹, and showed affection towards Sugriv who had sought his (Lord Ram's) refuge (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 33 ka.]

You would also follow suit: for in all sooth you have dug your own grave by making Lord Ram an enemy! Now, during the battle, when you'll be thrashed and pounded and pulverized by monkeys and bears, then you'll repent (but it would be too late by then)² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 33.]

I am capable of knocking off your teeth; but I have not got this command from Lord Ram, and I am so sorry I couldn't do it (knock your teeth off)³! Now soon you'll lie down in the battlefield on being perforated by Lord Ram's arrows⁴ (4).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 34.

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 33.]

Your kingdom would be given to Vibhishan who has diverted his mind to Lord Ram's holy feet and has developed devotion for them (i.e. for Lord Ram himself).'

Tulsidas says, after saying such harsh words of warning and reproach, Angad departed from there, roaring loudly (5).

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Part 5

The War Begins: The Attack by Lord Ram's Forces and the Horrors of War; The Sack of Lanka; Death of Kumbhakaran and Meghanad;
The Battle with Ravana and His Death.

Introduction:

Now we shall begin with the narration of the Epic War of Lanka that ravaged the once beautiful city of gold called Lanka which was ruled by Ravana, the king of the proud demon race, and a magnificent city that was not only a pride of the demon race on earth but rivalled even the city of gods in heaven, called Alka Puri where their king Indra ruled, in its splendour and glory.

This blood-curdling war led to the death of all the cruel and sinful demons, including Ravana, the famed and brave king of the demon race, along with his close associates as well as family members such as his son Meghnad, who had once vanquished Indra, the king of gods, during his heydays of power and fame, and Kumbhakaran who was Ravana's brother, and equally powerful and strong as him.

Only Vibhishan survived the war, and it was because he had been wise and prudent to leave his sinful family and take refuge with Lord Ram.

The primary reason why this war was made necessary in the first place was to free the earth from the horrors created by the demons, to free the creatures of this world from the constant torments caused to them by the demons, and to restore the balance in favour of the virtues of goodness and righteousness that had been severely disturbed by the onslaught of the demons who threw their weight against these virtues and favoured negative causes of evilness, vices and sinfulness by the sheer force of their might. The victory of Lord Ram in this epic war symbolised the end of tyranny and neutralisation of the negative forces of sinfulness, evilness and vices. It marked the restoration of peace and order in the world, of the victory of good over bad, so that the Lord's creation and its creatures could live an orderly life with peace.

After all, this was the primary reason why Lord Vishnu had to come down to earth in a human form as Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Doha no. 187.}

But to achieve this noble objective the Lord had to plan carefully because of the many boons Ravana had been granted by the creator Brahma as well as Lord Shiva to him which made him virtually invincible. One such strategy was to get the Lord's wife Sita kidnapped by Ravana so that the Lord would get an excuse to get rid of her abductor and tormentor in order to free her from his captivity. That is in fact the reason why Ravana failed to listen to all advice to give Sita back to Lord Ram so as to avoid the destructive war—because the Lord himself did not want it, for if Ravana had returned Sita it would have pre-empted the Lord's effort to eliminate the scourge of the demons. In order to give effect to his planning, Lord Ram, who was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, employed his cosmic powers to create delusions, the power that is known as 'Maya', which cast its spell upon Ravana's wisdom and clouded his thinking so much that he failed to see things distinctly like a man who is hallucinating.

Therefore, the other objective of the war, which was to free Sita from the clutches of her tormentor Ravana, too was fulfilled when Lord Ram attained victory and Ravana was killed.

In order to comprehensively describe this Epic War in vivid details and at the same time help the reader to clearly mark its landmark events, we shall structure our narrative in the form of following five Chapters:

Chapter 14: The Attack by Lord Ram's Forces—The Horrifying and Blood-Curdling War between the Demons and the Army of Monkeys and Bears; The Sack of Lanka begins; The Ravages of War.

Chapter 15: The first round of Battle with Meghnad leading to Laxman's fainting.

Chapter 16: Battle with Kumbhakaran and His Death.

Chapter 17: The second round of Battle with Meghnad and His Death.

And, Chapter 18: The Final Battle with Ravana and His Death.

That said, now let us begin with the narrative.

Chapter 14

The Attack by Lord Ram's Forces—The Horrifying and Blood-Curdling War between the Demons and the Army of Monkeys and Bears; The Sack of Lanka begins; The Ravages of War.

When Angad returned and briefed Lord Ram about what transpired in the court of Ravana, saying in essence that his mission to find a peaceful way to end the logjam had failed because Ravana was not ready to relent, the Lord gave instructions to his commanders to prepare to launch the war.

The Lord's army was divided into four main segments, each headed by a senior commander. This was done because the fort of Lanka had four gates, and

therefore each division of the Lord's army was to attack a gate assigned to it, and breach its defenses to enter through it. The monkeys and bears were already so excited and rearing for action that restraining them was in itself a difficult task till now, so as soon as the green signal to attack was given, there was nothing stopping them; all hell appeared to break loose. This formidable, ferocious and powerful army of Lord Ram thundered and roared and yelled and chuckled with a deafening sound as they fiercely lunged forward for the attack on the fort of Lanka; they resembled a huge bank of dark doomsday clouds ascending rapidly from the horizon to descend on the capital city of the demons to cover the whole place in a dark shroud of death and destruction.

This army so overwhelmed the demons that when it arrived they panicked. There was a huge tumult in Lanka; demon females and children wailed and screamed; demon warriors grabbed their weapons and dashed forward to meet the invading army head-on.

Ravana ordered his demon warriors to go after the monkeys and bears like a pack of hungry and famished wolves; to tear them apart and leave no one alive. Hence, the first wave of clashes betwixt Lord Ram's army and Ravana's army were like two cymbals being clanged energetically, or like two muscular and angry lions having a fierce face-off. Each side was cheering its Lord; the demons hailed Ravana while the monkeys and bears hailed Lord Ram.

In the midst of this uproarious scene, a demon named Malyawant, who was the maternal grandfather of Ravana, tried to persuade him for one last time to come to his senses and not become the destroyer of his own race. But as was expected, he wouldn't listen.

The War of Lanka has been vividly described by Goswami Tulsidas in his two classical works, viz. *Ram Charit Mana* and *Kavitawali Ramayan*. However, the mayhem and devastation unleashed by the army of monkeys and bears which went berserk in Lanka, plundering and ransacking the city of the demons once thought to be impregnable and immune to any misfortune, because 'misfortune' itself felt terrified of Ravana to ever cast its evil eye on his city, is not described more better, in greater graphis detail, and in a better poetic way, as is done by Tuslidas in '*Kavitawali Ramayan*'. Besides reading them we shall also be reading from Veda Vyas' classical narration of this epic Story in *Adhyatma Ramayan*.

As we move along with the narration, we shall also include '*Geetawali Ramayan*' in subsequent chapters as we have been doing earlier in our Book. This approach with the narration of the Epic War of Lanka from all these four classics mentioned here will make our own narrative very fascinating and interesting to read.

Meanwhile, for the purpose of describing the opening scenes of the war front and the first wave of the attack on Lanka which is the subject matter in this Chapter no. 14, we shall divide it into the following three Sections:

(i) Section 14.1—*Ram Charit Manas*, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 49.

(ii) Section 14.2 *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 25-64.

(iii) Section 14.3 *Kavitawali Ramayan*, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 30-51.

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Section 14.1: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 49:-

इहाँ राम अंगदहि बोलावा । आइ चरन पंकज सिरु नावा ॥ ३ ॥
अति आदर समीप बैठारी । बोले बिहँसि कृपाल खरारी ॥ ४ ॥

ihāṁ rāma aṅgadahi bōlāvā. ā'i carana paṅkaja siru nāvā. 3.
ati ādara samīpa baiṭhārī. bōlē bihaṁsi kṛpāla kharārī. 4.

[We now resume the Story by picking up the thread from where we had left it earlier, i.e. from the point where Angad left Ravana's court to return to his own camp—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35-a.

After leaving Ravan's court, Angad returned to his own camp. When Lord Ram was informed of his arrival, he called Angad and affectionately made him sit very close to him and report about the developments so that the next course of action can be decided upon.]

Here (i.e. on Mt. Subel, where the army of monkeys and bears had made their camp), Lord Ram called Angad¹. The latter went and reverentially bowed his head at the feet of the Lord. (3)

To show great affection and honour to Angad, Lord Ram, who was the slayer of the demon named Khar (kṛpāla kharārī), asked him most respectfully² to sit down near him, and then the Lord said to him, --- (4)

[Note—¹Upon his return from Lanka, Angad did not go straight to Lord Ram, but sent someone to inform the Lord of his arrival. Why did Angad refrain from going straight to the Lord? One, he wished to observe protocol, and it required him to first send a message that he has come back to report to the Lord, and now he seeks an appointment. Two, Angad was not sure if his mission would be considered as successful or failure by the Lord, so he wished to first send a feeler through a messenger to inform the Lord of his arrival from Lanka so that this messenger could come back and inform Angad how the Lord reacted at this news.

Why was Angad doubtful about the success of his mission? It is because Angad had failed to persuade Ravana to return Sita to Lord Ram and avoid the devastating war inspite of his best efforts. He compared the result of his own mission with that of Hanuman: in the case of Hanuman the mission was successful because Sita had been found by him, but in his own case it could be regarded as not being completely successful because Ravana could not be persuaded to give Sita back and avoid the war.

Besides this, he was not sure if Lord Ram had liked his action of kicking Ravana's crowns without permission. But in this regard Angad felt that it would be alright with the Lord, for he had not been annoyed with Hanuman when told that the latter had burnt the city of Lanka without the Lord's express permission. When a

messenger, an envoy or an emissary is sent on a mission by his master, a lot of discretion and authority is given to him to deal with the situation on the ground as he deems fit and necessary, as everything can't be foretold and planned in advance. A good master or lord is one who gladly accepts what his ambassador has done and said. The only thing that the master would like to consider to judge his emissary's performance is the latter's integrity and loyalty to him, and see that the emissary has done nothing that undermines the master's honour or sacrificed his interests.

Both Hanuman and Angad had scored perfectly on these counts. So Lord Ram had been pleased with both of them when they came to report to him.

To wit, when Angad was called by Lord Ram and shown special respect and honour, he felt very reassured that the Lord has not deemed his mission a failure or was annoyed with him in the least. On the other hand, the Lord's warm welcome of Angad clearly hinted that the Lord was fully pleased with him. At the time of sending Angad as his emissary, the Lord had given him a lot of discretion and the authority to use his own wisdom according to the situation[#], so he was within his right in doing what he did as long as he had proved himself loyal to the Lord, and protected his honour and cause. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 17.}

The main aim of Lord Ram in sending Angad as an emissary to Ravana was to prevent anyone saying at a later date that the Lord did not attempt to solve the vexed issue in a peaceful way, though if this matter had been sorted out peacefully, and without the war that led to the slaying of Ravana and his cruel demon hordes, then the very purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down as Lord Ram would have been defeated. For, after avoiding death, Ravana would have laid low for some time, and then would have resumed his old sinful and cruel ways once again, who knows not with a vengeance. The torments and horrors of the demon race that had made Mother Earth and the Gods pray to Lord Vishnu to save them would have continued unabated.

The question is: If this is the case, if Lord Ram actually wanted to use this excuse of Ravana abducting Sita to get rid of the menace of the demons, then why did choose to send an emissary to Ravana to find a peaceful way to end the confrontation, instead of going headlong into the war and slaying Ravana?

The answer is this: Lord Ram is an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace, he is benevolent and magnanimous, he is forgiving and tolerant, he treats everyone alike. So he wished to give every possible chance to Ravana to improve himself and mend his vile ways. One sure indication of it would be his willingness to see his own fault and be ready to repent and apologize, not letting his ego and pride come in the way of repentance for wrong done, and promising to improve himself and not commit evil deeds in the future. By offering to make truce with Lord Ram, surely Ravana would have had to accept the Lord's terms for peace, which obviously would have included, inter alia, a vow to stop his sinful and cruel ways forthwith, and to desist from terrorizing and tormenting the world henceforth.

Ravana's refusal to make peace with Lord Ram was therefore in line with the Lord's wish and real objective—which was to eliminate Ravana along with his ferocious demons once and for all. Hence, there was no reason why Angad's failure to persuade Ravana to make peace would at all annoy Lord Ram; rather, the Lord was glad that no such truce was made.

This is the reason why Lord Ram “smiled” when he asked Angad to give details of his adventure (bōlē bihaṁsi).

²Lord Ram had many things in mind when he showed affection, respect and honour to Angad by receiving him warmly and making him sit very close. The Lord wanted to clearly tell everyone that he loves Angad as much as he loves Hanuman, and especially because his father Baali, at the time of his death, had entrusted Angad's future in the hands of the Lord by making him his son's guardian—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

The Lord had shown great affection to Hanuman when he came back from Lanka with the news that Sita has been found—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) once again in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33. Now, at that time Angad was watching how the Lord showered great honour, respect and affection on Hanuman. He (Angad) felt sad in his heart; he thought to himself that if it had been him, instead of his friend Hanuman, who had been successful in doing Lord Ram's work, then it would have given him a chance of receiving the same honours and love that the Lord now gives Hanuman. Angad's heart was very happy; he felt he did not live up to the Lord's expectation; he felt that now onwards, Hanuman would be treated with favour by the Lord.

Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient; he knows the very thought and the emotions of a creature as soon as they arise in his mind and heart. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17.}

This being so, the Lord immediately realised that Angad was feeling sad and heart-broken. 'Well', the Lord decided in his own heart, 'I will compensate Angad for this. Next time I shall send him as my emissary, and when he comes back I'll show him affection and honour no less than what I have shown to Hanuman. Nay, I'll show him a bit more of it, because I owe this to him as his father has made me his guardian.' This is why Lord Ram showed Angad 'great respect and honour, while making him sit close to him' (*ati ādara samīpa baithārī*).

Lord Ram also wished to tell Angad not to be afraid that he failed in his mission of persuading Ravana to give Sita back to the Lord and avoid the war, and that his action of kicking Ravana's four crowns and sending them flying over to land at the feet of the Lord was uncalled for and an indecent behaviour for a messenger. Perhaps this is the reason why Angad did not go directly to Lord Ram after returning from Lanka, but had to be called by the Lord to give his report (*ihāñ rāma aṅgadahi bōlāvā*).

The third reason for this especial show of 'great respect and honour' by the Lord to Angad is that the latter was a "prince" of the kingdom of Kishkindha, and not an ordinary member of the army. Even Hanuman, who was the Lord's favourite warrior, was not a prince; whereas Angad was. Hence he deserved some special treatment, some more respect and honour as compared to others. The other exception for this special treatment was Sugriv because he was the 'king' of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha.

It ought to be noted that though Lord Ram showed affection to both Hanuman and Angad, there was a bit of a difference between the two. For one, Angad had Lord Ram's special sympathy and empathy because he was orphaned due to the death of his father Baali. Secondly, Lord Ram was made Angad's guardian by Baali at the time of his death, a responsibility which the Lord had to fulfil under all circumstances; so therefore Lord Ram treated Angad as his foster son. Hanuman too had been elevated to this exalted position because Sita had also addressed him as her son. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16.} But that was after Hanuman had repeatedly addressed Sita as "mother". {For instance, refer to:

Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 15; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16.} Yet, Hanuman was not 'orphaned' like Angad.

The fourth reason why Lord Ram showed such preferential treatment to Angad is that inspite of Ravana's repeated provocation by way of reminding Angad of his father Baali* so that deep in his heart his suppressed resentment against those who caused his father's death, i.e. Lord Ram and Sugriv, would burst out into the open, leading to Angad deserting Lord Ram's cause, had failed, and Angad remained steadfast in his devotion and loyalty to the Lord. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 21; (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 24; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

So Lord Ram had a softer corner for Angad in his heart that no one else could replace. The Lord wished to tell Angad that he must never feel isolated, and never hesitate to approach the Lord, for he (Lord Ram) has great respect and affection for him. And in order to hint it, the Lord overtly showed 'great respect and honour to Angad and made him sit close to him as he would have sat his own son'.]

बालितनय कौतुक अति मोही । तात सत्य कहु पूछउँ तोही ॥ ५ ॥
 रावनु जातुधान कुल टीका । भुज बल अतुल जासु जग लीका ॥ ६ ॥
 तासु मुकुट तुम्ह चारि चलाए । कहहु तात कवनी बिधि पाए ॥ ७ ॥

bālitanaya kautuka ati mōhī. tāta satya kahu pūcha'um̐ tōhī. 5.
 rāvanu jātudhāna kula ṭikā. bhuja bala atula jāsu jaga līkā. 6.
 tāsu mukuṭa tumha cāri calā'ē. kahahu tāta kavanī bidhi pā'ē. 7.

[Lord Ram said to Angad—] 'Oh son of Baali (bālitanaya)! I am very amazed¹ about one thing and am curious to learn more about it. So, oh my dear (tāta), I request you to tell me the truth. (5)

Ravana is the most acclaimed and the bravest member of the demon race, and he is famous in the world for the strength of his arms which has no match or parallel anywhere. (6)

You had sent four of his crowns rolling here²; this is an amazing and astounding feat. So my dear (tāta), I do really (appreciate your wondrous feat and I) wish to know how you managed to do it; how you managed to first get hold of them, and then send them rolling here.' (7)

[Note—¹Many unprecedented and amazing things have occurred in this Lanka Kand besides the one Lord Ram refers to presently: Angad kicking the four crowns of Ravana, and sending them rolling over to Lord Ram.

To begin with, the first was the construction of the floating bridge measuring a distance of 100 Yojans (800 miles approx.) across the choppy surface of the water of the ocean. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.}

The next astonishing feat was how a single arrow shot by Lord Ram, almost casually from his camp on Mt. Subel, had gone and precisely struck the ten crowns on

Ravana's head, as well as his wife Mandodari's earrings, making them all fall to the ground, and then, wonder of wonders, this arrow came back to enter Lord Ram's quiver. The greatest wonder in this incident is that it was night time, and to shoot an arrow so precisely in the dark is absolutely stunning and truly amazing. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

The third miraculous and unbelievable thing is that none of the mighty demons, who had prided themselves for their stupendous muscular strength and astounding physical powers, who had conquered the whole world and ran through the heaven like an unstoppable juggernaut, hadn't been able to move the foot of Angad when he planted them on the ground, no matter how hard they had tried, individually and jointly. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Likewise, many amazing deeds were done and many stunning feats were accomplished during the course of the war which we shall be reading by-and-by.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 32-a along with Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede it.]

सुनु सर्बग्य प्रनत सुखकारी । मुकुट न होहिं भूप गुन चारी ॥ ८ ॥
 साम दान अरु दंड बिभेदा । नृप उर बसहिं नाथ कह बेदा ॥ ९ ॥
 नीति धर्म के चरन सुहाए । अस जियँ जानि नाथ पहिं आए ॥ १० ॥

sunu sarbagya pranata sukhakārī. mukuṭa na hōhiṁ bhūpa guna cārī. 8.
 sāma dāna aru daṇḍa bibhēdā. nṛpa ura basahiṁ nātha kaha bēdā. 9.
 nīti dharma kē carana suhā'ē. asa jiyāṁ jāni nātha pahīṁ ā'ē. 10.

Angad replied, 'Listen oh Lord. You are all-knowing and omniscient (sarbagya), and you bestow happiness to those who come to bow before you and seek shelter with you (pranata sukhakārī). These are not ordinary crowns; but they symbolise the four great qualities and outstanding virtues that make a king great, that a great king must possess. (8)

Oh Lord; the Vedas (which ancient scriptures that are repositories of knowledge and wisdom covering all spheres of human activity, including religious and secular) assert that a good king is one who always keeps in mind the four chief tools of statecraft (which he employs according to the situation at hand). These are the following: (i) the ability to arrive at a consensus and have a reconciliatory approach to the issue at hand that may seem vexing (sāma); (ii) the willingness to give liberally and make charity so that he acquires a good reputation as well as a following of loyal subjects who have benefited from his largesse (dāna); (iii) the wisdom to decide when and how to use force or coercive methods in order to make things turn in his favour, and to punish an offender (daṇḍa); and (iv) the tact to create dissension in his opponents so that they fail to remain united (because then it would make them weak and easily manoeuvrable) (bibhēdā). (9)

The four crowns of Ravana (that had come flying to you when I kicked them) represented these aforementioned stellar qualities of diplomacy and good governance that a great king must possess as envisioned and espoused by the scriptures. When they found Ravana not fit for them, they came on their own to you to present themselves at your feet².’ (10)

[Note—¹ “Oh Lord,” said Angad, “you know the mystery behind the four crowns; you know what they actually signify. Yet, since you have asked me, well then, I shall tell you what I think about them, and why they came rolling over to you after abandoning Ravana. Oh Lord, you have told me to “tell the truth”, so I shall tell you the true mystery or secret behind these four crowns as I understand it.”

²What an excellent interpretation has been done by Angad. The crowns on the head of Ravana symbolised the virtues of a great king. The four crowns representing the four excellent qualities of a great king as enumerated herein above decided to leave Ravana because he had lately lost his eligibility to wear them. So they first left Ravana’s head by falling to the ground, which means they abandoned him, and when he tried to put them back on his head they virtually refused and pleaded with Angad to move them out of Ravana’s physical reach. Nay, they not only refused to go back to Ravana but also asked Angad to get them out of Lanka as fast as he could. The only way to do so was to kick them and send them flying away out reach of Ravana and his demons. These four crowns landed before Lord Ram and sought acceptance by him.

Angad summed up his experience of Ravana’s character by using this metaphor of the four crowns. This in brief explained why he was unable to persuade Ravana to make truce; it was because Ravana lacked any of the four qualities needed by a king to resolve a vexed issue.

How was Angad justified in making this conclusion? Let us analyse:

The first virtue is ‘reconciliation’ (sāma): Ravana obviously was not in its favour.

The second virtue is ‘being liberal in gifting or giving’ (dāna): Ravana obstinately refused to give Sita back for no rhyme or reason.

The third is ‘punishment or use of force’ (daṇḍa): Ravana failed to either punish or use force against all those who offended him, viz. Hanuman, Angad, Vibhishan (his brother who deserted him to join Lord Ram), Suka (his messenger who pleaded with him to end hostility with Lord Ram, as well as lavishly praised the Lord), and Mandodari (his wife who too did what Suka had done).

And lastly, the fourth is ‘create dissension in the rank of the enemy’ (bibhēdā): Ravana failed in this skill too because instead of creating dissension in the enemy quarter he created an enemy in his own brother Vibhishan who deserted him and joined his adversary’s camp. Another instance of his failure in this sphere of statecraft is his attempt to incite Angad to revolt against Sugriv and Lord by reminding him repeatedly they were the cause of death of his father Baali, but Angad did not bite his bait.]

दो०. धर्महीन प्रभु पद बिमुख काल बिबस दससीस ।

तेहि परिहरि गुन आए सुनहु कोसलाधीस ॥ ३८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

dharmahīna prabhu pada bimukha kāla bibasa dasasīsa.
tēhi parihari guna ā'ē sunahu kōsalādhīsa. 38 (a).

[Angad continued—] ‘Listen oh Lord of Kaushal (“kōsalādhīsa”; i.e. Lord Ram, the Lord of the kingdom of Ayodhya, of which ‘Kaushal’ was another name)! The ten-headed Ravana (dasasīsa) has no Dharma¹ left in him; he has abandoned this noble way of life (dharmahīna). Not only this, he is opposed to you, and has no affection and devotion for your holy feet (prabhu pada bimukha)², and to compound the problems and make matters worse for him he is also under the influence of Kaal (death) which has gripped him in its vice-like grip, completely obstructing his wisdom and eclipsing his common sense, thereby preventing him from being rationale and acting wisely (kāla bibasa)³.

Under these unfortunate and negative circumstances (which are unbecoming of a king and cause his downfall), the four noble and positive virtues that make a creature great, righteous, respected and honourable (and which a king must possess) decided to leave him and come to you in a symbolic manner, to take refuge with you (in the guise of the four crowns that came rolling over to you, because these excellent virtues I have mentioned herein above⁴ thought that Ravana was not a proper candidate to lend the glories associated with them to him).’ (Doha no. 38-a)

[Note—¹The term “Dharma” covers a wide spectrum of excellent qualities that makes a person renowned and worthy of great respect and honour. The term would therefore include such good virtues as righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, noble thought and conduct, ethics, morality, and everything else that is laudable and worthy of emulation.

²Lord Ram is deemed to be an embodiment of all the excellent qualities that come under the umbrella of the term ‘Dharma’; the Lord is an upholder of ‘Dharma’. And one of the many facets or aspects of Dharma is to be respectable to the Supreme Being.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being too, and since he is an upholder of Dharma, so therefore anyone who is disrespectful to the Lord is showing disrespect to the Supreme Lord of this creation as well as Dharma.

Refer also to: (a) what Angad has said to Ravana in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27; and (b) what Mandodari tells Ravana in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.

To wit, since Ravana was opposed and hostile to Lord Ram, the virtues of Dharma decided that their place was not with Ravana but with Lord Ram. So they abandoned the demon king Ravana, and instead sought refuge with the king of Kaushal, Lord Ram.

³Even Ravana’s wife Mandodari has concluded that her husband is acting recklessly and refuses to heed any kind of good advice because he is under the grip of death, and it is the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny that he is now destined to die, so it’s useless to talk with him and make him see reason—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37; (v) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 104.

⁴The 'four grand virtues' that abandoned Ravana are mentioned by Angad in Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 38 herein above.]

परम चतुरता श्रवन सुनि बिहँसे रामु उदार।
समाचार पुनि सब कहे गढ़ के बालिकुमार ॥ ३८ (ख) ॥

parama caturatā śravana suni bihañsē rāmu udāra.
samācāra puni saba kahē gaṛha kē bālikumāra. 38 (b).

Hearing this witty answer of Angad, the son of Baali (bālikumāra), the magnanimous and benevolent Lord Ram (rāmu udāra) smiled politely (as the Lord was amused by Angad's cleverness and presence of mind)¹.

Then, Angad proceeded to give a report to the Lord and brief him about Lanka and its fort². (Doha no. 38-b)

[Note—¹Observing that the Lord was pleased with his answer as was evident when the Lord 'smiled', Angad felt glad. He then gave a detailed account of Lanka and its fort to the Lord so that strategic planning for the military offensive can be finalised.

There was one occasion earlier when Lord Ram has smiled in a similar way. It was when, after pitching his camp on Mt. Subel, the Lord had observed the moon rising in the eastern sky and had asked his companions what they made of it, Hanuman had offered a witty answer, saying that the slight darkness in the brilliance of the moon's disc is due to the fact that an image of the Lord, who has a dark complexion, resides in the heart of the Moon God as the latter is the Lord's ardent devotee, and the dark shade in the moon's otherwise silvery disc is a reflection of the Lord's image permanently residing in the heart of the deity of the moon. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 12.}

With this clever answer, Angad endeared himself to Lord Ram and placed himself on the same pedestal as Hanuman; he showed that he is no less devoted to the Lord than his friend Hanuman was. And that is why Lord Ram 'smiled'.

The Lord's 'smile' meant that he was very amused by the reply of Angad as much as he was by the reply of Hanuman earlier.

²We have read earlier that Angad had walked through the streets of Lanka on his way to the palace of Ravana; he had also met and killed one of Ravana's sons on the way. As he walked like a conqueror through the avenues of the city of Lanka, the demon citizens thought that he was the same monkey (Hanuman) who had burnt their city earlier; so they were so terrified of him and out of their wits that they swiftly moved away from his path wherever he went, and some even volunteered to show him the way to Ravana's court just in order to avoid his sterns glance questioning them, fearing to invite his wrath if they demurred and failed to give him the correct direction. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 18 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede it.}

Angad had taken careful mental notes of his surroundings and a layout of the city, as well as its level of security and preparedness in case of an assault, as he headed to Ravana's court. The city was expected to be on the highest level of alert as the news of an invading army already camping on the shore of the island of Lanka had

already reached it, and it was the talk of the town. So Angad's report was quite accurate and updated. A lot must have changed since Hanuman's visit; so the final strategy for the offensive was devised on Angad's field report that was current.

What was the outline of Angad's brief? We shall get a clear hint of it in Chaupai line no. 2 herein below—in which Lord Ram has summoned his advisors to say that the fort of Lanka has four giant and strong gates, and therefore the strategy for breaching the defenses of Lanka should be devised accordingly.]

चौ०. रिपु के समाचार जब पाए । राम सचिव सब निकट बोलाए ॥ १ ॥

लंका बाँके चारि दुआरा । केहि बिधि लागिअ करहु बिचारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ripu kē samācāra jaba pā'ē. rāma saciva saba nikaṭa bōlā'ē. 1.

laṅkā bāṁkē cāri du'ārā. kēhi bidhi lāgi'a karahu bicārā. 2.

[From now onwards, the author of this Book will narrate the thrilling and awe-inspiring proceedings of the 'Great Epic War of Lanka' as if he were a war correspondent writing his memoirs based not only on his own recollections of the events as they unfolded at that time but also by collating vivid descriptions presented by other contemporary correspondents who had themselves witnessed this Epic Saga. This approach will present to the esteemed reader of this magnificent Book a vivid, a four-dimensional, and a comprehensive picture of the events that unfolded during the Epic War of Lanka. In fact, as must have been noted by now by my respected readers, this has been a constant feature of our Book—that we have read four classical Texts all throughout our reading, as it helps one to be acquainted with the Story from four different angles, aspects or perspectives.

To wit, the 'four war correspondents' whose detailed description of the War of Lanka that have been cited and collated here stand for the four classical Texts which we shall be quoting, and, as said above, which we have actually been doing throughout our Book, viz. Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Adhyatma Ramayan.

That said, now let us proceed.]

When Lord Ram received all the vital bits of information regarding the enemy forces and their formidable fort of Lanka, he summoned all his ministers and said, --- (1)

--- 'Lanka has four strong, massive gates which are virtually impenetrable. How shall we lay siege to them and effectively breach them—think over this matter urgently and devise a strategy accordingly.' (2)

तब कपीस रिच्छेस बिभीषन । सुमिरि हृदयँ दिनकर कुल भूषन ॥ ३ ॥

करि बिचार तिन्ह मंत्र दृढ़ावा । चारि अनी कपि कटकु बनावा ॥ ४ ॥

जथाजोग सेनापति कीन्हे । जूथप सकल बोलि तब लीन्हे ॥ ५ ॥

taba kapīsa ricchēsa bibhīṣana. sumiri hr̥dayaṁ dinakara kula bhūṣana. 3.

kari bicāra tinha mantra dṛṛhāvā. cāri anī kapi kaṭaku banāvā. 4.

jathājōga sēnāpati kīnhē. jūthapa sakala bōli taba līnhē. 5.

Then the three chief commanders of the Lord's army, viz. Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, Jamvant who was the king of the bears, and Vibhishan who was a prince of the demon race and a brother of Ravana, and who had come to surrender and take refuge with Lord Ram earlier, remembered or invoked the glory of the Lord, who was like a jewel of the Solar race to which the family of the illustrious king Raghu belonged, in their hearts while pondering over the matter and consulting each other to finalise a strategy.

[To wit, the chief commanders of the army prayed to the Supreme Being and invoked his grace before discussing the matter and arriving at a consensus.] (3)

After thoroughly discussing the affair they arrived at a firm decision. They divided the mammoth army into four divisions, --- (4)

--- And appointed an appropriate field commander for each division. After that, they called all the commanders and their subordinates as well as the rest of the warriors (to brief them of the strategy and the outline of the offensive)¹. (5)

[Note—¹Since Lanka's fort had four gates, it was felt necessary to divide the army into four divisions, with each division assigned the task to tackle one gate.]

प्रभु प्रताप कहि सब समुझाए । सुनि कपि सिंघनाद करि धाए ॥ ६ ॥
हरषित राम चरन सिर नावहिं । गहि गिरि सिखर बीर सब धावहिं ॥ ७ ॥
गर्जहिं तर्जहिं भालु कपीसा । जय रघुबीर कोसलाधीसा ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pratāpa kahi saba samujhā'ē. suni kapi siṅghanāda kari dhā'ē. 6.
haraṣita rāma carana sira nāvahiṁ. gahi giri sikhara bīra saba dhāvahiṁ. 7.
garjahiṁ tarjahiṁ bhālu kapīsā. jaya raghubīra kōsalādhīsā. 8.

When the mammoth army had assembled for a parade prior to the actual launch of the assault on Lanka, the chief commanders addressed it¹ to explain the rationale behind the war as well as to raise the morale of the warriors and infuse confidence in their rank and file by lauding the glory, the divinity, the mystical powers and the majesty of Lord Ram, their supreme commander.

When the briefing ended and orders to proceed were given, the warriors of the Lord's army surged forward to launch the assault with a thunderous roar like that made by an attacking lion. [Their roar reverberated in the sky like repeated claps of thunder emanating from a rapidly moving bank of dark clouds, and it made the earth tremble by its shock waves.]² (6)

Before departure, the warriors bowed their heads before the holy feet of Lord Ram (to seek his blessings), and then grabbing large ragged boulders and rocks that resembled summits of huge mountains (because of their sheer size), the army dashed forward for the attack on the fort of Lanka. (7)

The mighty monkey and bear warriors jumped enthusiastically and yelled ferociously as they roared with a thunderous war cry citing the name of Lord Ram: 'Glory to the

Lord of Kaushal; Glory to the brave King of the Raghu dynasty' (jaya raghubīra kōsalādhīsā)!'

[Note—¹The army assembled for a briefing. The chief commanders of the army extolled the exemplary valour, courage, gallantry and strength of the warriors; the commanders further motivated the warriors by telling them about the glories, the mystical powers and the majesty of their supreme Lord and Commander-in-chief, i.e. Lord Ram, alongside explaining to them the righteous and noble cause for which this war was being fought.

This briefing infused dynamism and energy into the rank and file of the Lord's army that was already restless for action and raring to go; it filled the army with confidence of victory, and it injected vigour and enthusiasm into each soldier. The fuse was lit and the spark of fire spread rapidly through the army, which bubbled with enthusiasm so much that it was daring to face the enemy and determined to reduce it to smithereens.

An army with high morale, an army that is sure it is fighting a just war, and an army that is confident to win a war, is more likely to actually win it than an army that is not certain of its own ground on principles of morality and righteousness of the cause for which it is expected to lay down its life.

²A sky-shattering and ear-splitting uproar was raised as the formidable army of Lord Ram, of mammoth proportions, made its departure for launching the first wave of a massive and no-holds barred assault on the fort of Lanka, that would be followed by many more such waves of assaults as the war progressed from day to day. It was a war which would go down in the realms of history of warfare as one that was rivaled by none else in its ferocity, dare devilry, gallantry, valour, courage and resilience shown by all those involved; it was an epic war which, though devastating and singularly calamitous, finally settled the matter in favour of a right cause by eliminating the elements that had undermined this cause; it was a war that marked the triumph of good over evil; it was a war that helped restore Dharma in this creation, Dharma that had earlier been overturned by the savagery of the demon race.]

जानत परम दुर्ग अति लंका । प्रभु प्रताप कपि चले असंका ॥ ९ ॥

घटाटोप करि चहुँ दिसि घेरी । मुखहिं निसान बजावहिं भेरी ॥ १० ॥

jānata parama durga ati laṅkā. prabhu pratāpa kapi calē asaṅkā. 9.
ghaṭāṭōpa kari cahuṁ disi ghērī. mukhahim nisāna bajāvahim bhērī. 10.

They (the monkeys and bears) knew that the fort of Lanka was exceptional strong and singularly formidable, making it virtually impregnable. Yet they were so much motivated and highly inspired by the remembrance of the glory and majestic powers of Lord Ram that they did not fear anything at all; they confidently and fearlessly proceeded ahead, with great zeal and dynamism. (9)

The army approached the fort of Lanka from all the four directions as if dark clouds of doomsday rise from all the directions of the horizon to descend upon the earth and engulf it in a dark veil of death and destruction. While doing so, the warriors made

chilling and ear-splitting war cries as if so many battle-drums and kettle-drums and war-trumpets were being played at the same time¹. (10)

[Note—¹The clouds of the doomsday do not come silently; they come roaring and thundering. Their sound is so violent and blood-curdling that the creature dies out of sheer fear even before the actual land fall of havoc and destruction that these clouds unleash by way of ferocious storms, rapid lightening strikes and deluge that drowns everything.

The scene of the huge aggressive army of monkeys and bears descending on the fort of Lanka from all corners of the island, roaring and thundering viciously, stomping the ground violently, yelling ferociously, baring their sharp teeth and showing their extended claws menacingly, was no less chilling than that of the rapidly moving clouds that cover the sky over the earth at the time of doomsday.]

दो०. जयति राम जय लछिमन जय कपीस सुग्रीव ।
गर्जहिं सिंघनाद कपि भालु महा बल सीव ॥ ३९ ॥

dōhā.

jayati rāma jaya lachimana jaya kapīsa sugrīva.
garjahim siṅghanāda kapi bhālu mahā bala sīva. 39.

Verily indeed, the monkey and bear warriors, who exemplified the best of the combined virtues of valour, courage, strength and gallantry, roared enthusiastically like a fearless lion (the king of the forest and the lord of the animal kingdom), cheering their Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, as well as their own king Sugriv, the lord of the monkey kingdom.

They yelled passionately in one voice: ‘Glory to Lord Ram; Glory to Laxman; Glory to Sugriv!’¹ (Doha no. 39)

[Note—¹In ancient times when wars were fought face-to-face in the battle-field between two great armies, unlike how wars are fought today, both the sides raised their own war cries that marked their independent identities.

So while the army of monkeys and bears cheered their own commanders such as Lord Ram, Laxman and Sugriv, and at the same time made a lot of loud noise to announce that they have arrived and are ready for battle, the army of demons would respond by cheering their king Ravana and beating their own war-drums and sounding other instruments that are routinely played during battles to announce that they were ready too—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 41 herein below.]

चौ०. लंकाँ भयउ कोलाहल भारी । सुना दसानन अति अहँकारी ॥ १ ॥
देखहु बनरन्ह केरि ढिठाई । बिहँसि निसाचर सेन बोलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

laṅkāṁ bhaya'u kōlāhala bhārī. sunā dasānana ati ahaṁkāri. 1.
dēkhahu banaranha kēri ḍhiṭhāī. bihaṁsi nisācara sēna bōlāī. 2.

Meanwhile, there was a great tumult in Lanka. When the ten-headed Ravana, who was extremely arrogant and haughty, heard of the developments, --- (1)

--- He said to himself with a sarcastic attitude, ‘Look how foolish and stubborn the monkeys are (that they have had the temerity to attack my city, thereby voluntarily pushing themselves into the jaws of death)!’

Thinking thus, he sneered scornfully¹ and summoned (the commanders of) his demon army. (2)

[Note—¹Why did Ravana scoff with contempt at the news of the arrival of the monkey army? The answer is to be found shortly in what he said to his demon warriors. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that follow herein below.}]

आए कीस काल के प्रेरे । छुधावंत सब निसिचर मेरे ॥ ३ ॥

अस कहि अट्टहास सठ कीन्हा । गृह बैठें अहार बिधि दीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

सुभट सकल चारिहुँ दिसि जाहू । धरि धरि भालु कीस सब खाहू ॥ ५ ॥

ā'e kīsa kāla kē prērē. chudhāvanta saba nīsicara mērē. 3.

asa kahi aṭṭahāsa saṭha kīnhā. gr̥ha baiṭhēm ahāra bidhi dīnhā. 4.

subhaṭa sakala cārihuṁ disi jāhū. dhari dhari bhālu kīsa saba khāhū. 5.

When Ravana stood to address his army of demon warriors that had assembled to hear his command, he haughtily observed: ‘These monkeys have been driven here by the wind of their own death, and behold my demon warriors who are all hungry to devour them!’ (3)

After making this contemptuous remark, he laughed derisively in a thunderous way to mock the monkeys. Then he turned to his demon army and ordered: ‘The Creator is so kind to us that he has served us food right at our doorstep, while we sit at home. [We are all hungry, and the Creator is so gracious that he has provided us food even without our going out to hunt for it.] (4)

Oh you excellent demon warriors who are champions in their own right (subhaṭa)! All of you go forthwith and proceed furiously in all the four directions; catch hold of the monkeys and the bears wherever you can find them, and then eat all of them up.¹ (5)

[Note—¹For quite some time now, none of the demons had dared to go out of the fort of Lanka to hunt and acquire food for the city because of fear of the monkeys and bears who had laid siege of Lanka. Food, which for the demons meant meat-based supplies, was quickly running out, and what still remained was being rationed. The demons, who had large appetites, were therefore virtually famished with limited supply of food at their disposal.

This is what Ravana hints at. Now with the monkeys and bears right at the gates of Lanka, the hungry demon warriors would theoretically have a field day, feasting and replenishing their depleted supplies of meat.

The demons were already smarting from aggravated battery of insult and humiliation to which they were subjected by Hanuman and Angad; they were furious with un-requitted anger because of the shame that both Hanuman and Angad had inflicted upon them and their whole race, including their king Ravana, and the way their golden city of Lanka had been devastated.

It is true that a lot many of the demon citizens were extremely terrified of the monkeys and bears, first because of the devastation caused by Hanuman in Lanka with no one daring to check him, and second in the way Angad had fearlessly rebuked Ravana and trounced his pride in full court, even going to the extent of disdainfully kicking Ravana's crowns, which were symbols of his majesty and authority, thereby inflicting an insult and humiliation on the pride and honour of the entire demon race in a manner that could never ever be revenged or requited by them, with no one to check him either, but it is also true that a lot many of the demons, especially the warrior class, must have been furious at these developments and were violently itching to get an opportunity to settle scores with their enemy, the monkeys and the bears.

Hence, when Ravana gave them the green signal to go and devour the invading army, it was a signal to wreak their suppressed anger upon the enemy with a vengeance, and do it vigorously, because now was the opportunity to seek severe retribution for the wrong done to them by Hanuman and Angad, and for which they had been waiting eagerly till now. So there was no stopping the demon warriors now as they dashed forward furiously, in large and multiple groups, to spit their venomous wrath mercilessly on the monkeys and bears.

So Ravana was right when he thought that by ordering his demon warriors to have a free hand at killing and eating the invading army of monkeys and bears he is virtually unleashing a wild and ferocious pack of hungry wolves in order to get rid of a helpless flock of pigeons that has come un-invited to disturb him and dirty his city of Lanka with their droppings!]

उमा रावनहि अस अभिमाना । जिमि टिट्ठिभ खग सूत उताना ॥ ६ ॥
चले निसाचर आयसु मागी । गहि कर भिंडिपाल बर साँगी ॥ ७ ॥
तोमर मुद्गर परसु प्रचंडा । सूल कृपान परिघ गिरिखंडा ॥ ८ ॥

umā rāvanahi asa abhimānā. jimi ṭiṭṭibha khaga sūta utānā. 6.
calē nisācara āyasu māgī. gahi kara bhiṇḍipāla bara sāṅgī. 7.
tōmara mudgara parasu pracandā. sūla kṛpāna parigha girikhaṇḍā. 8.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this divine story of Ram Charit Manas, said to his consort Uma to whom he was narrating it.]

Shiva said, 'Listen Uma! Ravana was so deluded by his haughtiness that he resembled the bird known as sandpiper that goes to sleep with its legs pointing to the sky¹.' (6)

The demon warriors sought Ravana's final permission and embarked to carry out the orders given to them. They armed themselves with different kinds of weapons, such as, inter alia, slings, javelins, spears, lancets, iron clubs, batons, maces, battle-axes, forks, sickles, battle-knives, wheels with razor-sharp edges, et al, as well as huge boulders and rocks (that were to be used as missiles). (7-8)

[Note—¹The sandpiper sleeps with its legs pointing to the sky in the belief that it will prevent the heaven from falling and crushing it while it is asleep. The bird is so stupid and ignorant and haughty at the same time that it harbours this ridiculous idea. The sky would neither fall to crush it, nor is it able to support the sky in case it does fall on it.]

Similarly, Ravana, in his ignorance and haughtiness, had become so deluded that he thought it was a joke to kill the monkeys and bears to feed his hungry demon hordes in the same way as the demons used to hunt and kill other creatures for food.]

जिमि अरुनोपल निकर निहारी । धावहिं सठ खग मांस अहारी ॥ ९ ॥

चोंच भंग दुख तिन्हहि न सूझा । तिमि धाए मनुजाद अबूझा ॥ १० ॥

jimi arunōpala nikara nihārī. dhāvahiṃ saṭha khaga mānsa ahārī. 9.
cōñca bhaṅga dukha tinhaḥi na sūjhā. timi dhā'ē manujāda abūjhā. 10.

Even as carnivorous birds-of-prey swoop down on pieces of red stones thinking them to be pieces of red meat [9], unaware of the intensity of agony and severity of pain that their foolishness would cause them (because by striking at the stone they bloody themselves and break their own beaks), the foolish and ignorant man-eating demons (manujāda) lunged forward towards their own peril¹ [10]. (9-10)

[Note—¹To wit, the demon army did not realise that it is going to jump down a well of self-destruction when it dashed forward furiously and recklessly to clash headon with the army of monkeys and bears.]

दो०. नानायुध सर चाप धर जातुधान बल बीर ।

कोट कँगूरन्हि चढ़ि गए कोटि कोटि रनधीर ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

nānāyudha sara cāpa dhara jātudhāna bala bīra.
kōṭa kaṅgūranhi caḍhi ga'ē kōṭi kōṭi ranadhīra. 40.

Countless numbers of mighty demon warriors, who were all extremely ferocious and vicious by nature, as well as were very valiant, brave, gallant and courageous, picked up whatever weapons they could lay their hands on, such as bows and arrows and many other types of arms and armaments, as they scampered forward excitedly and mounted the ramparts and battlements of the fort of Lanka¹. (Doha no. 40)

[Note—¹One section of the demon army rushed to the top of the wall of the fort of Lanka as it would be easy for them to pound the invading army from there even as their compatriots would face the enemy at the gates of the fort and on the ground around it. This is why those who rushed to the ramparts and battlements held bows and arrows so they can shoot at the enemy from the top, and those demon warriors who rushed to guard the gates and the ground around these gates had other weapons

that are needed for face-to-face battle, such as slings, spears, batons, clubs, battle-axes et al as enumerated in verse nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 40 herein above.]

चौ०. कोट कँगूरन्हि सोहहिं कैसे । मेरु के सृंगनि जनु घन बैसे ॥ १ ॥
 बाजहिं ढोल निसान जुझाऊ । सुनि धुनि होइ भटन्हि मन चाऊ ॥ २ ॥
 बाजहिं भेरि नफीरि अपारा । सुनि कादर उर जाहिं दरारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kōṭa kaṅgūranhi sōhahiṁ kaisē. mēru kē sṛngani janu ghana baisē. 1.
 bājahiṁ ḍhōla nisāna jujhā'ū. suni dhuni hō'i bhaṭanhi mana cā'ū. 2.
 bājahiṁ bhēri naphīri apārā. suni kādara ura jāhiṁ darārā. 3.

The demon warriors adorning the ramparts and battlements of the fort appeared to resemble huge banks of dark clouds assembled over the summit of Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain¹. (1)

Battle-drums and war-trumpets, as well as other musical instruments that are usually sounded during battles, were being played furiously. The provocative sound emanating from these musical instruments of war were meant to inject vigour, energy, courage and dynamism in the warriors; these sounds lifted their spirits and stoked their passions for battle, provoking them to fight ferociously and without pause. Hence, the sound of these instruments excited the demon warriors no end, and made them eager for battle. (2)

The sound of kettle-drums and the clarionets was so shrill, sharp and thunderous that they made the hearts of the cowards crack in fear². (3)

[Note—¹The walls of the fort of Lanka, all its ramparts and battlements, were plastered with foils of gold, or may be they were made of bricks of gold like the rest of this famed city. Though it is true that when Hanuman had burnt Lanka, a major part of it was destroyed and the city was more or less turned into a black hulk, yet it is also true that no matter how fiercely the fire may have raged some part of the city failed to be affected by the flames and managed to escape major damage. To wit, while the greater part of Lanka was turned black, there were some outer areas that still retained their golden shine. And the 'fort' must have been one such place that was little or not at all affected by the raging fire simply because it was far away from the city centre; the walls of the fort surrounded the city like a ring and they were away from the densely populated areas which were set ablaze by Hanuman. Hence, the ramparts and battlements retained their 'golden hue' when the war began. This is why they are compared to Mt. Sumeru, the 'golden mountain'.

The demons had huge bodies and dark complexion, and sitting and moving around on the top of the walls of the fort of Lanka they resembled the dark clouds that hover on the top of the golden mountain by the name of Mt. Sumeru.

²Verse nos. 2 and 3 bring into sharp focus the difference between a brave warrior and a coward. The sound of musical instruments of war excites a warrior, keeping him energised and inspiring him to fight spiritedly, but the same sound chills the blood of a coward who would have a heart attack if subjected to it for long.]

देखिन्ह जाइ कपिन्ह के ठट्टा । अति बिसाल तनु भालु सुभट्टा ॥ ४ ॥
 धावहिं गनहिं न अवघट घाटा । पर्वत फोरि करहिं गहि बाटा ॥ ५ ॥
 कटकटाहिं कोटिन्ह भट गर्जहिं । दसन ओठ काटहिं अति तर्जहिं ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhinha jā'i kapinha kē ṭhaṭṭā. ati bisāla tanu bhālu subhaṭṭā. 4.
 dhāvahiṃ ganahiṃ na avaghaṭa ghāṭā. parbata phōri karahiṃ gahi bāṭā. 5.
 kaṭakaṭāhiṃ kōṭinha bhaṭa garjahiṃ. dasana ōṭha kāṭahiṃ ati tarjahiṃ. 6.

The demon warriors saw their enemy for the first time. They saw a mammoth assemblage of monkey and bear warriors with huge bodies and formidable reputation. (4)

These brave and irrepressible warriors (the monkeys and bears) were rushing in (towards the fort) from all directions. They paid no heed to any obstacle in their way; they grabbed huge boulders and rocks that blocked their progress, some of which were as large as hillocks (literally 'as large as small mountains or hills'; "parbata"), only to dash them to the ground to crush them to pieces. (5)

Hundreds and thousands of valiant warriors of the monkey and bear army were gnashing their teeth, yelling ferociously, biting their lips with their teeth, and jumped and hopped menacingly (as they rapidly neared the fort)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The invading army of monkeys and bears was raring and eager for battle; the warriors were fast closing in menacingly on the fort of Lanka. It was a chilling sight the demon soldiers, who had first arrived on the walls of the fort, saw.]

उत रावन इत राम दोहाई । जयति जयति जय परी लराई ॥ ७ ॥
 निसिचर सिखर समूह ढहावहिं । कूदि धरहिं कपि फेरि चलावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

uta rāvana ita rāma dōhā'ī. jayati jayati jaya parī larā'ī. 7.
 nisicara sikhara samūha ḍhahāvahiṃ. kūdi dharahiṃ kapi phēri calāvahiṃ. 8.

There were shrill cries and raising of slogans from both the opposing forces, each praising and cheering its respective Lord, the demons raising slogans in honour of Ravana on the other side, yelling 'Glory to Ravana', and the monkeys and bears raising slogans in honour of Lord Ram on this side, yelling 'Glory to Lord Ram'.

With these shrill and chilling war cries respectively from both the sides, the two forces clashed head-on. (7)

The demons who had mounted the ramparts and battlements threw down huge mountain-like boulders upon their enemy (in order to crush the invading soldiers crowding at the bottom of the wall), but the monkeys and bears immediately grabbed the falling boulders, broke them into pieces, and then viciously hurled these pieces back at the demons stationed on the top of the wall of the fort. (8)

छं०. धरि कुधर खंड प्रचंड मर्कट भालु गढ़ पर डारहीं । १ ।
 झपटहिं चरन गहि पटकि महि भजि चलत बहुरि पचारहीं ॥ २ ॥
 अति तरल तरुन प्रताप तरपहिं तमकि गढ़ चढ़ि चढ़ि गए । ३ ।
 कपि भालु चढ़ि मंदिरन्ह जहँ तहँ राम जसु गावत भए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dhari kudhara khaṇḍa pracāṇḍa markṭa bhālu gaṛha para ḍārahīm.
 jhapṭahīm carana gahi paṭaki mahi bhaji calata bahuri pacārahīm.
 ati tarala taruna pratāpa tarapahīm tamaki gaṛha caḍhi caḍhi ga'e.
 kapi bhālu caḍhi mandiranha jahaṁ tahaṁ rāma jasu gāvata bha'e.

The ferocious monkey and bear warriors picked up broken pieces of mountains (hills and such like) and hurl them viciously on the wall of the fort. (Chanda line no. 1)

They (the monkeys and bears) lunged at the demons, caught hold of anyone they could lay their hands on by grabbing him by his legs, and then dashed the unfortunate victim hard on the ground. When the terrified demons tried to escape, these warriors mocked them (for their cowardice and un-warrior like meekness) and challenged them (not to run away, but to come close for a duel). (Chanda line no. 2)

The youthful and valiant monkeys and bears showed exceptional versatility and manoeuvrability as they easily climbed on the walls of the fort and mounted its top very quickly. (Chanda line no. 3)

Once on the top of the fort, the monkeys and bears rapidly descended into the city of Lanka and swept through it; they climbed on the terraces of its buildings (caḍhi mandiranha), all the while loudly cheering the glory of Lord Ram and proclaiming the Lord's majesty¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹It must have been a spectacular sight to behold. The Lord's army made rapid progress and forced the demon soldiers to beat a hasty retreat back into the city. To wit, the high wall of the fort of Lanka proved inadequate to stop the invasion.

The gates of the fort were no bother for the monkeys and bears, and the first wave of attackers did not pay attention to it either, as they chose to assault Lanka directly by jumping over the walls of the fort and invading the city itself.

They were in their hundreds and thousands, and once inside the city they roared and yelled triumphantly, cheering Lord Ram and raising slogans in his honour. The terrified demon citizens ran for cover and gave a right of way to the invading warriors. The monkeys and bears rushed atop buildings, small and big, shouting the glory of Lord Ram from there. The whole demon city reverberated with their loud cheers and yells even as the demons scampered for cover, and to plan to regroup and launch counter-offensive. There surely must have been complete chaos and a huge turmoil in Lanka.]

दो०. एकु एकु निसिचर गहि पुनि कपि चले पराइ ।

ऊपर आपु हेठ भट गिरहिं धरनि पर आइ ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

ēku ēku nisicara gahi puni kapi calē parā'i.
ūpara āpu hēṭha bhaṭa girahiṁ dharani para ā'i. 41.

Each monkey took hold of a demon as a hostage, and then they ran back from the city clutching the demon hostages. At the time of jumping over the wall of the fort they sat on top of their hostages, as a result of which when they landed on the ground below, it was the demon who was dashed against the hard surface of the earth, cushioning the effect of the fall for the benefit of the monkey warrior and preventing any injury to be caused to him (because the brunt of the violent fall was borne by the demon)¹. (Doha no. 41)

[Note—¹The poor demon faced a double whammy. First it was the long fall from the top of the wall of the fort that ended in a fierce dashing on the hard ground below, and then the horror of pain was magnified by the sheer weight of a heavy monkey sitting on the back of this demon, crushing the pitiful fellow between the weight of the monkey riding on the top and the hard surface of the ground below.]

चौ०. राम प्रताप प्रबल कपिजूथा । मर्दहिं निसिचर सुभट बरूथा ॥ १ ॥

चढ़े दुर्ग पुनि जहँ तहँ बानर । जय रघुबीर प्रताप दिवाकर ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

rāma pratāpa prabala kapijūthā. mardahiṁ nisicara subhaṭa barūthā. 1.
caṛhē durga puni jahaṁ tahaṁ bānara. jaya raghubīra pratāpa divākara. 2.

With the grace of Lord Ram, the indomitable monkeys and bears had acquired formidable strength and immensity of punch. They crushed and smothered the demons ruthlessly and violently, without letting them to have a pause. (1)

Once again, a fresh wave of monkeys leapt over the fort (of Lanka) here and there, wherever they found a chance². They chanted slogans and cheered Lord Ram whose glories and majesty were akin to the splendour of the brilliant sun. (2)

[Note—¹In Doha no. 40 and its preceding verses we have read about the first wave of the assault. Waves after waves of assaults were launched in quick succession, one after another. After the first batch of monkey warriors returned triumphantly from the city of Lanka, bringing back news of how they leapt across the wall and ran amok in the city, cheering loudly and establishing the flag of victory of Lord Ram symbolically in the city by shouting his name from atop buildings, the next group of monkey warriors, which was waiting below the fort, became excited as the monkeys in this group also wanted some vigorous action and a chance to prove their mettle.

This was the second wave of assault launched on Lanka. By this time the monkey warriors had determined that it was easier for them to enter Lanka by simply leaping over the walls of the fort instead of wasting time and energy in trying to fight their way in through the gates of the fort.]

चले निसाचर निकर पराई । प्रबल पवन जिमि घन समुदाई ॥ ३ ॥
 हाहाकार भयउ पुर भारी । रोवहिं बालक आतुर नारी ॥ ४ ॥
 सब मिलि देहिं रावनहिं गारी । राज करत एहिं मृत्यु हँकारी ॥ ५ ॥

calē nisācara nikara parā'ī. prabala pavana jimi ghana samudā'ī. 3.
 hāhākāra bhaya'u pura bhārī. rōvahiṁ bālaka ātura nārī. 4.
 saba mili dēhiṁ rāvanahiṁ gārī. rāja karata ēhiṁ mṛtyu haṁkāri. 5.

The demon warriors fled before the monkeys like dark clouds that are easily and swiftly swept away when pushed away by the powerful force of a strong gust of wind. (3)

There was total chaos and an unprecedented upheaval in the city of Lanka as terrified children and anxious demon females wailed, howled and lamented all over the place¹. (4)

Everyone got together to hurl abuses and curses at Ravana, accusing him of misusing his powers as a king to invite death and destruction for all². (5)

[Note—¹The distressed cries and howls of grief of the horrified citizens reverberated in the city, in all its nooks and corners. The children wailed and shrieked; the demonesses lamented their fate and grieved for their dead husbands, brothers, sons etc. who perished in the first few hours of the massive invasion. The first day of the war gave them a hint of what was yet to come. The demons were habituated in tormenting others and inflicting pain and grief on them, but they had never themselves witnessed the pain and grief of defeat, loss, death and destruction from so close a quarter in their personal lives as they had been witnessing lately, and it climaxed with the actual invasion by Lord Ram's army. Everything seemed lost and gone for the demon citizenry.

²The demons citizens were right in blaming Ravana for the calamity that had befallen them. The king, after all, is responsible for ensuring peace and happiness of his subjects; he must not take a rash decision that would cause havoc on his own kingdom. Whatever was happening now in Lanka was the doing of Ravana, because he had stubbornly refused to listen to anybody. He was so obstinate by nature, and so firmly gripped by arrogance and overcome with delusions, that even the evil omen of the burning of Lanka did not ring any alarm bell in his mind, nor did the falling off of his crowns on two occasions, once when they were shot down by the arrow of Lord Ram, and the second time when Angad had planted his legs on the ground. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 13-a along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 32 respectively.}

What could the poor and helpless citizens of Lanka do against the haughty will of their own king, except to accept their doomed fate and submit themselves meekly to it?

The female demons whose male relations had already died or were maimed, wept and wailed in grief; and the rest of the female demons wailed and wept at the prospect of their own male relations meeting the same end.

The children could not understand the gravity of the situation; but they wailed and cried and shrieked nevertheless out of fear as well as in resonance with the surrounding environment of loud lamentation and pitiful grieving that overwhelmed their little minds.]

निज दल बिचल सुनी तेहिं काना । फेरि सुभट लंकेस रिसाना ॥ ६ ॥
जो रन बिमुख सुना मैं काना । सो मैं हतब कराल कृपाना ॥ ७ ॥
सर्वसु खाइ भोग करि नाना । समर भूमि भए बल्लभ प्राना ॥ ८ ॥

nija dala bicala sunī tēhiṁ kānā. phēri subhaṭa laṅkēsa risānā. 6.
jō rana bimukha sunā maiṁ kānā. sō maiṁ hataba karāla kṛpānā. 7.
sarbasu khā'i bhōga kari nānā. samara bhūmi bha'ē ballabha prānā. 8.

When the king of Lanka, Ravana, heard that his army was in distress and retreating, he became furious with anger. (6)

He stopped them and yelled at the demon warriors, chiding them for their cowardice and bringing shame to the valiant demon race. He shouted at them: 'Oh you all; listen to me. If I hear anyone of you turning your back from the battle-field, then be warned ye all that I shall draw my sword and slay that coward with my own hands. (7)

You have been feeding yourselves well and eating everything you wished from my ration stores, and you have been enjoying all sorts of pleasures because of my patronage. Now when it comes to the battle-field, you prefer to save your life at the cost of my honour and prestige!

[Woe to you accursed fellows; shame to you! And remember my words: if anyone turns back then I will kill him myself. Go and show your mettle by pushing the enemy back. I told you to go and feed yourselves on the monkeys and bears, but here I see you are running away like a hunted animal. Curse be unto you, coward and spineless fellows; who have brought utter disgrace to our race of demons who are famed for their valour, gallantry and dare devilry. Return forthwith and face the enemy. Don't dare to show your face to me by showing your back to the enemy; the mighty sword of Ravana will welcome you!]¹ (8)

[Note—¹A similar threat was given by the demon commanders Khar and Dushan when their army, which attacked Lord Ram in the wake of Supernakha's episode, started fleeing in terror when the Lord began slaying them relentlessly with volleys of his fierce arrows—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 20.]

उग्र बचन सुनि सकल डेराने । चले क्रोध करि सुभट लजाने ॥ ९ ॥
सन्मुख मरन बीर कै सोभा । तब तिन्ह तजा प्रान कर लोभा ॥ १० ॥

ugra bacana suni sakala ḍērānē. calē krōdha kari subhaṭa lajānē. 9.
sanmukha marana bīra kai sōbhā. taba tinha tajā prāna kara lōbhā. 10.

When the demon warriors heard the sternly-worded warning of Ravana, all of them were terrified (because they knew Ravana's unforgiving nature and were sure that he will kill them if they did not obey him).

They were also utterly ashamed of themselves for being so timid and cowardly. So they angrily returned to the battle-field to avenge for the humiliation that they have suffered (at the hands of the monkeys and bears on the one hand, and Ravana on the other hand). (9)

It has been held that a warrior gets his fame, honour and glory by dying while fighting in the battle-field (and not by running away from it). Keeping this maxim in mind, the demon warriors set aside attachment to their lives and discarded the fear of losing it, as they decided to die while fighting the enemy up front in the battle-field¹. (10)

[Note—¹The demon warriors realised that their king was speaking the truth when he admonished them for turning their backs and running away from the battle-field. Surely this would invite scorn and infamy on their present families and cast a dark pall of dishonour that would dog their future generations. So they decided that if death was sure to come to them, then it is better for them to die like a hero fighting the enemy than to die an ignominious death of a coward by getting disarmed and slayed by Ravana.]

दो०. बहु आयुध धर सुभट सब भिरहिं पचारि पचारि ।

ब्याकुल किए भालु कपि परिघ त्रिसूलन्हि मारि ॥ ४२ ॥

dōhā.

bahu āyudha dhara subhaṭa saba bhirahiṃ pacāri pacāri.
byākula ki'ē bhālu kapi parigha trisūlanhi māri. 42.

[Deciding to die an honourable death of a warrior, the demon hordes were filled with renewed energy and dare-devilry as they lost all fear of death and longing for life.]

The brave demon warriors grasped many types of weapons and returned to face the enemy with renewed vigour. They fiercely challenged the monkeys and bears for hand-to-hand duel, and striking their enemy hard and viciously with iron clubs and tridents, the demon warriors began bludgeoning the monkeys and bears ruthlessly¹. (Doha no. 42)

[Note—¹Ravana's threat and chiding worked well, for this is the first time since the assault on Lanka began that the demons have shown some guts and resilience to fight. Earlier they simply fled from the ground, but now they showed their true mettle by striking hard at their enemy.

The result was spectacular. We shall read in the forthcoming verses herein below that now it was the time for the monkeys and bears to flee.]

चौ०. भय आतुर कपि भागन लागे । जद्यपि उमा जीतिहिं आगे ॥ १ ॥

कोउ कह कहँ अंगद हनुमंता । कहँ नल नील दुबिद बलवंता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhaya ātura kapi bhāgana lāgē. jadyapi umā jītihaḥim āgē. 1.
kō'u kaha kahaṁ aṅgada hanumantā. kahaṁ nala nīla dubida balavantā. 2.

Lord Shiva continued with his narration, ‘Oh Uma! The monkeys, who were terrified by the determined counter-offensive launched by the ferocious demon warriors who struck them hard and viciously, began to flee and scatter in a chaotic way, though by-and-by the glory of victory would be theirs. (1)

Some asked where Angad was, some called out to Hanuman, and some others questioned the whereabouts of the brave Nala and Dubid¹. (2)

[Note—¹During this alarming moment when the forward formations of the attacking monkey army that had invaded the city of Lanka faced sudden rout, and their phalanxes were breached by the vicious counter-attack by the demon forces, forcing the monkeys to flee in complete disarray, the terrified monkeys looked around for their commanders in order to seek orders. This verse shows that Angad, Hanuman, Nala and Divid were the commanders who had led the wave of attacking monkeys that had been divided into two divisions—one that leapt across the walls of the fort to directly enter Lanka, and the other that was making effort to break the massive gates of the fort.

An interesting observation can be made here. Where did this clash took place when the monkeys were pushed back by the charging demon warriors? We have just read that the second wave of monkey troops had entered the city of Lanka by leaping over the walls of the fort—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 42 herein above. So obviously the place of this action was within the fort of Lanka. The invading monkeys were swarming all over the city at the time Ravana had summoned his warriors and scolded them for showing cowardice in the face of the enemy, ordering them to fight like a true warrior or face death at his hands if they bring dishonour to the demon race by showing their back to the enemy—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 42 herein above. The demon warriors then struck hard at the monkeys who had been running amok in the city itself, and chased them back in complete disarray.

It is to be particularly noted at this point of time that the mighty gates of the fort hadn't been breached till now. Intense fighting was underway at the western gate where Meghanad, the son of Ravana, was leading the demon troops to guard it, while Hanuman was leading the monkey troops there making desperate attempts to break it. It will be clear shortly in verse nos. 3-4 herein below.

Angad too was on the field below—this will be clear in Doha no. 43 herein below.

In short, the commanders of the advance formations of the monkey and bear army, such as Angad, Hanuman, Nala and Divid, were on the ground below the walls of the fort, monitoring the troops and making effort to breach the gates. That is why those monkey warriors who had been inside the fort could not see their commanders around as is evident from this verse no. 2.]

निज दल बिकल सुना हनुमाना । पच्छिम द्वार रहा बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥

मेघनाद तहँ करइ लराई । टूट न द्वार परम कठिनाई ॥ ४ ॥

nija dala bikala sunā hanumānā. pacchima dvāra rahā balavānā. 3.
mēghanāda tahaṁ kara'i larā'ī. ṭūṭa na dvāra parama kaṭhinā'ī. 4.

The brave Hanuman, who was near the western gate of the fort, heard that his group is in distress and needs help. (3)

He was fighting with Meghanad (the valiant son of Ravana) at this gate, but despite all efforts breaking this strong gate was found to be very difficult. (4)

पवनतनय मन भा अति क्रोधा । गर्जेउ प्रबल काल सम जोधा ॥ ५ ॥
कूदि लंक गढ़ ऊपर आवा । गहि गिरि मेघनाद कहूँ धावा ॥ ६ ॥
भंजेउ रथ सारथी निपाता । ताहि हृदय महुँ मारेसि लाता ॥ ७ ॥
दुसरें सूत बिकल तेहि जाना । स्यंदन घालि तुरत गृह आना ॥ ८ ॥

pavanatanaya mana bhā ati krōdhā. garjē'u prabala kāla sama jōdhā. 5.
kūdi laṅka gaṛha ūpara āvā. gahi giri mēghanāda kahuṁ dhāvā. 6.
bhañjē'u ratha sārathī nipātā. tāhi hṛdaya mahuṁ mārēsi lātā. 7.
dusarēṁ sūta bikala tēhi jānā. syandana ghāli turata gr̥ha ānā. 8.

When the son of the wind god (Hanuman) heard this alarming news he became extremely angry; the mighty warrior roared like the god of death himself would when he is filled with wrath. (5)

Hanuman instantly leapt across the walls of the fort and entered it. Once inside, he grabbed a large hill-like rock and lunged furiously at Meghanad (who was leading his demon troops from within the western gate of the fort). (6)

He (Hanuman) broke the chariot into splinters, killed its charioteer, and then kicked violently on the chest of Meghanad. (7)

Another charioteer (who was kept as a reserve with a second chariot-in-waiting for contingencies) saw that his master (Meghanad) was seriously hurt and very agitated; so he immediately lifted him into his reserve chariot and took him home¹. (8)

[Note—¹Meghanad was taken aback as he hadn't expected this sudden attack from his rear; he couldn't imagine that someone would suddenly come from behind him, destroy his chariot and kick him violently in the chest. This sudden and unexpected assault from inside the fort therefore left Meghanad vulnerable and made him an easy target for attack by Hanuman. Meghanad couldn't even retaliate.]

दो०. अंगद सुना पवनसुत गढ़ पर गयउ अकेल ।
रन बाँकुरा बालिसुत तरकि चढ़ेउ कपि खेल ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

aṅgada sunā pavanasuta gaṛha para gaya'u akēla.
rana bāṁkurā bālisuta taraki caṛhē'u kapi khēla. 43.

Meanwhile, Angad learnt that the son of the wind god (Hanuman) had gone on the fort all alone. So the son of Baali (Angad), who was gallant in battle, reached the top of the fort in one single bound as if it was a sporting activity for him¹. (Doha no. 43)

[Note—¹As we have noted earlier, since both Hanuman and Angad were on the battle-field below the fort, monitoring and leading their troops from there and making attempts to break the gates of Lanka, there was no one to lead the group of monkeys who had jumped over the fort and entered Lanka to create havoc inside the city as narrated previously—apropos: Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 42.

That is why when the monkeys rampaging inside Lanka were scattered in a complete disorderly manner by a fierce counter-attack by the demons within the walls of the fort, the retreating monkey warriors couldn't find any commander to guide them and wondered where Hanuman, Angad, Nala and Divid were—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

चौ०. जुद्ध बिरुद्ध क्रुद्ध द्वौ बंदर । राम प्रताप सुमिरि उर अंतर ॥ १ ॥
रावन भवन चढ़े द्वौ धाई । करहिं कोसलाधीस दोहाई ॥ २ ॥
कलस सहित गहि भवनु ढहावा । देखि निसाचरपति भय पावा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jud'dha birud'dha krud'dha dvau bandara. rāma pratāpa sumiri ura antara. 1.
rāvana bhavana caṛhē dvau dhā'ī. karahim kōsalādhīsa dōhā'ī. 2.
kalasa sahita gahi bhavanu ḍhahāvā. dēkhi nisācarapati bhaya pāvā. 3.

The two monkey warriors (Hanuman and Angad), who had become furious and vicious with the heat of battle, let loose their anger on the enemy. They had a lot of confidence and bravery in them by the virtue of invoking the grace and blessing of Lord Ram in their hearts. (1)

Both of them climbed atop the palace of Ravana, all the while cheering and proclaiming the glory of Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (karahim kōsalādhīsa dōhā'ī). (2)

Once there, they shook the 'Kalash'¹ atop the palace so violently that not only was it uprooted and tumbled down to the ground but it also brought the whole structure of the palace crashing down with it as the violent shaking had made it crack.

When the helpless king of the demons (Ravana) watched this happen, he was horrified with anger and terrified with fear². (3)

[Note—¹The Kalash is a ceremonial structure shaped like an urn or a pitcher that adorns the top of important buildings. It was a cupola on the palace's top. When Angad and Hanuman shook it violently, the building developed cracks because the Kalash was firmly grouted into the terrace and formed a part of the main structure that

supported the building. When the Kalash shook it was similar to the effect of an earthquake that results in wide cracks in a building and makes it fall down.

²Ravana was in a state of shock. The shaking and the demolishing of the palace occurred so quickly and without warning that he had little time to gather his wits and think what to do. As the gigantic structure came crashing down with a mighty thud and a storm of dust, Ravana stood dazed, not knowing how to react. He had become immobile for some moments, so dismayed and shocked he was.

Up until now his own palace was spared any particular damage; it was not burnt while the rest of Lanka was razed to the ground in the fire lit by Hanuman, and it was not climbed by the invading monkeys who had leapt across the walls of the fort and rode atop the terraces of the major buildings of Lanka a little while ago.

One may wonder where Ravana would have stayed after his palace was demolished. The answer is that, being a king, it is certain that he had many other such palaces at his disposal. So he immediately shifted to some other palace.]

नारि बृंद कर पीटहिं छाती । अब दुइ कपि आए उतपाती ॥ ४ ॥

कपिलीला करि तिन्हहि डेरावहिं । रामचंद्र कर सुजसु सुनावहिं ॥ ५ ॥

nāri bṛnda kara pīṭahim chātī. aba du'i kapi ā'ē utapātī. 4.

kapilīlā kari tinhahi ḍērāvahim. rāmacandra kara sujasu sunāvahim. 5.

The women folk residing in the palace (Ravana's ladies, maids, queens and mistresses) beat their chests with their hands and wailed, 'Behold there; now there are two rioting monkeys here (instead of one)¹.' (4)

The two monkeys (thoroughly enjoyed this scene, and they) teased the horrified demonesses and terrified them further by their menacing acts², all the while proclaiming the glories of Lord Ram and making these dazed ladies listen to them³. (5)

[Note—¹The demon ladies raised an alarm when they saw Angad and Hanuman menacingly rampaging around together. Earlier they had witnessed how much havoc one single monkey can cause when Hanuman had single-handedly destroyed the city of Lanka during his first visit when he had burnt it. Now with two such violent monkeys determined to unleash their ire on the city in their midst, there was no surety of what worse was to come. So the terrified demonesses wailed and yelled and shrieked in horror.

²Angad and Hanuman scared the poor women of Ravana's palace by making menacing faces at them with wide open mouths that showed their sharp teeth; they threatened the ladies by rushing at them with claws extended as if they would grab and kill them; they hopped and jumped and stomped their feet violently on the ground around these shrieking and terrified demonesses; they made ferocious gestures at them.

The net effect was that the petrified women folk of Ravana's inner palace were shrieking, yelling and wailing alarmingly in the same way as the female demon citizens had done earlier when the invading monkey troops had first entered the city

and run through it spreading terror everywhere. {Apropos: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 42 herein before.}

³The ladies living in the inner courtyards of Ravana's palace lived a secluded life as they were isolated from the outside world. So they probably had yet not heard the war cries of the invading monkeys who had entered the city a little ago by jumping over the walls of the fort, and had then run through the city and climbed its buildings, all the while loudly cheering and boldly proclaiming the glories of Lord Ram at the top of their voices. This was now done by Angad and Hanuman—i.e. they made the ladies of the inner-chambers of Ravana's palace become aware of who Lord Ram was and why he was so famed and revered in the world.]

पुनि कर गहि कंचन के खंभा । कहेन्हि करिअ उत्पात अरंभा ॥ ६ ॥
 गर्जि परे रिपु कटक मझारी । लागे मर्दै भुज बल भारी ॥ ७ ॥
 काहुहि लात चपेटन्हि केहू । भजहु न रामहि सो फल लेहू ॥ ८ ॥

puni kara gahi kañcana kē khambhā. kahēnhi kari'a utapāta arambhā. 6.
 garji parē ripu kaṭaka majhārī. lāgē mardai bhuja bala bhārī. 7.
 kāhuhi lāta capēṭanhi kēhū. bhajahu na rāmahi sō phala lēhū. 8.

Then they (i.e. Hanuman and Angad) grabbed two thick golden pillars (of the demolished palace) each, and said to each other that they should now begin their job of ravaging through the demon forces and trouncing them. (6)

With this mutual understanding, the two valiant warriors roared ferociously as they plunged head-on in the middle of the enemy forces, pounding their adversaries mercilessly, right, left and center, with their mighty arms. (7)

They kicked some and slapped others, stomping on one demon, punching someone else and cuffing another, telling all of them menacingly that it is their punishment for not being devoted to Lord Ram, for not honouring and adoring him¹. (8)

[Note—¹Angad and Hanuman joined hands to start pounding and crushing the demon army. It is to be noted that their emphasise is on these demons not being devoted to Lord Ram and honouring him. The two friends did not tell their opponents that they are being punished for fighting for Ravana, the king of the demon race, for they were aware that it was their duty to fight for their king. The mistake the demons were actually making was that they chose the wrong cause to fight, for this war was sparked because Ravana had kidnapped Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, which is an evil deed and must be punished.]

दो०. एक एक सों मर्दहिं तोरि चलावहिं मुंड ।
 रावन आगें परहिं ते जनु फूटहिं दधि कुंड ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

ēka ēka sōm mardahim tōri calāvahim muṇḍa.
rāvana āgēm parahim tē janu phūṭahim dadhi kuṇḍa. 44.

They randomly caught hold of one demon and violently pressed him against another, thereby squashing them and making a pulp of both. After the demons died in this manner, the two warriors twisted their heads and yanked them off their corpses, and then flung them.

These heads landed heavily in front of Ravana and broke down into many pieces like so many earthen pots filled with curd that would break apart instantly when they fall from a height on the hard ground below, spilling out their contents. (Doha no. 44)

[Note—¹The severed heads of killed demon warriors started falling before a stunned Ravana like so many earthen pitchers filled with curd or any other liquid being pelted at him. They rained all around Ravana, falling with heavy thuds and immediately splitting wide open to spill out their contents—blood, brain and other tissue. The ground around the demon king resembled a garbage dumping area as it got rapidly filled with cracked and splintered skulls, blood, flesh and soft tissue of the damaged brains.

It appeared to a beholder that Ravana was being pelted heavily by rounded balls of baked earth stuffed with stinking garbage that littered the area around him, as these earthen balls split open immediately after crashing to the ground, spilling their dirty contents all around.]

चौ०. महा महा मुखिआ जे पावहिं । ते पद गहि प्रभु पास चलावहिं ॥ १ ॥
कहइ बिभीषनु तिन्ह के नामा । देहिं राम तिन्हू निज धामा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

mahā mahā mukhi'ā jē pāvahim. tē pada gahi prabhu pāsa calāvahim. 1.
kaha'i bibhīṣanu tinha kē nāmā. dēhim rāma tinhahū nija dhāmā. 2.

Whenever they (Hanuman and Angad) found a high general or chief commander of the demon army, they would seize him by the leg, swirl him round and round rapidly in the air (like a ball tied to a string), and then flung the dazed captive so violently that he flew straight (literally like a javelin or a ball released by a swinging sling) and landed right before Lord Ram. (1)

Vibhishan (who was standing close to Lord Ram) introduced the Lord to these great demon warriors by telling him their names (and designations). The Lord (who is by his inherent nature compassionate, merciful and forgiving) sent these dying demon warriors to his own abode in the heaven¹. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram granted these demon commanders and generals the boon of deliverance of their souls; they were granted emancipation and salvation of their souls. Though normally they ought to have gone to hell due the evil life they had led, but since they died in front of the Lord and at his feet, the Lord lived up to his reputation of showing mercy and grace to all those who come to him and die before

him by blessing these demons and giving them a place in heaven instead of leaving them to face their fate, which was surely hell.

One may ask: If Lord Ram is so merciful that he granted this privilege of going to the heaven to generals and commanders of the demon army, what about the poor ordinary demon soldiers who laid down their lives almost at the same time and in the same war as these generals?

The answer is to be found later on when we read that at the time the war ended and the Lord saw the battle-field littered with dead bodies of dead demons warriors, he cast his benevolent glance around and blessed the soul of all those dead demons with liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. In fact, all the demons who had died remembering Lord Ram and his divine name, albeit it was done not with devotion but out of either fear or animosity, found a destiny that is the envy of great hermits, seers, sages and saints, so magnanimous and kind Lord Ram is.

The Lord decided that no one who laid down his life to help him fulfil his mandate—one of which was to physically come down to earth as a human being and then bless his devotees with the story of his life that they would sing for generations to come to derive spiritual joy and happiness and feel blessed—must be punished; rather each individual is to be duly rewarded. The Lord was not vengeful; the Lord was an ocean of love and compassion. So he deemed it his moral obligation to send the demons to his own abode in the heaven, and not condemn them to hell.

The next relevant question is: Well then, what about the monkeys and bears who had died? The answer is this: Lord Ram asked Indra, the king of gods, to rain Amrit (the nectar of eternity; the ambrosia that can revive the dead) on the battle-ground. All the monkeys and bears were revived by this rain. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

But then, another question arises: Why was one group, the demons, allowed to die and go to heaven, while the other, the monkeys and bears, allowed to live? The answer is this: One of the Lord's mandates was to 'eliminate the cruel and sinful demons from the earth because they were tormenting all other creatures', so he was bound to uphold this promise that he had made to the gods and mother earth. On the other hand, the monkeys and bears who fought on the side of Lord Ram were actually the gods themselves as they had assumed these forms to help the Lord in his mission. Hence, the demons had to die, and the monkeys and bears would live. To wit, at the end of the day, evil and sinful forces represented by the demons had to be got rid of, and good virtues represented by the monkeys and bears were allowed to survive. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.}

The following verse nos. 3-5 reiterate these above observations.]

खल मनुजाद द्विजामिष भोगी । पावहिं गति जो जाचत जोगी ॥ ३ ॥

उमा राम मृदुचित करुणाकर । बयर भाव सुमिरत मोहि निसिचर ॥ ४ ॥

देहिं परम गति सो जियँ जानी । अस कृपाल को कहहु भवानी ॥ ५ ॥

अस प्रभु सुनि न भजहिं भ्रम त्यागी । नर मतिमंद ते परम अभागी ॥ ६ ॥

khala manujāda dvijāmiṣa bhōgī. pāvahim gati jō jācata jōgī. 3.

umā rāma mṛducita karunākara. bayara bhāva sumirata mōhi niscara. 4.

dēhim parama gati sō jiyam jānī. asa kṛpāla kō kahahu bhavānī. 5.

asa prabhu suni na bhajahim bhrama tyāgī. nara matimanda tē parama abhāgī. 6.

[It's indeed a wonder of wonders that—] The demons who were wicked, enemies of the entire human race, who killed and ate flesh of Brahmins (i.e. of those who were elders of the society and learned ones), and who remained engrossed in enjoyment of sensual pleasures—even such vile ones attained a destiny which great ascetics aspire for.

[To wit, these demons were so lucky that they got liberation and deliverance for their souls; they attained emancipation and salvation; they found beatitude and felicity for their tormented souls.] (3)

[Why was it so? Lord Shiva answers this when he said to his consort Uma:] ‘Oh Uma! Lord Ram is so immensely kind by his nature, and so full of mercy, compassion and grace that he thought to himself: “These demons had been remembering me (and repeating my divine name), albeit it was done in an inimical way.

[So I must keep my hallowed reputation in mind, that anyone who remembers me and utters my divine name even once becomes eligible to receive my grace and blessing. Hence, I must ensure that these demons get their due share; I must ensure that their souls find peace and beatitude. After all, it was their gross body that was sinful, and with its death this blot on their soul is wiped out. Their soul, which is inherently pure as it is consciousness personified, was unfortunately trapped inside their demon body, and now that body is history. So I must grant them emancipation and salvation in spite of them fighting with me and opposing me.]” (4)

Oh Bhavani (another name of Uma)! Thinking thus, Lord Ram granted these dead demon warriors a destiny that is regarded as supreme for all living beings¹. Say, who else in this world is so nice, graceful, merciful, compassionate and understanding (*asa kṛpāla kō*) as Lord Ram is? (5)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, those who do not adore and have devotion for such a merciful and gracious Lord Ram even after knowing his excellent character and benevolent nature, then truly and without doubt such people are most unfortunate, dumb and ill-fated.² (6)

[Note—¹The best destiny of a creature is when his soul, known as his Atma or his ‘true self’, which in turn is a personified form of pure consciousness, leaves the creature’s gross body and finds eternal freedom. This eternal freedom means that the Atma will not have to take a birth again; it finds permanent deliverance from the cycle of transmigration wherein the soul keeps returning to this gross mortal world by entering one or the other forms that the creatures take. This grants the soul liberation from the sufferings associated with life in this mortal world. The effect is that the soul of the creature finds eternal rest and peace; it attains a state of beatitude and felicity that grants it eternal bliss.

To wit, Lord Ram granted eternal freedom to the souls of the demons and ensured that they would not take a rebirth again. From spiritual and metaphysical perspective it means a great reward for these demons, a reward that even great ascetics, sages and hermits yearn for. On the other hand, from more worldly perspective it means that Lord Ram ensured that the earth is freed from the prospect of it being re-inhabited once again by these demons, for if that happened, if the earth

was once again filled by cruel demons after all the efforts to get rid of them, then the time and the energy invested to eliminate them would have been wasted in the first place.

²Truly it would be an irony if a person does not honour and adore such a great Lord as Lord Sri Ram is who goes out of his way to accept even the fallen and lowly, and welcome them with a smile. The Lord does not demur or think twice to grant them a high place inspite of their past wrongdoings—with only one caveat, and it is that they turn themselves over to his care without reservations or deceit in their hearts.]

अंगद अरु हनुमंत प्रबेसा । कीन्ह दुर्ग अस कह अवधेसा ॥ ७ ॥
लंकाँ द्वौ कपि सोहहिं कैसें । मथहिं सिंधु दुइ मंदर जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

aṅgada aru hanumanta prabēsā. kīnha durga asa kaha avadhēsā. 7.
laṅkāṁ dvau kapi sōhahim kaisēm. mathahim sindhu du'i mandara jaisēm. 8.

Lord Ram, the Lord of Ayodhya (avadhēsā), said to his senior advisors or ministers who were near him (such as Sugriv, Vibhishan etc.), ‘Angad and Hanuman have entered the fort. (7)

These two great warriors must be looking awesome in Lanka as they rampage wildly through it, and while on their spree of causing havoc in the city and battering the demon forces, resulting them to be scattered in complete chaos, helter-skelter in panic, they surely must resemble two mighty mountains known as Mandrachal that are churning the ocean simultaneously¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹In some ancient time, the gods and the demons had used Mt. Mandrachal to churn the celestial ocean. In this war which has resulted in a great churn in Lanka, the gods are represented by the monkey warriors in general, and Ravana’s soldiers are obviously the demons. Just like Mt. Mandrachal which was at the focal point of the ancient churning of the ocean, Angad and Hanuman are presently the focus of the great upheaval and chaos prevailing in Lanka. The turmoil in Lanka is like the immense tumult produced in the water of the celestial ocean as it wildly roared, heaved, swirled, splashed and foamed when it was churned in ancient time.

How did Lord Ram come to the conclusion that Angad and Hanuman had entered the fort of Lanka? Well, one reason obviously is that he was being updated by a network of spies on the ground who reported every development back to the command center monitored by the Lord and his close aides. The other reason is the sudden falling on the ground of demon commanders, some wounded and in a state of daze, and some others already dead, as they came in flying like balls when they were hurled out of Lanka by Angad and Hanuman. The gates of the fort were still not breached, and the higher ranking demon commanders were still within the fort. So when they started arriving and falling on the ground in a confused hail of bodies, it surely meant that the two valiant warriors, Angad and Hanuman, had reached within the fort and kicking these commanders out after seizing them from the inside it.

The Lord already had witnessed this skill of Angad when the latter had kicked Ravana’s crowns so precisely that they landed right in his front—apropos: Ram Charit

Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-10 that precede it; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Lord Ram also was aware that Angad and Hanuman kept close company; they were virtually inseparable from one another like two fast friends. So the Lord deduced that if Angad had gone inside the fort, then surely Hanuman too must be there.

A very vivid picture of the chaos in Lanka created by Hanuman's assault is presented in Tulsidas' book "Kavitawali Ramayan", in its Lanka Kand, verse nos. 40-41.]

दो०. भुज बल रिपु दल दलमलि देखि दिवस कर अंत ।

कूदे जुगल बिगत श्रम आए जहँ भगवंत ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

bhuja bala ripu dala dalamali dēkhi divasa kara anta.

kūdē jugala bigata śrama ā'ē jahañ bhagavanta. 45.

After having crushed the forces of the enemy by the might and punch of their arms, and seeing that the day was coming to an end, the two brave warriors (Angad and Hanuman) jumped back over the walls of the fort effortlessly, as if they weren't tired at all due to the strenuous activities of the day, and came back to their camp where the Lord (Ram) was. (Doha no. 45)

चौ०. प्रभु पद कमल सीस तिन्ह नाए । देखि सुभट रघुपति मन भाए ॥ १ ॥

राम कृपा करि जुगल निहारे । भए बिगतश्रम परम सुखारे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pada kamala sīsa tinha nā'ē. dēkhi subhaṭa raghupati mana bhā'ē. 1.

rāma kṛpā kari jugala nihārē. bha'ē bigataśrama parama sukhārē. 2.

When they reached Lord Ram they reverentially bowed their heads before the lotus-like feet of the Lord. The Lord felt glad in his heart when he saw the two skilled and valiant warriors¹. (1)

Lord Ram looked at the pair (Angad and Hanuman) with grace, compassion and kindness in his eyes, and this made the two feel very happy and rejuvenated². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram looked over Angad and Hanuman anxiously to see if they had any serious marks of wounds on their bodies, and to make out from their appearances how they generally fared: were they showing signs of fatigue and weariness; were they hurt and wounded; were they afraid of what was to happen the next day; did they have any unfortunate experience during the course of the battle of the day; was there any sign that they would like some rest; and so on. When the Lord observed that aside from some minor scars or scratches on their bodies here and there that are natural to occur when one is involved in a close and furious hand-to-hand duel with a vicious enemy, and had a little bit desire for rest, they were otherwise hale and hearty overall

and were raring to go to the battle front to face and crush the enemy once again any instant, he felt very happy, and blessed them.

²To wit, all weariness and fatigue that Angad and Hanuman may have had vanished immediately when they found that the Lord was pleased with them and their actions. The Lord's pleased look said it all to them; it encouraged them to fight with renewed vigour and with a harder punch the next day.]

गए जानि अंगद हनुमाना । फिरे भालु मर्कट भट नाना ॥ ३ ॥
जातुधान प्रदोष बल पाई । धाए करि दससीस दोहाई ॥ ४ ॥
निसिचर अनी देखि कपि फिरे । जहँ तहँ कटकटाइ भट भिरे ॥ ५ ॥
द्वौ दल प्रबल पचारि पचारी । लरत सुभट नहिं मानहिं हारी ॥ ६ ॥

ga'e jāni aṅgada hanumānā. phirē bhālu markṭa bhaṭa nānā. 3.
jātudhāna pradōṣa bala pā'ī. dhā'ē kari dasasīsa dōhā'ī. 4.
niscara anī dēkhi kapi phirē. jahaṁ tahaṁ kaṭakaṭā'i bhaṭa bhirē. 5.
dvau dala prabala pacāri pacārī. larata subhaṭa nahim mānahim hārī. 6.

When the rest of the monkey and bear troops heard that their commanders Angad and Hanuman have gone back to their camp, they also decided to return. (3)

When the demon army saw that their adversaries (the monkeys and bears) were turning back because it was twilight hours after which battles are usually not fought, they seized this occasion and lunged forward to chase the monkeys and bears from behind, making war fierce cries proclaiming the glory of their king, the ten-headed Ravana. (4)

When the monkeys and bears saw that they were being chased by the demon warriors with an intention to fight, they immediately turned back and clashed with their pursuers. The rival troops collided with each other ferociously, and groups of brave warriors could be seen gnashing their teeth wrathfully and engaging themselves in a no-holds barred vicious duel everywhere on the battle-field. (5)

The two sides fought fiercely, each thrashing and pounding the other mercilessly and with all the might they could muster. None of the clashing warriors would yield his ground; not a single brave soldier would accept defeat and turn his back. (6)

[Note—¹In ancient times, battles were fought only during the day time and stopped after sunset. That is why Angad and Hanuman decided to come back to their camp as soon as they saw that the sun was setting. The demons took advantage of this rule of warfare and decided to attack the monkeys and bears when they would least expect an attack. So for a few initial moments the monkeys and bears may have become confused by this untimely attack, but being alert soldiers they were quick to respond. The demons thought that they would have a good kill by attacking the retiring troops from their behind, but they underestimated the vigour and alertness of the Lord's troops. The demons rush forward was soon checked when the monkeys and bears turned back and met them head-on in the middle of their path. With a chilling battle-

cry raised from both the sides, the demons cheering in the name of Ravana and the monkeys and bears cheering Lord Ram, the two forces clashed with each other with full force.

The twilight hours are the time when dark and evil forces become more active, vigorous and energised. Since the demons symbolised such forces, they found renewed vigour during this time. After the debacle they faced during the day time, they wished to make up for it during the evening hours; so they attacked the monkeys and bears with a severity of ferocity that they lacked during the day time.]

महाबीर निसिचर सब कारे । नाना बरन बलीमुख भारे ॥ ७ ॥

सबल जुगल दल समबल जोधा । कौतुक करत लरत करि क्रोधा ॥ ८ ॥

प्राबिट सरद पयोद घनेरे । लरत मनहुँ मारुत के प्रेरे ॥ ९ ॥

mahābīra nisicara saba kārē. nānā barana balīmukha bhārē. 7.

sabala jugala dala samabala jōdhā. kautuka karata larata kari krōdhā. 8.

prābiṭa sarada payōda ghanērē. larata manahuṁ māruta kē prērē. 9.

All the demons were great and valiant warriors; they had huge dark-complexioned bodies of myriad sizes and shapes, with wide ferocious mouths and fearful disposition. (7)

The warriors on both the sides were equally brave, strong, gallant and powerful. They fought fiercely, adopting countless tactics and maneuvering skilfully to outwit their opponent. (8)

When the two troops wrangled with each other they resembled a sight when countless banks of dark clouds of the rainy season as well as white clouds of the winter season dash forward to collide with each other when they are propelled ahead by powerful gusts of winds¹. (9)

[Note—¹To wit, there was complete chaos on the battle-field. The warriors from one group fought the warriors from the other group in a free-for-all battle, forming small and large groups scattered at random, in a chaotic way here and there on the ground, without any particular order and distinction of rank. When one of the fighting warriors of a particular group belonging to one faction saw that some other group of his faction needed help, he would immediately leave the first group to go and join the second group to help. So there was mingling of warriors; it was a free melee of warring warriors where no one knew who the other was, except that he was either one of his own faction and therefore a friend, or that of the other faction and therefore his enemy.]

अनिप अकंपन अरु अतिकाया । बिचलत सेन कीन्हि इन्ह माया ॥ १० ॥

भयउ निमिष महुँ अति अँधिआरा । बृष्टि होइ रुधिरोपल छारा ॥ ११ ॥

anipa akampana aru atikāyā. bicalata sēna kīnhi inha māyā. 10.
bhaya'u nimīṣa maham̐ ati am̐dhi'ārā. br̥ṣṭi hō'i rudhirōpala chārā. 11.

The demon commanders named Anip, Akampan and Atikaye¹ observed that their demon troops were losing ground and have become scared, so they immediately employed their magical powers to create an illusion of a natural calamity about to happen in the battle-field. (10)

As a result, everything suddenly became dark, and blood, stones, splinters and ash began raining down on the ground below. (11)

[Note—¹The battle in which these three demon warriors were directly involved and exhibited their skills is elaborated narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 55.]

दो०. देखि निबिड़ तम दसहुँ दिसि कपिदल भयउ खभार ।
एकहि एक न देखई जहँ तहँ करहिं पुकार ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi nibiṛa tama dasahuṁ disi kapidala bhaya'u khabhāra.
ēkahi ēka na dēkha'ī jahaṁ tahaṁ karahiṁ pukāra. 46.

When the monkeys and bears saw that there was sudden darkness surrounding them on all sides (and stones, blood and ash were raining down upon them), they became alarmed and shocked. It was so pitch dark that no one could see anyone else. As a result, the monkeys and bears found themselves all alone, left to fend for themselves. This left all of them dismayed and petrified with fear, and so they cried out in distress. (Doha no. 46)

चौ०. सकल मरमु रघुनायक जाना । लिए बोलि अंगद हनुमाना ॥ १ ॥
समाचार सब कहि समुझाए । सुनत कोपि कपिकुंजर धाए ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sakala maramu raghunāyaka jānā. li'ē bōli aṅgada hanumānā. 1.
samācāra saba kahi samujhā'ē. sunata kōpi kapikuñjara dhā'ē. 2.

When Lord Ram came to know of this development, he called Angad and Hanuman. (1)

After telling them of the news, the Lord explained to them its mystery¹. Hearing everything, the two were very angry, and they departed immediately to settle the matter in the battle-field. (2)

[Note—¹The Lord explained to Angad and Hanuman that there was no actual rain of stones, blood and ash, and neither was there any extraordinary darkness in the battle-

field as it was made out to be. It was merely the result of black-magic done by the demon commanders Anip, Akampan and Atikaye.

This enraged Angad and Hanuman no end. They rushed to the aid of their compatriots trapped in the battle-ground.]

पुनि कृपाल हंसि चाप चढ़ावा । पावक सायक सपदि चलावा ॥ ३ ॥
भयउ प्रकास कतहुँ तम नाही । ग्यान उदयँ जिमि संसय जाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

puni krpāla haṁsi cāpa caṛhāvā. pāvaka sāyaka sapadi calāvā. 3.
bhaya'u prakāsa katahuṁ tama nāhīm. gyāna udayaṁ jimi sansaya jāhīm. 4.

Then the merciful Lord Ram smiled, stringed his bow, and shot a fiery arrow in the direction of the battle-field. (3)

Instantly the concerned area was lit up; there was no darkness anywhere around. It was like the case when darkness caused by ignorance and delusions is removed when there is light of knowledge, enlightenment and gnosis (collectively called 'Gyan')¹. (4)

[Note—¹A similar idea extolling the importance of Gyan is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

भालु बलीमुख पाइ प्रकासा । धाए हरष बिगत श्रम त्रासा ॥ ५ ॥
हनूमान अंगद रन गाजे । हाँक सुनत रजनीचर भाजे ॥ ६ ॥
भागत भट पटकहिँ धरि धरनी । करहिँ भालु कपि अब्हुत करनी ॥ ७ ॥
गहि पद डारहिँ सागर माहीं । मकर उरग झष धरि धरि खाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bhālu balīmukha pā'i prakāsā. dhā'ē haraṣa bigata śrama trāsā. 5.
hanūmāna aṅgada rana gājē. hāṁka sunata rajanīcara bhājē. 6.
bhāgata bhaṭa paṭakahīm dhari dharanī. karahīm bhālu kapi adbhuta karanī. 7.
gahi pada ḍārahīm sāgara māhīm. makara uraga jhaṣa dhari dhari khāhīm. 8.

When there was light on the battle-field, the bears and monkeys felt exhilarated and encouraged. They dashed towards their enemies, the demons, with renewed zeal and vigour; all their weariness and distress were dispelled. (5)

Meanwhile, Hanuman and Angad, who had arrived at the battle-field, roared fiercely. When the demon warriors heard their thunderous war-cry, they ran away in terror.

[To wit, the demons were so terrified of Hanuman and Angad that their mere presence in the battle-ground was enough to make them flee for their lives.] (6)

When the monkeys and bears saw that the demons were fleeing hastily in terror, they chased them in hot pursuit and overtook them. They caught the fleeing demons and dashed them violently on the ground.

Verily, the bears and monkeys were performing wonderfully well and doing astonishing deeds in the battle-field! (7)

Some of the demons who were fleeing were caught by their legs and dumped into the ocean, where alligators, crocodiles, sea-serpents and large fish such as sharks devoured them¹. (8)

[Note—¹Some of the fleeing demons were killed by getting dashed to the ground, while others were caught by their legs, swung around like on a sling and then flung off to the ocean where they drowned or were caught by carnivorous marine creatures who had gathered near the shore to feed on warriors who came within their reach.]

दो०. कछु मारे कछु घायल कछु गढ़ चढ़े पराइ ।
गर्जहिं भालु बलीमुख रिपु दल बल बिचलाइ ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

kachu mārē kachu ghāyala kachu garḥa caṛhē parā'i.
garjahim bhālu balīmukha ripu dala bala bicalā'i. 47.

Out of the great numbers of demon troops, some got slayed, some fell wounded on the ground, and some managed to escape and enter the fort.

Having scattered the demon forces, the bears and monkeys (bhālu balīmukha) roared and thundered triumphantly. (Doha no. 47)

चौ०. निसा जानि कपि चारिउ अनी । आए जहाँ कोसला धनी ॥ १ ॥
राम कृपा करि चितवा सबही । भए बिगतश्रम बानर तबही ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

nisā jāni kapi cārī'u anī. ā'ē jahāṁ kōsalā dhanī. 1.
rāma kṛpā kari citavā sabahī. bha'ē bigataśrama bānara tabahī. 2.

When night fell (and calm descended on the battle-field after the demons fled completely), all the four wings or divisions of the monkey and bear troops retired for the day and came back to their camp where Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (kōsalā dhanī), was¹. (1)

Lord Ram spread his grace and blessing over the whole assembly by casting his benevolent glance over his troops. The Lord's reassuring and benign look removed whatever traces of weariness the warriors might have had; they felt rejuvenated and excited once again. [The monkeys and bears were ready for the next day's battle.] (2)

[Note—¹This marks the end of the first day of the war.]

उहाँ दसानन सचिव हँकारे । सब सन कहेसि सुभट जे मारे ॥ ३ ॥

आधा कटकु कपिन्ह संघारा । कहहु बेगि का करिअ बिचारा ॥ ४ ॥

uhāṁ dasānana saciva haṁkāre. saba sana kahēsi subhaṭa jē mārē. 3.
ādhā kaṭaku kapinha saṅghārā. kahahu bēgi kā kari'a bicārā. 4.

Meanwhile, there in Lanka, the ten-headed Ravana summoned an urgent meeting of his ministers for a war council. He told them the names of all those demon warriors who had died in the battle that day. (3)

He said woefully, ‘The monkeys have virtually eliminated half of our army. Tell me quickly now what your advice is in this matter.

[To wit, don’t waste time in futile consultations and debates, and be quick in arriving at a decision regarding the strategy for the forthcoming days. Our forces are getting depleted rapidly, so there is no time for playing jokes. We have very little time, and whatever is to be done has to be done during this night itself.]’ (4)

माल्यवंत अति जरठ निसाचर । रावन मातु पिता मंत्री बर ॥ ५ ॥

बोला बचन नीति अति पावन । सुनहु तात कछु मोर सिखावन ॥ ६ ॥

जब ते तुम्ह सीता हरि आनी । असगुन होहिं न जाहिं बखानी ॥ ७ ॥

बेद पुरान जासु जसु गायो । राम बिमुख काहुं न सुख पायो ॥ ८ ॥

mālyavanta ati jarāṭha nisācara. rāvana mātu pitā mantrī bara. 5.
bōlā bacana nīti ati pāvana. sunahu tāta kachu mōra sikhāvana. 6.
jaba tē tumha sītā hari ānī. asaguna hōhim na jāhim bakhānī. 7.
bēda purāna jāsu jasu gāyō. rāma bimukha kāhuṁ na sukha pāyō. 8.

There was an old demon named Malyawanta amongst his ministers. He was a very senior demon and was like a parent for Ravana as he was his maternal grandfather. (5)

He spoke words of great wisdom when he addressed Ravana, saying to him ‘Listen my dear (sunahu tāta) to some of my advice that I speak for your own good. (6)

Ever since you have abducted Sita and brought her here, so many evil omens¹ are occurring on a regular basis that they can’t be listed and explained. (7)

Mind you, anyone who has opposed Lord Ram, whose glory and divinity have been proclaimed and affirmed by the ancient scriptures such as Vedas and Purans, has never found peace and happiness.

[So tell me honestly, how do you expect to find peace and happiness by being hostile to the Lord? My dear son, you are on the wrong path, and it would be good for all of us if you heed my advice and make a truce with the Lord by returning Sita to him and ending this war forthwith.]’ (8)

[Note—¹Some of the many bad signs portending bad days for a king and his kingdom are the following: (1) donkeys bray in a brutal voice; (2) clouds rain bloody water and thunder deafeningly; (3) the horizon and all the directions seem to be covered in a

dark haze of smoke or dust; (4) vultures, jackals and serpents enter and hide inside gardens and make fearful noises; (5) the idol of goddess Kali, the patron goddess of the battle-field presiding over death and destruction, seems to smile; (6) women begin talking incoherently and walk while asleep; (7) the food meant as morsels for the crow are eaten by stray dogs; (8) donkeys are produced as calves of cows, and rats are produced from mongoose; (9) conjugal relationships are established between tigers and cats, dogs and pigs, demons and kinnars, and human beings and demons; they begin copulating; (10) blue pigeons with red claws enter homes; (11) a dark-skinned man with tonsured head roams around homes during dawn and dusk hours {apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 35, verse nos. 25-34}; (12) the sacred fire of the sacrifice does not light up properly with a brilliant flame, but instead gives a lot of smoke and flying sparks, and leaves embers prematurely; (13) black ant contaminate the sweet pudding meant to be offered to the sacred fire during religious sacrifices; (14) the udder of cows dry up, the juicy exudation from the skin on the heads of elephants dry up, indicating that they have lost their stamina, and inspite of feeding well the horses remain hungry; (15) donkeys, camels, mules wail while their skin develops goose bumps; (16) well selected medicines fail to cure or give relief; (17) flocks of crows sit on houses and crow wildly while vultures fly overhead; (18) female jackals and hyenas and other carnivorous animals assemble near inhabited places and wail woefully {apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 15-21}; (19) when the wind blows it is filled with dust; (20) there are earthquakes; (21) trees fall down without any apparent cause; (22) the evening sky looks dark red; (23) the rays of the moon appear to be red or dark; (24) blue dots appear either on the surface of the sun or move across it's disc; (25) the stars become invisible because the night sky is covered in a haze of dust; (26) crows, kites, vultures and other birds of prey drop dead suddenly from the sky {apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 23, verse nos. 4-11}; (27) clouds rain hot bloody water; (28) statues begin to cry; (29) consecrated idols sweat and begin moving from their pedestals; (30) mouse begins fighting with cats {apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 28-32}.]

दो०. हिरन्याच्छ भ्राता सहित मधु कैटभ बलवान् ।

जेहिं मारे सोइ अवतरेउ कृपासिंधु भगवान् ॥ ४८ (क) ॥

कालरूप खल बन दहन गुनागार घनबोध ।

सिव बिरंचि जेहि सेवहिं तासों कवन बिरोध ॥ ४८ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

hiran'yāccha bhrātā sahita madhu kaitābha balavāna.

jēhiṁ mārē sō'i avatarē'u kṛpāsindhu bhagavāna. 48 (a).

kālarūpa khala bana dahana gunāgāra ghanabōdha.

siva birañci jēhi sēvahiṁ tāsōṁ kavana birōdha. 48 (b).

[Malyawanta continued—] 'The Supreme Lord who had slayed the demons Madhu and Kaitav, as well as the two brothers Hiranyakshyapu and Hiranyaksha, has himself manifested once again (in the form of Lord Ram)¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

The Lord who personifies Kaal (the god of death), the Lord who is like a wild fire to burn a forest represented by wickedness and evil forces, the Lord who is embodiment of all goodness and excellent virtues, the Lord who is all-knowing, omniscient and an image of enlightenment, the Lord who is worshipped and adored by Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma—say, what sense is there in being opposed to him?² (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

²Earlier, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana and the grand-daughter of Malyawanta, had also entreated Ravana to realise his follies and end hostility with Lord Ram, but like Malyawanta here she too had failed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

चौ०. परिहरि बयरु देहु बैदेही । भजहु कृपानिधि परम सनेही ॥ १ ॥
ताके बचन बान सम लागे । करिआ मुह करि जाहि अभागे ॥ २ ॥
बूढ़ भएसि न त मरतेउँ तोही । अब जनि नयन देखावसि मोही ॥ ३ ॥
तेहिं अपने मन अस अनुमाना । बध्यो चहत एहि कृपानिधाना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

parihari bayaru dēhu baidēhī. bhajahu kṛpānidhi parama sanēhī. 1.
tākē bacana bāna sama lāgē. kari'ā muha kari jāhi abhāgē. 2.
būrha bha'ēsi na ta maratē'uṁ tōhī. aba jani nayana dēkhāvasi mōhī. 3.
tēhim apanē mana asa anumānā. badhyō cahata ēhi kṛpānidhānā. 4.

[I sincerely advice you to—] Give Sita (baidēhī) back to the Lord and discard your hostile attitude towards him¹. You should, rather, develop devotion and adoration for Lord Ram who is, by his very nature, exceptionally merciful, kind and compassionate, as well as very affable, affectionate and endearing.' (1)

His (Malyawanta's) words appeared like sharp arrows piercing Ravana. He became furious and contemptuously rebuffed Malyawanta: 'Oh you wretched old fellow! Blacken your godforsaken face and go away from here. (2)

You have become old (so I am constrained to spare your life); otherwise I would have slayed you instantly. Scoot immediately from here; get out of my sight, and don't show me your ugly face again.' (3)

He (Malyawanta) concluded in his heart that surely the Lord (Sri Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being), who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhānā), wishes to get rid of him (Ravana)² (and that is why Ravana has become so stubborn and deaf to good advice). (4)

[Note—¹Mandodari had made the same plea repeatedly to Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 6; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes

Doha no. 14; (iii) Doha no. 15-b; (iv) Doha no. 37 and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes it; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 36.

Ravana's brother Vibhishan too had offered the same advice to Ravana which so much infuriated the latter that he kicked Vibhishan out of the kingdom—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; (ii) Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42.

At that time, when Vibhishan was making efforts to persuade Ravana to return Sita to Lord Ram and make peace with him, Malyawanta had endorsed his views, but like now, Ravana had sternly rebuked him and turned him away—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40.

²The flustered Malyawanta thought to himself: “Ravana is not listening because the Lord has cast his spell of delusions known as ‘Maya’ over him; it has eclipsed Ravana’s wisdom and the ability to think rationally. Forsooth, Ravana is in the throes of death; he is gripped by the fever of doom and destruction. He would therefore not listen, and it is absolutely futile even to try it. It’s the Lord’s wish which no one can change or challenge. It’s the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny that has made Ravana so obstinate and deaf to advice. What can I do; for that matter, what can anybody else do in this situation, for it has become absolutely hopeless.

The use of the word “*krpānidhānā*” for Lord Ram, meaning that the Lord is a treasury of the grand virtues of mercy, kindness, compassion and grace, is significant here in the context of saying that “Ravana’s death is the wish of Lord Ram”. It implies that Lord Ram wants to slay Ravana not because the Lord lacks these virtues in the slightest, or because he is a war-mongering warrior, merciless, cruel and vengeful who is out to kill Ravana just because the latter has taken away his wife Sita, unmindful of the consequences that would follow, such as the heavy loss of life in the ensuing war and the total destruction of the demon race and ruin of the famed golden city of Lanka—but because it is so destined that Ravana would die at the hands of Lord Ram.

The Lord was merely keeping his mandate and the promise he had made, as the Supreme Caretaker of this world, to the gods and mother earth on some earlier occasion. This death of Ravana was pleaded for by the latter, for they were so much horrified by Ravana’s unending torments and reckless misadventures that they had no option left for them but to pray to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to help them get rid of this evil menace, at which the Lord had promised them that he would personally come down as Lord Ram and do whatever is needed to honour their request. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 41 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.}]

सो उठि गयउ कहत दुर्बादा । तब सकोप बोलेउ घननादा ॥ ५ ॥

कौतुक प्रात देखिअहु मोरा । करिहउँ बहुत कहौं का थोरा ॥ ६ ॥

सुनि सुत बचन भरोसा आवा । प्रीति समेत अंक बैठावा ॥ ७ ॥

sō uṭhi gaya'u kahata durbādā. taba sakōpa bōlē'u ghananādā. 5.

kautuka prāta dēkhi'ahu mōrā. kariha'uṁ bahuta kahaurṁ kā thōrā. 6.

suni suta bacana bharōsā āvā. prīti samēta anka baiṭhāvā. 7.

Muttering curses (on Ravana), he (Malyawanta) got up agitatedly and went away (from the court)*.

[*This part of the verse can be interpreted in another way as: “When Ravana used uncouth words for Malyawanta, the latter got up and left the court.”]

Then, Meghanad (“ghananādā”; the son of Ravana)¹ spoke boastfully --- (5)

‘Watch what strange and fantastic deeds I would do tomorrow morning. I will do wonderful and awe-inspiring things; it is better for me not to speak much about them now before I actually exhibit my skills (in the battle-field)². (6)

Hearing the confident words of his son, Ravana felt reassured. He was very pleased with Meghanad and affectionately made him sit on his lap³. (6)

[Note—¹Meghanad was called “ghananādā” because whenever he spoke angrily it was like a clap of thunder emanating from dark stormy clouds.

²When Meghanad observed that his father Ravana was feeling cornered, helpless and distressed, he immediately came to the latter’s rescue. He confidently told Ravana: “Look my father; don’t feel so disheartened. I am still around. Watch what havoc I’ll unleash tomorrow morning in the battle-field. I would like to be modest by not speaking too much of what I intend to do, but have patience and see how I will avenge today’s debacle by wreaking the enemy’s forces ferociously.”

Whenever in the past Ravana suffered defeat in the battle-field, it was Meghanad who come to his rescue. The most famous feat was when Meghanad had freed his father from the captivity of Indra, the king of gods, who had captured him when Ravana attacked heaven. Meghanad immediately launched an offensive to free his father, and after accomplishing this he had tied Indra and brought him to Lanka as a trophy of war. At that time Brahma had gone to free Indra by granting many boons to Meghanad in return. This story is narrated in (a) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 78-81; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 50-54.

As a result, Ravana not only loved Meghanad but put immense faith in him as is evident from verse no. 6 here.

As the war progressed and Meghanad was killed, Ravana was unhinged and he became sure that he is going to lose. So thereafter, overcome with abject grief when he found that everything was lost and there was nothing more to lose than his own life, Ravana had fought the final phase of the war most fervently, most viciously and most ferociously like a true warrior does before he finally collapses and dies in the heat of battle.

Meghanad lived up to his words, for in the next day’s battle he led the charge from the front and poured out his anger on the enemy forces vehemently. He performed many magical feats that would be described shortly in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 52. It was during this battle that Meghanad had shot and wounded Laxman, making him fall unconscious in the battle-field—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54.

³To wit, Ravana made Meghanad sit very close to him on the royal throne; Meghanad sat so close to his father that for all practical purposes he appeared to be sitting on Ravana’s lap. Perhaps Meghanad had one of his hands resting on Ravana’s lap, with his father spreading his hand over his shoulder to hold his dear son tightly close,

giving the impression that the son was virually sitting on his father's lap. This gesture was meant to express Ravana's thanks and gratitude for his beloved son Meghanad.]

करत बिचार भयउ भिनुसारा । लागे कपि पुनि चहूँ दुआरा ॥ ८ ॥
कोपि कपिन्ह दुर्घट गढु घेरा । नगर कोलाहलु भयउ घनेरा ॥ ९ ॥
बिबिधायुध धर निसिचर धाए । गढ ते पर्वत सिखर ढहाए ॥ १० ॥

karata bicāra bhaya'u bhinusārā. lāgē kapi puni cahūṁ du'ārā. 8.
kōpi kapinha durghaṭa gaṛhu ghērā. nagara kōlāhalu bhaya'u ghanērā. 9.
bibidhāyudha dhara niscara dhā'ē. gaṛha tē parbata sikhara ḍhahā'ē. 10.

The whole night was spent in consultations. When the day broke the next day, the monkeys and bears once again surrounded the four gates of the fort¹. (8)

When the powerful monkeys and bears laid siege of the gates and the news spread wildly in Lanka, there was an immense turmoil inside the city. (9)

The demon warriors grabbed myriad kinds of weapons and rushed to face them. They threw (or rolled down) huge boulders resembling pointed peaks of mountains (parbata sikhara) from the top of the fort (in order to crush the monkeys and bears who were massed at the four gates, and surrounded the walls of the fort). (10)

[Note—¹This is the beginning of the second day of the war.]

छं०. ढाहे महीधर सिखर कोटिन्ह बिबिध बिधि गोला चले । १ ।
घहरात जिमि पबिपात गर्जत जनु प्रलय के बादले ॥ २ ॥
मर्कट बिकट भट जुटत कटत न लटत तन जर्जर भए । ३ ।
गहि सैल तेहि गढ पर चलावहिं जहँ सो तहँ निसिचर हए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ḍhāhē mahīdhara sikhara kōṭinha bibidha bidhi gōlā calē. 1.
ghaharāta jimi pabipāta garjata janu pralaya kē bādālē. 2.
markaṭa bikaṭa bhaṭa juṭata kaṭata na laṭata tana jarjara bha'ē. 3.
gahi saila tēhi gaṛha para calāvahiṁ jahaṁ sō tahaṁ niscara ha'ē. 4.

Huge boulders, large as hills and mountains, were rolled down the sides of the fort, and countless balls were shot (from canons and catapults). (Chanda line no. 1)

They (the canons and catapults) produced deafening sounds as if countless thunderbolts were striking simultaneously. They (the demons and monkey warriors) roared and made war-cries fiercely like so many clouds of doomsday rumble and thunder in unison. (Chanda line no. 2)

The ferocious monkey and bear warriors (markaṭa bikaṭa bhaṭa) clashed with their enemies; inspite of their bodies suffering wounds they do not demur or relent or

hesitate from engaging their adversaries in violent, no holds-barred duels. (Chanda line no. 3)

They (the monkeys and bears) grab the falling boulders and fling them back on the fort like so many missiles that are shot back with such high velocity that when they hit the demons atop the walls of the fort, they fall down dead instantly¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Thus the battle of the second day progressed with violence and mayhem, causing serious injuries and casualties on both the sides.

It is to be noted that till this point of time, the mighty gates of the fort of Lanka could not be breached; they still held their ground. However, they soon will be opened when Meghanad marched to the battle-front to take on the Lord's army head-on as promised to Ravana a little while ago in Chaupai line no. 6 that follows Doha no. 48 and precedes these Chandas above.

It ought to be noted that no worthwhile gain was made by either side during the whole of the first day of the war, and the first half of the second day too. The two giant armies clashed and dashed but gained nothing except bloodshed and mayhem.

Meghanad decided to break this logjam by intervening himself. He would march to the battle-field with his large and well-equipped demon army to face the enemy, and this would necessitate the unlocking of the gigantic gates of the fort. Though this "opening of the gates" is not specifically mentioned in the Text, but it is an obvious conclusion—because without their opening, the massive demon army, their huge war chariots and their countless warriors and great commanders, one of them being Meghanad himself, could not step on the battle-field and fight the war directly with Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, Vibhishan who too lent his hand, Sugriv, the king of the monkey forces, and Jamvant, the chief of the bears.

The main actions of the war unfolded on the battle-ground outside the walls of the fort. We shall be reading all about it as the war progresses.]

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Section 14.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 25-64:-

Now let us take a pause at this point and see how the developments in Lanka and the War have been described in Adhyatma Ramayan by quoting from its Lanka Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 25-64 as follows.

This narrative starts with the arrival of Malyawanta to give his advice to Ravana in order to persuade the latter to end hostility. When Ravana refused, the battle commenced with all its ferocity.

ततः समागमद्भृदो माल्यवान् राक्षसो महान् ।
बुद्धिमान्नीतिनिपुणो राज्ञो मातुः प्रियः पिता ॥ २५॥

प्राह तं राक्षसं वीरं प्रशान्तेनान्तरात्मना ।
शृणु राजन् वचो मेऽद्य श्रुत्वा कुरु यथेप्सितम् ॥ २६॥

tataḥ samāgamadvṛddho mālyavān rākṣaso mahān ।
buddhimānnītinipuṇo rājñō mātuh priyaḥ pitā ॥ 25॥
prāha taṁ rākṣasaṁ viraṁ praśāntenāntarātmanā ।
śṛṇu rājan vaco me'dya śrutvā kuru yathepsitam ॥ 26॥

[Lord Shiva said to his consort Uma—] ‘When Suka¹ had gone from there (i.e. from Ravana’s court), Malyavan (also known as “Malyawant”), an old demon who was wise, intelligent and prudent, as well as learned in the rules, regulations and codes of conduct of the day, and who was Ravana’s maternal grandfather, came there (25).

He calmly said to Ravana, the brave demon king, ‘Oh King! Listen to my words carefully. Then do as you think fit (26).

[Note—¹Suka (also pronounced as Shuka, Shuk, Suk) was a messenger of Ravana sent behind Vibhishan, when he went to seek refuge with Lord Ram, to spy on him and report back about whatever he could find out of the Lord’s army and its preparedness. Suka was emotionally won over by the gracious nature of Lord Ram and the way the Lord warmly welcomed Vibhishan inspite of his being his enemy’s (i.e. Ravana’s) brother. He concluded that his own lord, i.e. Ravana, was no match vis-à-vis Lord Ram from any angle, and that he was wrong in his doings and creating unnecessary hostility with the merciful Lord. Suka was also impressed by the Lord’s gallant army and concluded that Ravana stood no chance against the might of it. Thus Suka decided that he would do well now if he followed the example of Vibhishan in seeking peace for his soul by abandoning Ravana and seeking Lord Ram’s refuge. When Suka gave his honest views to Ravana, the latter lost his cool and severely reprimanded Suka, at which the latter left his court and went to surrender himself before Lord Ram. Blessed by the Lord, Suka led a life of a hermit thereafter, spending his time in meditation and spiritual pursuit in the forest alongside other hermits and ascetics.

This story is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 15-56, and Canto 5, verse nos. 1-24.

In Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, Suka’s episode is narrated in its Sundar Kand (Canto 5), Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

यदा प्रविष्टा नगरीं जानकी रामवल्लभा ।
तदादि पुर्या दृश्यन्ते निमित्तानि दशानन ॥ २७॥
घोराणि नाशहेतूनि तानि मे वदतः शृणु ।
खरस्तनितनिर्घोषा मेघा अतिभयङ्कराः ॥ २८॥
शोणितेनाभिवर्षन्ति तङ्कामुष्णेन सर्वदा ।
रुदन्ति देवलिङ्गानि स्विद्यन्ति पृथलन्ति च ॥ २९॥

yadā praviṣṭā nagarīm jānakī rā mavallabhā ।
tadādi puryaṁ drśyante nimittāni daśānana ॥ 27॥

ghorāṇi nāśahetūni tāni me vadataḥ śṛṇu ।
 kharastanitanirghoṣā meghā atibhayaṅkarāḥ ॥ 28॥
 śoṇitenābhivarṣanti laṅkāmuṣṇena sarvadā ।
 rudanti devaliṅgāni svidyanti pracalanti ca ॥ 29॥

27-29. 'Oh the ten headed one (Ravana)! Ever since the beloved of Sri Ram, i.e. his wife Janki (also known as Sita), has entered this city of Lanka, horrifying and awfully bad omens portending destruction and havoc are evident everywhere. I shall briefly tell you about them, listen. Very dark clouds thunder frighteningly with sharp bolts of lightening (27-28), and they incessantly pour hot blood over Lanka. The idols of gods¹ weep, their images perspire, and they move (shift) from their places (pedestals) themselves (29).

[Note—¹It means that though the demons were in general anti-gods, yet they used to worship some unconventional deity or deities whom they venerated as the god or gods of their race.]

कालिका पाण्डुरैर्दन्तैः प्रहसत्यग्रतः स्थिता ।
 खरा गोषु प्रजायन्ते मूषका नकुलैः सह ॥ ३०॥
 माजरिण तु युद्ध्यन्ति पन्नगा गरुडेन तु ।
 करालो विकटो मुण्डः पुरुषः कृष्णपिङ्गलः ॥ ३१॥
 कालो गृहाणि सर्वेषां काले काले त्ववेक्षते ।
 एतान्यन्यानि दृश्यन्ते निमित्तान्युद्भवन्ति च ॥ ३२॥

kālikā pāṇḍurairdantaiḥ prahasatyagrataḥ sthitā ।
 kharā goṣu prajāyante mūṣakā nakulaiḥ saha ॥ 30॥
 mārjāreṇa tu yuddhyanti pannagā garuḍena tu ।
 karālo vikaṭo muṇḍaḥ puruṣaḥ kṛṣṇapiṅgalaḥ ॥ 31॥
 kālo grhāṇi sarveṣāṃ kāle kāle tvavekṣate ।
 etānyanyāni dr̥śyante nimittānyudbhavanti ca ॥ 32॥

30-32. Kalika (a female evil spirit representing death) bares her yellow teeth and laughs in front of demons; the cows give birth to donkeys, while rats fight with cats and mongoose (30), and serpents with herons and eagles. Off and on, a very horrifying, colossus, bare-headed death-like figure, which is black or yellow in countenance, keeps on staring menacingly at the households of the city. In a similar manner, many black (or dark) and inauspicious signs are seen being produced everywhere. [Pay attention to me: these evil signs portend nothing but disaster.] (31-32).

अतः कुलस्य रक्षार्थं शान्तिं कुरु दशानन ।
 सीतां सत्कृत्य सधनां रामायाशु प्रयच्छ भोः ॥ ३३॥
 रामं नारायणं विद्धि विद्वेषं त्यज राघवे ।
 यत्पादपोतमाश्रित्य ज्ञानिनो भवसागरम् ॥ ३४॥

तरन्ति भक्तिपूतान्तास्ततो रामो न मानुषः ।
भजस्व भक्तिभावेन रामं सर्वहृदालयम् ॥ ३७॥

ataḥ kulasya rakṣārthaṁ śāntiṁ kuru daśānana ।
sītāṁ satkr̥tya sadhanāṁ rāmāyāśu prayaccha bhoḥ ॥ 33॥
rāmaṁ nārāyaṇaṁ viddhi vidveṣaṁ tyaja rāghave ।
yatpādapotamāśritya jñānino bhavasāgaram ॥ 34॥
taranti bhaktipūtāntāstato rāmo na mānuṣaḥ ।
bhajasva bhaktibhāvena rāmaṁ sarvahr̥dālayam ॥ 35॥

33-35. Therefore, oh the ten-headed one! You must take effective steps to neutralise and calm them down in order to safeguard and protect the interest of your clan. [To wit, you must take positive, remedial steps immediately to avoid a calamitous war while still there is time for you by abandoning your belligerent attitude.]

[And what ought must you do towards this goal of neutralising the evil effect of bad omens?] You must immediately give Sita back to Sri Ram with full honours and a lot of precious gifts. [To wit, you should send Sita back to her husband Lord Ram, and send a lot of gifts with her as a token of sincerity in making peace with the Lord. A peaceful settlement with the invading army is the best option left for you in view of the dark omens appearing in Lanka.] (33).

You must treat Lord Sri Ram as Narayan (Lord Vishnu) himself. So forget about having any sort of opposition, animosity, malice, ill-will and hostility with him. Remember: By taking the help of a boat in the form of Raghav's (Lord Sri Ram's) lotus-like feet, ascetics and hermits, i.e. all the enlightened souls—whose internal being has been purified by devotion, dedication, adoration and worship of the Lord—cross this ocean-like gross mundane world of delusions. Verily indeed and in all sooth, Lord Sri Ram is not an ordinary human. Therefore, you too must worship, honour, respect, adore and have devotion for the supreme Lord who resides in the heart of all living beings who have devotion, faith and belief in him (34-35).

यद्यपि त्वं दुश्चारे भक्त्या पूतो भविष्यसि ।
मद्वाक्यं कुरु राजेन्द्र कुलकौशलहेतवे ॥ ३६॥
तत्तु माल्यवतो वाक्यं हितमुक्तं दशाननः ।
न मर्षयति दुष्टात्मा कालस्य वशमागतः ॥ ३७॥

yadyapi tvam durācāro bhaktyā pūto bhaviṣyasi ।
madvākyaṁ kuru rājendra kulakauśalahetave ॥ 36॥
tattu mālyavato vākyaṁ hitamuktaṁ daśānanaḥ ।
na marṣayati duṣṭātmā kālasya vaśamāgataḥ ॥ 37॥

36-37. Though your demeanours, actions, characters and deeds are not good (i.e. although you are full of vices, sinful, evil and pervert), you still can become pure and purged of these vices by having his Bhakti. [To wit, by developing the virtues of devotion for Lord Ram, who is a personified form of the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu, by worshipping him and following him as a devotee, by forsaking your

evil ways and manners, you can cleanse your inner self and become as pure and holy as any other devotee of the Lord. This will give your soul eternal peace and beatitude.]

Oh King of Kings! Accept my words of good advice which are meant for the welfare of your whole family and the demon race.' (36).

But these well intentioned words of Malyavan, which were spoken for the good of Ravana, were not acceptable to the latter; the wicked and evil fellow became enraged and felt insulted because he was under the spell of death and in the grip of fate that destined his destruction. So he took umbrage at the suggestions of Malyavan, and treated the latter's advice as an affront to his majesty, valour, abilities and strength (37).

मानवं कृपणं राममेकं शाखामृगाश्रयम् ।
 समर्थं मन्यसे केन हीनं पित्रा मुनिप्रियम् ॥ ३८॥
 रामेण प्रेषितो नूनं भाषसे त्वमनर्गलम् ।
 गच्छ वृद्धोऽसि बन्धुस्त्वं सोढं सर्वं त्वयोदितम् ॥ ३९॥
 इतो मत्कर्णपदवीं दहत्येतद्वचस्तव ।
 इत्युक्त्वा सर्वसचिवैः सहितः प्रस्थितस्तदा ॥ ४०॥
 प्रासादाग्रे समासीनः पश्यन् वानरसैनिकान् ।
 युद्धायायोजयत्सर्वराक्षसान् समुपस्थितान् ॥ ४१॥

mānavam kṛpaṇam rāmamekaṁ śākhāmrgāśrayam ।
 samarthaṁ manyase kena hīnaṁ pitrā munipriyam ॥ 38॥
 rāmeṇa preṣito nūnaṁ bhāṣase tvamanargalam ।
 gaccha vṛddho'si bandhustvaṁ soḍhaṁ sarvaṁ tvayoditam ॥ 39॥
 ito matkarṇapadaviṁ dahatyetadvacastava ।
 ityuktvā sarvasacivaiḥ sahitaḥ prasthitastadā ॥ 40॥
 prāsādāgre samāsīnaḥ paśyan vānarasainikān ।
 yuddhāyāyojayatsarvarākṣasān samupasthitān ॥ 41॥

38-41. He said contemptuously, 'In what respect do you consider Sri Ram—who is but a poor, lowly and humble human—able and competent and as majestic as you make him out to be, especially when he has taken the help of those who reside on the branches of trees (i.e. monkeys), and who has been exiled even by his own father thinking that he was no good? He is only loved by sages, hermits, seers, ascetics etc. (but surely not by those who are brave and gallant warriors like me) (38).

It looks that Sri Ram has sent you as his advocate to mislead me by creating a smoke screen of fear in my mind, and that is why you talk such nuisance. Go, you are old and my relative (maternal grandfather; see verse no. 25). So I have tolerated whatever you have said (otherwise, I would have killed you) (39).

But enough is enough; your words scorch my ears and I don't want to hear another single utterance of yours. [Scoot from here forthwith; I don't want to see you an instant more.]'

Scolding Malyavan most disdainfully and sternly rebuking him, Ravana left his court in a huff; he was accompanied by all his other ministers who were in attendance there (40).

Then he climbed to the highest terrace in his palace and sat down there. From there, he watched the monkey army and took note of its formations. Then he started appointing his commanders and assigning specific duties to the demon warriors who were sitting around him, in preparation for the war (41).

रामोऽपि धनुरादाय लक्ष्मणेन समाहृतम् ।
दृष्ट्वा रावणमासीनं कोपेन कलुषीकृतः ॥ ४२॥
किरीटिनं समासीनं मन्त्रिभिः परिवेष्टितम् ।
शशाङ्कार्धनिभेनैव बाणेनैकेन राघवः ॥ ४३॥
श्वेतच्छत्रसहस्राणि किरीटदशकं तथा ।
विच्छेद निमिषार्धेन तदद्भुतमिवाभवत् ॥ ४४॥

rāmo'pi dhanurādāya lakṣmaṇena samāhṛtam ।
dr̥ṣṭvā rāvaṇamāsīnaṃ kopena kaluṣīkṛtaḥ ॥ 42॥
kirīṭinaṃ samāsīnaṃ mantribhiḥ pariveṣṭitam ।
śaśāṅkārdhanibhenaiva bāṇenaikena rāghavaḥ ॥ 43॥
śvetacchatrasahasrāṇi kirīṭadaśakam tathā ।
ciccheda nimiṣārdhena tadadbhutamivābhavat ॥ 44॥

42-44. Meanwhile, here Lord Sri Ram saw Ravana (sitting on the terrace of his palace) and angrily lifted the bow brought to him by Laxman (42).

He (Ravana) had crowns on his head and was sitting surrounded by his council of ministers. Then, using an arrow with a semi-circular head (i.e. an arrow with a scythe or sickle-like head), Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) (43) cut-off thousands of white ceremonial umbrellas which were over Ravana's head along with all the 10 crowns that adorned his head. It was a miraculous feat that was most astonishingly done in literally 'half of a moment' ("nimiṣārdhena"; very quickly before anyone could understand what happened)¹ (44).

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

लज्जितो रावणस्तूर्णं विवेश भवनं स्वकम् ।
आहूय राक्षसान् सर्वान् प्रहस्तप्रमुखान् खलः ॥ ४५॥
वानरैः सह युद्धाय नोदयामास सत्वरः ।
ततो भेरीमृदङ्गाद्यैः पणवानकगोमुखैः ॥ ४६॥
महिषोष्ट्रैः खरैः सिंहैर्द्वीपिभिः कृतवाहनाः ।
खड्गशूलधनुःपाशयष्टितोमरशक्तिभिः ॥ ४७॥
लक्षिताः सर्वतो लङ्कां प्रतिद्वारमुपाययुः ।
तत्पूर्वमेव रामेण नोदिता वानरर्षभाः ॥ ४८॥

lajjito rāvaṇastūrṇaṃ viveśa bhavanaṃ svakam ।
āhūya rākṣasān sarvān prahastapramukhān khalaḥ ॥ 45॥

vānaraiḥ saha yuddhāya nodayāmāsa satvarah ।
 tato bherīmṛdaṅgādyaiḥ paṇavānakagomukhaiḥ ॥ 46॥
 mahiṣoṣṭraiḥ kharaiḥ siṃhairdvīpibhiḥ kṛtavāhanāḥ ।
 khaḍgaśūladhanuḥpāśayaṣṭitomaraśaktibhiḥ ॥47॥
 lakṣitāḥ sarvato laṅkāṃ pratidvāramupāyayuh ।
 tatpūrvameva rāmeṇa noditā vānararṣabhāḥ ॥ 48॥

45-48. Being extremely ashamed and humiliated by this unexpected development, Ravana got up and immediately went inside his palace. He summoned Prahast and all other chief demons (45), and ordered them to start the war with the monkeys forthwith.

[The felling of Ravana's crowns and ceremonial umbrellas were too much for him to bear. It was a sort of provocative assault on his self-respect, dignity and honour that literally broke the camel's back. If he still had some secret desire to make some sort of compromise then that was knifed. The battle actually begins from here.]

Then the demons sounded various musical instruments that are played to announce the commencement of war; it was a war cry and a clarion call for the final out-break of hostilities.

These instruments were kettle-drums, battle-drums, cymbals, bugles etc. The demon army rode to the battle front on various sorts of animals such as buffaloes, camels and donkeys, lions and tigers; they armed themselves to the teeth with swords, tridents, bows, slings, rods, batons, spears and arrows and all other kinds of missiles.

The formidable demon army then appeared at each of the entrance gates of Lanka. [There were four massive gates of the fort¹.]

Here in the camp of Lord Sri Ram, he had already given necessary orders to his monkey commanders with respect to the launching of the assault on Lanka (45-48).

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39.]

उद्यम्य गिरिशृङ्गाणि शिखराणि महान्ति च ।
 तरुंश्चोत्पाद्य विविधान् युद्धाय हरियूथपाः ॥ ४९॥
 प्रेक्षमाणा रावणस्य तान्यनीकानि भागशः ।
 राघवप्रियकामार्थं लङ्कामारुरुहस्तदा ॥ ५०॥

udyamya giriśṛṅgāṇi śikharāṇi mahānti ca ।
 taruṃścotpāṭya vividhān yuddhāya hariyūthapāḥ ॥ 49॥
 prekṣamāṇā rāvaṇasya tānyanīkāni bhāgaśaḥ ।
 rāghavapriyakāmārthaṃ laṅkāmaruruhustadā ॥ 50॥

49-50. With Lord's green signal to attack, the monkey and bear warriors picked up large rocks and boulders from mountain tops and uprooted different types of large trees to arm themselves as they proceeded for battle. They saw the different sections of Ravana's troops stationed at different gates of the fort of Lanka. Then the Lord's

army climbed upon the ramparts and battlements of the fort of Lanka to successfully accomplish the Lord's work which was most important and very dear to him¹ (49-50).

[Note—¹What was this work? From the larger perspective of the welfare of this creation and the Supreme Being's duties towards it, it was to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons who had been tormenting all the creatures in the world.

To wit, from a wider and a spiritual perspective it was to free the souls of the demons from their evil gross bodies in which their souls were trapped, so that they can find deliverance and emancipation for themselves, so that salvation could be attained by these unfortunate souls. However, from a more earthly and limited perspective, it was to free Sita from the clutches of Ravana by defeating him in the war.]

ते दुर्मैः पर्वताग्रैश्च मुष्टिभिश्च प्लवङ्गमाः ।
ततः सहस्रयूथाश्च कोटियूथाश्च यूथपाः ॥ ५१॥
कोटीशतयुताश्चान्ये रुरुधुर्नगरं भृशम् ।
आप्लवन्तः प्लवन्तश्च गर्जन्तश्च प्लवङ्गमाः ॥ ५२॥

te drumaiḥ parvatāgraiśca muṣṭibhiśca plavaṅgamāḥ ।
tataḥ sahasrayūthāśca koṭiyūthāśca yūthapāḥ ॥ 51॥
koṭīśatayutāścānye rurudhurnagaram bhṛśam ।
āplavantāḥ plavantaśca garjantaśca plavaṅgamāḥ ॥ 52॥

51-52. Out of them (i.e. the monkey and bear commanders), some were the commanders of a thousand troops, some of ten thousand troops, and still others of hundreds of thousands of troops. This formidable and ferocious army besieged the city of Lanka (and its fort) from all the sides. The warriors were very excited as they jumped, hopped and skipped energetically, shouting and roaring in a fearsome way at the top of their voices. They were armed with trees and mountains (i.e. with large rocks and boulders etc.), and were ready to strike the enemy with clenched fists. [The monkeys and bears thrust their clenched fists angrily in the air, taunting the demons and aiming their fists at those looking down at them from the top of the fort.] (51-52).

रामो जयत्यतिबलौ लक्ष्मणश्च महाबलः ।
राजा जयति सुग्रीवो राघवेणानुपालितः ॥ ५३॥
इत्येवं घोषयन्तश्च समं युयुधिरेऽरिभिः ।
हनूमानङ्गदश्चैव कुमुदो नील एव च ॥ ५४॥
नलश्च शरभश्चैव मैन्दो द्विविद एव च ।
जाम्बवान् दधिवक्त्रश्च केसरी तार एव च ॥ ५५॥
अन्ये च बलिनः सर्वे यूथपाश्च प्लवङ्गमाः ।
द्वाराण्युत्प्लुत्य लङ्कायाः सर्वतो रुरुधुर्भृशम् ।
तदा वृक्षैर्महाकायाः पर्वताग्रैश्च वानराः ॥ ५६॥
निजघ्नुस्तानि रक्षांसि नखैर्दन्तैश्च वेगिताः ।
राक्षसाश्च तदा भीमा द्वारेभ्यः सर्वतो रुषा ॥ ५७॥

निर्गत्य भिन्दिपालैश्च खड्गैः शूलैः परश्वधैः ।
निजघ्नुर्वानरानीकं महाकाया महाबलाः ॥ ५८॥

rāmo jayatyatibalo lakṣmaṇaśca mahābalaḥ ।
rājā jayati sugrīvo rāghaveṇānupālitaḥ ॥ 53॥
ityevaṃ ghoṣayantaśca samaṃ yuyudhire'ribhiḥ ।
hanūmānaṅgadaścaiva kumudo nīla eva ca ॥ 54॥
nalaśca śarabhaścaiva maindo dvivida eva ca ।
jāmbavān dadhivaktraśca kesarī tāra eva ca ॥ 55॥
anye ca balinaḥ sarve yūthapāśca plavaṅgamāḥ ।
dvārāṇyutplutya laṅkāyāḥ sarvato rurudhurbhṛśam ।
tadā vṛkṣairmahākāyāḥ parvatāgraiśca vānarāḥ ॥ 56॥
nijaghnustāni rakṣāṃsi nakhairdantaiśca vegitāḥ ।
rākṣasāśca tadā bhīmā dvārebhyaḥ sarvato ruṣā ॥ 57॥
nirgatya bhindipālaiśca khadgaiḥ śūlaiḥ paraśvadhaiḥ ।
nijaghnurvānarānīkaṃ mahākāyā mahābalāḥ ॥ 58॥

53-58. 'Glory to the most valiant and mighty Lord Sri Ram and Laxman! Glory to Sugriv who is protected by Raghav (Lord Ram)!' (53).

Raising such slogans in a thunderous and resounding voice, they (the Lord's troops) clashed with the enemy (Ravana's troops).

Hanuman, Angad, Kumud, Neel, Nal, Sharabh, Mainda, Dwivid, Jamvant, Dadhimukh, Keshari, Taar (54-55) —

—And other powerful and gallant monkey warriors and their commanders, jumped and bounced enthusiastically as they surrounded all the gates of Lanka from all the sides.

Then holding large trees as well as rocks and boulders picked up from mountain sides, those monkeys swiftly began to attack the demons. They also used their teeth and nails in the assault on the demons.

Then the most strong and powerful demons, who were very fearful and appeared formidable with their colossus shapes and sizes, emerged from all the gates of the city, armed with lances, spears and spikes, as well as swords, tridents, battle-axes etc. to launch a vicious counter attack on the army of monkeys and bears (56-58).

रक्षसांश्च तथा जघ्नुर्वानरा जितकाशिनः ।
तदा बभूव समये मांसशोणितकर्दमः ॥ ५९॥
रक्षसां वानराणां च सम्बभूवाद्भुतोपमः ।
ते हयैश्च गर्जैश्चैव रथैः काम्बुनसन्निभैः ॥ ६०॥
रक्षोन्याघ्रा युयुधिरे नादयन्तो दिशो दश ।
रक्षसाश्च कपीन्द्राश्च परस्परजयैषिणः ॥ ६१॥

rākṣasāṃśca tathā jaghnurvānarā jitakāśinaḥ ।

tadā babhūva samaro māṃsaśoṇitakardamaḥ ॥ 59॥
 rakṣasāṃ vānarāṇāṃ ca sambabhūvādbhutopamaḥ ।
 te hayaiśca gajaiścaiva rathaiḥ kāñcanasannibhaiḥ ॥ 60॥
 rakṣovyāghrā yuyudhire nādayanto diśo daśa ।
 rākṣasāśca kapīndrāśca parasparajayaīṣiṇaḥ ॥ 61॥

59-61. The victorious monkey warriors too began to hit back at the demons ferociously. At that time, a very fierce and spectacular battle erupted between the demons and the monkeys as a result of which blood and flesh formed slush on the battle-field. The brave lion-like demons rode horses, elephants and golden chariots. All the directions of the compass reverberated and echoed with their thunderous roars and shrieks (i.e. war cries). The demons and monkeys were eager to attain victory over each other (59-61).

रक्षसान् वानरा जघ्नुर्वानरांश्चैव रक्षसाः ।
 रामेण विष्णुना दृष्टा हरयो दिविजांशजाः ॥ ६२॥
 बभूवुर्बलिनो हृष्टास्तदा पीतामृता इव ।
 सीताभिर्मर्षपापेन रावणेनाभिपालितान् ॥ ६३॥
 हतश्रीकान् हतबलान् रक्षसान् जघ्नुर्योजसा ।
 चतुर्थांशावशेषेण निहतं रक्षसं बलम् ॥ ६४॥

rākṣasān vānarā jaghnurvānarāṃścaiva rākṣasāḥ ।
 rāmeṇa viṣṇunā dr̥ṣṭā harayo divijāṃśajāḥ ॥ 62॥
 babhūvurbalino hr̥ṣṭāstadā pītāmṛtā iva ।
 sītābhimarśapāpena rāvaṇenābhipālītān ॥ 63॥
 hataśrīkān hatabalān rākṣasān jaghnurojasā ।
 caturthāṃśāvaśeṣeṇa nihataṃ rākṣasaṃ balam ॥ 64॥

62-64. The monkeys (and bears) on the one side, and the demons on the other side, started hitting and killing each other viciously; both the warring armies fought with a firmness of purpose, strength of resolution, and vigour of action; they dueled feverishly and fiercely, with ferocity, viciousness and violence the like of which was not witnessed anywhere anytime in a battle hereto before in this world.

The monkeys, who were born out of the genes of the various gods¹, who were therefore inherently indefeatable and possessed unmatched potentials, but who gained more might, valour, fierceness and powers when Lord Sri Ram, who was Lord Vishnu himself, glanced at them with his benevolent look, thereby gracing them with his blessings, and this, coupled with the earnestness of purpose and conviction in the noble cause for which they had engaged themselves in this war, had made them supremely invincible in the battle-field.

Thus empowered and emboldened, the monkeys and bears acquired special abilities and vigour and vitality and punch as if they had drunk 'Amrit', the elixir that grants renewed vigour and dynamism to even the dying; so they began pounding and slaying the demons vigorously. The demons, on the other hand, had lost their enthusiasm, zeal, strength and courage, as well as their confidence and faith in

themselves and the cause they were espousing, because they were nourished and sustained by Ravana who had become very sinful, especially for his very evil deed of having dared to touch Sita, making them uncertain, doubtful and dithering on the ground of the battle-field².

The result was that as the day and the battle progressed, the demon army was gradually depleted to such an extent that by the end of the first day of the battle it was reduced to a quarter of its original strength (62-64).

[Note—¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 188; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-32.

²The idea is that the monkeys gained an upper hand in the battle because they were fighting for a good cause and a righteous lord (Sri Ram), while the demons lost ground because they were fighting for the wrong cause and for an evil lord (Ravana).

Another important point is to be noted here. It is this: Earlier it has been clearly stated earlier that Ravana did not touch Sita even while kidnapping her—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 51-52. So by saying that Ravana had “touched Sita” and had therefore become most sinful is just a symbolic way of saying that he had dared to cast his evil and wicked eyes on her. ‘Touch’ here does not mean physical contact by the hand; it is a figure of speech indicating how he had even dared to think of her or keep her in his captivity or cast his evil eyes on her with malefic intentions—implying that if one thinks of someone in an evil way then it is as good as ‘touching that person’.]

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Section 14.3: Kavitawali Ramayan

Kavitawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 30-51.

We have read about the first phase of the war, with attacks and counter-attacks by the army of Lord Ram and that of Ravana, from Ram Charit Manas and Adhyatma Ramayan, in Sub-sections 14.1 and 14.2 respectively. It will however be evident that while the narrative in the Ram Charit Manas gives a vivid description of the attack on the fort of Lanka and its successful breaching by the Lord’s army, which is immediately followed by a vigorous battle between the two armies in which Hanuman and Angad played a hero’s role, the narrative in the Adhyatma Ramayan is crisper and a little bit more brief.

But they are silent with respect to what happened inside the city of Lanka; what was the situation in the famed city when the army of monkeys and bears invaded it after leaping on the walls of the fort? Except saying in Ram Charit Manas, albeit in a passing way, that there was a great turmoil in the city of Lanka when the monkeys invaded, with a lot of wailing and shrieking of terrified women and children, and the cursing of Ravana by the horrified citizens in general for being the cause of their sufferings (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that

precede Doha no. 42), nothing much is said about the massive havoc and destruction, of the mayhem and upheaval that was caused inside the city by this invasion.

This shortfall however is recompensed in “Kavitawali Ramayan”, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 30-51 which vividly describes the scene of death and destruction in the city of Lanka as the war raged with all its fierceness around it. These verses give to the reader a virtual ring-side view of the developments on the streets of Lanka, and how its helpless population reacted to, and was affected by, this blood-curdling legendary war of a mammoth proportion.

Now, let us commence reading from Kavitawali Ramayan as mentioned herein above.

The Demon-Monkey War

रोष्यो रन रावनु, बोलाय बीर बानइत,
जानत जे रीति सब संजुग समाजकी ।
चली चतुरंग चमू, चपरि हने निसान,
सेना सराहन जोग रातिचरराजकी ।।
तुलसी बिलोकि कपि-भालु किलकत
ललकत लखि ज्यो कँगाल पातरी सुनाजकी ।
रामरुख निरखि हरष्यो हियँ हनूमानु,
मानो खेलवार खोली सीसताज बाजकी ।।30 ।।

30. rōśyō rana rāvanu, bōlāya bīra bāna'ita,
jānata jē rīti saba sañjuga samājakī.
calī caturaṅga camū, capari hanē nisāna,
sēnā sarāhana jōga rāticararājakī..
tulasī bilōki kapi-bhālu kilakata
lalakata lakhi jyōm kaṁgāla pātārī sunājakī.
rāmarukha nirakhi haraśyō hiyaṁ hanūmānu,
mānō khēlavāra khōlī sīsataja bājakī..30..

Verse no. 6/30—Then Ravana angrily summoned his very famous and able warriors, who were experts in the art of warfare. All the four arms of the demon army (infantry, armour, cavalry and elephants) started for the battle-front as the war-drums suddenly sounded the battle-cry, chillingly and loudly. The demon army of Ravana looked most magnificent and awe-inspiring at that moment.

Tulsidas says that seeing them, the monkeys and bears laughed derisively and merrily as if beggars greedily look at platters full of delicious food. On a signal from Lord Ram, Hanuman became excited as if a hunter had opened the cage of the falcon (and given it freedom to hunt its prey).

[Note—The war between the monkey army and the demon army has been described in detail also in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 103.]

साजि कै सनाह-गजगाह सउछाह दल,
महाबली धाए बीर जातुधान धीरके ।
इहाँ भालु-बंदर बिसाल मेरु-मंदर-से

लिए सैल-साल तोरि नीरनिधितीरके ।।
 तुलसी तमकि-ताकि भिरे भारी जुद्ध क्रुद्ध,
 सेनप सराहे निज निज भट भीरके ।
 रुंडनके झुंड झूमि-झूमि झुकरे-से नाचै,
 समर सुमार सूर मारै रघुबीरके ।।31।।

31. sāji kai sanāha-gajagāha sa'uchāha dala,
 mahābalī dhā'ē bīra jātudhāna dhīrakē.
 ihāṁ bhālu-bandara bisāla mēru-mandara-sē
 li'ē saila-sāla tōri nīranidhitīrakē..
 tulasī tamaki-tāki bhirē bhārī jud'dha krud'dha,
 sēnapa sarāhē nija nija bhaṭa bhīrakē.
 ruṇḍanakē jhuṇḍa jhūmi-jhūmi jhukarē-sē nācaim,
 samara sumāra sūra mārāim raghubīrakē..31..

Verse no. 6/31—The courageous Ravana's great warriors advanced armed with shields and supported by war-elephants (1).

Here, large monkeys, who were as huge as Mt. Sumeru and Mt. Mandar, uprooted mountains and Shal Trees from near the sea shore (2).

Tulsidas says that then both the groups, full of anger, faced each other, and roaring loudly clashed with each other furiously. The commanders encouraged the warriors under their respective commands (3).

The bodies, whose heads were cut (headless trunks) begin to totter and swoon but refused to fall, so excited was their blood; and Lord Ram's champion warriors began to hit hard at the enemy in the battle (4).

तीखे तुरंग कुरंग सुरंगनि साजि चढ़े छँटे छैल छबीले ।
 भारी गुमान जिन्हें मनमें, कबहुँ न भए रनमें तन ढीले ।।
 तुलसी लखि कै गज केहरि ज्यो झपटे, पटके सब सूर सलीले ।
 भूमि परे भट भूमि कराहत, हाँकि हने हनुमान हठीले ।।32।।

32. tīkhē turaṅga kuraṅga suraṅgani sāji caṛhē chaṁṭi chaila chabīlē.
 bhārī gumāna jinhēm manamēm, kabahūṁ na bha'ē ranamēm tana ḍhīlē..
 tulasī lakhi kai gaja kēhari jyōṁ jhapṭē, paṭakē saba sūra salīlē.
 bhūmi parē bhaṭa bhūmi karāhata, hāṁki hanē hanumāna haṭhīlē..32..

Verse no. 6/32—Those who were very proud of their bravery and courage, whose bodies never relaxed (i.e. were ever eager to fight and engage themselves in robust activity)—such warriors mounted horses as swift as deer. Fully prepared to go into battle, the cavalry brigade charged. (1)

Tulsidas says even as a lion leaps at an elephant at the sight of it, so did Hanuman leapt forward and playfully began to knock the cavalry down, and they swooned, fell to the ground and wailed. This way the adamant Hanuman started slaying the demons by repeatedly challenging them. (2)

सूर सँजोइल साजि सुबाजि, सुसेल धरै बगमेल चले हैं ।
 भारी भुजा भरी, भारी सरीर, बली बिजयी सब भाँति भले हैं ।।

‘तुलसी’ जिन्ह धाएँ धुकै धरनी, धरनीधर धौर धकान हले हैं।
ते रन-तीक्खन लक्खन लाखन दानि ज्यों दारिद दाबि दले हैं।।33।।

33. sūra saṃjō'ila sāji subāji, susēla dharairṃ bagamēla calē hairṃ.
bhārī bhujā bhārī, bhārī sarīra, balī bijayī saba bhāṃti bhalē hairṃ..
'tulasi' jinha dhā'ēṃ dhukai dharanī, dharanīdhara dhaura dhakāna halē hairṃ.
tē rana-tikkhana lakkhana lākhana dāni jyōm dārida dābi dalē hairṃ..33..

Verse no. 6/33—Famous and valiant warriors mounted decorated horses, were armed with sharp spears, and rode to the battle in close formation. They had big muscular arms and well-built bodies, and they appeared attractive, brave and victorious by all means. (1)

Tulsidas says that lakhs of artful and witty warriors, who shook the earth when they ran and the mountains swayed when pushed by them, were defeated and destroyed by Laxman in the battle-field as if a great donor eliminates poverty by immense charity. (2)

गहि मंदर बंदर-भालु चले, सो मनो उनये घन सावनके।
'तुलसी' उत झुंड प्रचंड झुके, झपटै भट जे सुरदावनके।।
बिरुझे बिरुदैत जे खेत अरे, न टरे हठि बैरु बढावनके।
रन मारि मची उपरी-उपरा भलें बीर रघुपति रावनके।।34।।

34. gahi mandara bandara-bhālu calē, sō manō unayē ghana sāvanakē.
'tulasi' uta jhuṇḍa pracaṇḍa jhukē, jhapaṭairṃ bhaṭa jē suradāvanakē..
birujhē birudaita jē khēta arē, na ṭarē haṭhi bairu baṛhāvanakē..
rana māri macī uparī-uparā bhalēm bīra raghuppati rāvanakē..34..

Verse no. 6/34—The monkeys and bears charged forward, armed with mountains in their hands. The two armies looked like two huge banks of thick black clouds appearing on the horizon simultaneously.

Tulsidas says that at the same time, the multitudes of demons who could instill fear in the hearts of Gods, also charged and yelled.

Numerous famed warriors of Ravana, who had stood staunchly in the battle-field, clashed with each other because they were literally itching for a fight with anyone who came their way. They were stubborn and resolute, and refused to move or yield their ground. The warriors of Ram and Ravana crowded and swirled around each other as furious and no-holds-barred battle ensued.

सर-तोमर सेलसमूह पँवारत, मारत बीर निसाचरके।
इत तें तरु-ताल-तमाल चले, खर खंड प्रचंड महीधरके।।
'तुलसी' करि केहरिनादु भिरे भट, खग्ग खगे, खपुआ खरके।
नख-दंतन सों भुजदंड बिहंडत, मुंडसों मुंड परे झरके।।35।।

35. sara-tōmara sēlasamūha paṃvārata, mārata bīra nisācarakē.
ita tēm taru-tāla-tamāla calē, khara khaṇḍa pracaṇḍa mahīdharakē..
'tulasi' kari kēharinādu bhirē bhaṭa, khagga khagē, khapu'ā kharakē..
nakha-dantana sōm bhujadaṇḍa bihaṇḍata, muṇḍasōm muṇḍa parē

jharakē..35..

Verse no. 6/35—Ravana's warriors are using arrows, spikes and mountains for the attack, and on this side (Ram's side) they are being repulsed with uprooted Tal and Tamaal Trees (both having stout and long stems), and large boulders which are sharp and pointed. (1)

Tulsidas says all the warriors roared like a lion and clashed. The brave plunged in the sea of swords while the cowards stealthily slithered away. The monkeys are piercing the arrows of the demons with their teeth and claws, while the severed heads of the brave lie on the ground and insult each other. (2)

रजनीचर-मत्तगयंद-घटा बिघटै मृगराजके साज लरै ।
झपटै भट कोटि महीं पटकै, गरजै, रघुबीरकी सौह करै ।।
'तुलसी' उत हाँक दसाननु देत, अचेत भे बीर, को धीर धरै ।
बिरुझो रन मारुतको बिरुदैत, जो कालहु कालुसो बूझि परै ।।36 ।।

36. rajanīcara-mattagayanda-ghaṭā bighaṭai mṛgarājakē sāja larai.
jhapaṭai bhaṭa kōṭi mahīm paṭakai, garajai, raghubīrakī saunha karai..
'tulasi' uta hāmka dasānanu dēta, acēta bhē bīra, kō dhīra dharai.
birujhō rana mārutakō birudaita, jō kālahu kālusō būjhi parai..36..

Verse no. 6/36—Hanuman destroys the demon army like a lion amongst mad and wild elephants. [A single lion can create havoc in a group of wild elephants. Hanuman is compared to this lion.] He leaps and dashes numerous warriors to the ground and raises the cry of Lord Ram's name (1).

Tulsidas says Ravana raises war cries from the opposite side, hearing which the monkeys become unconscious out of fear- who can have courage to withstand that ferocious challenge of Ravana? The champion-of-all Hanuman, seeing the monkeys unconscious and losing ground against the enemy, rushed and crashed in the enemy so furiously that even the God of death trembled out of fear (2).

जे रजनीचर बीर बिसाल, कराल बिलोकत काल न खाए ।
ते रन-रोर कपीसकिसोर बड़े बरजोर परे फग पाये ।।
लूम लपेटि, अकास निहारि कै, हाँकि हठी हनुमान चलाए ।
सूखि गे गात, चले नभ जात, परे भ्रमबात, न भूतल आए ।।37 ।।

37. jē rajanīcara bīra bisāla, karāla bilōkata kāla na khā'ē.
tē rana-rōra kapīsakisōra barē barajōra parē phaga pāyē..
lūma lapēṭi, akāsa nihāri kai, hāmki haṭhī hanumāna calā'ē.
sūkhi gē gāta, calē nabha jāta, parē bhramabāta, na bhūtala ā'ē..37..

Verse no. 6/37—Those huge, war-hardened and brave demon warriors whom even death could not eat (i.e. kill) out of fear of their ferocity (death was afraid to go near them), were caught by the son of Kesari (Hanuman) in his trap, who challenged them contemptibly, and then coiling them in his tail, he flung them skywards. The demons' bodies shriveled (shrank) in fear and they kept on flying upwards (as if caught in a tornado and sucked upwards or moved upwards in a spiral of air), and they never

returned to earth (it is said that the comets and other cosmic debris originated from this incident).

जो दससीसु महीधर ईसको बीस भुजा खुलि खेलनिहारो ।
लोकप, दिग्गज, दानव, देव सबै सहमे सुनि साहसु भारो ॥
बीर बड़ो बिरुदैत बली, अजहूँ जग जागत जासु पँवारो ।
सो हनुमान हन्यो मुठिकाँ गिरि गो गिरिराजु ज्योँ गाजको मारो ॥३८॥

38. jō dasasīsu mahīdhara īsakō bīsa bhuajā khuli khēlanihārō.
lōkapa, diggaja, dānava, dēva sabai sahamē suni sāhasu bhārō..
bīra barō birudaita balī, ajahūṁ jaga jāgata jāsū paṁvārō.
sō hanumāna han'yō muṭhikāṁ giri gō girirāju jyōṁ gājakō mārō..38..

Verse no. 6/38—Ravana, who could uproot the abode of Lord Shiva, Mt. Kailash, with his 20 arms and play with it unhindered and without qualms; even the Gods, demons and guardians of all the directions of the Universe (Dikpals) were afraid of whose strength and courage (1); who was very brave and immensely courageous and whose fame is still being sung in the world, the same Ravana fell to the ground on being punched by the clenched fists of Hanuman as if a huge mountain crashes on being hit by thunderbolt (2).

दुर्गम दुर्ग, पहारतैं भारे, प्रचंड महा भुजदंड बने हैं ।
लक्खमें पक्खर, तिक्खन तेज, जे सूरसमाजमें गाज गने हैं ॥
ते बिरुदैत बली रनबाँकुरे हाँकि हठी हनुमान हने हैं ।
नामु लै रामु देखावत बंधुको घूमत घायल घायँ घने हैं ॥३९॥

39. durgama durga, pahāratēm bhārē, pracaṇḍa mahā bhujadaṇḍa banē haim.
lakkhamēm pakkhara, tikkhana tēja, jē sūrasamājamēm gāja ganē haim..
tē birudaita balī ranabāṁkurē hāṁki haṭhī hanumāna hanē haim.
nāmu lai rāmu dēkhāvata bandhukō ghūmata ghāyala ghāyaṁ ghanē haim..39..

Verse no. 6/39—Those demon warriors, whose arms are more invincible than an impregnable fortress and are larger than mountains, those who are ace among countless warriors and whose valour and energy are very famous and matchless, and those who are considered as 'lightening' among the society of warriors—all those famous veterans, war-hardened, valorous, valiant and brave demon warriors were slain by a stubborn Hanuman. Some of them who did not die, but were seriously wounded and roamed in the battle-field, were shown to Laxman by Lord Ram and identified by their individual names. [This shows that Lord Ram was well acquainted with the individual commanders, senior warriors and braves of the demon army.]

हाथिन सों हाथी मारे, घोरेसों सँघारे घोरे,
रथनि सों रथ बिदरनि बलवानकी ।
चंचल चपेट, चोट चरन चकोट चाहें,

हहरानी फौजें भरानी जातुधानकी ।।
 बार-बार सेवक-सराहना करत रामु,
 'तुलसी' सराहैं रीति साहेब सुजानकी ।
 लाँबी लूम लसत, लपेटि पटकत भट,
 देखौ देखौ, लखन! लरनि हनुमानकी ।।40 ।।

40. hāthina sōm hāthī mārē, ghōrēsōm saṁghārē ghōrē,
 rathani sōm ratha bidarani balavānakī.
 cañcala capēṭa, cōṭa carana cakōṭa cāhēm,
 haharānī phaujēm bhaharānī jātudhānakī..
 bāra-bāra sēvaka-sarāhanā karata rāmu,
 'tulasī' sarāhai rīti sāhēba sujānakī.
 lāmbī lūma lasata, lapēṭi paṭakata bhaṭa,
 dēkhau dēkhau, lakhana! larani hanumānakī..40..

Verse no. 6/40—Hanuman dashed elephants against elephants, killed horses by swinging other horses against them, crashed chariots against chariots and broke them into splinters (1). The demon army staggered and swooned when it was punched, bitten, kicked and thrashed by Hanuman (2).

Lord Ram again and again (repeatedly) praised the astounding valour and the magnificent feats of Hanuman, and said, 'Look, Laxman! Just have a look at the expertise in war of dear Hanuman. How marvelous his tail looks, by which he entraps the demons and dashes them against the ground.'

Tulsidas also praises the affection of his Lord towards his devoted servants (Hanuman) (3-4).

दबकि दबोरे एक, बारिधिमें बोरे एक,
 मगन महीमें, एक गगन उड़ात हैं ।
 पकरि पछारे कर, चरन उखारे एक,
 चीरि-फारि डारे, एक मीजि मारे लात हैं ।।
 'तुलसी' लखत, रामु, रावनु, बिबुध, बिधि,
 चक्रपानि, चंडीपति, चंडिका सिहात हैं ।
 बड़े-बड़े बानइत बीर बलवान बड़े,
 जातुधान, जूथप निपाते बातजात हैं ।।41 ।।

41. dabaki dabōrē ēka, bāridhimēm bōrē ēka,
 magana mahīmēm, ēka gagana uṛāta haiṁ.
 pakari pachārē kara, carana ukhārē ēka,
 cīri-phāri ḍārē, ēka mīji mārē lāta haiṁ..
 'tulasī' lakhata, rāmu, rāvanu, bibudha, bidhi,
 cakrapāni, caṇḍīpati, caṇḍikā sihāta haiṁ.
 baṛē-baṛē bāna'ita bīra balavāna baṛē,
 jātudhāna, jūthapa nipātē bātajāta haiṁ..41..

Verse no. 6/41—He (Hanuman) squeezed someone stealthily, drowned some in the ocean, buried others in the earth, flung some in the air (1), dashed someone by the hands, tore the legs from the trunk of still others, lacerated and tore-apart the flesh here and ground some one with his legs there (2).

Tulsidas says that, watching him in action, Lord Ram, Ravana, Gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Chandi began to praise him and his skills in their hearts (3).

Hanuman killed the great commanders and the famed warriors of the demon army (4).

प्रबल प्रचंड बरिबंड बाहुदंड बीर
 धाए जातुधान, हनुमानु लियो घेरि कै ।
 महाबलपुंज कुंजरारि ज्यो गरजि, भट
 जहाँ-तहाँ पटके लँगूर फेरि-फेरि कै ।
 मारे लात, तोरे गात, भागे जात हाहा खात,
 कहैं, 'तुलसीस ! राखि' रामकी सौं टेरि कै ।
 ठहर-ठहर परे, कहरि-कहरि उठैं,
 हहरि-हहरि हरु सिद्ध हँसे हेरि कै ।।42।।

42. prabala pracaṇḍa baribaṇḍa bāhudaṇḍa bīra
 dhā'ē jātudhāna, hanumānu liyō ghēri kai.
 mahābalapum̐ja kuñjarāri jyōm̐ garaji, bhaṭa
 jahām̐-tahām̐ paṭakē laṁgūra phēri-phēri kai.
 mārē lāta, tōrē gāta, bhāgē jāta hāhā khāta,
 kahaim̐, 'tulasīsa! rākhi' rāmakī saum̐ ṭēri kai.
 ṭhahara-ṭhahara parē, kahari-kahari uṭhaim̐,
 hahari-hahari haru sid'dha haṁsē hēri kai..42..

Verse no. 6/42—Then, those demons whose arm's strength were very potent and violent and others who were very brave, strong and ferocious, rushed forward and surrounded Hanuman on all sides. But Hanuman, who was a fountain of immense valour and bravery, roared like a lion and dashed those demon warriors to the ground everywhere by swinging his stern tail repeatedly. He broke and crushed the bones of the demons by his kicks and blows. They ran away pleading and crying in plight, and invoking the name of Lord Ram, they beseeched Hanuman to spare them and protect them. Lying scattered here and there, they moaned in agony and tried to raise themselves; Lord Shiva and mystics laughed heartily on seeing their condition.

जाकी बाँकी बीरता सुनत सहमत सूर,
 जाकी आँच अबहूँ लसत लंक लाह-सी ।
 सोई हनुमान बलवान बाँको बानइत,
 जोहि जातुधान-सेना चल्यो लेत थाह-सी ।।
 कंपत अकंपन, सुखाय अतिकाय काय,
 कुंभऊकरन आइ रह्यो पाइ आह-सी ।
 देखें गजराज मृगराजु ज्यो गरजि धायो,
 बीर रघुबीरको समीरसूनु साहसी ।।43।।

43. jākī bām̐kī bīratā sunata sahamata sūra,
 jākī āṁca abahūṁ lasata laṅka lāha-sī.
 sō'i hanumāna balavāna bām̐kō bāna'ita,
 jōhi jātudhāna-sēnā calyō lēta thāha-sī..
 kampata akampāna, sukhāya atikāya kāya,
 kumbha'ūkarana ā'i rāhyō pā'i āha-sī.
 dēkhēm̐ gajarāja m̐garāju jyōm̐ garaji dhāyō,

bīra raghubīrakō samīrasūnu sāhasī..43..

Verse no. 6/43—He, hearing whose peerless bravery even brave warriors feel afraid (to face him) and Lanka appears like red hot ambers from the fire which he had ignited—the same brave and strong Hanuman moved about, as if trying to measure the strength of the demons' army. At that moment, Ravana's son 'Akampan' (literally meaning one who never shakes) began to tremble and shake (out of fear), the body of 'Atikaya' (literally one who has an extra large body) shriveled and shrunk, and even Kumbhakaran came and exclaimed in surprise, and felt dejected. Like a lion rushes towards a herd of elephants, Lord Ram's brave and courageous son of Pawan (Hanuman) roared and rushed at them immediately on sighting them.

Jhulna

मत्त-भट-मुकुट, दसकंठ-साहस-सइल-
 सुंग-बिदरनि जनु बज्र-टाँकी ।
 दसन धरि धरनि चिक्करत दिग्गज, कमटु,
 सेषु संकुचित, संकित पिनाकी ।।
 चलत महि-मेरु, उच्छलत सायर सकल,
 बिकल बिधि बधिर दिसि-बिदिसि झाँकी ।
 रजनिचर-घरनि घर गर्भ-अर्भक स्रवत,
 सुनत हनुमानकी हाँक बाँकी ।। 44 ।।

44. matta-bhaṭa-mukūṭa, dasakaṇṭha-sāhasa-sa'ila-
 sṛṅga-biddarani janu bajra-ṭāṁkī.
 dasana dhari dharani cikkarata diggaja, kamaṭhu,
 sēśu saṅkucita, saṅkita pinākī..
 calata mahi-mēru, ucchalata sāyara sakala,
 bikala bidhi badhira disi-bidisi jhāṁkī.
 rajanicara-gharani ghara garbha-arbhaka òvata,
 sunata hanumānakī hāṁka bāṁkī..44..

Verse no. 6/44—Hearing the terrible war-cry of Hanuman—who is like the strike of Bajra (thunderbolt) for crushing the pinnacle of the mountain representing the strength of Ravana, who is the most exalted among the furious and wild demon warriors—the Diggals (custodians of the directions) clasped the earth in their teeth and shrieked; the legendary tortoise and serpent wriggled, squirmed and shriveled out of fear; Lord Shiva became doubtful; the earth and Mt. Sumeru became uneasy and shook; all the seven seas heaved, bounced, buffeted and splashed; Brahma became agitated, worried and nervous and started peering in all the directions (to ascertain the fate of his creation); and the pregnant demonesses aborted in all the house-holds of Lanka.

कौनकी हाँकपर चौक चंडीसु, बिधि,
 चंडकर थकित फिरि तुरग हाँके ।
 कौनके तेज बलसीम भट भीम-से
 भीमता निरखि कर नयन ढाँके ।।
 दास-तुलसीसके बिरुद बरनत बिदुष,
 बीर बिरुदैत बर बैरि धाँके ।

नाक नरलोक पाताल कोउ कहत किन
कहाँ हनुमानु-से बीर बाँके ।।45।।

45. kaunakī hāṁkapara cauṅka caṇḍīsu, bidhi,
caṇḍakara thakita phiri turaga hāṁkē.
kaunakē tēja balasīma bhaṭa bhīma-sē
bhīmatā nirakhi kara nayana dhāṁkē..
dāsa-tulasīsakē biruda baranata biduśa,
bīra birudaita bara bairi dhāṁkē.
nāka naralōka pātāla kō'u kahata kina
kahāṁ hanumānu-sē bīra bāṁkē..45..

Verse no. 6/45—On whose war-cry do Brahma and Shiva become alarmed and stunned, while the sun has to spur the horses of his chariot once again (because they had stopped in their track out of fear)?

Who is he whose blinding splendour and dazzling shine forced warriors like Bhimsen to close their eyes with their hands? [This refers to the Mahabharat war when Hanuman sat atop the war chariot of Arjun, and it is believed that it was Hanuman who led Arjun to his victory in the war. Bhimsen was a very strong warrior of the opposite camp. Here it means that Bhimsen was dazed when he saw Hanuman sitting on the chariot, and he lost all hopes of ever defeating Arjun who was protected by Hanuman. The splendour and shine are metaphors for Hanuman's great fame and majestic glory as an invincible warrior that made his enemies wince and close their eyes out of his fear.]

Wise people sing the valour and glory of Tulsidas' Lord (Hanuman) and say that he has established his majestic fame and stupendous glory over his well-known enemies who were famed for their strength and valour. Can anyone say that there is anyone who can be compared to Hanuman in bravery and strength in the heaven, on the earth and in the subterranean worlds?

जातुधानावली-मत्तकुंजरघटा
निरखि मृगराजु ज्यो गिरितें दूख्यो ।
बिकट चटकन चोट,चरन गहि, पटकि महि,
निघटि गए सुभट, सतु सबको छूख्यो ।।
'दास तुलसी' परत धरनि धरकत, झुकत
हाट-सी उठति जंबुकनि लूख्यो ।
धीर रघुबीरको बीर रनबाँकुरो
हाँकि हनुमान कुलि कटकु कूख्यो ।।46।।

46. jātudhānāvalī-mattakumjaraghaṭā
nirakhi mṛgarāju jyōṁ giritēm ṭūṭyō.
bikaṭa caṭakana cōṭa,carana gahi, paṭaki mahi,
nighaṭi ga'e subhaṭa, satu sabakō chūṭyō..
'dāsa tulasī' parata dharani dharakata, jhukata
hāṭa-sī uṭhati jambukani lūṭyō.
dhīra raghubīrakō bīra ranabāṁkurō
hāṁki hanumāna kuli kaṭaku kūṭyō..46..

Verse no. 6/46—Hanuman pounced on demons like a lion jumps upon a herd of wild elephants from the top of a mountain. All the warriors became hopeless and lost their courage and strength on being smitten by Hanuman's slaps and were dashed to ground by their legs. Tulsidas says that the earth shivered (shook) when the warriors fell on it, and jackals snatched at and ran away dragging falling warriors like robbers loot bulging purses in a market place. Lord Ram's brave and courageous warrior Hanuman repeatedly challenged the army of demons and crushed/beat them to pulp with great agility and ferocity.

Chappai

कतहुँ बिटप-भूधर उपारि परसेन बरषत ।
 कतहुँ बाजिसों बाजि मर्दि, गजराज करषत ॥
 चरनचोट चटकन चकोट अरि-उर-सिर बज्जत ।
 बिकट कटकु बिदरत बीरु बारिदु जिमि गज्जत ॥
 लंगूर लपेटत पटकि भट, 'जयति राम, जय!' उच्चरत ।
 तुलसीस पवननंदनु अटल जुद्ध क्रुद्ध कौतुक करत ॥४७॥

47. katahuṁ biṭapa-bhūdhara upāri parasēna baraśśata.
 katahuṁ bājisōm bāji mardī, gajarāja karaśśata..
 caranacōṭa caṭakana cakōṭa ari-ura-sira bajjata.
 bikaṭa kaṭaku biddarata bīru bāridu jimi gajjata..
 laṅgūra lapēṭata paṭaki bhaṭa, 'jayati rāma, jaya!' uccarata.
 tulasīsa pavananandanu aṭala jud'dha krud'dha kautuka karata..47..

Verse no. 6/47—Somewhere he (Hanuman) uproots trees and mountains, and showers them on the enemies' army; elsewhere, he crushes horses against horses and kills elephants by dragging them on the ground and then dashing them on it. The thud of his slaps and kicks on the chest and heads of the enemy resound and reverberate in the battle-field. That brave warrior (Hanuman) thunders like a cloud while slaying the formidable army of demons. He shouts 'Jai Ram, Jai Ram!' while dashing the demon warriors to the ground by wrapping his tail around their legs. In this way, the Lord of Tulsidas, son of wind God (Hanuman) performs wondrous and marvelous war-deeds in the battle-field.

अंग-अंग दलित ललित फूले किंसुक-से
 हने भट लाखन लखन जातुधानके ।
 मारि कै, पछारि कै, उपारि भुजदंड चंड,
 खंडि-खंडि डारे ते बिदारे हनुमानके ॥
 कूदत कबंधके कदम्ब बंब-सी करत,
 धावत दिखावत हैं लाघौ राघौबानके ।
 तुलसी महेसु, बिधि, लोकपाल, देवगन,
 देखत बेवान चढ़े कौतुक मसानके ॥४८॥

48. aṅga-aṅga dalita lalita phūlē kinsuka-sē
 hanē bhaṭa lākhana lakhana jātudhānakē.
 māri kai, pachāri kai, upāri bhujadaṇḍa caṇḍa,

khaṇḍi-khaṇḍi ḍārē tē bidārē hanumānakē..
 kūdata kabandhakē kadamba bamba-sī karata,
 dhāvata dikhāvata haiṁ lāghau rāghaubānakē.
 tulasī mahēsu, bidhi, lōkapāla, dēvagana,
 dēkhata bēvāna caṛhē kautuka masānakē..48..

Verse no. 6/48—Multitudes of Ravana's warriors were wounded by Laxman's attack, and they appeared red like a blossoming Kapas flower (the flower is red, so the demons resembled it because of blood oozing and smearing their bodies, making it appear red) (1); some of the warriors were killed, dashed to the ground, their arms torn away from the trunk, punctured and lacerated and thrown away (2).

Groups of Kabandhs¹ jumped and skipped about shouting "Bung-Bung" in the battle-field, as if showing the rapidity of Lord Ram's arrows (3).

Tulsidas says that Shiva, Brahma, the eight Lokpals (8 guardians of the world) and other Gods rode their chariots and watched the proceeding of the battle field from the sky (4).

[Note—¹The Kabandh is a special category of hobgoblin who has only trunk but no head or legs. Legend has it that Indra had punched the head and legs of a demon called Danu with his thunderbolt inside its trunk, as a result its body was reduced to only a trunk with a large mouth and protruding long arms.]

लोथिन सों लोहूके प्रबाह चले जहाँ-तहाँ
 मानहुँ गिरिन्ह गेरु झरना झरत हैं ।
 श्रोणितसरित घोर कुंजर-करारे भारे,
 कूलतें समूल बाजि-बिटप परत हैं ।।
 सुभट-सरीर नीर-चारी भारी-भारी तहाँ,
 सूरनि उछाहु, कूर कादर डरत हैं ।
 फेकरि-फेकरि फेरु फारि-फारि पेट खात
 काक-कंक बालक कोलाहलु करत हैं ।।49।।

49. lōthina sōm lōhūkē prabāha calē jahāṁ-tahāṁ
 mānahuṁ girinha gēru jharanā jharata haiṁ.
 śrōnitasarita ghōra kuṇjara-karārē bhārē,
 kūlatēm samūla bāji-biṭapa parata haiṁ..
 subhaṭa-sarīra nīra-cārī bhārī-bhārī tahāṁ,
 sūrani uchāhu, kūra kādara ḍarata haiṁ.
 phēkari-phēkari phēru phārī-phārī pēṭa khāta
 kāka-kaṅka bālaka kōlāhalu karata haiṁ..49..

Verse no. 6/49—Streams of blood flowed from the lacerated flesh of the warriors every where in the battle-field as if red water oozes from the crevices in the mountains. A huge river of blood started flowing; the elephants formed the embankments of that river, and dead horses falling in the stream of blood resembled the trees on the banks of a river which are uprooted and tumble in it. The dead bodies of the warriors are like the different aquatic creatures of that river of blood. That scene greatly excites and thrills brave warriors, but cowards and impotent people become scared, turn pale and swivel in horror. Jackals howl and tear apart the entrails

to eat, while crows, vultures etc. cheer in mirth like happy children enjoying themselves at play.

ओझरीकी झोरी काँधें, आँतिनिकी सेल्ही बाँधें,
 मूँड़के कमंडल खपर किऐँ कोरि कै।
 जोगिनी झुटुंग झुंड-झुंड बनीं तापसी-सी
 तीर-तीर बैठीं सो समर-सरि खोरि कै॥
 श्रोनित सौं सानि-सानि गूदा खात सतुआ-से
 प्रेत एक पिअत बहोरि घोरि-घोरि कै।
 'तुलसी' बैताल-भूत साथ लिए भूतनाथु,
 हेरि-हेरि हँसत हैं हाथ-हाथ जोरि कै। 50॥

50. ōjharīkī jhōrī kām̐dhēm, āṁtinikī sēl'hī bām̐dhēm,
 mūṁṛakē kamaṇḍala khapara ki'ēṁ kōri kai.
 jōginī jhuṭuṅga jhuṇḍa-jhuṇḍa banīm tāpasīm-sī
 tīra-tīra baiṭhīm sō samara-sari khōri kai..
 śrōnita sōm sāni-sāni gūdā khāta satu'ā-sē
 prēta ēka pi'ata bahōri ghōri-ghōri kai.
 'tulasī' baitāla-bhūta sātha li'ē bhūtanāthu,
 hēri-hēri haṁsata haim hātha-hātha jōri kai..50..

Verse no. 6/50—With bags made of emptied or hollowed out stomach hung around their shoulders, intestines used as a sling to tie them, and hollowed (scooped) out skulls used as pots (to collect blood), numerous groups of Joginis (spirits who roam battle-fields and drink blood) appear to have taken a ritualistic bath in the river of war, and are currently sitting on the banks of the river-of-blood to rest a while like so many hermitresses. They are kneading fresh flesh with blood and eating it like 'Sattu' (baked gram flour which is kneaded into dough with water and eaten as a meal with salt, spices, chillies etc.), while some spirits and ghosts dilute it with blood and drink it in a semi-fluid form.

Tulsidas says that the Lord of ghosts, phantoms and spirits called 'Bhutnath', accompanied by ghosts and phantoms, is laughing merrily hand-in-hand with his companions. [Such a horrific and blood-curdling scene of the battle-field is indeed remarkable in portrayal.]

राम सरासन तें चले तीर रहे न सरीर, हड़ावरि फूटी।
 रावन धीर न पीर गनी, लखि लै कर खप्पर जोगिनी जूटी॥
 श्रोनित-छीट छटानि जटे तुलसी प्रभु सोहैं महा छबि छूटी।
 मानो मरकत-सैल बिसालमें फैलि चलीं बर बीरबहूटी॥ 51॥

51. rāma sarāsana tēm calē tīra rahē na sarīra, haṛāvari phūṭīm.
 rāvana dhīra na pīra ganī, lakhi lai kara khappara jōginī jūṭīm..
 śrōnita-chīṭa chaṭāni jaṭē tulasī prabhu sōhaiīm mahā chabi chūṭīm.
 mānō marakkata-saila bisālamēm phaili calīm bara bīrabahūṭīm..51..

Verse no. 6/51—The arrows shot from Lord Ram's bow do not stop anywhere; they penetrate the bones of Ravana and escape from the other side of his body. Still, the brave and courageous Ravana pays no heed to the pain (caused by this severe injury).

Seeing blood sprouting from his body, the blood-drinking and thirsty Joginis gathered around him with overturned skulls as bowls to collect the blood (1).

Tulsidas says that his Lord Sri Ram, smeared with drops of blood (of the enemy) looked marvelous in the battle-field. He resembled the huge mountain known as Markat on which beautiful deep red creeping insects have spread (2).

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Chapter 15

The First Round of Battle with Meghnad;

The Fainting of Laxman & his Subsequent Revival.

On the second day of the war, when Meghanad got the news in the morning that the monkey and bear army has once again surrounded the fort and a fierce battle between them and the defending demon forces was underway, he decided to personally lead his troops from the front to launch a fierce counter-offensive. So he descended from the fort and entered the battle-field to the accompaniment of war music, hitting at the Lord's army with extreme ferocity and anger. In the battle that followed, Meghanad showed his many skills of warfare, including use of illusions to mislead the enemy, as he dispersed his opponents and made them flee in utter despair.

Laxman too joined the battle and led his forces from the front. By-and-by, the two great warriors, Laxman and Meghanad, faced each other for a showdown. In the duel that followed between the two, Meghanad was fast losing ground and was on the verge of total rout when he shot a powerful missile at Laxman, at which the latter fainted and fell down unconscious on the ground.

It was evening time, and the two armies halted the battle for the day. As they regrouped in their respective camps for the night, it was discovered that Laxman was not there. Meanwhile, Hanuman found Laxman lying unconscious in the battle-field, so he picked him up and brought him to Lord Ram. Though the Lord initially grieved for Laxman very gravely and in a most remorseful way, but he soon recovered himself and decided to take some action in order to revive his brother, instead of just wailing fruitlessly for him like a weak-hearted person, for the Lord realized that it is, after all, a war, and in a war one cannot expect that everything would go favourably his way, for there are bound to be ups and downs during its course, they are bound to be some reverses alongside successes, and only those who have the courage, wit, perseverance, presence of mind, resilience and forbearance in the face of adversity have a chance to emerge victorious.

The elderly bear chieftain by the name of Jamvant suggested that a medicine man named Sushen be brought from the city of Lanka, for he was an expert and would be able to tell how to revive Laxman by administering some medicinal herbs. Hanuman was dispatched to bring Sushen, and he immediately brought him in. On the advice of the doctor, Hanuman was sent by Lord Ram to the northern mountains to bring the desired herb. Meanwhile, when Ravana heard that Hanuman was on his way

to bring some herb that would revive Laxman, he sent one of the demons named Kalnemi to intervene and stop Hanuman, by either capturing him or killing him. Kalnemi, however, was no match against Hanuman, and when he was subsequently discovered he was immediately killed by the latter.

When finally Hanuman reached the northern mountains, he could not decide as to which was the correct herb he ought to take back; so he uprooted the part of the mountain that he determined was rich with herbs, and flew back with it to the camp of Lord Ram at Lanka.

Sushen administered the needed herb, and Laxman was brought back to life. When this news reached Ravana, he was filled with abject depression; he beat his head and thumped his chest in dejection as if he had half lost the war already. Earlier when he had learnt that his son Meghanad had done a marvelous thing by making Laxman fall, Ravana had rejoiced and felicitated his son, but this sudden and unexpected turn of events marking the revival of Laxman took him by surprise, leading to him becoming pale and gloomy as if misfortune stared right on his face.

Lord Ram loved Laxman most dearly, even more fondly than his own life. If Laxman had died, Lord Ram would have lost the war because he would have been so overcome with excess of grief and sorrow, especially in the context of his already existing grief over the loss of his wife Sita to which the loss of Laxman would have added newer wound, that he would not have been able to fight the war with the necessary enthusiasm and vigour needed to win with a mental state clouded with gloomy thoughts of sorrow, lamentation and grief at the loss of dear ones.

Ravana had hoped for it, but luckily for Lord Ram, and unluckily for Ravana, the fiat of fate and the writ of destiny had something different ordained for the demon king as was evident in Laxman's coming back to life and regaining his full vigour. Ravana felt crestfallen and undone.

To read these episodes in this Chapter no. 15, we shall divide it into the following four Sections:

Section 15.1: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62

Section 15.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 65-86; Canto 6, verse nos. 1-63; and Canto 7, verse nos. 1-41

Section 15.3: Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 5-15

Section 15.4: Kavitawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 52-55

That said, now let us start our reading.

Section 15.1: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62

दो०. मेघनाद सुनि श्रवन अस गढु पुनि छेंका आइ ।
उतर्यो बीर दुर्ग तें सन्मुख चलयो बजाइ ॥ ४९ ॥

dōhā.

mēghanāda suni śravana asa gaṛhu puni chēṅkā ā'i.
utaryō bīra durga tēm sanmukha calyō bajā'i. 49.

When Meghanad (the valiant son of Ravana) heard that the monkeys and bears have once again surrounded the fort and have laid siege to it, he got down from the fort to the accompaniment of beating war-drums (to announce to the enemy that he is coming), and went to face the enemy force formations at the front¹. (Doha no. 49)

[Note—¹Till this point of time, all earlier fighting had taken place inside the walls of the fort—because the demon warriors were so scared of the invading army of monkeys and bears that they did not dare to open the giant gates of the fort, forcing their enemy to leap over its great walls and engage in hand-to-hand battles right inside the city of Lanka. As we have read, this caused widespread panic and devastation in Lanka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 41; Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 42; Doha no. 43 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it; Doha no. 44 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; and Doha no. 45.}]

Meghanad was extremely peeved at this cowardly behaviour of his demon warriors. So now he decided to take the battle to the field opposite the fort where he would directly face his chief adversaries such as Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and Vibhishana whom Meghanad regarded as a traitor and betrayer of his race. By taking the war to the battle-field outside the fort, any further destruction of Lanka and damage to the fort would at least be prevented.

Once the gigantic gates of the fort of Lanka were opened and the first battle was fought outside it with Meghanad leading his demon troops, the course of the war changed in as much as the rest of the bloody war was fought in the plains opposite the city.

It is also believed that the battle with Meghanad happened during 'Pushya Nakshatra', i.e. during the time when the asterism known as Pushya was dominant.]

चौ०. कहँ कोसलाधीस द्वौ भ्राता । धन्वी सकल लोक बिख्याता ॥ १ ॥
कहँ नल नील दुबिद सुग्रीवा । अंगद हनूमंत बल सींवा ॥ २ ॥
कहाँ बिभीषनु भ्राताद्रोही । आजु सबहि हठि मारउँ ओही ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'i.

kahaṁ kōsalādhīsa dvau bhrātā. dhanvī sakala lōka bikhyātā. 1.
kahaṁ nala nīla dubida sugrīvā. āṅgada hanūmanta bala sīnvā. 2.
kahāṁ bibhīṣanu bhrātādrōhī. āju sabahi haṭhi mārā'uṁ ōhī. 3.

Meghanad thundered diabolically: 'Where is the Lord of Kaushal (Lord Ram); where are the two brothers (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) who are famed all over the world for

their skill with the bow (i.e. are known to be famous archers)? [I have come here to challenge them; where are they; why don't they come out now in the open before me?] (1)

Say, where are Nala, Neela, Dwivid, Sugriv; where is Angad and Hanuman who call themselves as extremely valiant? [Why, where are they now? Let them show their faces to me; I have come to meet them in the battle-field. Why are they hiding?] (2)

And where is the traitor Vibhishan who has betrayed his own brother (Ravana) and turned hostile towards him?

Come you, one and all; today I shall slay all of them at one go.' (3)

[Note—¹How did Meghanad know the names whom he lists now to come forward to meet the challenge? Here's the answer:

Earlier when the invading monkeys had raised war cries, they had done so in the name of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sugriv—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 39.

A little later, when the demons pushed back the monkeys with a vicious counter-attack, making them flee in terror, they had called for help, and at that time the retreating monkeys called out the names of Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela and Dwivid—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43.

The name of Vibhishan, who was Meghanad's uncle, was of course already known to him.

So this is how Meghanad got to know the names of the chiefs in the enemy camp.]

अस कहि कठिन बान संधाने । अतिसय क्रोध श्रवन लगि ताने ॥ ४ ॥

सर समूह सो छाड़ै लागा । जनु सपच्छ धावहिं बहु नागा ॥ ५ ॥

जहँ तहँ परत देखिअहिं बानर । सन्मुख होइ न सके तेहि अवसर ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi kaṭhina bāna sandhānē. atisaya krōdha śravana lagi tānē. 4.
sara samūha sō chāṛai lāgā. janu sapaccha dhāvahiṁ bahu nāgā. 5.
jahaṁ tahaṁ parata dēkhi'ahiṁ bānara. sanmukha hō'i na sakē tēhi avasara. 6.

With this formidable challenge, he (Meghanad) raised his bow and angrily pulled its string tight, stretching it right back to his ears. (4)

Then he shot a volley of abominable arrows that flew so fast and fierce, with a hissing sound, that they appeared to be winged snakes dashing forward towards their prey. (5)

Everywhere one could see there were monkeys falling to the ground, for none could face him (Meghanad)¹. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, the volley of sharp arrows shot angrily by Meghanad hit the front ranks of the monkey army, felling countless warriors. The arrows were shot so rapidly

that none of the monkey warriors had the least chance to lunge at Meghanad and catch hold of him.]

जहँ तहँ भागि चले कपि रीछा । बिसरी सबहि जुद्ध कै ईछा ॥ ७ ॥
सो कपि भालु न रन महँ देखा । कीन्हैसि जेहि न प्रान अवसेषा ॥ ८ ॥

jahaṁ tahaṁ bhāgi calē kapi rīchā. bisarī sabahi jud'dha kai īchā. 7.
sō kapi bhālu na rana mahaṁ dēkhā. kīnhēsī jēhi na prāna avasēṣā. 8.

Under the fierce onslaught launched by Meghanad, the terrified monkeys and bears ran helter-skelter everywhere; they were so sore alarmed and affright, and so much scared out of their wits by the ferocity of the attack, as well as the sight of so many of their numbers falling down to the ground, either as wounded or as dead, that the fleeing warriors lost all enthusiasm and courage to get involved in the battle any further. (7)

Not a single monkey or bear warrior was seen in the battlefield who was not scared for his life due to Meghanad's brutal attack.

[To wit, all those who remained alive lost their zeal to fight as they became very concerned about their own survival after witnessing the fate of their companions, most of whom were lying wounded or dead on the ground. The result was that, for the time being, the rout of the monkeys and bears was complete.] (8)

दो०. दस दस सर सब मारेसि परे भूमि कपि बीर ।
सिंहनाद करि गर्जा मेघनाद बल धीर ॥ ५० ॥

dōhā.

dasa dasa sara saba mārēsi parē bhūmi kapi bīra.
simhanāda kari garjā mēghanāda bala dhīra. 50.

[The ferocity of Meghanad's attack and the rapidity with which he shot his arrows can be gauged by the fact that—] He shot and wounded every monkey and bear warrior with around ten arrows each¹, and the result was all of them fell mortally wounded in the battle-field.

Having decimated his enemy, the brave, courageous, strong and valiant Meghanad (mēghanāda bala dhīra) roared thunderously, in triumph, like a lion (who has boldly entered and fearlessly attacked a group of wild animals, killing some, and making others flee in terror). (Doha no. 50)

[Note—¹By saying that each monkey and bear warrior was hit by “ten arrows” it is meant that Meghanad shot countless arrows at them; the arrows rained down over the monkeys and bears like so many pieces of hail-stones falling upon them from the sky during a fierce hail-storm, that there was no count of how many pellets of hail hit each warrior. The arrows fell so rapidly and thickly that they resembled a large piece of blanket-of-needles descending from the sky to cover the entire ground of the battle-

field, virtually suffocating every single warrior on the ground and taking the breath out of them.

Another significance of the number “ten” is that the arrows hit every single organ of the body of the monkey and bear warriors, making them grievously injured and wailing woefully in pain. It ought to be noted here that there are five organs of perception and five organs of action in the body of an individual, bringing the total to ten organs.

The five organs of perception and the five organs of action, with their corresponding objects, are the following: ‘ear’ is concerned with hearing; ‘eye’ with seeing; ‘tongue’ with tasting; ‘skin’ with touch; ‘nose’ with smelling; ‘mouth’ with speaking; ‘leg’ with walking; ‘hand’ with receiving and giving and doing deeds; ‘excretory’ with elimination of waste from the body; and ‘genitals’ with procreation.

So therefore, every pore of the body of the warriors was made to bleed; their bodies were filled with wounds.]

चौ०. देखि पवनसुत कटक बिहाला । क्रोधवंत जनु धायउ काला ॥ १ ॥

महासैल एक तुरत उपारा । अति रिस मेघनाद पर डारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi pavanasuta kaṭaka bihālā. krōdhavanta janu dhāya'u kālā. 1.

mahāsaila ēka turata upārā. ati risa mēghanāda para ḍārā. 2.

When the son of the wind god (“pavanasuta”; Hanuman) observed that the army was in a dire strait and panicky, he immediately dashed forward angrily, as if the god of death had himself lunged forward, filled with vengeance¹. (1)

He immediately uprooted a huge mountain (i.e. a gigantic boulder or rock) and threw it on Meghanad very wrathfully, with full force (in order to crush him underneath it)². (2)

[Note—¹It is believed that Hanuman was a manifestation of Lord Shiva’s form known as ‘Rudra’. This form of the Lord is his angry form, and Shiva assumes this form at the time of conclusion of creation when, at the time of doomsday, hellfire and brimstone burns and consumes everything in this world. This form of Lord Shiva is also synonym of death, and hence represents the ‘god of death’ known as Kaal. This is why Hanuman’s angry rush at Meghanad is compared to the rush of the god of death, known as Kaal, in order to punish the demon prince.

²This is the third confrontation between Hanuman and Meghand.

The first occurred when Hanuman had come to Lanka to search for Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 20.

The second occasion was in Lanka when Meghanad was defending the western gates of the fort of Lanka and the monkey army was unable to breach it. At that time too the monkeys had fled in terror when the demons had launched a fierce counter-attack on them. Hanuman leapt on the fort and attacked Meghanad with a huge mountain-like rock, breaking the demon prince’s chariot, killing his charioteer, and kicking Meghanad in the chest, making him swoon and fall to the ground. This

episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 43.

This is the third occasion, and it is presently being described between Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.]

आवत देखि गयउ नभ सोई । रथ सारथी तुरग सब खोई ॥ ३ ॥
बार बार पचार हनुमाना । निकट न आव मरमु सो जाना ॥ ४ ॥

āvata dēkhi gaya'u nabha sō'ī. ratha sārathī turaga saba khō'ī. 3.
bāra bāra pacāra hanumānā. nikaṭa na āva maramu sō jānā. 4.

When he (Meghanad) saw that Hanuman was coming to him with a mighty rock ready to be hurled at him, he (having had a bitter experience of such an attack by Hanuman and its serious consequences) immediately ascended to the sky, abandoning his chariot, charioteer and horses in great haste¹. (3)

Hanuman challenged him repeatedly to come down and face him like a bold warrior, but Meghanad was overcome with sore affright as he recalled the bitter experience he had had of a similar attack by Hanuman on an earlier occasion² that he durst not come near. (4)

[Note—¹Meghanad saw it coming; he had witnessed such an attack by Hanuman previously when he had managed to survive by the breadth of his hair. It happened during their second confrontation near the western gates of the fort of Lanka when Hanuman had similarly dumped a huge mountain-like rock on Meghanad, breaking his war chariot and killing his charioteer, and when Meghanad fell to the ground, kicking him viciously in the chest so furiously that he swooned and became unconscious. Another charioteer, driving a reserve chariot, had taken the seriously wounded Meghanad back into the fort of Lanka. This episode is narrated in: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 43.

²Meghanad could not forget it, and the mere sight of Hanuman furiously dashing towards him with a gigantic rock in his hand, ready to smash the light of life out of him, chilled Meghanad, and sucked the courage and the wit out of him. So he left his chariot instantly to escape from being crushed with it when the rock hit hard, with a great velocity. Meghanad managed to jump into the air in the nick of time, just at the moment the rock came down heavily upon his chariot, managing to save himself by the width of his skin.

Meghanad therefore dared not come on the ground to face Hanuman physically; so he decided instead to use the many magical tricks he knew from a distance, from the safe environ of the sky itself, so that if anything went awry, he would be able to escape quickly.]

रघुपति निकट गयउ घननादा । नाना भँति करेसि दुर्बादा ॥ ५ ॥
अज सज आयुध सब डारे । कौतुकहीं प्रभु काटि निवारे ॥ ६ ॥

raghupati nikaṭa gaya'u ghananādā. nānā bhāṁti karēsi durbādā. 5.
astra sastra āyudha saba ḍārē. kautukahīm prabhu kāṭi nivārē. 6.

[In order to divert Hanuman's attention—] He, who could thunder like a cloud ("ghananādā"; i.e. Meghanad), went to the place where Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) was, and hurled many kinds of abuses and insulting words at the Lord. (5)

After venting his verbal ire on the Lord, Meghanad shot many kinds of weapons at him¹. The Lord, who was an expert in the art of use of weaponry during warfare, easily neutralised all his weapons as if it was a mere game for him. (6)

[Note—¹The weapons used by Meghanad were of many kinds, falling under three chief categories—viz. one that was shot like a missile, e.g. an arrow, one that was thrown like a spear or a lance, and one that was hand-held and used directly, such as a battle-axe and a sword.

Meghanad used all of them simultaneously in order to overwhelm his enemy, Lord Ram. He probably was unaware that Lord Ram was a trained warrior belonging to the Kshatriya race, a race that is by birth a martial race. Meghanad also had no information how the Lord had easily neutralised such attacks, not by one or two demon warriors but by an entire army of ferocious and blood-hungry demons on earlier occasions, so an attack by an individual demon was merely a sport for Lord Ram. There are previous occasions which we recall when Lord Ram had single-handedly overcome such ferocious attacks by angry demons.

One such prominent occasion was when Lord Ram was attacked by the vicious army of Marich and Subahu while the Lord was protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

The other significant occasion was when Khar and Dushan attacked the Lord with their army of ferocious demons after their sister Supernakha was punished by the Lord for her pervert behaviour—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20-a.]

देखि प्रताप मूढ़ खिसिआना । करै लाग माया बिधि नाना ॥ ७ ॥

जिमि कोउ करै गरुड़ सैं खेला । डरपावै गहि स्वल्प सपेला ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi pratāpa mūṛha khisi'ānā. karai lāga māyā bidhi nānā. 7.
jimi kō'u karai garuṛa saim khēlā. ḍarapāvai gahi svalpa sapēlā. 8.

The stupid fellow (Meghanad) felt very frustrated when he observed the immense skills of the Lord (i.e. in the way he had neutralised all the weapons and prevented any of them from harming him), and so he (Meghanad) decided to employ the many magical tricks he knew, by using which he could create various kinds of illusions. (7)

It was like the case of a foolish man trying to tease Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who relishes devouring serpents) by holding a small snake in his hand and showing it to the giant bird (Garud), trying to shoo him away with the snake¹. (8)

[Note—¹Garud, the legendary Eagle who is the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, can easily snap and gobble up all species of serpents, no matter how large and poisonous the reptile is. So it is ridiculously foolish to scare away Garud by showing him a small serpent.

Similarly, it is so utterly foolish for Meghanad in showing his weapons as well as his magical tricks to Lord Ram, not knowing that the Lord was a Master of all such small and cheap tricks, as he is the Supreme Lord of this creation who has himself created all tricks in existence. To wit, what weapons and tricks Meghanad used against Lord Ram were but a small part, a very small and limited fraction, of the vast numbers of weapons and magical tricks that the maverick supreme Creator had created as a part of his vast empire that is known as the universe.]

दो०. जासु प्रबल माया बस सिव बिरंचि बड़ छोट ।

ताहि दिखावड़ निसिचर निज माया मति खोट ॥ ५१ ॥

dōhā.

jāsu prabala māyā basa siva birañci baṛa chōṭa.
tāhi dikhāva'i niscara nija māyā mati khōṭa. 51.

Forsooth, the Lord (Ram, the Supreme Being) whose Maya (powers to create illusions and delusions) is so powerful and omnipotent that all the powers and skills possessed by Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma taken together are dwarfed in its comparison, so much so that they are perpetually under the grand spell of the Lord's Maya¹, the demon prince (Meghanad) is so immensely dumb-headed that he was showing his cheap tricks to that same Lord²! (Doha no. 51)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 140; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22; and (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71.

²To wit, it was an extremely stupid thought and an ignorant behaviour of Meghanad to even imagine that he could stun Lord Ram with his magical tricks and weapons. But had he been not that foolish as he obviously was in the first place, he would not have wasted his energy and time even in attempting to fool Lord Ram with his stupid acts; on the contrary, he would have thought himself very honoured and privileged to have the chance to welcome the Lord, who had come calling right at his doorstep, and offer him his respect and tribute.

Why Meghanad alone; if his father Ravana had this kind of wisdom and knowledge, the savage war could have been avoided and the demon race could have been spared annihilation. But Destiny had destined things differently for them and their race, and no amount of preaching would bring light to this ill-fated race that was destined to doom and destruction like a twig which is involuntarily sucked up, spun and taken away to oblivion by a strong wind during a violent storm.]

चौ०. नभ चढ़ि बरष बिपुल अंगारा । महि ते प्रगट होहिं जलधारा ॥ १ ॥

नाना भाँति पिसाच पिसाची । मारु काटु धुनि बोलहिं नाची ॥ २ ॥
 बिष्टा पूय रुधिर कच हाड़ा । बरषड़ कबहुँ उपल बहु छाड़ा ॥ ३ ॥
 बरषि धूरि कीन्हेसि अँधिआरा । सूझ न आपन हाथ पसारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

nabha caḍhi baraṣa bipula aṅgārā. mahi tē pragaṭa hōhim jaladhārā. 1.
 nānā bhānti pisāca pisācī. māru kātu dhuni bōlahim nācī. 2.
 biṣṭā pūya rudhira kaca hārā. baraṣa'i kabahuṁ upala bahu chārā. 3.
 baraṣi dhūri kīnhēsi aṁdhi'ārā. sūjha na āpana hātha pasārā. 4.

[Having failed to have any influence of his dirty tricks on Lord Ram, Meghanad changed his tactic; now he decided instead to attack the monkeys and bears spread all over the battle-field. So, what did he do?¹]

He (Meghanad) went up in the sky and employed his magical powers to create a scene of doomsday (to terrify the army of monkeys and bears) by showering a large quantity of fireballs on the ground below, and at the same time created an illusion of water gushing out in large spouts from crevices formed on the earth. (1)

Various denominations of phantoms and hobgoblins, both males and females, began their death-dance on the battle-field, with blood-curdling shrieks calling for killing and chopping of warriors. (2)

From the sky there rained down all sorts of garbage, stinking slush and other abhorable things on the ground; sometimes it was a rain of excreta, mucous, blood, hairs and bones, and at other times it was a hail of sharp stones and raining of hot ash. (3)

He created a virtual dust-storm so thick and heavy that a dark cloud covered the sky and blocked all sunlight, causing such a thick blanket of darkness to form all around the battle-field that one could not see one's own hands. (4)

[Note—¹Meghanad had earlier assured his father Ravana that he would perform such miraculous deeds in the battle-field the next day that the like of which had never been witnessed by anyone ever—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 49.

So now he was carrying out his promise.]

कपि अकुलाने माया देखें । सब कर मरन बना एहि लेखें ॥ ५ ॥
 कौतुक देखि राम मुसुकाने । भए सभीत सकल कपि जाने ॥ ६ ॥
 एक बान काटी सब माया । जिमि दिनकर हर तिमिर निकाया ॥ ७ ॥
 कृपादृष्टि कपि भालु बिलोके । भए प्रबल रन रहहिं न रोके ॥ ८ ॥

kapi akulānē māyā dēkhēm. saba kara marana banā ēhi lēkhēm. 5.
 kautuka dēkhi rāma musukānē. bha'e sabhīta sakala kapi jānē. 6.
 ēka bāna kāṭī saba māyā. jimi dinakara hara timira nikāyā. 7.

krpādr̥ṣṭi kapi bhālu bilōkē. bha'e prabala rana rahahim̐ na rōkē. 8.

The monkeys and bears were utterly terrified when they witnessed this illusion similar to doomsday, and they panicked, thinking that this situation portended certain death for all of them. (5)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram smiled (as he was amused) when he saw this illusionary scene resembling the sight witnessed on doomsday, and also realised its widespread negative effect on the monkeys and bears who panicked because they believed it to be a reality. (6)

[What did the Lord do?] So the Lord shot an arrow that instantly cut through this veil of delusions to restore the situation as it existed prior to Meghanad's tricks, just like the appearance of the sun cuts through, in a moment, the veil of darkness cast by the night. (7)

Then Lord Ram looked around the ground of the battle-field, casting his benevolent glance over all the monkeys and bears to bless them. The Lord's rejuvenating glance had a magical effect as it instantly restored the confidence and vigour of the troops so much that they became all the more ferocious, formidable, and un-stoppable in the battle-field¹. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had done it earlier also when he shot an arrow to illuminate the battle-field which was covered by darkness during the first day of the war when his troops had become panicky, and once again when the darkness was removed the monkeys and bears fought with renewed vigour and zeal—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 47—to Doha no. 47, along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram's grace was so singular and divine by nature that whenever he merely looked at his troops, a sort of current passed through all its members, electrifying them and filling each monkey and bear with vigorous zeal, astounding dynamism, and a stupendous amount of energy. One example of this unique phenomenon is to be found at the time when the huge army started from Kishkindha on its way to Lanka, when a glance of Lord Ram inspired the whole army and electrified it; the monkeys and bears acquired a punch and strength of countless mountains striking at once—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 35.]

दो०. आयसु मागि राम पहिं अंगदादि कपि साथ ।

लछिमन चले क्रुद्ध होइ बान सरासन हाथ ॥ ५२ ॥

dōhā.

āyasu māgi rāma pahim̐ aṅgadādi kapi sātha.

lachimana calē krud'dha hō'i bāna sarāsana hātha. 52.

Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram and his constant companion, asked the Lord for permission to join the battle. Having got the Lord's nod, he moved forward

angrily in the battle-field with a bow and arrows at the ready in his hands; he was accompanied by Angad and other brave monkey warriors¹. (Doha no. 52)

[Note—¹The following verses would narrate the first battle between Laxman and Meghanad. It was during this duel that Laxman fainted when he was hit by an arrow shot by the demon prince. The end of this duel would also mark the end of the third day of the war in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 55 which we shall be reading by-and-by.

Who were the “other brave warriors” who accompanied Laxman? Naturally they were the chief commanders of the troops, and some of their names have been listed in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43 earlier—viz. Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela, Dwivida. There were others too, such as Mayanda, Dadhimukha, Gada, Vikatasa etc. as mentioned Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 54.

Then of course there were Sugriv and Jamvant, the chiefs of the monkeys and bears as a community. Perhaps these senior commanders, such as the latter two, remained with Lord Ram at their base camp. This observation is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 75 wherein Lord Ram has himself asked Sugriv and Jamvant to remain by his side at the time he sent Laxman to fight with Meghanad for the second time during which the demon prince was killed.

There are some very significant points to note in connection with the two battles between Laxman and Meghanad, and they are as follows:-

When Laxman went out to fight Meghanad for the first time, as he is doing now, he was very angry and full of self confidence that he would be able to trounce his enemy. Because of his anger he lost his sense of propriety and wisdom that would have told him to first pay his respects to his elder brother Lord Ram and seek his blessings for victory before asking for permission to go to face Meghanad. Besides this, Laxman was raring to go alone when other monkey warriors, such as Angad etc., voluntarily offered to accompany him. For this also, no express permission was sought from the Lord, and neither did the Lord told anyone of them to accompany Laxman. These things are clear from this Doha no. 52.

Compared to this, the situation was starkly different when Laxman had gone out to engage his adversary for the second time. At that time, Laxman had done so because the Lord himself had expressly asked him to do it. Besides this, during this second time, Laxman was reliant on Lord Ram’s grace and blessings to win his adversary; he had invoked the Lord’s majesty and glory at the time of seeking permission to go. He had also bowed his head before Lord Ram just before departure. As regarding the other monkey warriors who accompanied Laxman, it was also ordered by the Lord—that Angad and others should go with Laxman. These things are explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 75, and Chaupai line nos. 6-12 that precede it.

These crucial gestures empowered Laxman and made him able to slay Meghanad during his second engagement with him. During the first engagement, as we see however, Laxman had too much of self-confidence in his own abilities, in his own powers and strength by which he believed he would easily defeat Meghanad, instead of relying on the grace of the Lord in order to achieve this success. So in his haste Laxman had neither bowed his head before Lord Ram nor invoked the Lord’s grace, mystical powers and divinity as a majestic force with which to fight and win his enemy. He was also ‘angry’, and in anger his wisdom and sense of propriety abandoned him.

The result was that Laxman not only failed to overcome Meghand during the first battle, but he was seriously wounded too and fell to the ground unconscious. On the second occasion however, the situation changed as now Laxman was protected by the Lord's grace, as a result of which he successfully slayed Meghanad.

There are two important lessons we learn from these two situations: The first is that 'anger' is a bad thing; it robs a person of his ability to think and act properly. This fact is endorsed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas also, viz. in Baal Kand, Doha no. 277 where Laxman had told sage Parashuram that 'anger is at the root of all sinful activities'. But the irony is that Laxman himself forgets this maxim now.

The second lesson is: We must always rely on the Lord God for everything in life instead of boasting of our own abilities; whatever one does, whenever he does it, he ought to first pay his respects to the Lord God and be clear in his head that success and failure are not of his own doing but they are what the Lord wishes. Sometimes it happens that what appears to be today's failure proves to be god-sent blessing in the days to come. So it is always better and useful to rely on the Lord God in order to have peace of mind and soul.]

चौ०. छतज नयन उर बाहु बिसाला । हिमगिरि निभ तनु कछु एक लाला ॥ १ ॥
 इहाँ दसानन सुभट पठाए । नाना अङ्ग सङ्ग गहि धाए ॥ २ ॥
 भूधर नख बिटपायुध धारी । धाए कपि जय राम पुकारी ॥ ३ ॥
 भिरे सकल जोरिहि सन जोरी । इत उत जय इच्छा नहिं थोरी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

chataja nayana ura bāhu bisālā. himagiri nibha tanu kachu ēka lālā. 1.
 ihāñ dasānana subhaṭa paṭhā'ē. nānā astra sastra gahi dhā'ē. 2.
 bhūdhara nakha biṭapāyudha dhārī. dhā'ē kapi jaya rāma pukārī. 3.
 bhirē sakala jōrihi sana jōrī. ita uta jaya icchā nahim thōrī. 4.

He (Laxman) had fiery-red eyes (indicating his seething anger as he was wroth with exceeding wrath), a broad muscular chest, and long robust arms (implying that he had a muscular and well-built body of a strong, brave and powerful warrior who possesses the physical prowess by which he can defeat his opponent very easily in a hand-to-hand duel).

His body had a fair complexion like that of a snow-covered mountain, albeit it was a wee whit tanned red (with excitement and anger, as well as due to the fact that Laxman had been exposed to the elements of Nature for the past fourteen years of his forest sojourn by the side of his elder brother Lord Ram)¹. (1)

Meanwhile, the ten-headed Ravana sent reinforcement to help his son Meghanad; these formidable demon warriors grabbed all sorts of weapons they could lay their hands on, and arming themselves to the teeth they dashed forward (to aid the demon prince). (2)

The monkey and bear warriors raised a fierce war-cry praising Lord Ram and his glory as they too rushed forward to join the fray (and help Laxman); they grabbed parts of huge mountains, such as large rocks and boulders, as well as uprooted trees as their weapons. (3)

The two troops clashed head on with each other in a furious hand-to-hand battle, forming groups that engaged themselves in vicious duels, each vying with the other to have an upper hand and defeat the opponent, because both the sides had no lack of desire and the will to win². (4)

[Note—¹This verse describes how Laxman looked when he stepped out from his camp into the battle-field to take on Meghanad.

²This is the second direct face-to-face, vicious, no-holds barred and bloody clash between the warriors of the two sides, demons on one side, and monkey and bear warriors on the other side. The first such clash occurred during the assault on the fort of Lanka, and it is described in full earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 47.]

मुठिकन्ह लातन्ह दातन्ह काटहिं । कपि जयसील मारि पुनि डाटहिं ॥ ५ ॥
 मारु मारु धरु धरु धरु मारु । सीस तोरि गहि जुजा उपासु ॥ ६ ॥
 असि रव पूरि रही नव खंडा । धावहिं जहँ तहँ रुंड प्रचंडा ॥ ७ ॥
 देखहिं कौतुक नभ सुर बृन्दा । कबहुँक बिसमय कबहुँ अनंदा ॥ ८ ॥

muṭhikanha lātanha dātanha kāṭahim. kapi jayasīla māri puni ḍāṭahim. 5.
 māru māru dharu dharu dharu mārū. sīsa tōri gahi bhujā upārū. 6.
 asi rava pūri rahī nava khaṇḍā. dhāvahim jaham̐ tahaṁ ruṇḍa pracaṇḍā. 7.
 dēkxahim kautuka nabha sura bṛndā. kabahuṁka bisamaya kabahuṁ anandā. 8.

The Kapis (monkeys and bears) are motivated and so inspired by the surety of victory that nothing holds them back; they fight vigorously and enthusiastically, clobbering their opponents (the demon warriors) and hitting them hard with their clenched fists and vicious kicks, and biting them deep and ferociously with their sharp teeth. The monkeys and bears, thus, first hit the demons hard, severely wounding and demoralising them, and then the victorious Kapis sternly admonished their adversaries (lecturing them on the fruitlessness of their wasting their energy and life for a lost cause, a cause that is wrong from the beginning)¹. (5)

There was utter chaos and mayhem in the battle-field. Blood-chilling shrieks of the warriors, yelling repeatedly ‘kill, kill; catch hold and kill, break the skull and severe the head; tear apart the limbs’ [6], rent the air and reverberated all over the nine segments of the island (of Lanka)². Here and there, and everywhere else, whithersoever one could see, severed heads and fragmented skulls flew thick and wild like so many flying objects hurled all over the ground [7]. (6-7)

The gods were watching the strange spectacle from the sky; sometimes they were struck with horror at this sight of the ferocity of the war, and at other times they felt glad that the war has, at last, commenced³. (8)

[Note—¹A similar thing occurred earlier too during the first day of the war. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 44.

²The whole island of Lanka was filled with the sound of war. The island was geographically divided into nine segments for administrative purposes. The clamour and the turmoil of the war, the shrieks of warriors and the clash of weapons, was deafening, and it echoed all over the land.

³The gods sometimes became alarmed at the mismatch between the two sides, for the monkeys and bears were pitted against demons who were superior to them in all respects of warfare, for they had better weapons, were very ferocious and reckless, knew many tricks to deceive their opponents, and were seasoned warriors who were veterans of countless wars in which they had successfully conquered not only the rulers of earth but had even vanquished the all-powerful gods in heaven. So the gods sometimes feared for the safety of the army of Lord Ram as it consisted of monkeys and bears who are usually regarded as an inferior and weaker race in the hierarchy of creation.

But soon they recovered themselves and regained their confidence of victory, making them feel glad that the war has actually started, because now their long-cherished dream of getting rid of the cruel and sinful demons would be realised. After all, this is for what they had prayed to Lord Vishnu, whereat the Lord had promised them that he would come down personally to earth as Lord Ram to fulfil their wish. So now the time has come when their wish for the elimination of Ravana and his vicious horde of cruel and sinful demons was about to be fulfilled, about to be realised. Hence, it was a time to celebrate and feel happy.]

दो०. रुधिर गाड़ भरि भरि जज्जो ऊपर धूरि उड़ाइ ।
जनु अँगार रासिन्ह पर मृतक धूम रह्यो छाड़ ॥ ५३ ॥

dōhā.

rudhira gāṛa bhari bhari jamyō ūpara dhūri urā'i.
janu aṁgāra rāsinha para mṛtaka dhūma rahyāō chā'i. 53.

All the potholes, cavities and fissures of the earth were filled with blood flowing into them; this blood so collected then coagulated and formed a thick crust over which layers of dust settled. Thick clouds of dust also flew all over the battle-ground (as it was kicked up by gusts of wind).

The sight resembled a cremation ground where so many pyres could be seen with hot ash over which red-hot ambers burnt, and the sky around was filled with a cloud of dark smoke that arose from the dead bodies that were laid over this heap for the purpose of cremation. (Doha no. 53)

[Note—This imagery draws one's attention to the horrifying and repulsive sight witnessed in the battle-field. The next verse describes the horrifying sight of wounded warriors lying on the ground in the battle-field.

It is a chilling, gut-wrenching, nauseating and nightmarish sight that is visible not only in the battle-field of Lanka but also witnessed wherever bloody wars are

fought between two armies. It compels a man of any sensitivity and mercy left in him to ponder over the futility and cruelty of wars; it fills any man who is conscientious, and has even a wee whit compassion left in any corner of his heart, to feel revulsive and wince at the mere thought of a war.

Say, what is gained by mass slaughter of fellow human beings? Even a victory that is attained by massacre and creating the scene described in this doha, is utterly disgraceful, totally inhuman and reprehensible, completely contemptible and outright outrageous, and worth nothing but severe shame and ignominy on the victor.]

चौ०. घायल बीर बिराजहिं कैसे । कुसुमित किंसुक के तरु जैसे ॥ १ ॥
लछिमन मेननाद द्वौ जोधा । भिरहिं परसपर करि अति क्रोधा ॥ २ ॥
एकहि एक सकड़ नहिं जीती । निसिचर छल बल करड़ अनीती ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ghāyala bīra birājahim kaisē. kusumita kimsuka kē taru jaisē. 1.
lachimana mēghanāda dvau jōdhā. bhirahim parasapara kari ati krōdhā. 2.
ēkahi ēka saka'i nahim jīti. niscara chala bala kara'i anīti. 3.

Gravely wounded warriors adorned the battle-field much like the crimson flowers that deck up a Kinshuk tree (the “Butea frondosa” tree) at the time when they are in full bloom¹. (1)

Now the time came for a direct confrontation between Laxman and Meghanad; both of them clashed with each other very furiously. (2)

Both were equal in valour, gallantry and skills, so no matter how hard they tried to subdue their opponents, they could not succeed.

Seeing that Laxman would not be so easily overcome, the demon (Meghanad) started cheating by employing unfair means and using dirty tricks to force himself upon Laxman and vanquish him². (3)

[Note—¹This tree is also known as “Palasha”. It has beautiful deep red coloured flowers that make the tree look very charming when in full bloom.

In this imagery, the battle-field is likened to the Kinshuk tree, and the injured warriors lying on the ground, with thick dark red blood oozing from their wounds, are likened to the flower of this tree. Even as the flowers move softly on the tree when they are made to sway by the wind, the wounded warriors turn left and right, and try to rise or raise their limbs while lying on the ground.

A similar sight is also referred to in Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 89, verse no. 37.

²When Meghanad observed that he is unable to overcome Laxman by using fair means of warfare, he decided to employ foul methods and resort to cheating. Being a ‘demon’, someone who has no qualms in using dirty tricks and employing unrighteous methods to serve his goal, Meghanad had not the slightest compunctions in using unfair means to overcome his opponent Laxman.

He knew many magical tricks that he had used earlier also in the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52.

So he decided to use them once again. Meghanad would also employ these dirty magical tricks that create a lot of illusions, such as making him suddenly vanish and reappear again somewhere else, during the second battle with Laxman when he was finally killed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 76.]

क्रोधवन्त तब भयउ अनन्ता । भंजेउ रथ सारथी तुरन्ता ॥ ४ ॥

नाना बिधि प्रहार कर सेषा । राच्छस भयउ प्रान अवसेषा ॥ ५ ॥

रावन सुत निज मन अनुमाना । संकठ भयउ हरिहि मम प्राना ॥ ६ ॥

krōdhavanta taba bhaya'u anantā. bhañjē'u ratha sārathī turantā. 4.
nānā bidhi prahāra kara sēṣā. rācchasa bhaya'u prāna avasēṣā. 5.
rāvana suta nija mana anumānā. saṅkaṭha bhaya'u harihi mama prānā. 6.

Then (i.e. when Meghanad started cheating and using foul and unfair methods in the duel) Laxman (who is also known as “Anant”¹) became vehemently angry. He immediately broke Meghanad’s chariot into splinters and killed the charioteer.

[To wit, Laxman became so furious when Meghanad started using unfair means in the battle that he angrily retaliated by shooting a powerful volley of arrows that slammed into Meghanad’s chariot with such a mighty force that they smashed it smithereens and killed the charioteer.] (4)

Laxman, who is a manifestation of Sheshnath (sēṣā), launched a vicious attack on his adversary, hitting him hard and furious in a variety of ways so much so that the demon’s life was almost on the edge of being sniffed out. (5)

The son of Ravana (“rāvana suta”; Meghanad)² thought to himself that the situation was extremely alarming, and soon Laxman would snatch his life away from him (i.e. would kill him). (6)

[Note—¹“Anant” means: ‘one who has no end; one who is eternal; one who does not die’. Use of this epithet for Laxman is very significant here because soon we shall read that he is seriously wounded and on the verge of death when Meghanad shot him with a fiery arrow that usually sucked the life of its victim. This epithet mentally prepares the reader for that moment when Laxman falls unconscious on the ground; it psychologically acclimatizes the reader and assures him that when he comes to the point where Laxman is grievously wounded and falls to the ground, there should be no cause worry, as Laxman is “Anant”, i.e. he cannot die. That simply means that there is no cause of alarm, that Laxman’s fainting is part of the game, a part of the show, for he will be revived before long.

“Anant” is also the name of Lord Sheshnath, the celestial Serpent who had manifested himself as Laxman. Lord Vishnu, the macrocosmic and invisible form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, reclines on the coiled body of Sheshnath as it floats on

the surface of Kshir-Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk from which the first elements of creation emerged at the time of its origin.

²Like the case of the word “Anant” for Laxman, another interesting word is used here when referring to Meghanad; it is “the son of Ravana— *rāvana suta*”.

What is so remarkable with the use of this term? The word “Ravana” means ‘one who makes others weep’. Since the demon king used to torment the world so much, the word ‘Ravana’ is used for him. Now, his son Meghanad would soon create a situation when Lord Ram too would weep and lament for Laxman when he is wounded by Meghanad’s powerful arrow.

Like his father Ravana, his son Meghanad was about to create a situation which would make Lord Ram weep and his companions feel sorrowful. So therefore, Meghanad is addressed as the ‘son of Ravana’; “like father, like son”.]

बीरघातिनी छाड़िसि साँगी । तेज पुंज लछिमन उर लागी ॥ ७ ॥
मुरुछा भई सक्ति के लागें । तब चलि गयउ निकट भय त्यागें ॥ ८ ॥

bīraghātinī chāḍisi sāṅgī. tēja puñja lachimana ura lāgī. 7.
muruchā bha'ī sakti kē lāgēm. taba cali gaya'u nikaṭa bhaya tyāgēm. 8.

Frustrated and extremely irritated because he felt he was in a dire strait and his life was in danger if he allowed a moment more to Laxman, Meghanad struck back at his opponent by throwing a special spear (*sāṅgī*) that never failed in felling (and even probably killing) the greatest of warriors¹. This powerful weapon glowed with energy, and it slammed into Laxman’s chest. (7)

Laxman fainted (and fell to the ground unconscious) when this powerful weapon, that had immense energy and dynamism inbuilt in it, hit him hard with all its punch (*sakti kē lāgēm*). Then Meghanad overcame his fear (of Laxman) and went near his adversary¹. (8)

[Note—¹As long as Laxman was on his legs fighting Meghanad, the latter dared not go near him; but when Laxman swooned and collapsed on the ground, Meghanad gathered enough courage to go near him.

Why did Meghanad go near Laxman? The answer is to be found in the next Doha no. 54—it was to lift and bring Laxman to Lanka. Why? It was to make Laxman a hostage if he was still alive, and use him as a bait to make a stiff bargain with Lord Ram, or as a prized trophy of war if he wasn’t alive. It would be a great victory for Meghanad and an act of unmatched valour and gallantry if he could bring Laxman to Lanka in whatever state Laxman was, and in whatever way Meghanad could.

There are two other significant reasons why Laxman was wounded and fell to the ground unconscious.

One is that at the time of asking Lord Ram to give him permission to go and face Meghanad, Laxman had not properly shown his respect to the Lord by bowing his head before the latter, which he ought to have done. It was perhaps because Laxman was very angry at the time, and in his anger he had lost his wisdom to act in a proper way. Besides this, Laxman was so confident of his own abilities that he thought that he is competent enough to tackle Meghanad on his own accord

independently, and so he felt that there was no need to seek Lord Ram's full protection by way of seeking the Lord's blessings and invoking the Lord's grace and mystical powers. The result was that Laxman lacked the full backing and the complete support of Lord Ram's grace, his divine abilities and mystical powers that would have given him an impregnable shield of protection against harm when he was fighting Meghanad, and so he fell down unconscious. This event shows us that if we are to succeed in any enterprise in life, we must first seek the Lord God's blessings, and then rely on the Lord's powers to enable us to move ahead towards the goal of obtaining success in our efforts. Refer to a note appended to Doha no. 52 herein above where this aspect has been further explained.

The second reason is this: At the time when Lord Ram was preparing to leave Ayodhya to proceed to the forest, he had tried his best to dissuade Laxman from joining him. The Lord had told Laxman that it will do good if he did not accompany him to the forest, because then he would have to bear a lot of sorrows and miseries—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71. Now, this fainting of Laxman was to prove that the Lord's words were true.

A similar situation occurred when Sita insisted on accompanying Lord Ram to the forest. In her case the Lord had been very explicit in outlining the immensity of sufferings one encounters in a forest, telling her that if she insists in going to the forest with the Lord then she will get only sufferings in return—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63. And the Lord was proved correct once again by the developments later on—when Sita was kidnapped by Ravana and kept as a prisoner in Lanka, where she was subjected to great horrors.]

दो०. मेघनाद सम कोटि सत जोधा रहे उठाइ ।

जगदाधार सेष किमि उठै चले खिसिआइ ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

mēghanāda sama kōṭi sata jōdhā rahē uṭhā'i.
jagadādhāra sēṣa kimi uṭhai calē khisi'ā'i. 54.

Countless warriors, who were truly as strong and powerful as Meghanad, tried their best to lift Laxman from the ground, but failed.

Say, how is it practically possible to lift Sheshnath who is the support of the entire world (or who supports the whole universe upon his thousand hoods)¹?

No matter how much and how hard these warriors tried, they could not lift Laxman; so at last they gave up in frustration and went away distraught, smarting with shame and feeling extremely humiliated. (Doha no. 53)

[Note—¹Laxman was a manifested form of Lord Sheshnath, the celestial serpent who is believed to hold the world aloft on his thousand hoods—Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 197; and (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 126.

Trying to lift Laxman would be like trying to lift the earth upon which one is standing; it is like lifting the ground from below one's own foot while one is standing

on it. It's impossible. One can't hold the ground underneath his own foot and lift it up along with himself.

Similarly, trying to lift Laxman was tantamount to lifting the earth on which these demon warriors were standing.

A very interesting development is about to occur now. While the demon warriors were unable to lift Laxman from the ground where he was lying unconscious, Hanuman would very easily lift him and take his limp body to place it before Lord Ram at the end of the day's war—apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55 below.

The question is: How could Hanuman lift Laxman when the demons couldn't? Well, one reason is that the demons, being sinful, pervert and unholy, lacked any spiritual power and the special abilities that come with it, while Hanuman had an abundance of such powers and abilities.

Secondly, from the perspective of metaphysics, the demons represented 'gross' elements in creation, and such elements are always heavy themselves; their heaviness acted as a drag on their ability to lift and move Laxman because he was extremely heavy himself as he supported the whole world on his hood in his primary form as Lord Sheshnath.

On the other hand, Hanuman represented the lighter, the subtler elements of creation as he was the son of the 'wind' god, and 'wind or air' is one of the five subtle elements in creation. In this interpretation, Laxman represented the 'sky' element, because one of the names of Lord Sheshnath is 'Anant'*, which means eternal and without an end, which are the characteristics of the 'sky' element. {*Refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes this Doha no. 54.}

The air and sky are almost identical in subtlety; so therefore Hanuman and Laxman made a perfect match.

The power of wind is well known; a powerful storm can cause unprecedented havoc; a fierce wind can as easily lift a humble twig as it can topple ships and carry away heavier things that falls in its path, as will be observed when a tornado or hurricane strikes. The wind turns a windmill, and the latter, with the aid of the wind, can lift water from the bowls of the earth if connected to a pump, and then use it for irrigation. The wind can move ships by filling its sails. The air lifts balloons, and the wind can steer it.

In brief, the element 'wind' that Hanuman represented enabled him to lift Laxman because he represented the 'sky' element as explained herein above, making him very light.

Earlier on in the story of the Ramayan we read that Lord Shiva's Bow had become so heavy that a large number of strong kings and princes, who had gathered during the marriage ceremony of Sita at Janakpur, could not lift it, while the same Bow became so light that Lord Ram could not only easily lift it but as easily break it into two pieces. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 261.}

In this case, every citizen present on the occasion had made a fervent plea to the deity of the Bow, i.e. to Lord Shiva, requesting that the Bow become very light. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 255.}

Similarly, it's quite probable here that Hanuman too had prayed silently to Lord Sheshnath, the primary form of Laxman, to make his manifested form, i.e.

Laxman, very light so that he can be lifted. This the third plausible reason as to why Hanuman was able to lift Laxman.

Another interesting reason, and the fourth one, is this: Lord Shiva is depicted in iconography, based on the reading and interpretation of ancient mythological texts known as the ‘Purans’, as having a number of serpents wrapped around his body; these serpents are his ornamentation. This means simply that Lord Shiva is able to carry the weight of these serpents in the same way as we wear garlands or other ornaments on our bodies. Now, Hanuman is a manifestation of ‘Rudra’, the eleventh form of Lord Shiva that is concerned with annihilation of everything, it is the angry form of Shiva that brings about the end of this creation; and Laxman is a manifestation of the celestial serpent known as Sheshnath. This means obviously that the weight of the body of Laxman poses no problem for Hanuman to carry just like the case of the weight of the serpents posing no problem for Lord Shiva when he wears them around his body.

To wit, a combination of factors came into play that enabled Hanuman to lift Laxman, whereas the demons failed.]

चौ०. सुनु गिरिजा क्रोधानल जासू । जारइ भुवन चारिदस आसू ॥ १ ॥
सक संग्राम जीति को ताही । सेवहिं सुर नर अग जग जाही ॥ २ ॥
यह कौतूहल जानइ सोई । जा पर कृपा राम कै होई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunu girijā krōdhānala jāsū. jāra'i bhuvana cāridasa āsū. 1.
saka saṅgrāma jīti kō tāhī. sēvahiṁ sura nara aga jaga jāhī. 2.
yaha kautūhala jāna'i sōī. jā para krpā rāma kai hōī. 3.

[Lord Shiva continued his narration and said to his consort Uma, who is also known as Girija as she is the daughter of the Kingdom of Mountains. Shiva said:-]

‘Listen Girija. He whose anger is so fierce that its hell-like fire can burn all the fourteen divisions of this creation’ [1], ---

--- And who is served not only by the gods and the human beings but also by all other living beings in this creation, both immortal as well as mortal, both gross as well as subtle—say, who can defeat such a majestic and almighty Lord of the World in the battle-field? [2]

[Of course the answer is “no one can”. So then if that is the case, how do we explain what is happening on the ground in the war of Lanka, where we see that the monkeys and bears, who represent Lord Ram and form his army, are often times beaten back and thrashed by the demons, and we also read that Laxman has been gravely wounded and felled by their prince Meghanad. The answer to this vexing question is given below in the following verse.] (1-2)

The actual reason for what is happening on the ground in the war of Lanka, the reality behind the external deceptions created (which has presently created an impression that Laxman has been subdued and wounded by Meghanad) is known to only a few enlightened souls on whom Lord Ram (the Supreme Being and the bestower of gnosis, wisdom and knowledge) shows his grace². (3)

[Note—¹The “fourteen divisions of this creation”, known as the 14 Bhuvans or 14 abodes, are the following:

(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas (उर्ध्व लोक) are seven in number:—(i) Bhu/Bhūḥ (भूः), (ii) Bhuvaha/Bhuvah (भुवः), (iii) Swaha/Swah (स्वः), (iv) Maha/Mah (महः), (v) Janaha/Janah (जनः), (vi) Tapaha/Tapah (तपः), and (vii) Satyam/Satyam (सत्यम्).

(B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha/Adhah Loka (अधः लोक):— (i) Atal/Atala (अतल), (ii) Vital/Vitala (वितल), (iii) Satal/Sutala (सुतल), (iv) Rasaatal/Rasātala (रसातल), (v) Talaatal/Talātala (तलातल), (vi) Mahaatal/Mahātala (महातल), and (vii) Paataal/Pātāla (पाताल). The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

²Only those who know who Lord Ram and Laxman actually were, that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the invisible and all-pervading macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being, and that Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Sheshnath, the cosmic serpent who supports the whole creation on his thousand hoods and on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean that fills the outer space in the form of ether, would know that all this fainting and fighting and all other things were merely for show to hide the reality of both Lord Ram as well as Laxman, because Ravana, the mighty king of demons, had a boon of immunity from death being caused by anybody except at the hands of human beings; so it had to be done that way, that a human being would one day succeed in slaying the mighty demon king, and to make it happen that way, the Lord had to take extra precautions to ensure that nothing is visibly done on the ground that would reveal his true identity, that could be construed as being reasonably beyond the powers of a human being to do, as far as possible, so that the sanctity of the boons granted to Ravana by the creator Brahma could be maintained, and the scourge of the demons could be brought to an end.

To wit, if the secret was leaked—that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human but the Supreme Being himself in the form of a prince—then most of the demons would have either run away or surrendered themselves without a fight. If this happened, the Lord would not have been able to eliminate them, and they would have lived, causing a piquant situation that would have defeated the very purpose for which Lord Vishnu came down to earth—because these cunning demons would have pretended to show remorse and promise the Lord that they would certainly change their sinful ways in order to escape death, but sooner or later, in all probability sooner rather than later, they would have invariably gone back on their words and reverted to their old bad habits of tormenting creatures and creating unfettered terror in this world.

Come to think of it: Lord Sheshnath who could turn the world upside down by merely shifting it or turning it over on his hoods or even tilting his head a little bit to one side, could have very easily make Lanka first heave and then splash and sink into the depths of the ocean that surrounded it from all the sides like a ship capsizing in rough waters of the ocean during a violent storm, so what was the great idea, except to ensure sanctity of Brahma’s boons, that Laxman had to endure so much trouble?]

संध्या भइ फिरि द्वौ बाहनी । लगे सँभारन निज निज अनी ॥ ४ ॥

व्यापक ब्रह्म अजित भुवनेस्वर । लछिमन कहाँ बूझ करुनाकर ॥ ५ ॥

तब लागि लै आयउ हनुमाना । अनुज देखि प्रभु अति दुख माना ॥ ६ ॥

sandhyā bha'i phiri dvau bāhanī. lagē saṁbhārana nija nija anī. 4.
byāpaka brahma ajita bhuvanēśvara. lachimana kahāṁ būjha karunākara. 5.
taba lagi lai āya'u hanumānā. anuja dēkhi prabhu ati dukha mānā. 6.

When it was eventide and the time of day when twilight approached, both the armies retired from the battle-field for the day (to go back to their respective camps). The commanders of the two armies (the demons as well as the monkeys and bears) surveyed their troops to take stock of the situation and review the condition of their respective forces¹. (4)

Lord Ram—who is the all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm (the Supreme Being and cosmic Consciousness) in his primary form (byāpaka brahma), who is invincible and the almighty Lord of the entire creation (ajita bhuvanēśvara), and who shows mercy to others (karunākara)—asked where Laxman was (when he could not see him around). (5)

In the meantime, Hanuman brought the unconscious Laxman (and laid him on the ground before the Lord)².

When the Lord saw his younger brother lying unconscious (and almost as if he was not alive), he became very sad and extremely sorrowful. (6)

[Note—¹This is the end of the second day of the war in general, and the end of the first duel between Laxman and Meghanad.

A head count was done by the commanders of the two armies to determine who had died, how many were wounded, and how many and who had survived.

²We have already read in Doha no. 54 herein above that Meghanad and all other strong demon warriors had failed to lift Laxman and take him to Lanka with them. And now we read that the same Laxman was lifted and brought before Lord Ram by Hanuman.

How and why could Hanuman lift Laxman when the demons couldn't? This crucial question has been answered and explained in detail in a note appended to Doha no. 54 referred to above, as well as to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 84 later on, during the narration of Ravana's battle with Lord Ram.]

जामवंत कह बैद सुषेना । लंकाँ रहइ को पठई लेना ॥ ७ ॥

धरि लघु रूप गयउ हनुमंता । आनेउ भवन समेत तुरंता ॥ ८ ॥

jā mavanta kaha baida suṣēnā. laṅkāṁ raha'i kō paṭha'ī lēnā. 7.
dhari laghu rūpa gaya'u hanumantā. ānē'u bhavana samēta turantā. 8.

Jamvant (the old bear chieftain) said that a Vaidya (a doctor who treats patients using herbal medicines) named Sushen lives in Lanka¹, and asked for advice as to who should be sent to bring him. (7)

[It was unanimously decided that Hanuman must be urgently dispatched to bring Sushen². So therefore—] Hanuman assumed a small form (like the one he had

assumed earlier to enter Lanka undetected when he had gone there the first time in search of Sita), and went to Lanka.

He immediately brought the doctor, along with his house, from there³. (8)

[Note—¹How did Jamvant come to know about Sushen, the doctor? He was told about him by Vibhishan, the demon prince and brother of Ravana who had joined Lord Ram's camp.

Why did Vibhishan not himself disclose that a doctor by this name lived in Lanka, and instead confided this news to Jamvant and asked the latter to reveal this information? Well, Vibhishan was very intelligent; he thought that if he said something himself then there were chances that he would be misunderstood as if he was contriving a devise by which to invite one of his confidantes from Lanka in the garb of a doctor, who would then administer some poison to Laxman that would cause his death.

Even if not actually giving poison to Laxman, no one could be absolutely sure how a medicine would react, as the best of medicines given by the best of doctors may sometimes prove ineffective or even fatal if it causes some serious reaction in the patient's body, which would cause Laxman's death. Should it unfortunately happen, then all the monkeys and bears would definitely conclude that Vibhishan had a malefic intention in suggesting the name of Sushen, with whom he was hand-in-glove secretly to manoeuvre things in a cunning way that would lead to Laxman death by administering a poison or a wrong medicine so as to weaken Lord Ram and make him regret for his decision to attack Lanka. If that happened, if the finger of suspicion rested on Vibhishan for any ill fate that befell Laxman, then that would be his end; he will definitely be killed to avenge Laxman.

Vibhishan weighed the pros and cons and came to the conclusion that there were fair chances that Lord Ram, who would be overcome with grief by then, would begin to doubt his integrity and question why he had advised that Sushen be brought to treat Laxman, and chances were that, driven by excess of sorrow at Laxman's ill fate, and under the wrong impression that Vibhishan was to be blamed for it, the Lord would approve putting him to death as punishment for betrayal.

Vibhishan pondered over the matter seriously and deduced that the aspect of the affair was very alarming and fraught with danger for him, and one unwise step on his part would land him in a grave situation should things go wrong and something unexpected and unfortunate befalls Laxman due to his intercession in this matter. So it was prudent and advisable under the circumstances to keep mum. But at the same time, thought Vibhishan, it was his moral obligation and duty to help his benefactor Lord Ram and his brother Laxman in these trying times, and if he had some knowledge that could be of certain help to them, then he ought to put it to good use while ensuring his own safety, or even putting himself to a little risk if a greater good is attained.

It was a horrifying prospect, but Vibhishan nevertheless decided to help Lord Ram, who had warmly welcomed him and given him unconditional refuge when he was ousted from his own kingdom by his brother Ravana, as best as he could while playing it safe for himself; and so he quietly approached Jamvant to give this confidential bit of information about the availability of an expert doctor named Sushen in Lanka.

It can be argued that Hanuman may have brought this information, about the presence of a doctor by the name of Sushen in Lanka, when he had gone there in search of Sita. But he would have told this to Angad as he was his fast friend, and

probably not to Jamvant as the latter was very senior in the hierarchy as well as in age. Besides, Hanuman belonged to the ‘monkey race’ while Jamvant was the chief of the ‘bear race’; hence the interaction between Hanuman and Jamvant must have been very limited and formal as compared to his interaction with Angad. Now here since Angad has kept quiet, it means he had no such knowledge of a doctor named Sushen in Lanka.

Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that this information was given by Vibhishan to Jamvant.

²Why was Hanuman chosen for the job of bringing Sushen from Lanka? The answer is given right here—it was because he could ‘assume a minute form’ that would enable him to make his ingress and egress from Lanka without being detected.

Hanuman had experience of using this trick, because he had employed it when he had gone to Lanka earlier in search of Sita; he had not only made his ingress by assuming a small form (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4) but had also explored the city throughout the night in this form, without being detected (apropos: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5).

How then was his bringing the doctor with his whole house kept a secret? It is because it was night time, and he had lifted the house and become air-borne immediately. Then he silently cruised in the sky to exit the boundaries of the city.

³How did Hanuman do it? Well, Hanuman scooped up the house from the ground by digging the soil from underneath it and then lifting it in his hands to bring it to where Lord Ram was sitting by the side of wounded Laxman, just like a gardener transplants a sapling by lifting it from one place in the garden to transfer it to another place.

We shall soon read that Hanuman would employ this skill to lift up a mountain and bring it to Lanka when he could not descry the desired herb on it—apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58 herein below.]

दो०. राम पदारबिंद सिर नायउ आइ सुषेन ।

कहा नाम गिरि औषधी जाहु पवनसुत लेन ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

rāma padārabinda sira nāya'u ā'i suṣēna.

kahā nāma giri auṣadhī jāhu pavanāsuta lēna. 55.

Sushen arrived and paid his obeisance to Lord Ram by bowing his head at the Lord's feet. Then he named the mountain on which the required medicine (i.e. the medicinal herb) was to be found¹, asking the son of the wind god (“pavanāsuta”; Hanuman)² to go and fetch it³. (Doha no. 55)

[Note—¹Where was this mountain that bore the herb which could revive Laxman back to life? It is mentioned in Valmiki's Ramayan, Uddha Kand (Lanka Kand), canto 74, verse nos. 29-30 that Jamvant had told Hanuman: “Fly over the surface of the ocean and reach the northern mountains known as the Himalayas. Further on you will see a golden-hued mountain known as Rishav; the famed abode of Lord Shiva, known

as Kailash, is visible beyond it. In between the two you will see a mountain where medicinal herbs glow in the night like so many fire-flies.”

In Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 46 it is said that this herb was located in the “Dronachal mountain”. Then in verse no. 60 it is said that: “Hanuman went to this mountain and defeated the Gandharvas who were protecting it; then he lifted it and started on his journey back.”

What were the special qualities of this unique herb? In Valmiki Ramayan we find the answer in its Lanka Kand, canto 101, verse nos. 30-31. “The herb is to be found on the southern summit of the Drona Mountain; it can heal wounds, restore the origin condition of the patient’s body, revive a person who is almost dead, and can re-join or heal broken or ruptured parts of the body such as bones, skin, muscles, veins and tissues.”

²The use of the term “son of the wind god” is very significant here. The wind is extremely swift in its movement; it can cover large distances in a short span of time. Hanuman had to travel a long distance to the mountain to bring the herb; he had to cross the ocean and the land beyond, with all the natural geographical obstacles he would have to contend with, in order to reach it. Only the wind can easily surmount all physical obstacles when traversing from one point to another on the surface of the earth.

Secondly, it was necessary to ‘fly’ in the sky all the way to the destination, and it was possible only if Hanuman’s primary form as the ‘son of the wind god’ is invoked. The wind god would surely help his son Hanuman to fly over the ocean and the land to reach his destination, and then return by the same path.

The ‘son’ of the wind god surely must possess the unique abilities of his father, the abilities to fly and move rapidly, to overcome all physical hindrances that come in the way of his path, and to be able to remain air-borne while carrying the weight of the bundle of herbs on his way back. As we will soon discover, this ability to remain air-borne while carrying a heavy weight was absolutely essential, because on his way back Hanuman had to carry the entire mountain loaded with herbs. It is because he could not decide which specific herb was needed, and so took along the whole mountain in order to avoid taking the risk of picking a wrong herb, or wasting precious time in searching for the correct herb.

³It is not clear from the reading of this verse who actually asked Hanuman to go to the mountain and bring the needed herb—was it Sushen, or was it Lord Ram?

Most probably it was the doctor himself—firstly it is because since Sushen was brought by Hanuman, he was better acquainted with the latter as compared to the rest of the ministers of Lord Ram who were standing around; and secondly it is because Lord Ram was so sad and woefully grieving for unconscious Laxman that he was not in a proper state of mind to talk about anything.

It is a common observance that when there is a patient lying in a serious condition and a doctor is called, the patient’s closest kin who love him dearly, such as his only son, parent or wife who is the most affected by grief and overcome with sorrows, is not in a proper state of mind to discuss the situation and relevant details coherently with the doctor, and it is usually done by others in the family who are in attendance; it is because the latter are able to maintain their cool and act dispassionately as compared to those who are directly affected by the shock of the serious illness of their dear one.

At the same time, it could have been Lord Ram who asked Hanuman to go and bring the required herb. The Lord was the commander-in-chief of the army, and a person who occupies this senior position in the hierarchy is expected to maintain his cool and exercise self-control during the gravest of situations and battle-field reversals. It was necessary for Lord Ram to maintain external calm to ensure that the morale of his troops is not affected negatively, at least till the time there was hope of Laxman's revival.]

चौ०. राम चरन सरसिज उर राखी । चला प्रभंजन सुत बल भाषी ॥ १ ॥

उहाँ दूत एक मरमु जनाव । रावनु कालनेमि गृह आवा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma carana sarasija ura rākhī. calā prabhañjana suta bala bhāṣī. 1.
uhāñ dūta ēka maramu janāvā. rāvanu kālanēmi gṛha āvā. 2.

Enshrining Lord Ram's holy lotus-like feet in his heart (i.e. after invoking the Lord's glory and grace, and paying his due obeisance to him), and then reassuring the Lord that he will be able to successfully accomplish the mission (of bringing the requisite herb) by reiterating his own abilities, about his skills and strengths, in this regard¹, the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) started off on his journey. (1)

Meanwhile, there (in Lanka) a spy informed Ravana about the developments (that Laxman was lying wounded and unconscious on the ground in his camp, and Hanuman was dispatched to bring an herb from the northern mountains to revive him)².

Being thus informed, Ravana went to the house of the demon named Kalnemi.
(2)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that Hanuman commits the same mistake which Laxman had committed earlier when he had gone to engage Meghanad in the battle-field, and it is that Hanuman did not pay his full respects to Lord Ram by bowing his head before the Lord, nor did he seek the Lord's permission in express terms to proceed with the mission.

The first error, of not bowing his head before the Lord, was however compensated and made excusable to a great extent because Hanuman had 'invoked and enshrined the Lord's holy feet in his heart at the time of departure', a silent and subtle gesture that is equivalent to actually bowing the head before the Lord.

The second error can also be excused because Hanuman has been expressly requested to bring the needed medicinal herb and charged with this mission. Lord's permission was implied and implicit in this request; he was assigned this commission on an urgent basis, as there was no time left for observing formalities and courtesies.

But the third error Hanuman made, of 'speaking of his own abilities, his strength and skills' before the Lord, on his face, and in the presence of all those who had gathered around, was tantamount to boasting about himself. So what happened? Soon Hanuman would learn a bitter lesson, that his wisdom and intelligence and abilities to see things clearly were not as great and refined and sharp as he seemed to believe—for, first he fell in a trap laid by one of the demons, named Kalnami, who was sent by Ravana to deceive Hanuman and block his way, and if possible, to kill

him, because he could not see through the deception initially and was virtually caught by the demon, and on the second occasion a little while later Hanuman could not recognise the herb he was expected to bring to revive Laxman when he arrived at his destination in the northern mountains. These two failures were a sort of punishment for Hanuman, reminding him that whatever he had said about his stellar qualities and unique abilities were only loud talk and bloated assumptions. Thus, Hanuman was reminded to be modest and show more humbleness the next time. We shall read about these two events shortly.

²Ravana's spies were updating him about the developments in the battle-field. They must have surely told him about Sushen being taken to the camp of Lord Ram to treat Laxman. It is remarkable that Ravana did not put Sushen in prison or to death when he was brought back by Hanuman.

What may have been the reason of Ravana's not punishing Sushen for reviving his enemy's brother?

Well, the answer is this: First, it is a sacrosanct duty and moral obligation of any doctor to save a person's life, irrespective of whose life he saves; whether the patient is an enemy or a friend is immaterial in this moral obligation and fulfilment of a doctor's duty.

Secondly, Ravana too needed the services of an expert doctor; it was not in his interest to antagonise or irritate or offend Sushen, who was the best doctor in Lanka, at a crucial time when a fierce war was raging, and countless demon warriors too needed medical help from him. So no matter how much Ravana may have liked to wreak his vengeance upon Sushen, yet he decided in his wisdom to keep quiet for the time being and punish the doctor for treason or betrayal later on when calm returns and the war ends.

Ravana approached Kalnemi because he judged in his mind that this demon was the only one in Lanka who would have the guts and the wherewithal to face Hanuman. Ravana abandoned his usual arrogance and ego by personally approaching Kalnemi and visiting him at his home, instead of summoning him to his palace. We have already seen that earlier Ravana had adopted the same method when he had personally approached another demon named Marich in order to carry out his plans to steal Sita. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23.}

Ravana needed someone who can use the art of deception skilfully, as he intended to capture or kill Hanuman, or at least delay his journey to the northern mountains by blocking his way. Ravana, being a great king was expected to have a wide body of knowledge of virtually everything as kings usually are trained to have; so he had some basic knowledge of the science of herbal treatment, and he guessed that this herb must be administered to Laxman before day-break in order to be effective. So if he somehow managed to delay Hanuman and prevent him from bringing the herb by morning, then Laxman would not live. This fact is clearly hinted when we shall read a little later that Lord Ram lamented at the delay in Hanuman's coming back because it was past midnight and dawn was fast approaching. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61.}

दसमुख कहा मरमु तेहिं सुना । पुनि पुनि कालनेमि सिरु धुना ॥ ३ ॥

देखत तुम्हहि नगरु जेहिं जारा । तासु पंथ को रोकन पारा ॥ ४ ॥

dasamukha kahā maramu tēhiṁ sunā. puni puni kālanēmi siru dhunā. 3.
dēkhata tumhahi nagaru jēhiṁ jārā. tāsu pantha kō rōkana pārā. 4.

The ten-headed Ravana told Kalnemi the reason for his visit, learning which the latter became exceedingly alarmed and highly distraught, repeatedly beating his head in disgust and the doomed prospect of their race (by the recklessness of one single individual, Ravana, who stubbornly refused to see the consequences of his irrational, indefensible and senseless actions)¹. (3)

Kalnemi sternly warned Ravana of the hazards he faced, and rebuked him in strong terms, saying: ‘He (Hanuman) had burnt the city right before you, while you were watching helplessly²; say then, who can successfully create a hurdle in his path and stop him? [To wit, who can stop this formidable person from progressing on his journey as you wish me to do?] (4)

[Note—¹In the story of the Ramayana we come across three such individuals whom Ravana approaches to seek help when he was in dire straits, and all the three have sternly rebuked him, saying that what he has chosen to do is totally unjustified and wrong, that yet there was time for him to make amends and prevent a catastrophe from befalling on the demon race, that he is making a grave error of judgement in thinking that Lord Ram was an ordinary human prince whom he can easily vanquish; and in all the three cases Ravana stubbornly refused to relent, threatening two with death, and putting the third in an embarrassing situation wherein if he refused to cooperate with Ravana and toe his line, then it would be tantamount to betrayal of one’s own family blood.

The first such individual was the demon named Marich; Ravana had approached him in order to employ his skills at assuming any form that he wished to have to a deception with the help of which he would abduct Sita. Marich had most politely warned Ravana of the grave and fatal error he is committing in creating animosity with Lord Ram without any reason, and had also told him about his personal experience in this regard, forewarning him of the dire consequences of his recklessness. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26.}

The second instance is that of Kalnemi; we are reading it presently. He too advised Ravana in almost the same way as Marich had done, in no uncertain language that he is severely erring in creating animosity with Lord Ram who is no one else but the Supreme Lord himself in this form, and that he would do good to himself if he worshipped and adored the Lord instead. But again, Ravana bluntly refused, becoming aggressive and threatening Kalnemi with death. {Doha no. 56 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 directly herein below.}

The third person whom Ravana approached for help was his own brother Kumbhakaran. He too was shocked and gravely lamented to learn what Ravana had done and what he planned to do, about his sinful act of bringing Sita as a captive and unnecessarily provoking a war with Lord Ram, strongly taking him to task and admonishing him for his mad actions, for his pervert nature and wrong decisions. But on realising that his elder brother Ravana is in no mood to listen, and if he refused to enter the fray on his behalf in the war against Lord Ram, then history would accuse him of being disloyal to the king and betraying his own brother, Kumbhakaran

reluctantly decided to enter the battle-field. He also saw in this a rare chance of attaining deliverance for his soul, and helping it to find liberation from the cage-like body of a demon, which was sinful, evil and gross. Besides these benefits, Kumbhakaran saw another great reward: that he would have a wonderful opportunity to see Lord Ram from very close quarters; it would be a rarest of rare privilege for him, because such a view is not available even to great sages, hermits and ascetics who spend their entire lives doing severe penances and great sacrifices and observance of vows just for a chance to have this divine glimpse even for a second. So therefore, instead of regretting, Kumbhakaran become joyous. We shall read about it shortly when we soon come to the third day of the war. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.

When Kalnemi came to know Ravana's intention, that the latter wanted him to obstruct Hanuman's way so that he fails to bring the herb to revive Laxman, Kalnemi became sore affright and saw death staring in his face. This is what he means here. He put Ravana in an embarrassing situation by asking this question: what was Ravana doing when Hanuman ran amok in the city and burnt it; couldn't Ravana himself stop him at that time? Why couldn't he ask Kalnemi at that time to stop Hanuman from having a free run in the city, burning it from street to street and house to house, if it was possible, and if Ravana thought that Kalnemi was capable of doing it? The prospects of stopping Hanuman were brighter then as compared to now, because at that time there was a whole army of demons to support Kalnemi if he was ordered to stop Hanuman, but now he has to do it all alone, prejudicing his own life and safety. This is nonsense and a virtual suicide. Ravana had no answer of course.]

भजि रघुपति करु हित आपना । छाँड़हु नाथ मृषा जल्पना ॥ ५ ॥
नील कंज तनु सुंदर स्यामा । हृदयँ राखु लोचनाभिरामा ॥ ६ ॥
मैं तैं मोर मूढ़ता त्यागू । महा मोह निसि सूतत जागू ॥ ७ ॥
काल ब्याल कर भच्छक जोई । सपनेहुँ समर कि जीतिअ सोई ॥ ८ ॥

bhaji raghupati karu hita āpanā. chāṁṛahu nātha mṛṣā jalpanā. 5.
nīla kañja tanu sundara syāmā. hṛdayaṁ rākhū lōcanābhirāmā. 6.
mairṁ tairṁ mōra mūṛhatā tyāgū. mahā mōha nisi sūtata jāgū. 7.
kāla byāla kara bhacchaka jō'ī. sapanēhuṁ samara ki jīti'a sō'ī. 8.

[I sincerely advise you to—] Worship Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) and pay your obeisance to him. To wit, by doing it you would ensure your own good and take care of your welfare.

My lord; stop useless talk, and discard all forms of worthless boast and hollow bluster (for these will not serve you any good at all). (5)

Instead of it (i.e. instead of wasting your time and energy in this futile pursuit), you ought to enshrine the beautiful image of the Lord that is dark complexioned like a blue-hued lotus flower in your heart. Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay,

this image of the Lord is so enchanting and beauteous that it bewitches the sight of its beholder and holds it in its thrall². (6)

Discard your stupid idea that makes you differentiate between ‘I’, ‘You’, ‘Mine (and yours)’ etc³.

Wake up from the night of ignorance that has created darkness around you, preventing you from seeing the truth and the reality. (7)

He (i.e. Lord Ram) who can devour (bring to an end; conclude) even the serpent of Time (by bringing an end to the cycle of creation and destruction, known as Kaal)⁴, say who can even imagine to conquer him in a war fought in a mortal world⁵? (8)

[Note—¹After telling Ravana of the impracticability of stopping Hanuman, Kalnemi gave him some sincere advice regarding his wrong decision of opposing Lord Ram and creating hostility with him that reflected what others too had told him in this matter: such as his wife Mandodari, his younger brother Vibhishan, and Suka, his messenger sent behind Vibhishan to spy on him, and Marich, the demon who was forced by Ravana to become a deer with a golden hide. A little later in the story, Ravana’s brother Kumbhakaran too says a similar thing.

Refer:- (a) With respect to Mandodari—Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-10 that precede it; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Doha no. 7; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; and (iv) Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37.

(b) With respect to Vibhshah—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and (ii) Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede it.

(c) With respect to Suka—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 57.

(d) With respect to Marich—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26.

(e) With respect to Kumbhakaran—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 63.

²When Ravana had forced Marich to become a golden deer and sent to deceive Sita, he (Marich) too had enshrined this image of Lord Ram in his heart to derive solace in embracing death; Marich was very happy at the prospect of his seeing Lord Ram’s captivating beauty from so close a quarter—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.

A similar vision was invoked by Kumbhakaran when he had to go and fight Lord Ram, albeit most reluctantly; he had felt joyous that he will have a chance to see this enchanting image of the Lord from up so close. He minced no words in expressing his joy, and even asked Ravana to embrace him for giving him this chance of enjoying this view and attaining salvation for his soul—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 63 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

³Kalnemi tells Ravana about the basic principle of metaphysics and spirituality: that the true identity of all living beings is their Atma, their soul, which is pure consciousness, an entity that is subtle, invisible, eternal, universal and holy, and which is the same in all creatures irrespective of whatever external form they might have. To wit, the physical gross body that the world sees and recognises as an

individual person is not that individual's 'true self'; it is his Atma resides in this body. Whereas the physical body has its limitations and is specific to an individual, the Atma is not subjected to any such limitations; it is not butted and bounded by lines and physical boundaries.

Hence, who is an enemy of whom; what is the difference between 'him' and 'me' and 'you'; none whatever—because the Atma is the same in all.

So therefore, how come Lord Ram is Ravana's enemy; how and why the former should become the latter's enemy. Why does Ravana think that way; what is the cause of the animosity and its resultant war? None of course.

Truly then if Ravana thinks this way, then he is definitely under the influence of darkness caused by ignorance of the facts.

⁴The eternal coil of Time that represents a 'serpent' because of its fatal nature and coiled structure that continuously wounds and un-wounds like the spring in a clock that keeps the clock's hands moving, and which keeps the creature rotating in a continuous cycle of birth and death, even this otherwise in-conquerable and un-stoppable movement of Time can be stopped when the Supreme Being decides so; when he decides to bring to an end one cycle of creation and destruction, Time would come to a standstill.

The actual words used in this verse are "kāla, byāla, bhacchaka". 'Kaal' also means 'death'; or the god who presides over death. Since no one is immune to death, it is likened to a poisonous 'serpent' or the 'byala' that kills for sure when it bites.

Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram, has Garud, the celestial Eagle, as his mount, and this Garud has a special ability that it can easily devour serpents.

So in this verse it is said that Lord Ram can, if he so wishes, bring an end to Kaal, the god of death who kills all others, too, just like the Lord's mount known as Garud can kill and devour all sorts of serpents, who themselves can kill all those they bite. This being the case, can anyone be so powerful and strong that he would overcome Lord Ram, the killer of Death-God himself? The obvious answer is: No, there is no one who can do it.

⁵An almost similar declaration was made by others such as Mandodari, Marich, Suka, Kumbhakran on different occasions.

Refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 25 (by Marich); (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Vibhishan); (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 (Mandodari); (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63 (Kumbhakaran).]

दो०. सुनि दसकंठ रिसान अति तेहिं मन कीन्ह बिचार ।

राम दूत कर मरौं बरु यह खल रत मल भार ॥ ५६ ॥

dōhā.

suni dasakaṇṭha risāna ati tēhim mana kīnha bicāra.

rāma dūta kara maraur̥ baru yaha khala rata mala bhāra. 56.

When the ten-necked Ravana (*dasakaṇṭha*) heard what Kalnemi had to say, he became wroth with exceeding wrath.

Observing Ravana's angry reaction and fearing for his life, Kalnemi thought to himself that if he has to die then why should it be an ignominious death at the hands of this pervert fellow who is burdened with sins and vices (that would make his soul go to hell); why should it not be an exalted death at the hands of a messenger of Lord Ram (that would ensure that his soul goes to heaven)¹. (Doha no. 56)

[Note—¹Why dying at the hands of Lord Ram's messenger Hanuman, who was also the Lord's great devotee, so much preferred by Kalnemi? It is because such a death would bless his soul with beatitude and felicity which is equivalent to dying directly at the hands of the Lord himself.

The greatness of Hanuman, Lord Ram's devotee and messenger, is explicitly endorsed in Ram Charit Manas by those who met him personally, albeit under different situations. For instance we read in (i) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 4 alone with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it about the declaration made by Lankini; (ii) then again in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 7 about the declaration made by Vibhishan; and (iii) finally in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 58 about the declaration made by the alligator who found its deliverance when he was killed by Hanuman. All endorse this view—that one is very fortunate to meet Lord Ram's devotee and messenger.

We read earlier that Marich too had thought in a similar fashion when he was forced by Ravana to assume the form of a deer with a golden hide so that Sita could be abducted—that it would be better not to die at the hands of Ravana who was home to all sins and vices. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.}

The only difference between Marich and Kalnemi is the circumstance of their death, for while Marich was slayed by Lord Ram himself (apropos: Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 27), Kalnemi is now slayed by the Lord's favourite devotee named Hanuman (apropos: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 58).]

चौ०. अस कहि चला रचिसि मग माया । सर मंदिर बर बाग बनाया ॥ १ ॥

मारुतसुत देखा सुभ आश्रम । मुनिहि बूझि जल पियौ जाइ श्रम ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi calā racisi maga māyā. sara mandira bara bāga banāyā. 1.
mārutasuta dēkhā subha āśrama. munihi būjhi jala piyaum jā'i śrama. 2.

Saying this to himself (as said in Doha no. 55 herein above), Kalnemi went to intercept Hanuman. Somewhere on the way, he (Kalnemi) used his crafty ability to create deceit and illusions to generate an impression of the presence of a fresh water pond, with a shrine on its bank that was surrounded by a lush garden. (1)

When the son of the wind god ("mārutasuta"¹; Hanuman) saw this scene, he thought that it was the hermitage of a sage²; so he decided to go there to drink some fresh water to refresh himself and feel relaxed (i.e. overcome his tiredness of the long journey)³. (2)

[Note—¹The use of the word “*mārutāsuta*”, the ‘son of the wind god’, for Hanuman is intentional here to indicate that he was going on his way the way ‘wind goes’, i.e. by the path of the sky, by flying over land, the way wind travels from one point to another.

Hanuman had to cover an enormous distance from Lanka to the northern mountains and then come back with the required herb, all within a short span of time, during the night itself, and before daybreak the next day. So, the path of the sky, in a straight line like the bird flies, would not only be the shortest distance to be covered but it would also circumvent all obstacles that would naturally be encountered if he had gone by the land route. To wit, the flight path through the path of the sky would be free of all hindrances, and would make it possible to come back with the herb as quickly as possible.

Therefore it follows that Hanuman observed a beautiful garden with a pond and a shrine on the land below while he was cruising rapidly northwards in the sky. Remember: It was night time, so how did Hanuman see this hermitage? Surely there was some light burning in it that attracted his attention. Hence it follows that Kalnemi had played his trick to perfection; he took care to light a fire in the form of a small bonfire usually made in hermitages lying deep inside forests to ward off wild animals, or a fire-sacrifice pit where the remains of the fire lit during a religious ritual of the day was still burning.

²Another interesting point is this: In verse no. 1 herein above, it is merely said that “Kalnemi generated an impression of the presence of a pond, a shrine, and a surrounding garden”, whereas in the present verse no. 2 it is said that “Hanuman saw a hermitage”.

It clearly means that Kalnemi chose a place where a pond with an old shrine and a little garden already existed; what he actually did was to disguise himself as a hermit and went there to occupy it as its inhabitant. Then he quickly made arrangements for a fire so that its light would attract Hanuman’s attention as he passed overhead. The result of Kalnemi’s efforts was that the ancient place, which was probably un-inhabited and abandoned long ago, looked like a complete hermitage lived in by a lonely sage or a group of sages.

The next pertinent question that arises is this: Where was this artificial hermitage approximately located? The present verse clearly states that Hanuman decided to “visit the hermitage in order to refresh himself by drinking water that would also help him overcome his tiredness and fatigue of the journey”. It implies that he had been flying a very long distance till he reached the hermitage created by Kalnemi.

Surely some time must have passed between Hanuman’s departure from Lanka and the spot where he saw the hermitage—because, first, sometime must have passed while Ravana went to Kalnemi and persuaded the latter to go and intercept Hanuman, then secondly, more time must have elapsed while Kalnemi first planned what to do, and then actually carry out the cunning device that he had devised to trap Hanuman. All the while Hanuman was making rapid progress northwards towards his destination through the sky. Hence, by the time Kalnemi gave finishing touches to his deceit, Hanuman must have travelled quite a long distance from the shores of the southern ocean where Lanka was situated, making him “tired and thirsty”, and longing for some fresh water for refreshment and the need for some quick relaxation.

Kalnemi needed time, and during this time Hanuman was constantly flying to his destination in the northern mountains, nearing them as fast as he could fly, and by the passage of each hour he was feeling more and more tired. So it follows that this artificial hermitage was somewhere close to Hanuman's destination in the north of the plains, some place close to the mountains in the north.

It is said in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 46-47 that: "When asked by Ravana to go and intercept Hanuman, Kalnemi went and created a deception of a hermitage at a place near the Himwan Mountain, or the snow-covered Mountains in the northern Himalayas. This particular mountain where the herb was to be found was known as Mandrachal. Near this place Kalnemi created a false hermitage, and disguising himself as a senior sage who had a number of disciples, he sat down (to wait for Hanuman)."

Kalnemi also preferred a spot far away from Lanka and very near Hanuman's destination for three reasons:

First, because he decided that by this time Hanuman would be physically worn out by the exertion of the long journey, and would therefore need some water to drink to quench his thirst, and a place to relax a bit to recover his energy.

Secondly, with the destination in sight and being very near to it, Hanuman would think that sparing a few minutes to refresh himself and relax a wee whet to recover his energy would not affect or hinder his mission in any tangible way; rather it would be helpful to him because he has to carry a load in the form of the herb on his return journey. So the chances would be good of his falling in the trap easily.

And thirdly, it would be easier for Kalnemi to subdue Hanuman because the latter would be sufficiently fatigued out and lacking in energy by this time to put up a vigorous resistance to Kalnemi should the necessity arise for a fierce battle between the two. Kalnemi was weary of facing Hanuman when the latter was in his prime form.

{The episode of Kalnemi, his deceit, and his subsequent slaying by Hanuman, has been narrated in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 46-59½ .}

This location of Kalnemi's artificial hermitage being close to the northern mountains is also indirectly indicated in the verses herein below, because we read that soon after the events associated with Kalnemi, Hanuman had reached the mountain containing the required herb, and the gap of time between the two events seems to be apparently very small—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 58 herein below.

³Another very interesting observation is to be made here. Hanuman goes against his own declaration made earlier to Mainak that "he is determined not to rest till Lord Ram's work was done" (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 1). But now he wishes to "refresh himself by taking a break and drinking water in the pond"! So why was he overcome with thirst and weariness this time, while all through the battle, and the burning of Lanka earlier, he had never felt either thirsty or the need to take rest to recover his energy?

The answer is this: He committed the same mistake that Laxman had committed which resulted in his suffering from fainting when hit by Meghanad, and this mistake was: Hanuman did not pay his obeisance properly to Lord Ram by bowing his head and seeking the Lord's express blessings for success in the enterprise at the time of departure from Lanka to bring the herb. This is clear when we closely examine Doha no. 55 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it, as well as the note

appended to them in the case of Hanuman. In the case of Laxman, it is Doha no. 52 with the notes appended to it.

To wit, all successes that Hanuman, Laxman and the rest attained were the result of Lord Ram's grace and blessings upon them, and not due to their own abilities.

The irony of the matter is this that Hanuman 'bows his head to Kalnemi who was disguised as a hermit or a sag' as find in the next verse. It implies that Hanuman's legendary ability to perceive the truth behind the veil of deception was also compromised. And this is also proved by the fact that he could not decide which herb was needed when he saw the mountain on which the herbs grew (apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58).

The simple lesson that is learnt from these episodes is that one must first and foremost pay one's obeisance to the Lord God, invoke his grace and pray for his blessings before embarking on any enterprise, small or big, and never to think that one would succeed in anything because one has the ability or the skill or the knowledge or the wherewithal needed for success.]

राच्छस कपट बेष तहँ सोहा । मायापति दूतहि चह मोहा ॥ ३ ॥

जाइ पवनसुत नायउ माथा । लाग सो कहै राम गुन गाथा ॥ ४ ॥

rācchasa kapaṭa bēṣa tahañ sōhā. māyāpati dūtahi caha mōhā. 3.
jā'i pavanasuta nāya'u māthā. lāga sō kahai rāma guna gāthā. 4.

The demon (Kalnemi) was present there in the hermitage in a fictitious form of a hermit or a sage. He was trying to deceive the messenger of the Lord who is the master of all tricks and deceptions (i.e. Lord Ram, the Supreme Being)! (3)

The son of the wind god (Hanuman) went to him and bowed his head¹. Seeing him, the hermit (i.e. Kalnemi) started praising Lord Ram and his glories². (4)

[Note—¹Why did Hanuman bow his head before this false hermit or sage? It is because this physical form, that of a learned sage, a hermit, a seer, an ascetic, or a saint, is deemed to be so holy and worthy of respect that it invites involuntary and automatic respect and reverence from the beholder.

We have read earlier a similar kind of thing happening when the great king named Pratapbhanu was also cheated by his enemy who was disguised as a hermit; this crooked fellow was previously defeated in a battle by the king, and he had decided to assume the form of a hermit to escape detection till he waited for his time to take revenge upon the king. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 158; and Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 170.}

²Kalnemi thought that if he praised Lord Ram then he will easily gain Hanuman's confidence. This ploy served him a dual purpose: first it would help him disarm Hanuman's suspicion of him, and second, it will also give him an opportunity to purify his inner self and prepare for the deliverance of his soul by making some last minute gestures of repentance for his past sinful life as a demon in the service of Ravana, by singing the glories of Lord Ram, which a true 'demon' would never do.

It was this singing of Lord Ram's glories now, and his uttering the Lord's holy name at the time of his death at the hands of Hanuman a little later, that Kalnemi attained emancipation and salvation for himself; even Hanuman lavishly praised Kalnemi for uttering the Lord's holy name at the time of his death—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58 herein below.

It is to be noted that Kalnemi began to praise Lord Ram immediately after Hanuman bowed before him, even before Hanuman introduced himself to him or said anything about himself or his journey. This is the normal practice with saintly persons and devotees of the Lord—that they greet their guests and welcome their visitors by uttering the name of the Lord and saying his grace, or saying something else in the Lord's honour.]

होत महा रन रावन रामहिं । जितिहहिं राम न संसय या महिं ॥ ५ ॥
इहाँ भाँ मैं देखउँ भाई । ग्यान दृष्टि बल मोहि अधिकाई ॥ ६ ॥

hōta mahā rana rāvana rāmahim. jitihahim rāma na sansaya yā mahim. 5.
ihāṁ bha'eṁ maim dēkha'uṁ bhāī. gyāna dr̥ṣṭi bala mōhi adhikāī. 6.

Kalnemi said, 'A great war is underway between Ravana and Lord Ram'¹. Well, there is no doubt in the fact that Lord Ram will win in it². (5)

I have a divine vision that I have acquired on the strength of my gnosis, the special empowerment that comes to me by my spiritual practices that have granted me self-realisation and enlightenment; it entitles and enables me to see things not physically visible to others, things that occurred in the past, are underway in the present, and would eventually happen in the future³. (6)

[Note—¹How did Kalnemi know that a fierce war was raging between Ravana and Lord Ram? Answer: Ravana himself had briefed him about it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 56 herein above.

²A similar prediction was made by Trijata, the pious female demon appointed by Ravana to guard Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 99 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-13 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede this Doha.

Even at the beginning of the war, when during the initial wave of attack by the Lord's army the demons had violently repulsed it, and it seemed that all was lost, the reader is assured by the narrator of the Story, i.e. Lord Shiva, that ultimately the monkey and bears would emerge victorious—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.

³A similar boastful claim was made by another crooked person who had disguised himself as a hermit to cheat his adversary. It was a king who had been defeated by another great king named Pratapbhanu. The defeated king assumed the form of a hermit and lived in a hermitage in the forest, bidding his time to take revenge on Pratapbhanu. As destiny would have it, one day Pratapbhanu landed at his hermitage when he got lost in a hunting expedition. The impostor hermit had also made similar boastful claims of possessing exceptional spiritual powers as done by Kalnemi here,

and he finally managed to trap the innocent king in his crooked design to manoeuvre things in such a way that finally Pratapbhanu was cursed by angry Brahmins to become a demon. It was Pratapbhanu who became Ravana in his next birth. For the purpose of our note, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 162 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 164; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 168—all of which indicate that that crooked hermit had made similar claims of possessing some special powers others don't have like Kalnemi does here.

A question arises here: Was not Kalnemi committing treason and betrayal; was he not being disloyal and unfaithful to his own lord Ravana by predicting that the war would be won by his enemy? Well, Kalnemi's internal thoughts are abundantly clear when he had expressly told Ravana on his face that what he plans to do is wrong, that he should abandon all hostility with Lord Ram and worship him instead, and that no one can succeed by opposing the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 56.

So therefore, Kalnemi was not saying something that was new; he had always believed that Lord Ram would win as is evident from his interview with Ravana.

He had rather protected his lord Ravana's identity by saying that he knew about the war out of his own spiritual abilities. This lie served two objectives: first, it prevented Hanuman from directly knowing that he was a demon sent by Ravana to kill him, and second, it helped Kalnemi to convince Hanuman about his being a holy man so that the latter would easily fall in the trap laid out by former.

Thus, Kalnemi was duly fulfilling his duty to his lord Ravana; he was neither committing treason nor being disloyal to his master Ravana or the demon race.

How did Kalnemi planned to kill Hanuman? He wanted to poison him by making him drink poisoned water. It will be clear in the next verse below.]

मागा जल तेहिं दीन्ह कमंडल । कह कपि नहिं अघाउँ थोरें जल ॥ ७ ॥
सर मज्जन करि आतुर आवहु । दिच्छा देउँ ग्यान जेहिं पावहु ॥ ८ ॥

māgā jala tēhiṁ dīnha kamaṇḍala. kaha kapi nahim aghā'uṁ thōrēm jala. 7.
sara majjana kari ātura āvahu. dicchā dē'uṁ gyāna jēhiṁ pāvahu. 8.

Hanuman asked for some water to drink (as it was the main reason why he had come to this hermitage in the first place), at which request Kalnemi gave him a water-pot called a Kamandal (which is normally kept by all hermits)¹.

The Kapi (Hanuman; literally the 'monkey') said that a little water would not satisfy him (for he felt very thirsty and needed some larger source of water not only to quench his thirst but also that he could sprinkle some water on his body to wash and feel relaxed). (7)

Kalnemi replied, 'There is a pond in the yonder. Go there and wash yourself; then come here at the earliest so that I can bless you with Gyan (gnosis; some form of spiritual knowledge) after doing some formal rituals to prepare you for that purpose that would make you eligible to receive this great knowledge². (8)

[Note—¹It is very much evident what Kalnemi's intention was: he had come to get rid of Hanuman, and not to help him in any way. So obviously, the water-pot contained poisoned water.

Hanuman was on Lord Ram's mission; so he had the invisible shield of the Lord's protection. Say, how can any harm come to someone who is an ardent devotee of Lord Ram? The lesson we learn from this episode is that if we put ourselves in the Lord's charge, then even if we do not expressly ask the Lord for protection, the Lord would do it on his own; the Lord would never let his devotee come to harm as he always takes care of the latter's welfare.

²Kalnemi found to his dismay that his planning was about to crumble; he feared that after drinking water and refreshing himself, Hanuman would proceed on his way. Kalnemi thought quickly how to prevent this from happening; so he threw a bait of granting knowledge. How stupid it was for Kalnemi to think of this device; Hanuman had not asked for any spiritual knowledge or for being initiated. Kalnemi was in such a hurry that he did not even think that this offer, without it being sought, must surely ring an alarm bell in Hanuman's mind.

Hanuman too was so overcome with anxiety about the job to be done, that of searching the herb and taking it back to Lanka within the stipulated time, that this unusual offer of Kalnemi could not rouse any suspicion of foul play in his mind.

This also shows that the pond was not poisoned—for otherwise there was no question of Kalnemi asking Hanuman to come back for knowledge. Rather, he would have wished to escape forthwith from the spot in order to avoid the risk of incurring Hanuman's wrath in case he had become suspicious of this hermit and just tasted the water of the pond, and did not gulp it down in sufficient quantity to have any fatal effect. Then it was certain that Hanuman would come back and trash Kalnemi's light out of him.

Another proof of the pond not being poisoned is that an alligator, who was a cursed Apsara, a heavenly damsel, whom Hanuman would soon kill and grant freedom from the curse, lived in the same pond. Had it been poisoned, this Apsara would have died first.]

दो०. सर पैठत कपि पद गहा मकरीं तब अकुलान ।

मारी सो धरि दिव्य तनु चली गगन चढ़ि जान ॥ ५७ ॥

dōhā.

sara paiṭhata kapi pada gahā makarīm taba akulāna.
mārī sō dhari dibya tanu calī gagana caḍhi jāna. 57.

When the Kapi (i.e. Hanuman) entered the pond (to drink water, and to wash and refresh himself), a deadly alligator, that lived in it, immediately caught hold of his legs.

Hanuman instantly slayed the attacker¹ who left its mortal gross body to revert back to its original form that looked divine. In this ethereal form, its soul mounted an aerial vehicle and ascended to the sky (to go to heaven). (Doha no. 57)

[Note—¹Hanuman went inside the water of the pond and closed his eyes to wash his face and drink water. At that moment the alligator caught hold of his one leg and tried

to drag him inside the pond. Hanuman grabbed the attacker and ripped apart its mouth. {Refer: (i) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 54-55; (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 21-23.}

Who was this alligator? An Apsara, who is a beautiful damsel who lives in heaven, usually as a heavenly courtesan in the court of Indra, the king of gods, named ‘Dhaanya-Maali’ was cursed to become an alligator. After Hanuman liberated her from this curse by slaying her form as an alligator, she resumed her original heavenly form and went back to her place. {Refer: (i) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 57; and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 24-25.}

In the following verses we read that this Apsara, who was in the cursed form of an alligator, tells Hanuman why she became so, and also alerts him about the reality of the hermit living in the hermitage, that he was actually a fierce demon contriving ways to kill him at the behest of Ravana.]

चौ०. कपि तव दरस भइउं निष्पापा । मिटा तात मुनिबर कर सापा ॥ १ ॥

मुनि न होइ यह निसिचर घोरा । मानहु सत्य बचन कपि मोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

kapi tava darasa bha'i'uṁ niṣpāpā. miṭā tāta munibara kara sāpā. 1.
muni na hō'i yaha niscara ghōrā. mānahu satya bacana kapi mōrā. 2.

Assuming a divine form, the alligator’s soul spoke to Hanuman from the sky, ‘Oh Kapi! I have been cleansed of the negative effects of my sins by the good circumstance of having had the good fortune of seeing you.

My dear (tāta)! As a reward of meeting you, I have now been absolved of the consequences of the curse cast upon me by a learned sage in some past time¹. (1)

Be warned that this fellow (who has sent you to this pond) is not a hermit as you think him to be; on the contrary, he is a fierce demon. Oh Kapi, have faith in my words; I am telling you the truth.², (2)

[Note—¹Why was the Apsara cursed to become an alligator, and what was her name?

The answer is this: Though seeming to be incredulous because what happened does not behove good for the character of a so-called spiritual man, but the story goes that one sage, whose name is not disclosed by her, asked her for sexual favour, which the Apsara refused. This enraged the sage who cursed her to become an alligator; but soon realising that she was being unjustly punished for no fault of hers, the sage blessed her that some time in the future Hanuman would free her from this curse while he would be on his way to the northern mountains on Lord Ram’s errand, and then she would resume her original form and go back to heaven. The name of this Apsara was ‘Dhānya-Māli’. {Refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse nos. 56-57.}

²What would make Hanuman believe in the truthfulness of the words of this ethereal form that emerged from the dead gross body of the alligator he had just killed? The very fact that the Apsara emerged in this ethereal body which had a divine aura around it, and the fact that she boarded a plane coming to fetch her to heaven, left no

doubt in the mind of Hanuman that she was not a demon at least, for otherwise this remarkable heavenly form would not have appeared before him and neither would a plane come to fetch a sinful dead demon to take him to heaven, for sinful souls are destined to hell and not to heaven.

He had made one major mistake, of not being able to see through the deceit of Kalnemi and falling a prey to his sweet words, and now he should not make a second mistake, and definitely a fatal one, of not heeding an alert given to him.

The transmuting of an alligator into an Apsara jolted Hanuman and roused him from his stupor which was caused perhaps in part by the fatigue incurred by the stress of the long-haul journey from Lanka, and also due to the accompanying anxiety and worry concerning the success of the mission of finding the right herb, and then taking it back to Laxman in the allotted time.]

अस कहि गई अपछरा जबहीं । निसिचर निकट गयउ कपि तबहीं ॥ ३ ॥

कह कपि मुनि गुरदछिना लेहू । पाछें हमहि मंत्र तुम्ह देहू ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi ga'ī apacharā jabahīm. nīsicara nikaṭa gaya'u kapi tabahīm. 3.
kaha kapi muni guradachinā lēhū. pāchēm hamahi mantra tumha dēhū. 4.

When the Apsara went on her way after alerting Hanuman, he went near the demon (disguised as a hermit). (3)

The Kapi told him that he wished to make his offerings and pay his obeisance to him first, and after that he would accept the Mantra (spiritual initiation) that he (the false hermit) wished to grant him¹. (4)

[Note—¹The usual procedure for such initiation is that first the spiritual teacher, a Guru, gives a Mantra, a blessed spiritual formula, to his disciple, and then the latter offers his offerings to the former as a tribute. But Hanuman turns the table around full circle; he offers to pay his dues first and then accept the blessing.

Hanuman was responding to Kalnemi's advise that he should go to the pond and come back to accept the initiation—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57.

Hanuman did not wish to give Kalnemi a chance to either escape or play some other dirty trick; so he acted swiftly, without wasting a moment as is evident in the next verse.]

सिर लंगूर लपेटि पछारा । निज तनु प्रगटेसि मरती बारा ॥ ५ ॥

राम राम कहि छाड़ेसि प्राणा । सुनि मन हरषि चलेउ हनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

sira laṅgūra lapēṭi pachārā. nija tanu pragatēsi maratī bārā. 5.
rāma rāma kahi chāṛēsī prānā. suni mana haraṣi calē'u hanumānā. 6.

Hanuman wrapped his long tail around Kalnemi's neck, tightened the grip like a hangman's noose, lifted his victim off his seat, and then dashed him violently on the ground, causing his instant death.

At the time of his death, Kalnemi reverted back to his original form (of a demon). (5)

He (Kalnemi) uttered the holy name of Lord Ram repeatedly while his soul left his mortal gross body of a demon¹.

When Hanuman heard it, he felt very glad internally in his Mana (heart and mind; inner-self)². After that he resumed his journey and moved ahead (in search of the required herb). (6)

[Note—¹Upon close examination of the story of the Ramayan we discover that there were a few more souls who had remembered or uttered or invoked Lord Ram's holy name at the time of their death, and each one of them got their due spiritual reward irrespective of the physical form of the body their soul had assumed while living in this mortal world. It is because the holy name of Lord Ram is called the 'Tarak Mantra', i.e. it is a divine spiritual formula which when used would invariably have its effect, which is to grant liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of the dying creature; it bestows beatitude and felicity and eternal bliss to the person, no matter who he or she is, or what sort of body the concerned creature possesses in this mortal world. {Refer: Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1; Canto 4, verse no. 7; and Canto 6, verse nos. 1-29. It tells us that Lord Ram's holy and divine name "Rām" is a Tarak Mantra, a spiritual formula empowered to deliver the soul of a creature and grant it emancipation and salvation which bestows eternal beatitude and felicity.}

The first instance is of course that of king Dasrath; he had uttered Lord Ram's name at the time of his death which was brought about by the deep grief from which Dasrath suffered at the separation of his beloved son Ram. The reward was that Dasrath went to the abode of the Gods in heaven. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.}

The demon Marich, who was compelled by Ravana to assume the form of a deer with a golden hide so that Sita could be stolen, had uttered Lord Ram's holy name and remembered the Lord's grace and blessings at the time of his death; he was granted an exalted destination that is difficult even for great sages to attain. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 27.}

The next example is that of Khar and Dushan along with their army of demons who had attacked Lord Ram in the forest at the behest of Supernakha. These demon warriors had uttered the Lord's holy name "Ram-Ram" at the time of their death, and every one of them attained emancipation and salvation. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20-a.}

Then we come to the unique case of the vulture king named Jatayu. He had laid down his life in an attempt to save Sita while she was being taken away by Ravana. Jatayu's case is unique in the whole of the Ramayan as Lord Ram performed his last rites himself as he would do for his own father, thereby granting the vulture a rare honour and privilege that was denied even to Dasrath. Jatayu too had invoked Lord Ram's holy name during the last moments of his life, entitling his soul to attain an exalted destination of eternal beatitude and felicity. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 31; and Doha no. 32.}

A similar destination of the soul was obtained by Sabari, the old tribal woman whose last rites too were performed by Lord Ram even as she burnt her mortal body in a fire lit for the purpose, repeating Lord Ram's holy name, invoking his grace, and

enshrining the Lord's divine form in her heart. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

The next example is that of Baali, the king of Kishkindha and the father of Angad, the monkey prince. Baali too had fixed his mind on the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram at the time of his death, and was rewarded with heaven as his destination. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishindha Kand, Doha no. 10.}

As we move along with the telling of this magnificent and enthralling Story, we shall see by-and-by that Kumbhakaran and the much reviled Ravana too were exceptionally fortunate like no one else was in the whole story, in as much as their soul had emerged from their bodies and entered directly into the holy body of Lord Ram in the form of a blazing shaft of splendourous energy; it was a visible proof of the fact that the destination of the soul has nothing to do with the body in which it has lived in this world as long as the soul has a burning and sincere desire to repent for its past sins and seek emancipation and salvation for its self. The way the soul of these two great demon warriors entered the body of Lord Ram was a vivid example of the merger of the creature's 'individual soul' with the 'universal supreme Soul of creation' represented by Lord Ram if the creature has an honest internal desire for this fate for himself, no matter what he pretends to be on the outside. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 in case of Kumbhakaran; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 in case of Ravana.}

This establishes another important point: Lord Ram never distinguished between two individuals based on the sort of the physical body they have; Dasrath was his worldly father; Jatau was a vulture; Sabari was an out-caste tribal woman; Baali was a monkey by body; the rest of them, such as Marich, Khar, Dushan, Kalnemi, Kumbhakaran and Ravana, were all demons. What the Lord sees is the purity of the creature's soul, and the earnestness of his desire to attain him, to repent for his sins and past evil deeds in order to get liberation and deliverance from his present body, as well as a wish to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul that would grant him eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity—and all this must be sincere and without deceit, conceit and pretensions.

²“Hanuman felt glad when he heard Kalnemi utter Lord Ram's name”—why? Remember: Hanuman was a great devotee of Lord Ram; he himself constantly and consistently kept on muttering the Lord's holy name, and kept his mind and heart focused on the remembrance of the Lord. He had no personal grudge against or any animosity with Kalnemi, as a true devotee of Lord Ram ought not to have. He slayed Kalnemi only because the latter was trying to cheat him and obstruct him in his mission to fulfil the Lord's mandate, which was not acceptable.

So Hanuman felt elated that at last Kalnemi's soul would find deliverance; he felt happy that he became an instrument in providing liberation to one more soul which had become trapped in the evil body of a demon; he felt comforted that he had heard another creature utter his beloved Lord Ram's name, bringing him within the circle of the Lord's devotees. Hanuman also rejoiced that history would not accuse him for killing a hermit, but rather would praise him for providing emancipation and salvation to a creature who was suffering in a mortal, gross, and evil body of a demon.

Kalnemi's death was a matter of celebration for Hanuman for another reason also: it subtly made him realise about the invisible protection that he had of Lord Ram who ensures, constantly, consistently and invariably, that no harm comes to Hanuman from any quarter, even if he makes an inadvertent slip here and there in life. What a

great assurance indeed for a creature; who is a more benevolent and gracious Lord than Lord Ram indeed is!]

देखा सैल न औषध चीन्हा । सहसा कपि उपारि गिरि लीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

गहि गिरि निसि नभ धावत भयऊ । अवधपुरी ऊपर कपि गयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhā saila na auṣadha cīnhā. sahasā kapi upāri giri līnhā. 7.
gahi giri nisi nabha dhāvata bhaya'ū. avadhapurī ūpara kapi gaya'ū. 8.

When Hanuman saw the mountain, he could not recognize the needed medicinal herb. So (deciding not to waste any time) he immediately, and swiftly, lifted the mountain by uprooting it from the ground¹. (7)

Holding the mountain aloft on his hand, he cruised through the night sky as fast as he could.

On his way back, the Kapi passed over the city of Ayodhya². (8)

[Note—¹As has been noted earlier in a note to Doha no. 55, the mountain where the required herb was located was called 'Dronachal'. It was situated in the upper reaches of the mighty Himalayan range on the north of the Indian land mass, between Mt. Kailash and a mountain that had a golden hue. {Reference: (a) Valmiki's Ramayan, Uddha Kand (Lanka Kand), canto 74, verse nos. 29-30; and (b) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 46.}

Now we learn here that unable to descry the correct herb from the countless similar herbs growing on the mountain's side, Hanuman decided to lift the whole mountain, which was, in all probability, a huge hill large enough to be called a 'mountain', and take it to Lanka in order not to waste any time in searching for the needed herb, and also to avoid the risk of picking up the wrong one by an error of judgment, which would not only be fatal for Laxman but would also mean complete failure of his own effort.

The interesting point to note here is this: We read that the monkeys and bears were using huge rocks and boulders as their missiles by which they attacked the demon warriors during the course of the war. The answer to the question 'from where did they get so many rocks and boulders' is found here—they used this mountain brought by Hanuman as a source for their crude forms of attack weapons, such as rocks and boulders and stones of all shapes and sizes, in the battle-field of Lanka.

Meanwhile, why couldn't Hanuman see and recognise the necessary herb? One answer is that in the darkness of the night all of them looked alike. There was not one or two or twenty herbs, but countless numbers of them, and all grew closely in large clusters all along the side of the mountain. In peaceful times one would have the patience to carefully examine which herbal plant he needed, but in this case it was an emergency of life and death, time was quickly running out, and a great distance was to be travelled on the way back to Lanka. All these factors played out simultaneously in Hanuman's mind; so there was no time for him to demure and examine each herb and plant like a scholar doing research work for his university thesis. He had to be quick and determined in his decision.

The other reason is that from a distance these herbal plants appeared to glow like a glow-worm, but when Hanuman came closer, this light disappeared. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 74, verse no. 64.}

To better understand this phenomenon, we can take the example of the moon's disc in the sky. From a great distance, from the surface of the earth, the moon appears to shine with a silvery glow, but upon getting closer and landing on its surface it is as ordinary, as full of potholes, as strewn with rocks, and has a landscape that is as wildly naked and foreboding as any other celestial body in the earth's neighbourhood. To wit, the moon shines only from a distance; up close it has a dark body consisting nothing but soil and rock.

So was the case with these herbs. From a distance they seemed to glow with a vague diffused light, but when looked closer they were like ordinary plants. This glow might have been caused by some natural trace element present in them; or probably it was caused by reflection of the refracted light falling upon them from the surrounding snow-clad mountain peaks, or some kind of reflection from heavenly lights resembling the Northern Lights that are seen in the sky near the arctic circle up in the northern hemisphere. But by the time Hanuman approached the plants, this reflection vanished.

Actually Hanuman was directed towards the mountain with the help of the diffused light on its side as he saw it from the sky, for it acted as a beacon for him to help navigate his way. When he landed, he was at sea; he was dumbfounded as now he could not see anything in the all-pervading darkness around him.

²A crucial fact emerges from a careful reading of this verse. Hanuman had gone by a different route on his way to the mountain as nowhere a mention of his flying over Ayodhya is found. But on his return journey he decided to take a detour, a diversion, which took him over the city of Ayodhya.

Why did Hanuman take a different route on his way back? Well, the answer is this: He has had a very close shave on his outward journey when he escaped from the trap laid by Kalnemi literally by the width of his skin. He felt that by this time, Ravana would surely have cooked up something new to trap him, and this time it would be a problem for him as he was burdened with a heavy mountain that he was carrying. There was no point in showing unnecessary dare devilry during such emergency times, and it would be wiser to avoid a difficult and dangerous situation. So he took a new route on his flight way back to Lanka to play it safe, and this detour brought him over Ayodhya.]

दो०. देखा भरत बिसाल अति निसिचर मन अनुमानि ।

बिनु फर सायक मारेउ चाप श्रवन लगि तानि ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhā bharata bisāla ati nīsicara mana anumāni.

binu phara sāyaka mārē'u cāpa śravana lagi tāni. 58.

When Bharat (the younger brother of Lord Ram) saw a huge form flying in the sky over the city, he thought that it was some kind of nocturnal creature (nīsicara), probably a demon.

So he stringed his bow and pulled it taught to shoot an arrow that had no pointed tip on it at the figure flying overhead¹. (Doha no. 58)

[Note—¹Bharat spent the entire period of fourteen years, during which Lord Ram was in exile in the forest, at a place close to the city of Ayodhya, in its suburbs, living like a hermit, and spending his time in meditation and other spiritual practices. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326.}]

But at the same time Bharat was very conscious of his duties and obligations and responsibilities. He kept strict vigil at night to watch for any ominous sign in the sky, to look out for any spy drone hovering over the sky over Ayodhya. When he saw a huge figure coursing through the night sky, a sort of a flying saucer, an Unidentified Flying Object known as an UFO in modern parlance, he became suspicious. What was it, he wondered; is it something dangerous, such as a heavy rock or an explosive device, carried by someone sent by one of the many enemies of his kingdom, who may have dispatched his spy to drop it over the unsuspecting and sleeping city to cause extensive damage to it? Could it be a missile or an asteroid or a meteor or something else like a rocket or some explosive projectile that may prove to be dangerous for the city?

Bharat wished to examine it; he wished to abort a catastrophe before it happened. So he shot a blunt arrow, one without a sharp tip, which would only bring this thing down, and not blast it off the face of the firmament all together. So much the lucky it was for Hanuman, for otherwise the consequences for him are too obvious to be stated in explicit terms.

Now let us visualise this scenario more closely, and make some intelligent guess to arrive at a plausible sequence of events as to what actually might have happened during those crucial moments when Hanuman was cruising in the night sky over the sprawling city of Ayodhya down below.

It appears that some sort of system existed in those ancient times that would be like a radar system of our modern world; it was an integrated system that kept an eye over the city's skyline to detect and intercept any suspicious object flying over it. This vigilance was heightened during night time when chances of an aerial attack by one of the enemies of the kingdom of Ayodhya were great, as compared to daylight hours. This radar system was monitored by Bharat himself who, as the care-taking ruler of Ayodhya in the absence of its rightful king Lord Ram, wanted to ensure foolproof security of the city. Hanuman's bleep on this ancient system of vigilance and defence of the airspace immediately alerted Bharat, as this flying object was most unconventional and odd. It was of a huge size, was cruising at great speed, and its flight trajectory gave an impression that it was a star streaking from the northern borders of the kingdom towards its south, and flying right over the city of Ayodhya.

Deciding to examine what this suspicious-looking UFO was, Bharat shot a sort of an intercepting-missile that would only stop this mysterious object from progressing ahead, instead of destroying it in space. His arrow, in all probability, was like a modern-day missile and other weapon systems that work on computer-based data fed into the projectile at the time of its launch, giving it an ability to self-navigate and hit the desired object with the required force and impact it according to the data pre-fed into its on-board computers.

So, with some fine-tuning and skilful maneuvering, Bharat was able to manipulate his arrow in such a way that instead of blasting the target hit by it and reducing it into small fragments that would disperse in the void of the vast space of

the firmament and burning themselves up without harming the city below, it simply stopped its flight and brought it down.

This arrow interrupted the flight of Hanuman and disturbed the dynamics of his flight, navigation and trajectory so much that the target of its strike suddenly lost speed and went into a tailspin, falling to the ground either following a curved parabolic path due to its speed, or it fell as a wild out-of-control tumble because it was suddenly stopped, spinning right and left and making somersaults to make a virtual nose dive and land on the ground below.

And how did Hanuman land on the ground; what happened to him? Was he gravely injured as would naturally happen when struck by a projectile at high speed in the air, and then by the impact of the fall? If not, then what could have possibly happened that saved him? What happened also to the mountain he was carrying?

These questions are answered as a note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein below.]

चौ०. परेउ मुरुछि महि लागत सायक । सुमिरत राम राम रघुनायक ॥ १ ॥

सुनि प्रिय बचन भरत तब धाए । कपि समीप अति आतुर आए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

parē'u muruchi mahi lāgata sāyaka. sumirata rāma rāma raghunāyaka. 1.
suni priya bacana bharata taba dhā'ē. kapi samīpa ati ātura ā'ē. 2.

He (Hanuman) fell down unconscious on the ground after being hit by the arrow, all the while remembering and uttering the holy name of Lord Ram, 'Ram-Ram', repeatedly¹. (1)

When Bharat heard² this name, which was very dear to him, he instantly rushed forward to investigate, and eagerly came near the Kapi (Hanuman) in great haste. (2)

[Note—¹Hanuman landed on the ground and fell 'unconscious'. He lost his consciousness because he had not expected being hit by a projectile while speeding in the sky; the jolt of the sudden strike that stopped his flight midway had caught him unawares and disoriented him; he lost his mental balance and bearing. The fall from a great height added to his mental confusion, and the worry of securing the safety of the herb-bearing mountain exacerbated his anxieties.

This sequence of events indicates that the arrow had hit Hanuman softly, and only with a force that was sufficient enough to stop his further progress and bring him down. Bharat had not intended to destroy the target as noted earlier in Doha no. 57 herein above; his intention was to neutralise it, bring it down to earth, and examine it. It is a natural deduction at which we arrive at because no where it is said that Hanuman had suffered any grave injury from the strike. He was merely 'unconscious'; he just 'fainted'; and that is a natural thing to happen to any person who is suddenly jolted by a close strike and stopped in his path, making him lose control of himself, swoon and fall to the ground.

One important factor appears to have certainly contributed to Hanuman escaping from any major injury to his person. He must have landed on soft soil cushioned by green grass, leafy plants, or some other soft vegetation, such as found in a farmland or a grassy meadow or a lawn of a garden that formed a green belt

surrounding the hermitage where Bharat lived on the outskirts of Ayodhya. This is very much possible, because Bharat may have certainly created such an environment around his hermitage to replicate the aura of the surroundings of the forest, with its serenity and greenery and beauty where his beloved brother Lord Ram was spending his time of exile. This soft earth must have acted as a buffer for Hanuman, cushioning the impact of the fall and preventing any serious injury to him.

Another important reason why Hanuman escaped being injured was this: He was continuously chanting the name of Lord Ram. The Lord's divine name has mystical powers, and when a creature invokes it in distress, it extends its natural protection to the caller. It was this invisible protective shield of Lord Ram's holy name that cast its protective cover over Hanuman as he fell; it was his sure protection from any or all harm. In all sooth and without gainsay, this is why he suffered no grave injury except some momentary fainting.

Now, how can we say with certainty that Hanuman was not injured? Well, the answer is simple and straightforward: He would resume his journey shortly, after a little break and a short interview with Bharat.

Another proof of Hanuman not incurring any injury to his person is this: When he met Lord Ram at his camp near the battle-field of Lanka, the Lord did not find any mark of a wound on his body, for if the Lord had observed any he was sure to ask Hanuman about its cause.

And thereafter, after a little while, the battle resumed with its full ferocity the next day, and Hanuman played a leading role in it. It also goes to show that he was fit and fine to face the enemy the very next day of his adventure of bringing the mountain, meaning that he was not bodily injured, as that would have adversely affected his fighting abilities. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 65 where Hanuman strikes a vicious cuff to Kumbhkaran with his clenched fists.}

But what about the 'mountain' he was carrying? Nothing is said anywhere in the text concerning it; so we have to make an intelligent surmise. Hanuman was carrying the herb-bearing mountain aloft on one of his hands as he was cruising through the night sky. He was gripping the mountain from below, perhaps by firmly clasping some sturdy creeper or a protruding outcrop of its rock. When hit by Bharat's arrow, he instinctively intensified his grip over it so that he doesn't lose his charge. When he landed on the ground, this mountain did not break up—because it was made of solid rock that had hardened over time. Some of its surface soil and plants may have shaken off by the force of the impact of the fall to the ground, but no major damage was done to it.

²Bharat heard Hanuman saying Lord Ram's name. It clearly implies that Hanuman was saying it loudly, and not silently, as he fell through the sky, and even after landing on the ground he called out this holy name aloud during the intervening moments of landing and losing consciousness. His call was loud enough for Bharat to hear and pay attention; it was loud enough to be heard over the noise of the fall.

Bharat was already on high alert; as soon as he heard someone calling out Lord Ram's name, he became amazed and sorely alarmed at the same time even as he rushed out to see who has been shot by him by mistake. He had thought that some nocturnal creature, probably a demon, was flying over Ayodhya, but such creatures won't call out the holy name of Lord Ram. So surely something was seriously amiss, thought Bharat as his hairs stood on their ends while he dashed forward to investigate,

keeping his fingers crossed, hoping for the best, and praying to the Lord God for mercy and grace.]

बिकल बिलोकि कीस उर लावा । जागत नहिं बहु भाँति जगावा ॥ ३ ॥
मुख मलीन मन भए दुखारी । कहत बचन भरि लोचन बारी ॥ ४ ॥

bikala bilōki kīsa ura lāvā. jāgata nahim̐ bahu bhāṁti jagāvā. 3.
mukha malīna mana bha'e dukhārī. kahata bacana bhari lōcana bārī. 4.

[By the time Bharat came to Hanuman lying unconscious on the ground, he had become certain that the creature whom he had hit was not an enemy but was someone who, in some or the other way, was related to Lord Ram, for otherwise he wouldn't have uttered the Lord's name when in distress and on the threshold of death. This realisation dismayed Bharat extremely, and sorrow and regret and despondency and deep sadness overwhelmed him.]

Bharat observed that the fallen creature was very agitated and seems to be suffering much¹. So Bharat embraced him, but no matter how much he tried to revive him from his unconscious state, he could not. (3)

Bharat was overcome with sadness, sorrow and grief so much so that his face became pale, and his Mana (mind and heart) was shrouded with darkness that intuitively precedes some bad news (because he feared for the worst).

However, he gathered his wits together and said with tears filling his eyes (4) -
--,

[Note—¹Hanuman's suffering was not so much at the physical level of his body as it was at the mental level—for even while he lay unconscious physically, yet his sub-conscious mind continued to work overtime, pricking him and cursing him that he has failed to carry out Lord Ram's mission. He also worried that if he could not reach Lanka in time, and the designated time frame during which the herb would revive Laxman expired, then everything would be lost. These and such like thoughts kept swirling wildly in his mind as he lay unconscious on the ground, making him very uneasy. He was filled with regret and remorse and despondency and hopelessness; he felt helpless and hapless. He silently cursed himself and his life.]

जेहिं बिधि राम बिमुख मोहि कीन्हा । तेहिं पुनि यह दारुन दुख दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
जौ मोरें मन बच अरु काया । प्रीति राम पद कमल अमाया ॥ ६ ॥
तौ कपि होउ बिगत श्रम सूला । जौ मो पर रघुपति अनुकूला ॥ ७ ॥
सुनत बचन उठि बैठ कपीसा । कहि जय जयति कोसलाधीसा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhim̐ bidhi rāma bimukha mōhi kīnhā. tēhim̐ puni yaha dārūna dukha dīnhā.
5.

jaur̐ mōrēm̐ mana baca aru kāyā. prīti rāma pada kamala amāyā. 6.

tau kapi hō'u bigata śrama sūlā. jaum mō para raghupati anukūlā. 7.
sunata bacana uṭhi baiṭha kapīsā. kahi jaya jayati kōsalādhīsā. 8.

Bharat sadly observed, ‘Why, it is the same malevolent Creator who had earlier devised my separation from Lord Ram, who has now once again shown his harsh and un-emotional character by giving you this great suffering! (5)

[Staking the gain accruing to him for all the spiritual practices done by him, and invoking their combined rewards to bear on him right now in order to make Hanuman regain consciousness, Bharat implored most earnestly and pleadingly—] If I have true affection for Lord Ram and true devotion for his holy feet, if my affection and devotion is unpretentious, selfless, honest and without deceit, if it involves my whole being that includes my heart and mind, my words and my actions, as well as my body, and added to it if Lord Ram (Raghupati) is indeed pleased with me and favourable towards me (and has not held me guilty for all the pain and suffering he had to undergo when my cursed and unfortunate mother Kaikeyi sent him to forest)—then I invoke the combined good effects of all these blessings to pray that let it so happen that the Kapi (Hanuman) is freed from his weariness caused by the stress of the journey, as well as any other form of suffering and misery caused to him, so that he is revived; whatever be the cause of his fainting should be nullified.¹’ (6-7)

No sooner had Bharat said these words, than Hanuman, the chief amongst the monkeys (kapīsā), got up with a spring, raising a cry of applause for the glory of Lord Ram and the majestic powers of his holy name, proclaiming ‘Hail the glory of the king of Kaushal (“kōsalādhīsā”; Lord Ram), Glory to him, again and again repeatedly².’ (8)

[Note—¹We note here that Bharat assumes Hanuman has fainted because he was tired due to the stress of the journey, especially when he was carrying a weighty mountain on his hand, and so when the arrow hit him he was dazed and numbed by its impact, because whatever energy that was left in him was sapped by this sudden jolt, causing him to lose his bearing, swoon, and fall down.

Then Bharat thought that may be there was some other reason for Hanuman’s experiencing excess of stress that led to his exhaustion and his consequent inability to resist the arrow’s impact and continue with his journey.

Therefore, while staking the blessings and all the good rewards that accrued to him for his meritorious deeds and spiritual practices to bear directly upon Hanuman now and facilitate in his quick recovery, he uses an all-inclusive caveat by saying that “whatever be the cause of his fainting” should be nullified.

Let us examine this development of Hanuman’s fainting more closely, and see what the precarious condition in which Lord Ram was during that night, and what subtle spiritual message is intended in this episode.

It was the second calamitous set-back to Lord Ram during the short period of one single night. Back near the battle-field Lanka, his dear brother Laxman, who had shared his pains and grief arm-in-arm, being his constant companion and comrade and soul-mate and aide in thick and thin, was also lying on the ground unconscious and on the verge of death. And the Lord’s other trusted aide Hanuman, his other constant companion and comrade-in-arm during the fateful war, was lying in a similar condition far away in Ayodhya.

Laxman had Lord Ram himself by his side, and Hanuman had the Lord's representative in the person of Bharat by his side. In effect and for all practical purposes, Bharat was an image of Lord Ram and his love for the creature. Bharat was extremely dear to Lord Ram more than anyone else, and Lord Ram was dear to Bharat more than anyone else. Here is the proof: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169 (these are the words of mother Kaushalya); (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184 (these are the words of all the citizens of Ayodhya, including sage Vasistha, the chief minister of the kingdom, and of the queen mother); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 208 (these are the words of sage Bharadwaj); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 210 (these are also the words of sage Bharadwaj); (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 266 (these are also the words of the guru of the gods, sage Vrihaspati, who explicitly calls Bharat a "shadow" or an "image" of Lord Ram); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 2 and 5 that precede Doha no. 289 (these are also the words of king Janak); and finally, (vii) Doha no. 326 (these are concluding verses of Ayodhya Kand). Say, what more proof is needed when it is proclaimed that "Bharat and Ram are reflections of each other".

Well then, coming back to our narrative, Lord Ram was by the side of unconscious Laxman, and Bharat was by the side of unconscious Hanuman. Now the difference arises, a difference that has a profound spiritual importance and a message for all of us. It is to be noted here that inspite of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram himself being by his side, wishing most earnestly for his recovery, Laxman could not be revived. But Hanuman was instantly revived when an image and ardent devotee of the same Supreme Being in the form of Bharat invoked the holy name of the Lord and prayed for his recovery!

How wonderful and fantastic it is when we compare the two events, and how clear is the implied message—for it unambiguously and irrefutably shows that the Lord's devotee is more powerful and more empowered with spiritual powers that he possesses by the virtue of his devotion for the Lord than the Lord himself is, and that the Lord's holy name is also singularly more powerful and profoundly more majestic than the principle to whom this name belongs, i.e. the Lord himself. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 265 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it; and (ii) Baal Kand, from Doha no. 23—Doha no. 25.}

This is why Laxman could not be revived while Hanuman could be—for Bharat had prayed for Hanuman's recovery, and his prayer and request cannot go in vain no matter what happens, because Bharat was a devotee of Lord Ram, he had the Lord enshrined in his heart like a deity is in a temple, and was constantly repeating the holy name of the Lord every single moment of his existence.

These two closely related incidences are intended to motivate and inspire a creature to realise and understand the fact for his own sake that he will be the wiser if he becomes a devotee of the Lord, if he remembers the Lord and his holy name in his life, because then there is no fear for him, because he is assured of constant protection and solace.

The creature must realise and understand that relying on the Lord's grace and blessings and benevolence and munificence is a sure-shot formula for happiness and joy in his life; it's a magical wand, a charm that would help him tide over all his secret worries, his concealed fears and his hidden consternations in life. It would give him strength, courage and support to face all adversities in life; it will make life so much the easier for him to live; it would help him to confidently face the vagaries and uncertainties life; it will give him stability and a rock-like foundation to stand upon; it

will make him feel that he is not alone in this world, but has a powerful, albeit an invisible, hand to support and protect him.

And last but not the least is this resounding message: “that at the end of every dark night there is the dawn of a day”; “that no matter how doomed the present is, the tomorrow is going to be bright and cheerful for those who have faith in the Lord God”. The Lord God will take upon himself the suffering of his devotee, he himself would sacrifice his own happiness but ensure that his devotee is happy. In the episode concerning Laxman and Hanuman fainting, we observe that Lord Ram has suffered and lamented gravely; perhaps worse was in store for both Laxman and Hanuman if one were to leave the Creator, whom Bharat calls stone-hearted and harsh, to have his own way, but their destined suffering was suffered by Lord Ram instead, thereby reducing its gravity and intensity, and the malevolent Creator could not harm them as he would have otherwise liked it to happen—because he is “harsh and emotionless and stone-hearted”.

It was both Bharat’s and Hanuman’s unwavering faith in Lord Ram’s holy name and devotion to him that saved the day for everyone, for first Bharat’s faith saved Hanuman as we have read in the present verse, and this subsequently paved the way for Laxman’s revival because a little while later Hanuman arrived at Lanka within the designated time for the administration of the herb brought by him that saved Laxman’s life, as we shall soon read in Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it herein below.

²Now, let us close our eyes for some moments and apply a basic knowledge of science to examine closely the event of Hanuman being hit by Bharat’s arrow and the physical forces that came into play: what might have happened during the crucial moments when the arrow struck him, and what might have been the cause of his quick revival in such a fit state of mind and body as if nothing had happened.

Hanuman was constantly chanting, constantly humming Lord Ram’s holy name as he cruised through the sky. This chanting and humming produced vibrations that radiated out from his body in the form of sound waves that covered his whole body as a blanket. It was virtually like a moving dynamo which produced electromagnetic energy that moved along with its source, i.e. Hanuman as he cruised through the firmament. Added to it was his speed, which created kinetic energy. And then there was heat energy and static electric energy produced by friction with the air as he and his mountain moved with great speed across the atmosphere, rubbing its layers of air and gases.

All these physical forces interacted with each other in a complex way, and the pocket of hot air that was created around Hanuman as he zoomed through the sky, helped to trap these energies tightly around so that when he moved ahead he dragged these energies along with him.

To wit, Hanuman was surrounded by a shield of stupendous energy created by many physical forces acting simultaneously and trapped around his body in the air pocket thus created, and this shield moved along with him as a shimmering glow of incandescent light. Therefore, from a distance, from the perspective of an observer on the ground, he appeared like a fast moving comet, or meteor streaking across the night sky.

It has been established that even earth produces a humming sound heard from space, and it is caused by a combined effect of the earth’s magnetic field and its rotation on its axis. The earth also has charged particles in its outer atmosphere that

help to protect it from many harmful radiations hitting it from outer space. So it was something similar with Hanuman.

Bharat's arrow was fully charged with energy too; it was meant to strike and bring down the object it hit. In today's modern world we are aware of heat-seeking cruise missiles, and we also know that in the darkness of the night their path appears to be like a fire-ball moving rapidly in a particular direction. So was the case with Bharat's arrow too.

It rapidly closed in on Hanuman and rammed into him. What would one expect? There was an exceptionally bright flash of light as the two phenomenal energy sources, moving in opposite directions, clashed with each other. It was like two high-tension overhead electric cables touching each other over farmland due to some cause: there would be a sudden burst of dazzling light, for a fleeting moment, and then everything would be dark again as the electric circuit snaps.

This above scenario would give us an idea what might have actually occurred during those crucial moments when Bharat's arrow hit Hanuman: There was a mighty flash of lightening; the energy crippled the arrow and reduced it to a mangled and twisted piece of metal that either vaporized in air due to the heat generated by the impact, or it fell to the ground in bits and pieces like debris of an exploded object falling on earth from the sky. It is also possible that Bharat had visualized this scenario beforehand, and since his objective was to investigate this mysterious object flying over the night sky of Ayodhya rather than blow it out, the arrow he shot was a special one which could withstand the impact and its consequences in that it would not disintegrate, but instead cling to the object it hit and bring it down. So this arrow clung to Hanuman and pulled him down in such a way that he glided softly to the ground.

How come this was made possible? Yes, it was made possible because of the upward thrust that the arrow provided from below to the weighty body of Hanuman as it plummeted down towards the earth, much like choppers or reusable rockets used for space missions of the modern world use the upward thrust of their in-built rocket-engines to make a soft landing after finishing their mission. These modern machines don't dash to the ground as this would break them to pieces; they make a soft and delicate landing.

But at the moment when the arrow struck Hanuman, the protective shield of energy trapped around his body was short-circuited; the arrow punched a hole through them and ruptured the air pocket that trapped these energies. As a result, the energies began hissing out of this fissure; they began to dissipate and depressurize the protective shield. The violent impact of the arrow deflected Hanuman from his chosen flight path and pushed him in the direction the arrow pointed. This change of course was aided by the thrust exerted by the escaping spout of energies through the hole punched by the arrow; the thrust thus created by them was in the direction opposite to the point where the arrow struck. The combined effect was that Hanuman went on an uncontrolled spin, spiraling down towards earth in a sort of vortex with its base resting somewhere close to the ground.

Though the shock of the arrow's strike dazed Hanuman, yet he continued to chant Lord Ram's name—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 58 herein above. And this saved him from a worse fate.

When Bharat realized he had committed some grave mistake (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that follow Doha no. 58), he immediately used his skills to 'repair the damage caused by his arrow to the protective shield around Hanuman' much like a modern-day mechanic would repair the unintended damage caused to a

flying drone, or some other thing that is very important and has to be urgently retrieved, in order to make it functional once again. So Bharat plugged the hole and sealed it once again. How did he do it? He invoked the holy name of Lord Ram because he knew of its majestic mystical powers to heal and repair, as well as all the benefits that accrued to him by his meritorious deeds, and his other spiritual and religious practices. He focused them all at one point like a welder focuses his welding-torch to weld broken joints.

Once the hole was sealed, once the repair was done, the energy that was being continuously generated by Hanuman by his incessant chanting of Lord Ram's holy name, but was leaking out till that moment, began accumulating once again within the 'healed' or 'repaired' shield surrounding him, and sooner rather than later, he came to himself; he was revived back to life.

And when he did come to, when he did regain consciousness, it was as if nothing had happened. It was like the case of a creature living in hibernation mode for some time when all his physical activities cease and his metabolism stops for the period, but when he wakes up he is up and going with the same energy and enthusiasm as when he had first entered into hibernation mode. This is also the way Yogis (those ascetics who practice meditation) manage to live for long periods in a suspended mode when all the physical activities of the body are put on hold.

So in this way Hanuman also lived in a suspended animation mode for the period between the moment the arrow first struck him and when he was revived. Remember: Hanuman was an incarnation of Lord Shiva's eleventh form known as Rudra, and Shiva is the patron deity of all Yogis; there is no one more proficient in practicing Yoga than Lord Shiva. So it was quite natural for Hanuman to do something to which he was accustomed, and survive the ordeal.

The bubbling energy and great enthusiasm for doing Lord Ram's work, which was so characteristic of Hanuman, was there in its prime form once again as it was prior to the time when he was hit by the arrow. Rather, it was made more vigorous and forceful as he discovered that it was this one factor—that he was on the Lord's mission and that he was continuously chanting his holy name—that had saved his life that day. It renewed his commitment; it renewed his devotion and faith, making them more robust; it invigorated him; and it made him raring to go instantly with a burning zeal and confidence in Lord Ram.]

सो०. लीन्ह कपिहि उर लाइ पुलकित तनु लोचन सजल ।

प्रीति न हृदयं समाइ सुमिरि राम रघुकुल तिलक ॥ ५९ ॥

sōraṭhā.

līnha kapihi ura lā'i pulakita tanu lōcana sajala.

prīti na hr̥dayaṁ samā'i sumiri rāma raghukula tilaka. 59.

As soon as the Kapi (Hanuman) regained consciousness, Bharat eagerly embraced him most affectionately¹; his body was thrilled and his eyes welled up with tears (of happiness and for thanksgiving).

Emotions of affection and love for Lord Ram swelled so much in Bharat's inner-self when he remembered the Lord that he could not contain them in his heart (as a result of which they overflowed to cause excess of thrill in his body, as well as to make tears ooze out of their glands and fill his eyes). (Doha no. 59)

[Note—¹Really indeed, Hanuman comes out as being the single most fortunate, privileged and lucky character in the whole Story of the Ramayan in as much as he was blessed with the honour of receiving an embrace from Lord Ram more than once*, and as if still something was wanting, he is now being embraced by the Lord's "image" and his own devotee-brother Bharat himself to complete the picture of his exceptional good luck and unique blessedness. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62.

And, how does it feel to embrace a great devotee of Lord Ram? The answer is here—one feels thrilled, and tears well up in eyes. Since Hanuman is a great and blessed devotee of Lord Ram, what embracing such a devotee feels like is being experienced by Bharat here, and was experienced by both Vibhishan and Hanuman earlier when they met while Hanuman was in Lanka during the latter's expedition to search Sita (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 6). In this latter instance we find that 'both' felt exhilarated because 'both' were ardent devotees of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. तात कुसल कहु सुखनिधान की । सहित अनुज अरु मातु जानकी ॥ १ ॥

कपि सब चरित समास बखाने । भए दुखी मन महुँ पछिताने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāta kusala kahu sukhanidhāna kī. sahita anuja aru mātu jānakī. 1.

kapi saba carita samāsa bakhānē. bha'e dukhī mana mahuṁ pachitānē. 2.

After the exchange of initial greetings and introductions, Bharat asked Hanuman about the welfare of Lord Ram: 'My dear (tāta)! Tell me about the well-being of Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of joy and happiness, along with the good news of the younger brother (Laxman; "anuja")¹ and mother Sita (Janki; "mātu jānakī")².' (1)

The Kapi (Hanuman) briefed Bharat about everything, and this tidings filled the latter with extreme sorrow, sadness and gloom; he felt very despondent and lamented gravely³. (2)

[Note—¹While enquiring about Laxman Bharat simply uses the word "anuja", meaning 'younger brother'. It therefore assumes a dual meaning; it refers to Laxman as Lord Ram's younger brother, as well as Bharat's younger brother.

²Laxman's mother Sumitra had also advised him to treat Sita as his 'mother' and Lord Ram as his 'father' at the time of granting her permission to him to accompany them to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

Hanuman too calls Sita his mother repeatedly and in quick succession during their first interaction in the Ashok grove of Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it; (ii)

Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede it; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 17.

Did Sita acknowledge that Hanuman was her 'son'? Surely she did so—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16; and Chaupai line nos. 2, 9 that precede Doha no. 17.

³Bharat sorely regretted and intensely lamented that he could not help his beloved brother Lord Ram in his time of need; that it was he who had been the cause of the Lord having had to face such hardship and trouble in the forest. The bad news of Sita's abduction and its attendant sufferings for Lord Ram, the bad tidings of Laxman's fainting and the horrors of the war that was underway in Lanka—all cast a pall of deep gloom on Bharat's mind. He became pale and forlorn; he was dismayed and distressed beyond description. But what could he do; he had no choices left at that time but to pray and hope for the best.

A very pertinent question that comes to the mind is this: Why did Bharat not decide to send his well-trained and equipped army of the kingdom of Ayodhya to Lanka to help Lord Ram? Well, the answer is simple and easy to guess: no time was left for it to be actually implemented in practice.

The reason is this: Lanka was very far away, and the army would take a lot of time to reach it by first marching across the huge distance from Ayodhya to the shore of the southern ocean, and then crossing it to land on the shores of Lanka. This was impossible to achieve in a short frame of time because the war was already raging.

So, Bharat drew a deep breath in utter frustration and regret even as he lamented and grieved most woefully. But he recovered himself quickly, for it was a waste of time allowing emotions to take control over wisdom and prudence. Hence, Bharat decided to give some practical help instead, and in the present circumstances it was that all haste must be made to ensure Hanuman reaches Lanka in time with the mountain to save Laxman. Bharat also knew that if Laxman is saved, no harm would come to his beloved brother Lord Ram, for he knew well the abilities of Laxman.

Therefore, he devised a method to send Hanuman extremely fast, and it was to ask the latter to sit on his arrow which will move so fast through the sky that it would make up for the time that has been lost till now, enabling Hanuman to land in Lanka well in time.

All these things are narrated in the verses that follow herein below.]

अहह दैव मैं कत जग जायउँ । प्रभु के एकहु काज न आयउँ ॥ ३ ॥

जानि कुअवसरु मन धरि धीरा । पुनि कपि सन बोले बलबीरा ॥ ४ ॥

तात गहरु होइहि तोहि जाता । काजु नसाइहि होत प्रभाता ॥ ५ ॥

चढु मम सायक सैल समेता । पठवौं तोहि जहँ कृपानिकेता ॥ ६ ॥

ahaha daiva mairṁ kata jaga jāya'uṁ. prabhu kē ēkahu kāja na āya'uṁ. 3.

jāni ku'avasaru mana dhari dhīrā. puni kapi sana bōlē balabīrā. 4.

tāta gaharu hō'ihi tōhi jātā. kāju nasā'ihī hōta prabhātā. 5.

caṛhu mama sāyaka saila samētā. paṭhavaum tōhi jaham̐ kṛpānikētā. 6.

Bharat lamented sorely, cursing himself that he could not be of any help or service to Lord Ram. He said with a sad and distressed voice with genuine grief and

despondency in his expressions, ‘Alas oh God; why was I born in this world as a cursed one who could not even be of a single service to the Lord, nor could extend any kind of help to him?’¹ (3)

Bharat paused for a while as he pondered over the situation and its gravity, and realising that the time was not favourable for yielding to negative thoughts and emotions as they would be of no help, the brave and courageous Bharat gathered his wits together and said to Hanuman after a while, (4) ---

‘My dear, you may be late in your journey back, and everything would be ruined if the night ends and dawn appears’². (5)

[Therefore, not much time is to be wasted, and all haste is to be made.]

Hence, I suggest that you mount my arrow with your mountain, and I shall shoot it to send you back speedily to where Lord Ram, who is a treasury of mercy and grace, is present. [Well, I will send you virtually with the speed of sound as the arrow thunders across the sky towards Lanka. You can rest assured of that.]³ (6)

[Note—¹Bharat has lamented very gravely in a similar fashion when he came back to Ayodhya from his maternal uncle’s home to learn about Lord Ram’s exile to forest. He had cursed his birth then too for being the cause of Lord Ram’s exile. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 160; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 161; (iii) Doha no. 162; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 168; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178; (vi) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 179; and etc.}

²This shows that either Bharat was briefed by Hanuman of the urgency of reaching Lanka before dawn to make the herb effective, or this technical detail was already known to Bharat.

Bharat thought to himself: “Hanuman must be exhausted by the journey and the hit by the arrow. He may be feeling sore in his muscles, and there is no time for rest. It would be very hard for him to travel a long distance with a sore body which has to carry this heavy mountain under the prevailing situation. Even if wishes to travel on his own strength, it will be slow progress as he would be bogged down by the weight of this great mountain. Besides this, he has already lost some crucial moments during this sad episode, and any further delay would jeopardise Laxman’s chances of survival. So I must help him. If I send him riding my arrow then it would be very helpful, as, one, he would have time to relax, two, he would arrive in time, and three, when Lord Ram sees the arrow and enquires him about it, the Lord will know that I had sent him astride this arrow, and this bit of information would tell the Lord though I was so unfortunate that I could not extend any help to him but at least I could offer this small service as a token of my unflinching love and constant remembrance of him. I’ll be glad if the Lord comes to know how much I miss him.”

To wit, Bharat devised this device of offering to send Hanuman astride his arrow to help him overcome his guilty conscious that “he was of no help or service to Lord Ram”—apropos: verse no. 3 herein above.

So Bharat said to Hanuman: ‘If you are not able to reach before dawn then it would not be possible to revive Laxman as the herb would lose its effectiveness. Already so much time has been wasted while you were unconscious. I understand that you must be fatigued and must be having some muscular soreness due to your falling

down to the ground as well as the stress incurred by carrying the heavy mountain in your hand. This mountain would act as a drag on you, slowing you down considerably and sapping your energy further. The result would be that you might be late in arriving in time. So I suggest you ride piggy-back on my arrow which I shall shoot in the direction of Lanka. This will make your journey comfortable and easy, and when you land there you will be in the proper frame of mind and body to enter the battle refreshed the next day.’]

सुनि कपि मन उपजा अभिमाना । मोरें भार चलिहि किमि बाना ॥ ७ ॥
राम प्रभाव बिचारि बहोरी । बंदि चरन कह कपि कर जोरी ॥ ८ ॥

suni kapi mana upajā abhimānā. mōrēm bhāra calihi kimi bānā. 7.
rāma prabhāva bicāri bahōrī. bandi carana kaha kapi kara jōrī. 8.

When Bharat made this offer (that he would like to send Hanuman back to Lanka astride his arrow if he would ride it with the mountain in his hand), Hanuman wondered how an arrow would be able to move speedily while carrying the weight of his body (along with that of the mountain). (7)

But he soon recovered his senses and concluded that it would be made possible by the virtue of Lord Ram’s glory and grace, so he should not doubt it nor wonder at it².

Then he bowed at the feet of Bharat and said humbly: --- (8)

[Note—¹Another reason why Hanuman overcame his doubt that Bharat would be able to actually shoot an arrow that would be strong and powerful enough to carry the combined weight of his own body and that of the mountain all the way to Lanka is that just a while ago he had witnessed the stupendous abilities and astounding powers of Bharat when an arrow shot by him brought Hanuman down. Not only that, Bharat had quickly revived him back to his former energetic self in such a miraculous way that he did not feel the after-effects of the deadly blow of the arrow or of the fall to the ground.]

दो०. तव प्रताप उर राखि प्रभु जैहउँ नाथ तुरंत ।
अस कहि आयसु पाइ पद बंदि चलेउ हनुमंत ॥ ६० (क) ॥
भरत बाहु बल सील गुन प्रभु पद प्रीति अपार ।
मन महुँ जात सराहत पुनि पुनि पवनकुमार ॥ ६० (ख) ॥

dōhā.

tava pratāpa ura rākhi prabhu jaiha'uṁ nātha turanta.
asa kahi āyasu pā'i pada bandi calē'u hanumanta. 60 (a).
bharata bāhu bala sīla guna prabhu pada prīti apāra.
mana mahum̐ jāta sarāhata puni puni pavanakumāra. 60 (b).

[Hanuman replied to Bharat—] ‘Oh Lord! I shall enshrine your majesty’s glory in my heart, and proceed speedily (to reach Lord Ram)¹.

[To wit, you need not worry; I am hale and hearty. Please don't feel afraid about my safety. No one could have stopped me except you, as you are an image of Lord Ram himself. By bowing to you I am symbolically bowing to my beloved Lord Ram. So have no fears; I will reach there in time.]'

Saying this and obtaining Bharat's permission, Hanuman bowed his head at his feet and started on his journey once again, with great firmness of purpose, strength of resolution, and vigour of action. (Doha no. 60-a)

The son of the wind god (Hanuman) was so exceptionally impressed by Bharat and his exemplary character that on his way back to Lord Ram, he kept on thinking of Bharat most reverentially all along the way, about the strength and might of his arms, about his polite, friendly and courteous nature, about his virtues and glories, and about the depth and intensity of his love for Lord Ram.

Hanuman repeatedly praised Bharat for these stellar virtues. (Doha no. 60-b)

[Note—¹One practical reason why Hanuman chose to go alone without the aid of riding Bharat's arrow, and probably it is also the reason why Bharat granted him permission though it would mean a bit difficult journey for Hanuman, is this:

When Lord Ram, who would be eagerly waiting for Hanuman's return, and in all probability would be watching the sky for signs of him, finds that he was riding an arrow, the Lord would be alarmed. He would think that some enemy had captured Hanuman and tied him to the arrow to force him to take this missile to where the Lord and his army were, and then explode the weapon in an attempt to wipe them out.

Or the Lord would think that Hanuman was gravely wounded and devised this contraption to come there, and this would cause immense pain to the heart of the Lord as he would lament that Hanuman had to suffer injury for him.

The Lord's confidence in Hanuman's valour and ability would be shaken, and also out of pity for his sufferings and weakness, or exhaustion caused by the arduous task of bringing the heavy mountain from afar, the Lord would henceforth feel reluctant to employ Hanuman in any combat, preferring to give him some rest. As a result, Hanuman's skills during the war would not be fully used. That would be disastrous for everyone, as a powerful warrior would be inadvertently side-lined or neglected, and his martial skills would be not fully exploited.

Even if none of the above possibilities actually happened, still there was a certain chance that Lord Ram may at least enquire about the arrow, and then when Hanuman tells him about Bharat, the Lord would be plunged in a new bout of grief and sorrows as he remembers his dear and loving brother.

The situation on the ground at Lanka was very delicate and serious; no newer emotions ought to be aroused in the bosom of Lord Ram that would negatively impact his mind and disturb him, even in the least. The episode of Laxman's fainting must have already sapped Lord Ram's energy and hurt his emotions enough, so nothing should be done again to worsen things further by making him plunge in a new vortex of sorrow generated by the memory of Bharat.

The wisest thing then would be not to remind Lord Ram of Bharat or his native Ayodhya while the ferocious war rages, so that he can concentrate all his energies on the battle-front and the war that he has to fight with zeal; it had to be ensured that he remains un-encumbered by negative emotions of remembering his far-away land, his family members, his loving brothers Bharat and Shatrughan etc. as they are bound to disturb his mind, making him feel sad and overcome with regret and grief, as they would be counter-productive at this juncture.]

चौ०. उहाँ राम लछिमनहि निहारी । बोले बचन मनुज अनुसारी ॥ १ ॥

अर्ध राति गइ कपि नहिं आयउ । राम उठाइ अनुज उर लायउ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

uhāṁ rāma lachimanahi nihārī. bōlē bacana manuḥa anusārī. 1.

ardha rāti ga'i kapi nahirṁ āya'u. rāma uṭhā'i anuja ura lāya'u. 2.

* In the meantime, there (in Lanka) Lord Ram watched Laxman gloomily (as he lay unconscious and critically wounded before him), with great sadness and despondency reflecting in his countenance. The Lord, behaving like an ordinary human being¹, lamented gravely for him, and in his sorrows he said the following remorseful words - -- (1)

‘It is past midnight, and the Kapi (Hanuman) has not come back (with the herb which could revive Laxman).’

Saying these woeful words expressing extreme sadness and grief, the Lord lifted Laxman and clasped his body to his own bosom². (2)

* {Let us—the narrator of this fantastic and wondrous Story, as well as its listener, the author and his reader—imagine that we are travelling in some sort of a Time Machine that makes us travel through time and space, back in an age long past, extremely rapidly, almost in the time taken to blink an eye. This Machine has some special and distinguishing qualities—it transports us over long distances of space in a very short span of time of a few hours; it accelerates and decelerates very speedily; it can move forward and backward at stupendous speed and also stand still in the air to monitor developments on the ground below; and it can take the travellers to their destinations at their own pace and convenience.

What proof do we have for the above observations concerning the Time Machine, and that we are travelling in it? Well, there are very obvious and ample proofs if we just pause a while to look at things more closely.

First let us see about the ability of this Time Machine to traverse great distances in a short time. A short while ago we find ourselves in Lanka, witnessing that moment in the night when the wounded Laxman was lying unconscious before Lord Ram, and the medicine man named Sushen, who was brought from inside the city, prescribed the herb which could revive Laxman, but it was located far-away in the northern mountains. Hanuman was ordered to bring it. Now, it was a huge distance that had to be covered in a small time slot; this mountain was located thousands of miles away from the land of Lanka, far away in the north of the mainland. First going to that place and then coming back from there doubled the distance needed to be covered, and everything had to be done within a few hours of darkness, between the hours of the early night after sunset and the hours late in the night that preceded dawn of the next day when the sky was still dark and the sun was yet far away below the horizon.

So, we have first become a witness of the events on the battle-field of Lanka and watch Laxman being injured, and then Hanuman being commissioned to bring the herb from the northern mountains. Then we leave Lanka at this point of time to travel alongside Hanuman all along to the northern mountain, deep inside the range of lofty

mountains to somewhere near its northern fringes, somewhere near Mt. Kailash, where the mountain with the needed herb was located. And let us remember that in the meantime we have witnessed the incident of the demon Kalnemi trying to trap and kill Hanuman. Some time is lost in Kalnemi's fictitious hermitage, and some more time is wasted in searching for the herb in vain. Finally, realising that the time was fast running out, Hanuman plucks the mighty mountain from the ground and starts his long journey back to Lanka.

We accompany him as he takes a detour and flies over the city of Ayodhya where we see him being shot by Bharat's arrow, and we record what transpired there and how he was revived back to life by Bharat's intercession, we witness Hanuman's interaction with Bharat, and then we resume our journey back to Lanka by the side of Hanuman who was cruising through the night sky in great haste like a streaking star.

Since we are accompanying Hanuman and observing the developments as scribes and witnesses, it will now be easy for us to understand why this present verse starts with the following phrase: "In the meantime, there (in Lanka) Lord Ram watched Laxman gloomily, with great sadness reflecting in his countenance ---". It is because we will now be describing what is happening at a place that is far away in Lanka while we are still in the midst of the journey with Hanuman who is sailing through the firmament of the night. Remember: Hanuman is still on his way and we are with him, and not with Lord Ram and Laxman at Lanka. So we have to use words and phrases that convey the idea that we are then, at that moment, talking about something happening far away, at some distant place.

This indicates that this Time Machine of ours is equipped with some wondrous instruments that keep us updated with news from the battle-field: These equipments now tell us about how Lord Ram is grieving for Laxman while Hanuman is fast approaching him with the herb still rooted in the mountain, and a while ago they made us aware of Ravana approaching Kalnemi and forcing him to become a false hermit in an attempt to get rid of Hanuman.

An important clarification is needed here regarding the way we travel to record the events, and the way Hanuman travels to bring the herb. We are travelling in our Time Machine, while Hanuman is travelling independently on his own power; to wit, Hanuman and we, the scribes and witnesses, are travelling independently. This is why Hanuman could not be warned of the impending danger from Kalnemi because he was travelling separately from us!

Then we come to the next point about this Time Machine, that it has the ability to stand still in the air like a hover-craft or a drone to record the events on the land below from a safe distance up in the sky in such a way that its presence remains secret. From its perch high up in the sky, this Time Machine can record sound and videos of what's being said and done down on the ground below, made possible with the help of special devices having sensitive sensors. Don't we have geo-stationary satellite today that aren't seen by us but which can map even small areas with great clarity, and eavesdrop on private conversation by means of special microphones equipped with secret sensors. These spying activities are standard practice employed world-wide in espionage.

Therefore we conclude that this Time Machine had some remote sensing and recording device that did the trick for the scribe, the narrator or the author of this wonderful Story, and the witnesses, the listeners and the readers, who were aboard it.

Hence, when we narrate about the incidents concerning Kalnemi and Bharat, as well as the uprooting of the mountain by Hanuman, we can say with positive authority that they are trust-worthy accounts as to what had actually happened then,

and not something cooked-up as an imaginary cock-and-bull story, for they are a first-hand account that was recorded for posterity by the scribe in such a way that none of the parties concerned with the Story, either the hero Hanuman or Kalnemi and Bharat, could get the wind of the proceedings being recorded.

The next point about this miraculous Time Machine is this: “it can take the travellers to their destinations at their own pace”. Well, it is easy to understand what is meant here. The ‘traveller’ is the reader of this fascinating Story. The incidents that are covered by the ‘scribe’, who happens to be the narrator or the author of this Story, are recorded in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62. It is the period between Meghanad hitting Laxman with his powerful spear when the latter fell down on the ground unconscious, and the time when Laxman was revived back to life and Sushen, the doctor, was safely put back in Lanka by Hanuman.

Now, different readers would read these verses at different speeds, at their own paces. Some will finish reading them in one sitting, and the time taken in this read also depends upon an individual’s reading speed; some others would read them in pieces in a day or two; and still there are some others who would spread this reading over many days or weeks. So therefore, the same set of incidents are virtually being made known to different individuals at different speeds, which symbolically means that these individuals are travelling in the Time Machine at different speeds!

In our modern world we are used to hearing about ‘Artificial Intelligence’ and ‘Virtual Reality’, so why wonder about the existence of this fantastic ‘Time Machine’ during an age when air-planes could travel without the help of a physical pilot, directed by the mere wish of the chief passenger aboard, as is evident in the case of the self-driven air-plane known as the ‘Pushpak Viman’ that was used by Lord Ram and his entire entourage to return to Ayodhya directly from Lanka after the Lord’s victory. The scribes of yore used some variation of such Time Machines, in existence at the time of the period of their writing, to record for posterity great wars and singularly important epoch-changing developments in a truthful manner, in the actual way they happened, without any kind of tampering with facts, or manipulating details to suit their own whims and fancies.

Thus, the account of the great Story of the Ramayan that has come down to us from Tulsidas in the form of ‘Ram Charit Manas’, or from Veda Vyas as ‘Adhyatma Ramayan, is true and correct. As for some variations in their details, it is because the cycle of creation—right from its origin, through its development and ending with its conclusion—runs in an endless rotation like a gigantic wheel set in slow motion by its cosmic creator known by the name of Brahm, the Supreme Being. As the Wheel turns and completes one cycle, to go on to its next cycle of rotation, it is quite possible that at a particular point of its rotation, at a specific point of time when it reaches a specific point in its rotation, the incident that occurred in its second rotation may vary in its details of happening and take some different shade of colour than what it looked like during the previous cycle. This results in variations in some finer details, some minor aspects, within the general framework of the Story of the Ramayan; but these slight differences do not affect the general structure and the outline of the Story. This fact has been recorded by Tulsidas himself in ‘Ram Charit Manas’—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

Another reason for variation in finer details of the Story is that each bard or poet who decided to record it did it according to how he understood and saw it, so that one aspect was highlighted by one scribe, and another aspect by another scribe, giving rise to different versions of the same Story. This fact is explicitly said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

Coming back to our narrative, till this point of time we have read (from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Doha no. 55) that Laxman was lying unconscious on the ground after being hit by a powerful spear used by Meghanad against him, and Hanuman was ordered to go to the northern mountains to bring a herb that could neutralise the deadly effect of Meghanad's weapon and revive Laxman. Then we have read how Hanuman was shot by Bharat on the suspicion that he was some unknown intruder who may pose a danger to Ayodhya, and how Hanuman recovered and resumed his journey to Lanka with the mountain and the herb—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 60 herein above.

Hence, from this present verse no. 1 we resume our narrative from where we had left it last, at Lord Ram's camp near the battle-field of Lanka where Laxman is lying unconscious before him.

To wit, what a wondrous and fantastic Time Machine is this indeed!}

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram behave “like an ordinary human being”? Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this Story, explains this himself in Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 61 herein below.

Lord Shiva says that “though Lord Ram is always steady and unchanging, yet he showed how a human being would ordinarily respond for someone who is totally devoted to him when that faithful follower is somehow harmed.”

Well, Lord Ram had to wail and lament like an ordinary man so as to conform to and fulfil a boon given by Brahma, the Creator, to Ravana that he would die at the hands of a human being. This is the primary reason why Lord Ram, who otherwise could do everything in this world by his mere wish as he was in incarnation of the Supreme Being, acted and behaved like an ordinary man. The Lord is an expert in everything in this creation, so he was also an expert actor. As such, he acted his role of a human being to such perfection and finesse that inspite of the many miraculous things happening, no one could doubt that he was not.

Hence, here also the Lord took special care not to do anything that would reveal his true identity; so he lamented and grieved for his wounded brother like any other man would ordinarily do.

²So, what was so alarming that made Lord Ram become so worried and desperate with despair when Hanuman could not come back by midnight?

The answer is this: The herb would lose its ability to revive an injured person if it was not administered in the night itself, much before dawn. Besides this, Lord Ram's anxiety increased by each passing moment as he thought, in his worries and nervousness, that he could perceive that life was slowly ebbing out of Laxman. So he was worried that if the herb was used late there were chances that its effectiveness would be lost, as by that time Laxman's life would be irretrievably lost.

When one is overcome with grief, small frames of time appear to look like ages. Each passing hour seemed to be one lost era of life to Lord Ram; he was on an

edge, and uncertainties added to his nervousness which made the matters worse for him.]

सकहु न दुखित देखि मोहि काऊ । बंधु सदा तव मृदुल सुभाऊ ॥ ३ ॥
 मम हित लागि तजेहु पितु माता । सहेहु बिपिन हिम आतप बाता ॥ ४ ॥
 सो अनुराग कहाँ अब भाई । उठहु न सुनि मम बच बिकलाई ॥ ५ ॥

sakahu na dukhita dēkhi mōhi kā'ū. bandhu sadā tava mṛdula subhā'ū. 3.
 mama hita lāgi tajēhu pitu mātā. sahēhu bipina hima ātapa bātā. 4.
 sō anurāga kahāṁ aba bhā'ī. uṭhahu na suni mama baca bikalā'ī. 5.

Lord Ram wailed sorrowfully, 'My dear brother. You had never tolerated if you had seen me sad in any manner¹. It has been your nature always to be kind, soft, amiable and gracious. (3)

It is for my sake that you abandoned your parents², and then suffered gravely, but graciously endured, for my sake, all the sufferings, pains and inconveniences that you had to encounter in the forest, such as extremes of cold and heat, of hailstorms and hot scorching winds (because of your decision to accompany me)³. (4)

My Brother! Where is that affection for me now; how and why do you now tolerate my intense grief and sadness without responding? Say, why don't you rise even after hearing my earnest pleas and words soaked in abject grief and despair; why don't you respond when you see me so agitated and full of anxiety?⁴ (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 198 where this fact is clearly hinted. Now Lord Ram has acknowledged it expressly himself.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233 where Laxman became very agitated on seeing worry on the face of Lord Ram at the time when news arrived that Bharat was headed towards their hermitage with a large retinue that also included a huge detachment of the kingdom's army.

Earlier, at the time of the Bow-Breaking ceremony at Janakpur, when sage Parashuram came angrily to the venue and threatened Lord Ram to punish him for breaking Lord Shiva's bow, Laxman had interceded on behalf of the Lord and had fearlessly as well as sternly rebuked the sage, even going to the extent of teasing him repeatedly that amounted to insult. This verbal spat between Laxman and Parashuram is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Doha no. 278. {The whole episode, however, is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76 where we read about Laxman's resolve to accompany Lord Ram to the forest.

³The horrors and sufferings of the forest are outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 63.

⁴Lord Ram wailed for Laxman: “Tell me, why are you lying unmoving; why have you suddenly developed a sternness of heart and indifference of countenance that you seem not to be moved by my plight, whereas you had always acted to the contrary in the past, and whenever you saw me worried or upset, you were up in arms to protect me. Had you not done that when news arrived that Bharat was coming to our hermitage at Chitrakoot with an entourage that consisted all the main members of the royal court of Ayodhya as well as large detachment of the army? You had seen me worried then, and you had thought that I was worried that Bharat was coming to fight with me and get rid of me so that he could permanently usurp the throne of the kingdom, whereas that was not the case as Bharat was actually coming to take me back home. Had I not told you this that time that there was no fear from Bharat. Nevertheless, you had picked up arms and got ready to face Bharat and kill him if I was harmed; does it not prove that you could not imagine any harm or pain coming to me from any quarter, even if it meant killing our brother and all the rest who were accompanying him? It was only after my assuring you that there was no fear of any danger that you had relented and calmed down. {This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233.}

You had kept awake to keep guard while I slept—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90.

You had been serving me most diligently and faithfully in the forest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 139; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142.}

Whenever you found that I am in a sad and despondent mood, you too reflected my emotions by being overcome with equal sadness and despondency. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precedes Doha no. 141.}

At the time when Sita was stolen and I had all but lost the will to live, it was you who had supported me at that critical moment of my life; it was you who had helped me tide over my mental state of abject dejection and utter hopelessness by encouraging me to make efforts to search for her. Had it not been for you, I would have fallen then and there; it was this advice of yours that motivated me to look ahead with hope of finding her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8, 16 that precede Doha no. 30.}

Well then, where is now that unflinching devotion and sturdy commitment of yours; why do you not get up and assure me that you are alright and you will not allow any harm to come to me. Listen dear: If you do not rise, if you are revived, then I too will die with you, because I can't live without you. {Refer: Chaupai line nos. 9-10 herein below.}]

जौं जनतेउँ बन बंधु बिछोहू । पिता बचन मनतेउँ नहिं ओहू ॥ ६ ॥

सुत बित नारि भवन परिवारा । होहिं जाहिं जग बारहिं बारा ॥ ७ ॥

अस बिचारि जियँ जागहु ताता । मिलइ न जगत सहोदर भ्राता ॥ ८ ॥

jaum janatē'um̃ bana bandhu bichōhū. pitā bacana manatē'um̃ nahim̃ ōhū. 6.
suta bita nāri bhavana parivārā. hōhim̃ jāhim̃ jaga bārahim̃ bārā. 7.
asa bicāri jiyam̃ jāgahu tātā. mila'i na jagata sahōdara bhrātā. 8.

Had I been aware that I would have to suffer separation from my dear brother in the forest, then surely I would not have obeyed the words of my father¹. (6)

In this world, one can have more than one chance to have a son, money, wife, home and a family [7], ---

--- But one cannot have another chance to be fortunate enough to have a dearest-of-dear brother, someone for whom no one and no thing ever matters more in this world than the former to whom the latter is totally devoted, and whom the latter adores like no one else would ever do². Think over this thing and wake up (you're your slumber, because I am feeling very distressed and extremely distraught by seeing you lying in this condition) [8]. (7-8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had to keep his father Dasrath's words that the latter gave to Kaikeyi, the step-mother of the Lord, according to which she had demanded that Lord Ram be sent to forest for fourteen years so that her own son Bharat could be anointed as a prince-regent who would become the future king. {This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, specifically in (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 41.}]

²Here, the phrase “dearest-of-dear brother” that Lord Ram uses refers to Laxman who was totally devoted to him. For Laxman, there was no one and no thing that ever mattered more than the Lord. The next verse endorses this view with emphasis.]

जथा पंख बिनु खग अति दीना । मनि बिनु फनि करिबर कर हीना ॥ ९ ॥
अस मम जिवन बंधु बिनु तोही । जौं जड़ दैव जिआवै मोही ॥ १० ॥

jathā paṅkha binu khaga ati dīnā. mani binu phani karibara kara hīnā. 9.
asa mama jivana bandhu binu tōhī. jaum̃ jaṛa daiva ji'āvai mōhī. 10.

My woefully precarious condition is as miserable and grief-stricken as a poor bird that has lost its wings¹, or a serpent that has lost the gem-like luminescent globule of condensed sap present on its hood², or an unfortunate elephant that has lost its trunk³. (9)

Oh my dear brother! This is the gloomy way my life would be if unfortunately the malefic Creator, who is so opposed to me, forces me to live, compelling me to survive even after you are separated from me⁴. (10)

[Note—¹The bird's wing is the most important part of its body because it is the wing that enables the bird to fly and live a happy life. If the wing is lost, then the poor bird would be forced to live a life which would be as good as being dead for it.

The importance of the wing for a bird and how a person suffering from some grave misfortune when something without which he can't live is compared to a bird losing its wings is given elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas.

For instance, in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76 we read that the citizens of Ayodhya were sore overcome with grief when they learnt that Lord Ram was being sent to forest exile, and their condition is being compared to 'a bird who has lost its wings'.

Again, in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 148 we read that the condition of king Dasrath was also like a bird who has lost its wings. This was the time when Dasrath was lying on his death bed lamenting for Lord Ram, and his minister Sumantra returned to tell him the bad news that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman have refused to return.

²There are some special species of serpents on whose hoods, according to legends, a small luminescent sac resembling a small globule is seen. It contains a sap that has oozed out of the serpent's hood and has solidified there. The reptile emerges out of its hole in the darkness of the night, and it is believed that the light emanating from this sac enables the serpent to see its way. If the sac is lost, the serpent becomes blind. In this grief, the serpent repeatedly dashes its hood on the hard ground to express its sadness, and this causes it to die.

This phenomenon is cited as a metaphor to indicate that Lord Ram would be blind and helpless without Laxman by his side.

Other instance is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154 where the condition of king Dasrath is compared to it just prior to his death after he learnt that Lord Ram would not return.

³The elephant depends upon its trunk for food; without the trunk this poor creature won't be able to gather its natural food such as branches and leaves of trees etc. and would consequently die. The trunk is also the elephant's defence; it is used to catch hold of an attacking enemy and thrash it to ground. The trunk is used by it to drink water, to forage for food, to fend off its enemies, to defend itself, to sound the trumpet to establish its majesty amongst other animals in the forest, to shoo away flies from its body, and so on and so forth. In fact, the trunk is a pride of the elephant like a tail is for all other animals. The trunk is one muscular organ that is most valued by the elephant in its body.

Here Lord Ram says that his personal glory and the most valuable part of his identity was Laxman, and if the latter is lost then a good part of himself, which is the better part of him, will also be lost. So what's the good in living a lustreless life thereafter; what's the point in living without any glory and identity?

⁴Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, Laxman was like high pole over which the flag of Lord Ram's fame and glory fluttered majestically—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 17.

Then say, what would be the fate of this 'flag' if the 'flag-post' was lost?]

जैहउँ अवध कवन मुहु लाई । नारि हेतु प्रिय भाइ गँवाई ॥ ११ ॥

बरु अपजस सहतेउँ जग माहीं । नारि हानि बिसेष छति नाहीं ॥ १२ ॥

अब अपलोकु सोकु सुत तोरा । सहिहि निठुर कठोर उर मोरा ॥ १३ ॥

jaiha'uṃ avadha kavaṇa muhu lā'ī. nāri hētu priya bhā'i gaṃvā'ī. 11.
 baru apajasa sahatē'uṃ jaga māhīm. nāri hāni bisēṣa chati nāhīm. 12.
 aba apalōku sōku suta tōrā. sahihi niṭhura kaṭhōra ura mōrā. 13.

Alas! With what face would I go back to Ayodhya (in case I survive this ordeal of my separation from you) with the ignominy dogging me all the way back—that I lost my dear brother for the sake of my wife¹? (11)

In any case, I could have coped somehow with the infamy of losing my wife and being unable to retrieve her from the clutches of her captor because I was incompetent and incapable of giving her protection in the first place, and then being able to free her from her captors because I did not have the valour, the strength and the power to do so.

Aside of the infamy, the ignominy, the shame, the sneer and the scorn that I would have inevitably invited throughout my remaining life on this account, it would not be of an insurmountable cause of grief for me, as losing one's wife (or a woman) is not much of a great misfortune and an irreparable loss for a wise man² (as it is of losing you, my dearest of dear brother, for this loss is in-compensable, this damage is irreparable, this vacancy cannot be filled). (12)

But my dear son (suta)³, my loss and its associated grief is much more profound and deeper. Woe to me that now my stern, emotionless and merciless heart (that did not burst with sorrow when it first saw you lying unconscious) will force me to suffer intensely and immensely from combined agony arising from the infamy and shame at having lost my dear brother for the sake of my wife, as well as the grief and sorrow arising directly due to your loss itself. Verily, it will compound the misery and grief for me; it will be misery and grief compounded for me! (13)

[Note—¹Lord Ram woefully lamented for Laxman. He despondently said with great sadness in his voice and profound regret effusing from his words: “What a shameful thing would it be; what face I would have to show to my kin and the citizens of Ayodhya when they ask me about you? I will be forced to tell them that I lost Laxman in the war to retrieve Sita, my wife. I have just now told you that “one may have a chance to have another wife in one's life should he lose one and decides to remarry, but never a second chance to have a loving brother who is faithful and devoted to him”—apropos: verse no. 7 herein above.

²A wise, self-realised and enlightened man is expected to adopt the path of renouncing all his worldly attachments—and this includes his wife and home—after a certain age to spend the rest of his life in pursuing his spiritual objectives; doing meditation, contemplation and introspection, going on pilgrimage, and generally living away from the turmoil and worries of a householder's life to prepare himself for a peaceful final exit from this mortal world.

To wit, a self-realised man who wishes to pursue spiritual calm and peacefully prepare for deliverance of his soul at the time of his death would renounce the world, and this entails his voluntarily severing all his ties with his wife one day. Even if a man wishes to continue to live as a householder and for some unfortunate reason has lost his wife, he can always remarry. So therefore, losing a wife is no big deal; it's not a loss that can't be compensated for.

³Remarkable: Lord Ram calls Laxman his “son—*suta*”. Truly it was so; even Laxman’s mother Sumitra had advised him to treat Lord Ram and Sita as his parents in the forest, and serve them accordingly with due diligence—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 74; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.

And of course it goes without saying that Laxman obeyed his mother’s instructions in letter and spirit—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 139 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142.]

निज जननी के एक कुमारा । तात तासु तुम्ह प्रान अधारा ॥ १४ ॥
 सौंपेसि मोहि तुम्हहि गहि पानी । सब बिधि सुखद परम हित जानी ॥ १५ ॥
 उतरु काह दैहउँ तेहि जाई । उठि किन मोहि सिखावहु भाई ॥ १६ ॥

nija janani kē ēka kumārā. tāta tāsū tumha prāna adhārā. 14.
 saumpēsī mōhi tumhahi gahi pānī. saba bidhi sukhada parama hita jānī. 15.
 utaru kāha daiha'um̐ tēhi jāī. uṭhi kina mōhi sikhāvahu bhāī. 16.

Oh Son (*tāta*)! You are the only son of your mother (Sumitra); for her you are a source of succour and solace that supports her during her lifetime*¹. (14)

She had held your hand and put you my safe custody thinking that you will be very happy and safe with me (at the time of our leaving Ayodhya)².

[Woe to me! How miserably I have betrayed her faith and trust in me! What face will I show her when she finds I have returned to her without you? Brother, let me die with you.] (15)

Say, what answer would I give her when I return? Oh my brother; arise and tell me this.’ (16)

[Note—*This verse can be read as follows also: “You are your mother’s only son; you are the one who gives her life meaning and for whom she would like to live.”

This interpretation is also correct because the word “*tāta*” meaning a ‘son’ has been strategically placed in the centre of the verse, serving both its first and second halves simultaneously. So this word can mean either that Lord Ram calls Laxman his son, or that he calls Laxman as the son of Sumitra.

¹Sumitra had two sons: One was Laxman, and the other was his younger brother named Shatrughan. What Lord Ram means here is that Sumitra loved Laxman more because he was her elder son, and his long separation from her must have made her long for him very intensely. Shatrughan, on the other hand, was by her side at Ayodhya, so since she could see and talk with him as often as she wished, this longing was not there. She must be always thinking of Laxman, always remembering him, and always praying for his safety and quick return. It is an age-old adage that “distance creates a stronger bond of love between two individuals”.

Sumitra herself has acknowledged that she loved Laxman more because he was devoted to Lord Ram when she tells him that “a woman who bears a son who is devoted to Lord Ram is a most fortunate mother; otherwise it is better to remain childless and barren”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²At the time when Laxman told Lord Ram that he has decided to accompany him to the forest, the Lord sent him to take his mother Sumitra’s permission. Sumitra was overcome with sadness and grief upon learning what had happened, but she had no reservations in granting her permission to Laxman to go with Lord Ram. She was unambiguous and very emphatic in giving her consent, saying that there would be nothing better for Laxman to do than to go with the Lord and serve him in the forest. She also told Laxman that he was safer with the Lord than if he would chose to live in Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73—to Doha no. 75.}]

बहु बिधि सोचत सोच बिमोचन । स्रवत सलिल राजिव दल लोचन ॥ १७ ॥
उमा एक अखंड रघुराई । नर गति भगत कृपाल देखाई ॥ १८ ॥

bahu bidhi sōcata sōca bimōcana. sravata salila rājiva dala lōcana. 17.
umā ēka akhaṇḍa raghurāī. nara gati bhagata kṛpāla dēkhāī. 18.

What a wonder it is that Lord Ram who is a remover of all sorts of sorrows and grief tormenting a creature would himself be overcome with sorrow and grief!

He shed tears from his lotus-like eyes that rolled down their lids which resembled dew drops dripping down from the petals of the lotus flower¹. (17)

[Lord Shiva tells goddess Uma, his divine consort, why Lord Ram shed the tears. He said—] ‘Oh Uma! Lord Ram (“raghurāī”; the Lord of the Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya) is steady and unchanging, one who remains the same under all circumstances.

So therefore, he is shedding tears and expressing grief here just to act his role of a human being to perfection (in order to conform to Brahma’s boon given to Ravana that he would only be killed by a human being, and it was necessary for Lord Ram to behave like a human being to achieve this objective)².

To wit, Lord Ram is also acting in the way he does to show how a human being is expected to respond when someone who is totally devoted to him is harmed in anyway; or how a wise lord ought to treat his servant and dependant who has offered to serve the lord with everything in his command, even to the extent of sacrificing his personal comforts and happiness if it makes the lord happy and contented like Laxman had done for Lord Ram.’³ (18)

[Note—¹What an excellent and wonderful example of poetic imagery we find here. Lord Ram’s eyes are likened to the lotus flower, and the tears that are falling from the edges of the eye-lids are compared to dew-drops falling from the tips of the petals of that lotus.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177.

Lord Ram has no worldly emotions; normally he should not have cried. But he had to act like an ordinary man to fulfil the condition of the boon given to Ravana by Brahma—that only a human being would be able to kill the demon.

Lord Shiva is the first and the primary narrator of the Story of the Ramayan which he had narrated to his wife Uma, also known as Parvati. During the course of the reading of Ram Charit Manas we observe that on many an occasion, Shiva is quoted as saying something to Parvati or Uma to clarify certain points that may arouse some kind of doubt in her mind. She was listening attentively, without interfering in the narrative by way of asking questions. But Lord Shiva was an expert narrator; he could guess that his wife wanted to ask a question but was hesitant to disturb his flow. So the Lord himself would pause to clarify a particular point before moving on.

Here, when the narrative came to the point where it is said that “Lord Ram shed tears”, Uma raised an eyebrow, as it seemed incredulous to her that the Supreme Being should cry. Hence, Shiva paused to explain the reason to her, the circumstances surrounding the episode that compelled Lord Ram to weep like an ordinary man.

³Lord Ram here shows not only how Laxman was important for him, but by Laxman’s example the Lord also wishes to show the world how any one who is his ardent devotee—one who has vested all his trust and faith in the Lord, one who trusts the Lord for his security and welfare, one for whom there is no other creature dearer than the Lord, one who serves the Lord with all the diligence, efforts and sincerity in his command, one would sacrifice his own life and its pleasures in order to serve the Lord—is loved most dearly by the Lord and is close to the Lord’s heart.

Lord Ram is extremely merciful and obliging; he showers all the love and grace he has on his devotee as he has done for Laxman here. The Lord says that for him a wife, son, wealth, home and family are of no consequence if his devotee is suffering—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-10 herein above that we have just read a while ago.]

सो०. प्रभु प्रलाप सुनि कान बिकल भए बानर निकर ।

आइ गयउ हनुमान जिमि करुना महँ बीर रस ॥ ६१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

prabhu pralāpa suni kāna bikala bha'e bānara nikara.

ā'i gaya'u hanumāna jimi karunā maham̐ bīra rasa. 61.

Hearing the woeful wailings and lamentations of Lord Ram, the entire horde of monkeys¹ forming the Lord’s army, its rank and file, was overcome with sadness; sorrow, despondency and despair cast a pall of gloom over all of them.

Just at that critical juncture² (when everything seemed to be lost, when everyone was distraught and overcome with the dread of what untold misfortunes were in store for them, that would suddenly upset everything and sink the boat midstream), Hanuman came back³ as if the dynamic energy associated with the glorious virtues of heroism, bravery, gallantry and valour suddenly interposes to lift the sagging spirits of those who are burdened by and are on the verge of collapsing

under the mighty weight of loss of hope, the feeling of helplessness, of sadness, despondency, grief and dejection. (Sortha no. 60)

[Note—¹An interesting observation can be made here. ‘Monkeys’ are specifically mentioned as being overcome with gloom reflecting the general sad mood of the hour. But Lord Ram’s army had a large number of ‘bears’ too; what about them?

Well, the chief of the bears was Jamvant, the aged bear who is believed to be an incarnation of Brahma, the creator, himself. Jamvant was well aware of Hanuman’s abilities; it was he who, being privy to the greatness of Hanuman, had motivated the latter to show his true form and fulfil Lord Ram’s mission when the monkeys and bears were in a similar situation of hopelessness and despair on the shore of the ocean while on a mission to search for Sita. At that time, it was Jamvant whom Hanuman asked for instruction as to what he is supposed to do in Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

In the present case also, it was Jamvant who had advised that Sushen be brought from Lanka, and had sent Hanuman to fetch him. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 55.}

So therefore, Jamvant was absolutely clear that nothing would stop Hanuman from coming back. This confidence was lacking in the monkey group; none of their leaders, such as Sugriv and Angad, had this secret knowledge about Hanuman. Hence, Jamvant collected his troops and told them to remain calm, as there was nothing to worry or panic.

²Everything seemed to be lost at that point of time. A deep sense of sadness, gloom, helplessness, haplessness and dejection permeated everywhere, and had a sway over everyone present. Just at that time, during those critical moments, a sudden ray of hope emerged like the sun’s brilliant rays that pierce through the veil of dark clouds that shroud the firmament to shine its splendorous light on the world below, eliminating darkness and despondency, and replacing it with cheer and energy.

Before midnight everyone waited patiently for Hanuman’s return, as they were aware that he has to go and back from afar, a distance of thousands of miles; so ample time must be given to him. Besides this, ample time was left before dawn as it was still before midnight, and hence sufficient time was available during which the herb, once brought, could be immediately administered to Laxman to revive him.

But once midnight passed and yet there was no sign of Hanuman, the situation changed and things became alarming, so much so that even Lord Ram seemed to lose hope and started wailing for Laxman—apropos: Chaupai no. 2 that follows Doha no. 60 herein above.

When the commander-in-chief of the army, or for that matter any leader who is supposed to lead others by being an example of courage, strength, resilience and steely nerves at times of adversities and down-tides, begins to lament and wail himself in the way the Lord behaved then, one can easily visualise the negative reaction it would produce on those who depend upon him, who look up to him for guidance, courage and support for themselves.

What lesson one learns from this episode is this: A leader ought always to be extremely careful with how he behaves and responds to emergencies and adversities if he wishes others who are under his wings and who he commands to stand firm against the onslaught of misfortunes in order to be able to finally turn the tide in their favour. For, if the leader fails to control his emotions, if he shows signs of losing hope and the

will to fight back, then no matter how powerful and resourceful his followers are, the battle will be lost even before it is fully fought to the end.

This is why Lord Shiva paused for a while and explained to Uma, his listener, why Lord Ram behaved in the way he did. It was not because the Lord was ‘weak’ in any sense, but it was because he had other things of greater import in his mind that Lord Shiva has himself hinted in verse no. 18 that precedes this Sortha no. 61 herein above.

³My dear readers; do you recall the Time Machine we referred to earlier while reading Chaupai line no. 1 that followed Doha no. 60 herein above, in which we were following Hanuman and recording the events unfolding at a fast pace?

Well, during the time when Lord Ram wailed for unconscious Laxman before him on the ground, back at Lanka, Hanuman was making rapid progress through the night sky, holding the mountain, with the required herb, in his hand. He was in all haste as he wanted to make up for the precious time that was lost during his encounters with Kalnemi and Bharat. So he zoomed past the firmament like a streaking star. And of course, the ‘scribe and the witnesses’, travelling in the Time Machine, followed him closely!

We will observe here that normally a Doha or a Sortha is preceded by eight lines of a standard Chaupai. But here we find that there are ‘eighteen lines’ in the Chaupai. It is done with a purpose: to indicate that some length of time had elapsed between midnight and the moment when Hanuman actually arrived. To wit, the ‘elongated Chuapai’ symbolised a stretching of the time frame for this particular event.

Meanwhile, all those present on the ground were huddled together, in small and large groups, in eager anticipation of Hanuman’s return, and all had their eyes fixed on the northern sky because it was from this direction Hanuman was expected to come back, as it was in this direction he had gone on his mission of bringing the herb.

Suddenly they could descry a streaking star heading straight towards their camp. Lo and behold—there came their dear Hanuman, dashing like lightening that pierced through the dark cover of the overhead firmament.

At this wonderful and most welcome sight, there was a spontaneous burst of thunderous applause. Everyone was elated and on his feet instantly; cheering and dancing in mad abandon.

Hanuman glided down to land before Lord Ram; he was rushed upon by his waiting companions who embraced and kissed him, and who shed tears now once again, but these tears were of joy and happiness and rejoicing and hope.]

चौ०. हरषि राम भेंटेउ हनुमाना । अति कृतग्य प्रभु परम सुजाना ॥ १ ॥

तुरत बैद तब कीन्हि उपाई । उठि बैठे लछिमन हरषाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

haraṣi rāma bhēṇṭē'u hanumānā. ati kṛtagya prabhu parama sujānā. 1.

turata baida taba kīnhi upāī. uṭhi baiṭhē lachimana haraṣāī. 2.

Lord Ram affectionately embraced Hanuman by clasping the latter to his bosom¹. The Lord felt highly obliged to Hanuman because it is the nature of the gracious and kind

Lord to feel obliged for even a small service that is rendered to him by his devotees.
(1)

The doctor (**baida**) wasted no time in applying the herb and doing whatever that was needed to revive Laxman. His efforts were successful as Laxman immediately arose and sat up cheerfully (as if nothing had happened to him)². (2)

[Note—¹How fortunate was Hanuman indeed, for it is the second time Lord Ram has thus embraced him. The first opportunity was when he had brought back the news of Sita from Lanka, and at that time the Lord had explicitly said that he will forever remain indebted to Hanuman—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 32—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

No other character in the Story of the Ramayan has had this honour and privilege.

²We must acknowledge the expertise of the doctors of that time who were so skilled in their art and craft of using medicinal herbs and plants to cure patients. Laxman woke up fresh and energetic, as if he was fast asleep and was now woken up.

Even as a man feels rested and rejuvenated and fresh after sound sleep, with all his fatigue and weariness of the previous day removed after a restful sleep, Laxman too was revived as if he was fast asleep a while ago, and now was ready to face the challenges of the war.

During the intervening period between being hit by Meghanad's weapon when he fell down unconscious, and when he was revived back to consciousness, Laxman had lain like a Yogi or an ascetic doing deep meditation. During such meditative trance, the practitioner holds his breath and goes into a virtual hibernation mode, when all the activities of his body and metabolism cease. When he ends his trance, he is back to normal. Laxman too knew this trick; so he practiced Yoga by holding his breath for the time he appeared to lie unconscious.

This served an important medical function also—for it helped to contain the spread of the poison that was injected into Laxman by the tip of the spear that struck him. The doctor, Sushen, applied the herb that sucked out the clotted blood and neutralised the poison. So when Laxman was prodded to get up, he was fit and fine.

Credit must be surely given to Sushen who lived up to his profession of a 'doctor' for whom a patient is a patient first and foremost, irrespective of whether he is a friend or a foe, and therefore the doctor is obliged to give his best to his patient even if it means treating his arch enemy.

Sushen was playing with fire, for he was in the pay-roll of Ravana, the arch enemy of Laxman and Lord Ram; Ravana could have roasted him alive for helping revive Laxman.

Now this brings us to another fascinating observation—it is that Ravana should also be given equal credit for not punishing Sushen for reviving Laxman. Ravana accepted and acknowledged the fact that Sushen was merely doing his professional duty of treating a patient to whom he is called to attend. This shows the greatness of Ravana's soul and the high standard of his thinking even though he unfortunately had become a 'demon'. Surely Lord Ram acknowledged the greatness of Ravana's soul, because the Lord, who was actually the Supreme Being in his form, allowed Ravana's soul to enter his own body at the time of his death, so that the soul of this unfortunate creature could find eternal rest and beatitude—apropos: Ram

Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 104.]

हृदयँ लाइ प्रभु भेटेउ भ्राता । हरषे सकल भालु कपि ब्राता ॥ ३ ॥
 कपि पुनि बैद तहाँ पहुँचावा । जेहि बिधि तबहिं ताहि लइ आवा ॥ ४ ॥
 यह बृतांत दसानन सुनेऊ । अति बिषाद पुनि पुनि सिर धुनेऊ ॥ ५ ॥

hr̥dayaṃ lā'i prabhu bhēṭē'u bhrātā. haraṣē sakala bhālu kapi brātā. 3.
 kapi puni baida tahāṃ pahuṃcāvā. jēhi bidhi tabahiṃ tāhi la'i āvā. 4.
 yaha br̥ttānta dasānana sunē'ū. ati biṣāda puni puni sira dhunē'ū. 5.

Lord Ram picked up Laxman and embraced him by clasping him to his bosom. Meanwhile, all the bears and monkeys¹ were exhilarated and felt extremely happy. (3)

In the mean time, the Kapi (Hanuman) then took Sushen back to Lanka and replaced his home in the same spot from where it was earlier lifted and brought along with its occupant. (4)

When Ravana heard the news (of Laxman's revival), he was very upset and beat his head repeatedly².

[Note—¹This clearly means that both the bears and monkeys were standing or sitting around Lord Ram. In this context, the reader ought to refer to note appended to Sortha no. 61 herein above where attention is drawn to the mention of only monkeys for feeling sad when they saw Lord Ram, and not of the bears. The reason is explained there itself.

²The question: 'Why did Ravana not punish Sushen for treating Laxman' is answered in the note appended to verse no. 2 that follows Sortha no. 61 herein above.

The next question is this: Why did Ravana showed exasperation and beat his head so much?

The answer is as follows: Like Lord Ram playing his role of a human being to perfection, Ravana too decided to play his role as a vicious demon and an arch enemy of the Lord—to ensure that the Lord certainly kills him so that his soul can, at last, find its liberation and deliverance; so that his soul can find the emancipation and salvation that eludes it; so that his soul can attain the much sought-after beatitude and felicity; so that his soul does not miss its only opportunity to attain eternal bliss and happiness, a chance to attain which would be lost for good should, for some reason, Lord Ram shows his characteristic grace and mercy upon him (Ravana) and spares him for all his sins and mischief that he has committed all along.

And one more final question: Why would Ravana feel so upset by Laxman's revival? The answer is obvious: it is the time of war, and every fallen great warrior in the enemy's side was celebrated as one point nearer to final victory over him. Laxman was not an ordinary warrior; he was the second-in-command of Lord Ram's army, his brother, and equally powerful and able as the Lord. This meant that if Laxman was out of the way, if he was fatally incapacitated, then Lord Ram would be so demoralized, so greatly overcome with grief, so much handicapped, and so deeply ruined emotionally that he would lose the will to fight the war any longer, and even if

he continued to wage it then it would be a half-hearted effort that would certainly lead to his defeat.

So during the night, while Laxman lay unconscious on the ground, the demons must have been celebrating an imminent victory that would be theirs the next day when they would easily be able to rout the Lord's demoralized army. When Ravana's spy rushed to him to convey the news that Laxman had been revived, and is hale and hearty enough that he is raring to go to the battle-field as soon as the day broke, Ravana felt that all was lost; he trembled in consternation and the fearful thought of facing a raging Laxman in the battle-field, as it was now certain that Laxman would hit back with full force and vengeance at the demons, pouring all the fiery venom that he has at his command on them—for remember, Laxman was a manifestation of the legendary Seshnath, the serpent with a thousand hoods.

Ravana was not only worried for the demons in general, he was particularly concerned all the more gravely for his own son Meghanad, because it was he who had shot Laxman the day before, and so certainly he would be the primary target of Laxman's seething anger. This is the reason that when the battle resumed the next day, which was the third day of the war, he persuaded his brother Kumbhakaran to go and face the enemy, instead of Meghanad. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-12 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

Ravana's beating of head is a visible sign of his extreme exasperation and frustration; it shows that he felt all was lost and the danger to the demons was all the more aggravated. The hour of celebration for the demons when Laxman fell to the ground wounded and unconscious now transmuted into an hour of despair and despondency when he was revived, while the reverse was the case that prevailed in Lord Ram's camp.]

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Section 15.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 65-86;
Canto 6, verse nos. 1-63; and Canto 7, verse nos. 1-41.

Now let us take a pause and do a little bit of rewinding; let's see how this episode of Laxman fainting has been narrated in sage Veda Vyas' Story of the Ramayana known as 'Adhyatma Ramayan'.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that there is a pointed difference between the ways the two classics that we are reading have described why Laxman had fainted, and some other related events. Let us summarise them here:

(i) While Goswami Tulsidas' classic book 'Ram Charit Manas' says that he was shot by Meghanad, the son of Ravana (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54), the other book by sage Veda Vyas, the 'Adhyatma Ramayan', attributes Laxman's fainting to Ravana who shot him during their clash (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-8).

(ii) The second difference is that in 'Ram Charit Manas' we read that Hanuman was shot down by Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, as he flew

over the city of Ayodhya carrying the huge mountain. However, Hanuman was quickly revived, there was a short interview between the two, and then he resumed his journey to Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 60.}

In ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, however, there is no mention of Hanuman meeting Bharat en-route to Lanka.

(iii) The third interesting point is that whereas in Ram Charit Manas it is Sushen, the doctor, who picks the correct herb to revive Laxman (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62), in Adhyatma Ramayan it is Lord Ram who himself selects the herb and then asks Sushen to administer it to Laxman (apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 36-37).

Another interesting episode in Adhyatma Ramayan is Kalnemi’s advice to Ravana where he prescribes three methods of worshipping Lord Ram. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 45-63.}

These interesting variations necessitates that we also read the episode of Laxman’s fainting from the Adhyatma Ramayan, besides our earlier reading from Ram Charit Manas, to get a more varied version of this grand Story as told from two angles, from two ancient classics.

For this purpose, therefore, we shall be quickly reading about Laxman’s fainting from Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, as follows:

Sub-section: 15.2.1 – Lanka Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 65-86;

Sub-section: 15.2.2 – Lanka Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-63;

Sub-section: 15.2.3 – Lanka Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 1-41.

Let us commence our reading now:

Sub-section: 15.2.1 – Lanka Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 65-86:-

स्वसैन्यं निहतं दृष्ट्वा मेघनादोऽथ दुष्टधीः ।
 ब्रह्मदत्तवरः श्रीमानन्तर्धानं गतोऽसुरः ॥ ६५॥
 सर्वास्तुकुशलो व्योम्नि ब्रह्मास्त्रेण समन्ततः ।
 नानाविधानि शस्त्राणि वानरानीकमर्दयन् ॥ ६६॥
 ववर्ष शरजालानि तदद्भुतमिवाभवत् ।
 रामोऽपि मानयन् ब्राह्ममस्त्रमस्त्रविदां वरः ॥ ६७॥
 क्षणं तूष्णीमुवासाथ ददर्श पतितं बलम् ।
 वानराणां रघुश्रेष्ठश्चुकोपानलसन्निभः ॥ ६८॥

svasainyaṃ nihataṃ dr̥ṣṭvā meghanādo'tha duṣṭadhīḥ ।
 brahmadattavaraḥ śrīmānantardhānaṃ gato'suraḥ ॥ 65॥
 sarvāstrakuśalo vyomni brahmāstreṇa samantataḥ ।
 nānāvidhāni śāstrāṇi vānarāṇīkamardayan ॥ 66॥
 vavarṣa śarajālāni tadadbhutamivābhavat ।
 rāmo'pi mānayan brāhmamastramastravidāṃ varaḥ ॥ 67॥

kṣaṇaṃ tūṣṇīmuṣāsātha dadarśa patitaṃ balam ।
vānarāṇāṃ raghuśreṣṭhaścukopānalasannibhaḥ ॥ 68॥

65-68. Seeing that the major part of his army had been eliminated, Meghanad (the son of Ravana), who was excessively evil and pervert, but was nevertheless encouraged to fight on and retaliate confidently because he was empowered by special boons that were granted to him by Lord Brahma, the creator, became invisible and vanished from sight in the battle-field (65).

That demon was proficient in using all types of weapons in the battle-field. So he climbed up in the sky, showered different types of arms, such as arrows, from there, and began to pound the army of monkeys by his Brahmastra (a special weapon given to him by Lord Brahma).

[He peppered the monkey army with numerous lethal weapons of various denominations that were very powerful and magical by nature. He literally sprayed the monkey army with those fierce weapons as if hail and rain were falling all over the battle-field.]

It appeared to be a very wondrous and astonishing sight (because Meghanad was not visible, and so the monkey commanders did not know whom to fight).

Sri Ram, who is the best amongst experts in weapons and the use of arms, watched the decline, destruction and decimation of his forces silently for a moment just in order to show respect to Brahma's weapon and maintain its sanctity.

At last however, the best in Raghu's clan (i.e. Sri Ram) became furious with anger like a raging fire (66-68).

चापमानय सौमित्रे ब्रह्मास्त्रेणासुरं क्षणात् ।
भस्मीकरोमि मे पश्य बलमद्य रघूत्तम ॥ ६९॥
मेघनादोऽपि तच्छ्रुत्वा रामवाक्यमतन्द्रितः ।
तूर्णं जगाम नगरं मायया मायिकोऽसुरः ॥ ७०॥

cāpamānaya saumitre brahmāstreṇāsuraṃ kṣaṇāt ।
bhasmīkaromi me paśya balamadya raghūttama ॥ 69॥
meghanādo'pi tacchrutvā rāmaṣvākyamatandritaḥ ।
tūrṇaṃ jagāma nagaraṃ māyayā māyiko'suraḥ ॥ 70॥

69-70. Addressing his brother Laxman, the Lord said, 'Oh the son of Sumitra! Bring my bow—I shall, in a moment, reduce to ashes this wicked demon with my own fiery weapon known as Brahmastra¹. Oh the best in king Raghu's clan (i.e. Laxman)! Watch the spectacular display of my might and the strength of my arms today' (69).

Meghnad was very alert. Hearing these words of Sri Ram (and fearing for his life), that cunning demon, who was good at tricks and pretending to be brave, stealthily fled from the battle-field while he was still invisible, and went back to his city (of Lanka) (70).

[Note—¹Any powerful weapon that could invariably destroy its enemy, like a fire would burn anything that comes in its way or a missile would destroy any target it hits, even if the target is wrong, was called Brahmastra. So in this sense, the powerful weapons of both Meghanad and Lord Ram were designated as 'Brahmastras'. It

means that it was not necessary that any such weapon was given to its possessor by Brahma, the creator, himself.]

पतितं वानरानीकं दृष्ट्वा रामोऽतिदुःखितः ।
 उवाच मारुतिं शीघ्रं गत्वा क्षीरमहोदधिम् ॥ ७१॥
 तत्र द्रोणगिरिर्नाम दिव्यौषधिसमुद्भवः ।
 तमानय द्रुतं गत्वा सञ्जीवय महामते ॥ ७२॥
 वानरौघान् महासत्त्वान् कीर्तिरते सुस्थिरा भवेत् ।
 आज्ञाप्रमाणमित्युक्त्वा जगामानिलनन्दनः ॥ ७३॥

patitaṃ vānarāṇikaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā rāmo'tiduhkhiṭaḥ ।
 uvāca mārutiṃ śīghraṃ gatvā kṣīramahodadhim ॥ 71॥
 tatra droṇagirirṇāma divyaauśadhisamudbhavaḥ ।
 tamānaya drutaṃ gatvā sañjīvaya mahāmate ॥ 72॥
 vānaraughān mahāsattvān kīrtiste susthirā bhavet ।
 ājñāpramāṇamityuktvā jagāmānilanandanaḥ ॥ 73॥

71-73. Seeing that his army had suffered a lot due to Meghanad's ferocious attack, Lord Sri Ram felt very sorry and was overcome with sadness and remorse (because the monkeys and bears had to suffer due to him).

So the Lord summoned Hanuman (Maruti, the son of the wind god) and said, 'You go to the Kshir Sagar¹ immediately (71). There is a mountain called Dronachal there. Different types of medicinal herbs grow on it. Oh the wise one! Go and quickly bring that mountain here (72) and revive these brave and valorous monkey warriors back to life². This will make your fame, gallantry and glory stable and world-famous for all times to come'.

Hearing this, the son of the wind-god said 'as you please', and started off for the mission immediately (73).

[Note—¹The “Khir-Sagar” is an ancient celestial ocean of milk described in the scriptures where Lord Vishnu is said to reside; he reclines on the coiled body of the celestial serpent known as Sheshnath who floats on the surface of this ocean.

²In the version of the Ram Charit Manas, the Lord also wishes that all the monkeys and bears who lay wounded and dead on the battle-field should be brought back to life, but it was at the end of the war. He asks Indra, the king of Gods, to shower a rain of Amrit, an ambrosia that restores life, on the whole ground. This rain helped all the monkeys and bears to come back to life. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 114.}

Further, Lord Ram has given clear instructions to Hanuman here to bring the Dronachal mountain to Lanka to revive the monkeys. This is in sharp contrast to Tulsidas' version in Ram Charit Manas where the mountain was brought by Hanuman to revive Laxman, and not the other monkeys. Also he brought it because he could not recognise the required herb, but here he has done it on specific instructions of Lord Ram to 'bring the mountain here'.]

आनीय च गिरि सर्वान् वानरान् वानरर्षभः ।
जीवयित्वा पुनस्तत्र स्थापयित्वाऽऽययौ द्रुतम् ॥ ७४॥
पूर्ववद्दैवं नादं वानराणां बलौघतः ।
श्रुत्वा विस्मयमापन्नो रावणो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ७५॥

ānīya ca giriṃ sarvān vānarān vānararṣabhaḥ ।
jīvayitvā punastatra sthāpayitvā'yayau drutam ॥ 74॥
pūrvavadbhairavaṃ nādaṃ vānarāṇāṃ balaughataḥ ।
śrutvā vismayamāpanno rāvaṇo vākyaṃabravīt ॥ 75॥

74-75. He brought that mountain, revived all the monkeys (by using its herbs), and immediately took it back to where it belonged¹ (74).

Hearing the tremendous uproar of the monkeys once again, Ravana was utterly astonished (because it was almost a miracle that he had not expected)². He summoned all his demon warriors and said in an urgent tone (75)—

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas nothing is said what was done with this mountain after Laxman was revived.

²When Meghanad went home he told his father Ravana that he had successfully decimated the monkey army. So when the demon king heard their uproar he was bound to be surprised as well as confounded. It meant that Meghanad's tricks and the weapons of which he was so proud of and boastful were useless.

This portended grave danger for the demon army because now it seems that Lord Ram's army would be difficult to subdue, as all the monkey and bear warriors who might be wounded or dead during the course of battle of the day would be revived during the night, and their number would never diminish. The demon army, on the other hand, was getting smaller and smaller in their numbers by each passing day as none of the demon fighters could be revived.]

राघवो मे महान् शत्रुः प्राप्तो देवविनिर्मितः ।
हन्तुं तं समरे शीघ्रं गच्छन्तु मम यूथपाः ॥ ७६॥
मन्त्रिणो बान्धवाः शूरा ये च मत्प्रियकाङ्क्षिणः ।
सर्वे गच्छन्तु युद्धाय त्वरितं मम शासनात् ॥ ७७॥

rāghavo me mahān śatruḥ prāpto devavinirmitaḥ ।
hantuṃ taṃ samare śīghraṃ gacchantu mama yūthapāḥ ॥ 76॥
mantriṇo bāndhavāḥ śūrā ye ca matpriyakāṅkṣiṇaḥ ।
sarve gacchantu yuddhāya tvaritaṃ mama śāsanāt ॥ 77॥

76-77. 'Raghav (Sri Ram) is my great enemy. It appears that the Gods, who are inherently my arch enemies and hate me innately, have created him (or sent him) to get rid of me. My entire army and its commanders, as well as all those who are my friends, well-wishers and loyal to me, who would like to ensure their own welfare and well-being by helping me to get rid of this danger from my enemy—I command all

such friends and well-wishers and commanders of my army to proceed forthwith to the battle-field to eliminate (kill) this enemy of mine. (76-77)

ये न गच्छन्ति युद्धाय भीरवः पूरुषाविप्लवात् ।
तान् हनिष्याम्यहं सर्वान् मच्छासनपराङ्मुखान् ॥ ७८॥
तच्छ्रुत्वा भयसन्तस्ता निर्जग्मू रणकोविदाः ।
अतिकायः प्रहस्तश्च महानादमहोदरौ ॥ ७९॥
देवशत्रुर्निकुम्भश्च देवान्तकनरान्तकौ ।
अपरे बलिनः सर्वे ययुर्युद्धाय वानरैः ॥ ८०॥

ye na gacchanti yuddhāya bhīravāḥ prāṇaviplavāt ।
tān haniṣyāmyaḥ sarvān macchāsanaparāṇmukhān ॥ 78॥
tacchrutvā bhayasantrastā nirjagmū raṇakovidāḥ ।
atikāyaḥ prahastaśca mahānādamahodarau ॥ 79॥
devaśaturnikumbhaśca devāntakanarāntakau ।
apare balinaḥ sarve yayuryuddhāya vānaraiḥ ॥ 80॥

78-80. Those cowards who do not go to battle fearing for their lives—let them be certain that I shall kill all of them who do not obey my orders¹ (78).

Hearing these stern orders of Ravana and fearful of his wrath, the terrified demon warriors, who were skilled in the art of warfare, who were very valiant, courageous, brave and strong—such as the demons named Atikai, Prahasht, Mahanad, Mahodar, Devshatru, Nikumbh, Devantak, Narantak—all of them departed for the battle-field to fight the monkeys and take them head-on (79-80).

[Note—¹The poor demons had no choice. No matter how reluctant they might have been to go and face the wrath of the Lord's army, but when they found that if they demurred a bit more then Ravana would certainly do them to death, they decided to embrace death with the dignity of a brave warrior rather than die an ignominious death like a coward.]

एते चान्ये च बहवः शूराः शतसहस्रशः ।
प्रविश्य वानरं सैन्यं ममन्थुर्बलदर्पिताः ॥ ८१॥
भुशुण्डीभिन्दिपालैश्च बाणैः खड्गैः परश्वधैः ।
अन्यैश्च विविधैरस्त्रैर्निजघ्नुर्हरियूथपान् ॥ ८२॥

ete cānye ca bahavaḥ śūrāḥ śatasahasraśaḥ ।
praviśya vānaraṁ sainyaṁ mamanthurbaladarpitāḥ ॥ 81॥
bhuṣuṇḍībhindipālaiśca bāṇaiḥ khadgaiḥ paraśvadhaiḥ ।
anyaiśca vividhairastrairnijaghnurhariyūthapān ॥ 82॥

81-82. Those above named demons, as well as numerous other hundreds of thousands of demon warriors who were matchless in their bravery and courage, who were intoxicated with the pride of their valour, strength, potentials, bravery and might,

entered the ranks of the monkey army, and began thrashing and crushing them relentlessly (81).

They attacked the commanders of the monkey army with ‘Bhushandi or Bhushundi’ (an ancient weapon of war; used to pierce the enemy in close duels or slice through his body; probably a dagger), ‘Bhindipal’ (an ancient weapon that was like a spike or spear thrown at the enemy), arrows, swords, battle-axes, and many other different sorts of sharp and formidable weapons of war (82).

ते पादपैः पर्वताग्रैर्नखदंष्ट्रैश्च मुष्टिभिः ।
 प्राणैर्विमोचयामासुः सर्वराक्षसयूथपान् ॥ ८३॥
 रामेण निहताः केचित्सुग्रीवेण तथापरे ।
 हनूमता वाङ्गदेन लक्ष्मणेन महात्मना ।
 यूथपैर्वानराणां ते निहताः सर्वराक्षसाः ॥ ८४॥
 रामतेजः समाविश्य वानरा बलिनोऽभवन् ।
 रामशक्तिविहीनानामेवं शक्तिः कुतो भवेत् ॥ ८५॥

te pādapaiḥ parvatāgrairnakhadamṣṭraiśca muṣṭibhiḥ ।
 prāṇairvimocayāmāsuḥ sarvarākṣasayūthapān ॥ 83॥
 rāmeṇa nihatāḥ kecitsugrīveṇa tathāpare ।
 hanūmatā cāṅgadena lakṣmaṇena mahātmanā ।
 yūthapairvānarāṇāṃ te nihatāḥ sarvarākṣasāḥ ॥ 84॥
 rāmatejaḥ samāviśya vānarā balino'bhavan ।
 rāmaśaktivihīnānāmevaṃ śaktiḥ kuto bhavet ॥ 85॥

83-85. Here, the brave monkey warriors used trees, rocks and boulders uprooted from mountains, as well as their own nails, teeth (to tear at and bite the flesh of the demons) and clenched fists (which they used to punch at them) etc. to hit back at the demon army with all the ferocity and might in their command, thereby rendering the demon army in general, and their commanders in particular, lifeless.

[To wit, it was a closely fought hand-to-hand battle of extreme ferocity.] (83).

Out of those demons, some were killed at the hands of Lord Sri Ram, some by Sugriv, and others by Hanuman, Angad, the great Laxman, and various other brave monkey warriors. In this manner, all those demons were killed (84).

Since the divine cosmic energy and dynamism that was unleashed by Sri Ram had injected the monkey warriors with stupendous energy and blessed them with invincibility, they had become extremely ferocious and a formidable force to reckon with; they had acquired astounding force, punch, might, valour, prowess and potentials against which the poor demons could not stand.

Otherwise say, how could these humble monkeys and bears become so potent a fighting force that was so powerful, so effective, so able, so strong, so valiant and so proficient in the battle-field that they could easily trounce the once famed army of the demons (who had some time ago crushed even the so-called mighty gods of heaven with extreme ease and impunity) had it not been for the miraculous effect of Lord Ram’s divine majesty and cosmic powers that defy understanding and measurement? (85).

[Note—Eight among the chief commanders of the demon army as listed in verse nos. 79-80 had died in this battle which was joined by Sri Ram and Laxman themselves as is clear from verse no. 84.

Verse no. 85 clearly attributes the victory of the monkey and bear army to the blessings of Lord Ram, and to the Lord's mystical powers, his cosmic energy, his majestic authority and his stupendous dynamism that led his army to a resounding victory in the war against a formidable enemy who was a little while ago regarded as a force that could not be faced by anyone, no matter how strong he was, anywhere in the world.]

सर्वेश्वरः सर्वमयो विधाता मायामनुष्यत्वविडम्बनेन ।
सदा चिदानन्दमयोऽपि रामो युद्धादिलीलां वितनोति मायाम् ॥ ८६॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
पञ्चमः सर्गः ॥ ५॥

sarveśvaraḥ sarvamayo vidhātā māyāmanuṣyatvaviḍambanena ।
sadā cidānandamayo'pi rāmo yuddhādilīlāṃ vitanoti māyām ॥ 86॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmaramāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
pañcamaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 5॥

86. Lord Sri Ram is the Lord of the entire creation; he is the Lord of everything in this creation; he is all pervading and omnipresent; he is the controller of all and one who determines the destiny and fate of everything and everyone in existence; he is truly eternally blissful and self-contented.

In spite of these divine virtues, he follows the behaviour of an ordinary human being because he has assumed that body by employing his Maya, which is the Lord's cosmic powers that create illusions.

[To wit, though the Lord has a cosmic form that is invisible, without any attributes, all-pervading, sublime and subtle in nature, yet he appears like an ordinary human being because of the effect of Maya that the Lord employed to give an impression that he is an ordinary man like the rest of the human race.]¹

It is such a wonder that he spreads his playful activities to the battle-field and fights this battle that is so deceptive (because it raises doubts in the mind about the Lord's true identity, and creates a erroneous impression that he is an ordinary man).

[To wit, if Lord Ram wants, he can finish off the entire demon army by merely blinking at them. But he wishes not to do so for the purpose of creating a legendary Story which his devotees will sing and narrate for all times to come. Such Stories are called 'Kathas and Leelas' of the Lord which he had performed for the benefit of his devotees during one of his manifestations in this mortal world.] (86).

[Note—¹Lord Ram had to maintain the sanctity of the creator Brahma's boons given to Ravana according to which the demon king could be killed only by a human being. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 10-15.}

So the Lord had to keep his true identity a top secret.]

Thus ends the discourse between Lord Shiva and Uma as narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uddha/Lanka Kand, Canto 5.]

Sub-section: 15.2.2 – Lanka Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-63:-

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

श्रुत्वा युद्धे बलं नष्टमतिकायमुखं महत् ।

रावणो दुःस्वसन्तप्तः क्रोधेन महताऽऽवृतः ॥ १॥

निधायेन्द्रजितं लङ्कारक्षणार्थं महाद्युतिः ।

स्वयं जगाम युद्धाय रामेण सह राक्षसः ॥ २॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

śrutvā yuddhe balaṃ naṣṭamatikāyamukhaṃ mahat ।

rāvaṇo duḥkhasantaptaḥ krodhena mahatā"vṛtaḥ ॥ 1॥

nidhāyendrajitaṃ laṅkāraṣaṇārthaṃ mahādyutiḥ ।

svayaṃ jagāma yuddhāya rāmeṇa saha rākṣasaḥ ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva resumed his narration and said—'Oh Parvati! Hearing that the large army led by Atikai etc. has been completely devastated in the battle, Ravana was dismayed and overcome with extreme remorse and gloom. He was greatly agitated with anger, wrath and vengeance (1).

That most energetic, agile and valiant demon appointed Indrajeet (Meghanad, his son) to take care of the internal security of the city of Lanka, and himself set off, along with other demons, to fight with Lord Sri Ram¹ (2).

[Note—¹According to this version of the grand Story of the Ramayan, it was Ravana who had shot Laxman and wounded him, as we shall read in this Canto, whereas in the version of as narrated in Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas it was Meghanad who fought and wounded Laxman as we have already read earlier in Sub-section 15.1 of this Book.]

दिव्यं स्यन्दनमारुह्य सर्वशस्त्रास्त्रसंयुतम् ।

राममेवाभिदुद्राव राक्षसेन्द्रो महाबलः ॥ ३॥

वानरान् बहुशो हत्वा बाणैरशीविषोपमैः ।

पातयामास सुग्रीवप्रमुखान् यूथनायकान् ॥ ४॥

divyaṃ syandanamāruhya sarvaśastrāstrasaṃyutam ।

rāmamevābhidudrāva rākṣasendro mahābalaḥ ॥ 3॥

vānarān bahuśo hatvā bāṇairāśīviṣopamaiḥ ।

pātayāmāsa sugrīvapramukhān yūthanāyakān ॥ 4॥

3-4. Riding on a majestic and magnificent chariot, and armed to the teeth with all his arms, armaments and weapons of war, that most strong and valiant king of demons (Ravana) charged at Sri Ram (3).

Killing a number of monkeys with his deadly arrows, which were poisonous like serpents (i.e. they were poison-tipped and fierce, and whosoever they struck fell down), he fell Sugriv and many other chief commanders of the monkey army, making them fall unconscious on the ground by his volley of ferocious arrows¹ (4).

[Note—¹The arrows shot by Ravana killed many monkey warriors and injured others. The phrase “poisonous like serpents” is a figure of speech to indicate that these arrows were deadly and tipped with poison. Some who were struck with them fell down and died, but there were many others who did not actually die but were merely gravely wounded, for they “fell unconscious on the ground”.]

गदापाणिं महासत्त्वं तत्र दृष्ट्वा विभीषणम् ।
 उत्सर्ज महाशक्तिं मयदत्तां विभीषणे ॥ ५॥
 तामापतन्तीमातोक्य विभीषणविघातिनीम् ।
 दत्ताभयोऽयं रामेण वधाहो नायमासुरः ॥ ६॥
 इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणो भीमं चापमादाय वीर्यवान् ।
 विभीषणस्य पुरतः स्थितोऽकम्प इवाचलः ॥ ७॥

gadāpāṇiṃ mahāsattvaṃ tatra dr̥ṣṭvā vibhīṣaṇam ।
 utsasarja mahāśaktiṃ mayadattāṃ vibhīṣaṇe ॥ 5॥
 tāmāpatantīmālokya vibhīṣaṇavighātinīm ।
 dattābhayo'yaṃ rāmeṇa vadhārho nāyamāsurah ॥ 6॥
 ityuktvā lakṣmaṇo bhīmaṃ cāpamādāya vīryavān ।
 vibhīṣaṇasya purataḥ sthito'kampa ivācalaḥ ॥ 7॥

5-7. Seeing the most valiant and courageous Vibhishan was standing in his path with his battle-mace in hand, ready to challenge him, Ravana shot him with a very powerful weapon called ‘Maha-Shakti’ given to him by a demon named Maidanav (5).

Seeing that fierce weapon approaching Vibhishan with a clear intent to kill him, Laxman thought: ‘I wot that this prince of demons has been blessed with fearlessness by Lord Sri Ram¹. Hence, he must not be allowed to die or be harmed at any cost’ (6).

Therefore, Laxman, who was very gallant, valiant, valorous and strong, decided to intervene and take the hit of Ravana’s weapon himself in order to protect Vibhishan.

So he, Laxman, took his powerful bow in his hand and stood like a sturdy mountain in front of Vibhishan, putting the latter behind him and separating him from Ravana who approached Vibhishan menacingly (7).

[Note—¹Lord Ram had granted his protection to Vibhishan at the time the latter had surrendered before the Lord—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-13; 42-47.

So Laxman decided that he will allow no harm to befall Vibhishan.]

सा शक्तिर्लक्ष्मणतनुं विवेशामोघशक्तिः ।
यावन्त्यः शक्तयो लोके मायायाः सम्भवन्ति हि ॥ ८॥
तासामाधारभूतस्य लक्ष्मणस्य महात्मनः ।
मायाशक्त्या भवेत्किं वा शेषांशस्य हरेस्तनोः ॥ ९॥

sā śaktirlakṣmaṇatanuṃ viveśāmoghaśaktiḥ ।
yāvantyāḥ śaktayo loke māyāyāḥ sambhavanti hi ॥ 8॥
tāsāmādhārabhūtasya lakṣmaṇasya mahātmanah ।
māyāśaktyā bhavetkiṃ vā śeṣāṃśasya harestanoh ॥ 9॥

8-9. That specially charged (or energised) weapon shot by Ravana at Vibhishan was infallible, so it forced its way and entered the body of Laxman (because he was standing in front of Vibhishan).

All the magically empowered and specially charged weapons of war that can ever be created or produced by Maya in this world¹, Lord Vishnu (the Supreme Being) is the basic source of their origin, their existence, their strength, their potentials and effects (because the Lord is the Supreme Being, the supreme Authority and the supreme Lord-Emperor of this creation).

[To wit, Lord Vishnu is the almighty Authority under whose command everything exists in this world, and these weapons are no exception. ‘Maya’ is the Lord’s cosmic powers representing his majesty, his dynamism and his mystical ability to carry out his wishes. Just like all weapons of an army are deemed to be under the authority and command of a king who is the commander-in-chief of his army, similarly all weapons that exist in this creation are under the command of Lord Vishnu whose visible form was in the person of Lord Ram.]

Laxman who was as great as Lord Sheshnath (the celestial serpent who holds the universe on his hoods, and who had manifested himself as Laxman to serve Lord Vishnu) himself, and who was also an image of Lord Vishnu (because Seshnath and Vishnu are inseparable from one another²)—say then is it ever possible that any weapon, no matter how powerful it is, can actually ever harm him?

[To wit, no weapon can harm Laxman as he is a fractional manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the ‘Lord of all weapons’. He appears to be wounded by Ravana’s shot because of the effect of Lord’s Maya—his powers to create delusions, giving an illusory impression that “Laxman was gravely injured by Ravana’s weapon and lost his consciousness”. The matter of the fact is that it was nothing but a ‘smoke-screen’ of deception created by Maya.] (8-9).

[Note—¹The weapons that were used by Ravana during the ferocious no-holds-barred war can be compared to the weapons of our modern world. Those weapons were very powerful and effective, were state-of-the-art and technically advanced weapons, comparable to modern-day chemical, biological, nuclear and other such weapons of mass destruction, or missiles and rockets and guns and grenades that are widely used in warfare.

The term “Maya” refers to the almighty Lord’s cosmic energy and dynamism that can achieve impossible feats. In relation with the weapons that were used at the

time this term means that these weapons were exceptionally powerful and effective. Their ability to cause destruction and havoc was unparalleled. Even an ordinary looking weapon such as an arrow could unleash and spew such raging fire and brimstone and vengeance upon anything it is aimed at that huge armies could perish under the attack of one such arrow if it is so wanted or wished.

²According to metaphysics and the Upanishads, everything that exists in this world was created by Brahm, the cosmic pure Consciousness. Brahm has revealed himself in the form of everything; everything is an 'image of Brahm', from the most microscopic to the most gigantic, from the inanimate to the animate, from the subtle and sublime to the gross, from the invisible to the visible. In fact, there is nothing in this creation that is 'not' Brahm.

Hence, Laxman too is an image of Lord Vishnu who is the cosmic form of this Brahm.

Lord Vishnu, the second god of the Trinity, is the sustainer and protector of this creation created by Lord Brahma, the first god of the Trinity. Lord Shiva, the third god of this Trinity, is however responsible for conclusion or bringing to an end of this creation.

In order to sustain this creation and help it to develop and flourish, Lord Vishnu needs a base upon which to rest his charge; so he invariably needs Seshnath's support as the latter holds the world aloft on his hoods and prevents it from collapsing and sinking into the nether world. Therefore, Lord Vishnu invariably depends upon Seshnath to carry on with his duties properly, which is like saying that 'Vishnu is inseparable from Seshnath'.]

तथापि मानुषं भावमापन्नस्तदनुव्रतः ।
 मूर्च्छितः पतितो भूमौ तमादातुं दशाननः ॥ १०॥
 हस्तैस्तोलयितुं शक्तो न बभूवातिविस्मितः ।
 सर्वस्य जगतः सारं विराजं परमेश्वरम् ॥ ११॥
 कथं लोकाश्रयं विष्णुं तोलयेल्लघुराक्षसः ।
 गृहीतुकामं सौमित्रं रावणं वीक्ष्य मारुतिः ॥ १२॥
 आजघानोरसि क्रुद्धो वज्रकल्पेन मुष्टिना ।
 तेन मुष्टिप्रहारेण जानुभ्यामपतद्भुवि ॥ १३॥

tathāpi mānuṣaṃ bhāvamāpannastadanuvrataḥ ।
 mūrccchitaḥ patito bhūmau tamādātum daśānanaḥ ॥ 10॥
 hastaistolayitum śakto na babhūvātivismitaḥ ।
 sarvasya jagataḥ sāraṃ virājaṃ parameśvaram ॥ 11॥
 kathaṃ lokāśrayaṃ viṣṇuṃ tolayellaghurākṣasaḥ ।
 grahītukāmaṃ saumitriṃ rāvaṇaṃ vīkṣya mārutiḥ ॥ 12॥
 ājaghānorasi kruddho vajrakalpena muṣṭinā ।
 tena muṣṭiprahāreṇa jānubhyāmapatadbhuvi ॥ 13॥

10-13. Still, since the Lord was in the form of a human, he behaved accordingly, and becoming unconscious (due to the effect of the weapon known as Maha-Shakti), he fell to the ground.

In order to take the unconscious Laxman away with him back to Lanka, Ravana (10) tried to lift him up, but he was unsuccessful in doing so. This made him very astonished¹. Indeed say, how can a lowly and humble demon lift someone who supports the whole world from below (in his primary form as Seshnath, the celestial serpent who is believed to hold the world on his hoods), and who also holds Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, as he reclines on his coiled body on the surface of the Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk?

When Hanuman (Maruti, the son of the wind god) observed that Ravana wants to take Laxman (son of Sumitra) away from the battle-field (12), he became very angry and punched Ravana ferociously in the chest with his Bajra-like² clenched fists. Reeling under the severity of this impact, Ravana swooned and tottered and fell to the ground on his knees (13).

[Note—¹Why was Ravana so astonished when he could not lift Lord Ram lying on the ground? It is because Ravana was no ordinary demon; he had such stupendous strength in his arms that one day he had lifted Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva, to bring it to Lanka. It was during this mischief of his that Lord Shiva's favourite mount known as Nandi, the Bull, had cursed Ravana that one day it would be a human being helped by monkeys who will cause his death. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-56.}

²The “Bajra” is the weapon of Indra; commonly called thunderbolt. It is said to be the most powerful and infallible weapon that ever existed.]

आस्यैश्च नेत्रश्रवणैरुद्वमन् रुधिरं बहु ।
विघूर्णमाननयनो रथोपस्थ उपाविशत् ॥ १४॥
अथ लक्ष्मणमादाय हनूमान् रावणार्दितम् ।
आनयद्रामसामीप्यं बाहुभ्यां परिगृह्य तम् ॥ १५॥
हनूमतः सुहृत्त्वेन भक्त्या च परमेश्वरः ।
लगुत्वमगमदेवो गुरुणां गुरुरप्यजः ॥ १६॥

āsyaiśca netraśravaṇaiarudvaman rudhiram bahu ।
vighūrṇamānanayano rathopastha upāviśat ॥ 14॥
atha lakṣmaṇamādāya hanūmān rāvaṇārditam ।
ānayadrāmasāmīpyaṃ bāhubhyāṃ parigrhya tam ॥ 15॥
hanūmataḥ suhṛttvena bhaktyā ca parameśvaraḥ ।
laghutvamagamaddevo gurūṇāṃ gururapyajaḥ ॥ 16॥

14-16. A lot of blood spouted from Ravana's mouth, eyes and ears; he was jolted so severely that he began swooning and tottering, and the world turned in circles before his eyes. Nevertheless, he somehow managed to lift and drag himself to board the rear of his chariot (14).

Thereafter, Hanuman lifted Laxman in his arms and brought him to where Lord Sri Ram was (15).

For the sake of Hanuman, for the sake of his devotion, faith and natural affection for him, Laxman became very light so as to be allowed to be lifted easily,

though it is true that he (Laxman) is the heaviest of the most heavy elements in this creation¹. (16)

[Note—¹Laxman made himself light so that Hanuman would be able to easily lift him and take him to Lord Ram. This was done in deference to Hanuman's deep sense of devotion and love for both Laxman and Lord Ram, and his vow to serve them till the last breath of his life. Laxman thought that if Hanuman failed to lift him and take him to Lord Ram then he will feel he has failed in his commitment of service to the two brothers, and this may prove fatal, because then Hanuman may himself decide to end his life rather than face the ignominy of failing to serve Lord Ram and his brother Laxman in their hour of need.]

सा शक्तिरपि तं त्यक्त्वा ज्ञात्वा नारायणांशजम् ।
 रावणस्य रथं प्रागाद्रावणोऽपि शनैस्ततः ॥ १७॥
 सञ्ज्ञामवाप्य जग्राह बाणासनमथो रुषा ।
 राममेवाभिदुद्राव दृष्ट्वा रामोऽपि तं क्रुधा ॥ १८॥
 आरुह्य जगतां नाथो हनूमन्तं महाबलम् ।
 रथस्थं रावणं दृष्ट्वा अभिदुद्राव राघवः ॥ १९॥

sā śaktirapi taṃ tyaktvā jñātvā nārāyaṇāṃśajam ।
 rāvaṇasya ratham prāgādrāvaṇo'pi śanaistataḥ ॥ 17॥
 sanjñānavāpya jagrāha bāṇāsanamatho ruṣā ।
 rāmamevābhidudrāva dr̥ṣṭvā rāmo'pi taṃ krudhā ॥ 18॥
 āruhya jagatāṃ nātho hanūmantam mahābalaṃ ।
 rathastham rāvaṇam dr̥ṣṭvā abhidudrāva rāghavaḥ ॥ 19॥

17-19. Realising (or recognising) that he (Laxman) was but a part (a fraction) of Lord Narayan (Lord Vishnu) himself, that powerful weapon called 'Shakti' bounced-off him (or, left him alone) and went back to Ravana's chariot¹. There, Ravana too gradually regained consciousness (17).

Ravana became very angry and exasperated; taking his bow, he rushed at Lord Sri Ram menacingly. Seeing him coming in his direction, the Lord too became extremely wrathful (18). The Lord of the world (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) climbed on the shoulders of Hanuman, who was very valiant and exceptionally gallant, and seeing Ravana who was astride his chariot, the Lord rushed towards him² (19).

[Note—¹It is like the case of a ray of light bouncing off from a mirror, or from a well polished and glazed surface. It is also observed, though rarely, that a stroke of thunderbolt descending from the cloud in a shaft of dazzling light to strike the world below would sometimes bounces off the surface where it first lands, and then either jumps from one object to another till its energy is dissipated, or it may land on the ground after the first bounce and vanish inside the bowls of the earth.

To wit, the weapon known as 'Shakti' that was shot by Ravana was like a dazzling shaft of high energy equivalent to that of a thunderbolt. When it hit Laxman on the chest, it could not pierce it, but bounced-off it, rebounding and going back to

the place from where it came. Boomerang also works in the same way—it comes back to the place from where it is shot.

In our modern world we are aware of bullet-proof jackets through which bullets do not pass. So there is no wonder in this Shakti not being able to pierce Laxman's chest, for it is possible that Laxman was protected by some kind of invisible protective shield that he wore, against which this Shakti was ineffective.

²Lord Ram has mounted Hanuman's shoulders more than once. The first time was when the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, had mounted on Hanuman's shoulders as he took them to the summit of the hill to meet Sugriv, the prince of the monkeys—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 27-29.

The second time was when the Lord and his army started on their journey to the shore of the southern ocean to launch a campaign to vanquish the demons and free Sita. At this time Lord Ram had himself commanded that he would mount on the shoulders of Hanuman, and Laxman would sit astride the shoulders of Angad—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 31.]

ज्याशब्दमकरोत्तीव्रं वज्रनिष्पेषनिष्ठुरम् ।
रामो गम्भीरया वाचा राक्षसेन्द्रमुवाच ह ॥ २०॥
राक्षसाधम तिष्ठाद्य त्व गमिष्यसि मे पुरः ।
कृत्वापराधमेवं मे सर्वत्र समदर्शिनः ॥ २१॥
येन बाणेन निहता राक्षसास्ते जनालये ।
तेनैव त्वां हनिष्यामि तिष्ठाद्य मम गोचरे ॥ २२॥

jyāśabdamakarottīvraṃ vajraniṣpeṣaniṣṭhuraṃ ।
rāmo gambhīrayā vācā rākṣasendramuvāca ha ॥ 20॥
rākṣasādhama tiṣṭhādya kva gamiṣyasi me puraḥ ।
kṛtvāparādhamevaṃ me sarvatra samadarśinaḥ ॥ 21॥
yena bāṇena nihatā rākṣasāste janālaye ।
tenaiva tvāṃ haniṣyāmi tiṣṭhādya mama gocare ॥ 22॥

20-22. Sri Ram strung the string of his bow which made such a formidable and loud twang that it could demolish and turn to rubble (i.e. break into splinters) even the mighty and strong weapon known as 'Bajra' by the energy of its sound waves¹.

Then Sri Ram addressed Ravana in a very grave and serious manner in his voice (20)—'Oh you evil, pervert, lowly and wicked demon! Though I have a calm and even mind that remains steady and equitable, treating all the creatures equally and with equanimity, not differentiating one from the other, but still you have offended me unnecessarily. How dare you wish to escape from me now?

Stop; wait for a while (21).

Oh, come on! I shall now kill you using the arrow which I had used earlier to slay the other demons (e.g. the demons Khar, Dushan etc.) who attacked me on other occasions at different places that were inhabited².' (22).

[Note—¹The Bajra is a weapon of Indra, the king of gods. It is made of the toughest of all existing materials. The sound waves generated by the twang of Lord Ram's bow

were so strong and had such high potential of energy concentrated in them that they could break to pieces even the Bajra if they struck against it. This example is used in a metaphoric way to give an idea of the huge sound that was produced when Lord Ram pulled the string of his fierce bow and then released it with a deafening, ear-splitting twang.

²The term “other inhabited places” refers to areas in and near forests where sages and hermits lived and established their hermitages, where they practiced their religious vows. Lord Ram had visited many of them during his journey through the forest. The demons used to live in the surrounding forests and torment these sages. Lord Ram had slayed many of them. Some of the demons slayed by Lord Ram were the following: (a) Tadka and Subahu who were killed near the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, (i) Canto 4, verse nos. 26-32 (Tadka); (ii) Canto 5, verse nos. 5-8 (Subahu); (b) Viradh—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 17-34; (c) Khar and Dushan—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 26-35; (d) Marich—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 16-20.

These places referred to by Lord Ram where he slayed the other demons were different from Lanka, because in Lanka only the demons lived, it was ‘inhabited only by the demons’, whereas all other places were ‘inhabited by human beings’, and the demons hid themselves in forested areas, away from human population. This is why the Lord uses the phrase “other inhabited areas”.]

श्रीरामस्य वचः श्रुत्वा रावणो मारुतात्मजम् ।
वहन्तं राघवं सङ्ख्ये शरैस्तीक्ष्णैरताडयत् ॥ २३॥
हतस्यापि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैर्वायुसूनोः स्वतेजसा ।
व्यवर्धत पुनस्तेजो ननर्द च महाकपिः ॥ २४॥

śrīrāmasya vacaḥ śrutvā rāvaṇo mārutātmajam ।
vahanṭaṃ rāghavaṃ saṅkhye śaraistīkṣṇairatāḍayat ॥ 23॥
hatasyāpi śaraistīkṣṇairvāyusūnoḥ svatejasā ।
vyavardhata punastejo nanarda ca mahākapiḥ ॥ 24॥

23-24. Hearing these words of Sri Ram, Ravana shot very sharp, fierce and potentially effective arrows at the son of the wind-god (Hanuman) who was presently the mount of Raghav (Sri Ram) (in order to seriously wound him and render him unfit for participating in the war)¹. (23)

But inspite of being hit by those violent arrows, the son of the wind-god's strength and valour went on progressively increasing, and that great monkey roared thunderously; he yelled fiercely with renewed vigour (24).

[Note—¹In earlier days when chariots were used during wars, the enemy aimed at the chariot and the charioteer as well as the horses so that the king or the army commander riding on it is forced to abandon it. This restricted his movement and the ability to command his troops, because these chariots were often used as battle-field command-and-control units. Their breaking also acted as a big demoralising factor for the army.

So, Ravana intended to wound Hanuman and force Lord Ram to dismount. Injuring Hanuman would also help to push aside a formidable War-Horse of Lord Ram, for Ravana feared Hanuman more than anyone else.]

ततो दृष्ट्वा हनूमन्तं सव्रणं रघुसत्तमः ।
 क्रोधमाहारयामास कालरुद्र इवापरः ॥ २५॥
 साश्वं रथं ध्वजं सूतं शस्त्रौघं धनुरजसा ।
 छत्रं पताकां तरसा चिच्छेद शितसायकैः ॥ २६॥

tato dr̥ṣṭvā hanūmantam savraṇam raghusattamaḥ ।
 krodhamāhārayāmāsa kālarudra ivāparaḥ ॥ 25॥
 sāśvam ratham dhvajam sūtam śastraugham dhanurañjasā ।
 chatram patākām tarasā ciccheda śitasāyakaiḥ ॥ 26॥

25-26. When the most superior of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) saw that Hanuman has been injured, he became extremely angry and ferocious as if he were a personification of a second 'Kaal Rudra' (the form of Shiva which is regarded as a manifestation of death, destruction, wrath, vengeance and retribution) (25).

The Lord swiftly used a shower of his own acutely potent and sharp arrows to easily smash (destroy) Ravana's horses, chariot, charioteer and war-standard, as well as all the arms and weapons that were carried by him in this chariot, such as his bow, and the ceremonial umbrellas, royal insignia of the demon kingdom etc. that were also stored in the chariot¹ (26).

[Note—¹It was Ravana who had taken the first step in this direction—of trying to destroy the enemy's mount by shooting at Hanuman. Nothing however happened to Hanuman; but on the contrary, the tables were turned quickly on Ravana when Lord Ram retaliated with his own volley of arrows that demolished the demon king's chariot along with all its paraphernalia of war.]

ततो महाशरेणाशु रावणं रघुसत्तमः ।
 विव्याध वज्रकल्पेन पाकारिरिव पर्वतम् ॥ २७॥
 रामबाणहतो वीरश्चाल च मुमोह च ।
 हस्तान्निपतितश्चापस्तं समीक्ष्य रघूत्तमः ॥ २८॥
 अर्धचन्द्रेण चिच्छेद तत्किरीटं रविप्रभम् ।
 अनुजानामि गच्छ त्वमिदानीं बाणपीडितः ॥ २९॥

tato mahāśareṇāśu rāvaṇam raghusattamaḥ ।
 vivyādha vajrakalpena pākāririva parvatam ॥ 27॥
 rāmabāṇahato vīraścāla ca mumoha ca ।
 hastānnipatitaścāpastam samīkṣya raghūttamaḥ ॥ 28॥
 ardhačandrena ciccheda tatkirīṭam raviprabham ।
 anujānāmi gaccha tvamidāniḥ bāṇapīḍitaḥ ॥ 29॥

27-29. Thereafter, the best amongst the Raghus (Sri Ram) shot his arrows that were as powerful and effective as Bajra, the 'thunderbolt', which is a strong weapon of Indra that he had used to reduce the mighty mountains to rubble; these formidable arrows pierced through Ravana's body and perforated it like a sieve (27).

Being hit and severely wounded thus by the hail of arrows shot by Lord Sri Ram, that brave warrior (Ravana) lost his bearings; he swooned and fell down unconscious; and his mighty bow slipped from his hand and fell down before Sri Ram, the Lord who was the best in king Raghu's race (28).

Then he (Lord Sri Ram) lopped off the crown—which was as splendid as the sun—from Ravana's head by shooting an arrow with a sickle-shaped tip. [The arrow cut off Ravana's crown from his head in the same way as a farmer uses his farming tool known as a sickle to cut and trim his crop, or lop off unwanted branches and twigs of trees as well as useless plants from his farmland.]

Then Sri Ram said, 'You are wounded and feeling miserable due to being injured by my arrows. Hence, I order you to go away from here for the time being'¹ (29).

[Note—¹Remarkable indeed! The reader must note how great warriors adhered to the principles of ethics and right conduct even during war times in ancient days. Lord Ram could have easily killed Ravana when he lay wounded and unconscious on the ground before him, with his chariot, horses, arms and armaments all destroyed by the Lord as mentioned in verse no. 26 herein above. At that moment, Lord Ram's job of getting rid of his enemy was very easy. But no, he did not kill a fallen enemy. This single instance is a very good and noble example of high and ethical standards that were followed during warfare in earlier times.

One will not fail to see the sharp contrast with what happens in our so-called civilised, cultured and modern society—where killing one's enemy unawares in a cowardly and unethical fashion, such as in an ambush, a terror attack, secret poisoning, remote-controlled weapons, or some other secret and clandestine methods that are routinely employed by spies and secret agents of countries and their militaries, rogue and not-rogue, to eliminate their adversaries, when the victim is unarmed or unprepared to offer any resistance, is more often followed as standard practice, rather than an exception, all over the world.

It will be noted that wars in ancient times were fought according to principles of ethics and morality that conformed to the rules of conduct set for warfare, such as ending the day's battle at evening, starting the next day's battle after sunrise, not killing a fallen warrior, giving protection or grant of life if the enemy asks for mercy, not killing an unarmed opponent, etc. But unfortunately, in our civilised and modern world such situations are seen as golden chances to rid off one's enemy with the least effort and incurring the least collateral damage.]

प्रविश्य लङ्कामाश्वस्य श्वः पश्यसि बलं मम ।
रामबाणेन संविद्धो हतदर्पोऽथ रावणः ॥ ३०॥
महत्या लज्जया युक्तो लङ्कां प्राविशदातुरः ।
रामोऽपि लक्ष्मणं दृष्ट्वा मूर्च्छितं पतितं भुवि ॥ ३१॥

praviśya laṅkāmaśvāsya śvaḥ paśyasi balaṁ mama ।
rāmabāṇena saṁviddho hatadarpō'tha rāvaṇaḥ ॥ 30॥

mahatyā lajjayā yukto laṅkāṃ prāviśadāturaḥ ।
rāmo'pi lakṣmaṇaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā mūrccitaṃ patitaṃ bhuvi ॥ 31॥

30-31. You go and take rest in Lanka today, then see my might and valour tomorrow (when you come to face me again after a night's rest)'.
Then being severely incapacitated and miserably wounded, and having his pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance crushed, Ravana (30) returned shyly to Lanka; he was full of gloom, shame and regrets.

Meanwhile, Lord Sri Ram saw that Laxman was lying unconscious on the ground (31).

मानुषत्वमुपाश्रित्य लीलयानुशुशोच ह ।
ततः प्राह हनूमन्तं वत्स जीवय लक्ष्मणम् ॥ ३२॥
महौषधीः समानीय पूर्ववद्वानराणपि ।
तथेति रघवेणोक्तो जगामाशु महाकपिः ॥ ३३॥
हनूमान् वायुवेगेन क्षणात्तीर्त्वा महोदधिम् ।
एतस्मिन्नन्तरे चारा रावणाय न्यवेदयन् ॥ ३४॥

mānuṣatvamupāśritya līlayānuśoca ha ।
tataḥ prāha hanūmantam vatsa jīvaya lakṣmaṇam ॥ 32॥
mahauṣadhīḥ samāniya pūrvavadvānarāṇapi ।
tatheti raghaveṇokto jagāmāśu mahākapiḥ ॥ 33॥
hanūmān vāyuvegena kṣaṇāttīrtvā mahodadhim ।
etasminnantare cārā rāvaṇāya nyavedayan ॥ 34॥

32-34. [When Lord Ram saw his brother lying unconscious on the ground—] He began grieving (for Laxman) like an ordinary human under the influence of delusions¹.

The Lord said to Hanuman, 'Oh son (vatsa)! As you had done earlier², bring the great herb that has a rejuvenating property to revive Laxman and all other monkeys'.

When Raghav (Sri Ram) had said so, the great monkey, Hanuman (33), said 'alright', and he immediately started off on the mission of bringing the required herb, with a speed that of the wind³. He crossed the great ocean (that separated Lanka from the mainland towards its northern borders, and over which the Lord had got a bridge constructed earlier in order to cross over to Lanka with his mighty army) in a fraction of a moment (i.e. very quickly).

Just about that time, the spies of Ravana ran to inform him about the latest developments, and submitted their report as follows (34)—

[Note—¹When a person sees his dear brother mortally wounded and thinks that he will not survive, he starts grieving and lamenting for him. Lord Ram knew very well that nothing would happen to Laxman because he is all-knowing and omniscient; that Laxman's fainting and falling down was just for show. Still the Lord grieved and

expressed his regret at the decision of sending Laxman to the battle-field as if he was under the sway of delusions like an ordinary man would be.

Why did the Lord behave this way? It was to maintain the secret that he was an incarnate Supreme Being, Lord Vishnu, who has come down in the form of a human being to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons who had been mercilessly tormenting the creatures of the Lord's world, making the Lord obliged to personally intervene and provide succour to his creatures who depended on him for their protection and happiness.

²Refer to: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 71-74. It is obvious why Lord Ram entrusted Hanuman with this job of bringing the herb that would revive Laxman. The Lord knew that Hanuman alone was capable of this unique feat, because he had done it earlier too when he had brought the Mandrachal Mountain on the orders of the Lord so that the wounded monkeys could be brought back to life as narrated in the verses referred to here.

³Hanuman sailed through the sky with the swiftness of a storm or a gale-force wind, with little or no resistance from any obstruction found on the ground below, such as from ocean, rivers, mountains, hills, forests, valleys, etc.]

रामेण प्रेषितो देव हनूमान् क्षीरसागरम् ।
गतो नेतुं लक्ष्मणस्य जीवनार्थं महौषधीः ॥ ३५॥
श्रुत्वा तत्त्वारवचनं राजा चिन्तापरोऽभवत् ।
जगाम रात्रावेकाकी कालनेमिगृहं क्षणात् ॥ ३६॥

rāmeṇa preṣito deva hanūmān kṣīrasāgaram ।
gato netuṃ lakṣmaṇasya jīvanārthaṃ mahauṣadhīḥ ॥ 35॥
śrutvā taccāravacanam rājā cintāparo'bhavat ।
jagāma rātrāvekākī kālanemigṛhaṃ kṣaṇāt ॥ 36॥

35-36. 'Oh Lord! Sri Ram has sent Hanuman to the 'Kshir Sagar' (the legendary ocean of milk), and he has gone there with the errand of bringing the great herb to revive Laxman' (35).

Hearing their report, the king (Ravana) became alarmed and very worried. He instantly, even though it was an improper hour of the night (rātrā---) to visit someone, went alone to the house of Kalnemi (36).

गृहागतं समालोक्य रावणं विस्मयान्वितः ।
कालनेमिरुवाचेदं पूञ्जतिर्भयविह्वलः ।
अर्घ्यादिकं ततः कृत्वा रावणस्यागूतः स्थितः ॥ ३७॥
किं ते करोमि राजेन्द्र किमागमनकारणम् ।
कालनेमिमुवाचेदं रावणो दुःखपीडितः ॥ ३८॥

grhāgataṃ samālokya rāvaṇaṃ vismayānvitaḥ ।

kālanemiruvācedaṃ prāñjalirbhayavihvalaḥ ।
 arghyādikaṃ tataḥ kṛtvā rāvaṇasyāgrataḥ sthitaḥ ॥ 37॥
 kiṃ te karomi rājendra kimāgamanakāraṇam ।
 kālanemimuvācedaṃ rāvaṇo duḥkhapīḍitaḥ ॥ 38॥

37-38. Seeing Ravana come home to visit him at that odd hour of the night, Kalnemi was surprised and perplexed (and wandered at the probable reasons for his coming to him).

Kalnemi though showed his due respect to the visitor (Ravana) by offering water to clean his feet, and then stood before him with folded hands, but secretly very worried and terrified about what Ravana proposed to say to him.

After initial formalities were over, Kalnemi said politely (37), 'Oh King of kings (rājendra)! With what purpose have you come here today? Say what can I do for you; how can I serve you?'

Then Ravana said sombrely¹ to Kalnemi (38)—

[Note—¹Ravana was overcome with fear of the impending danger to the demon army if Laxman was revived, because he feared that now Laxman would unleash the might of his anger and wrath upon them with a vengeance, and being well aware that Laxman was an incarnation of Lord Seshnath, the thousand hooded serpent who supports the world on his hoods, Ravana was all the more terrified at the prospect of the scorching venom that would spout out of Laxman and fall upon the demons when he loses his cool, roasting them alive, and scorching them to a horrifying death.

Added to this worry was another: He was sure that stopping Hanuman was virtually an impossible thing, as he had witnessed Hanuman's abilities during the Burning of Lanka.

These gloomy and foreboding thoughts clouded his mind, making him feel sore affright and overcome with anxiousness that made him extremely upset.]

ममापि कालवशतः कष्टमेतदुपस्थितम् ।
 मया शक्त्या हतो वीरो लक्ष्मणः पतितो भुवि ॥ ३९॥
 तं जीवयितुमानेतुमोषधीर्हनुमान् गतः ।
 यथा तस्य भवेद्विघ्नस्तथा कुरु महामते ॥ ४०॥
 मायया मुनिवेषेण मोहयस्व महाकपिम् ।
 कालात्ययो यथा भूयात्तथा कृत्वैहि मन्दिरे ॥ ४१॥

mamāpi kālavaśataḥ kaṣṭametadupasthitam ।
 mayā śaktyā hato vīro lakṣmaṇaḥ patito bhuvi ॥ 39॥
 taṃ jīvayitumānetumoṣadhīrhanumān gataḥ ।
 yathā tasya bhavedvighnastathā kuru mahāmate ॥ 40॥
 māyayā muniveṣeṇa mohayasva mahākapim ।
 kālātyayo yathā bhūyāttathā kṛtvaihi mandire ॥ 41॥

39-41. 'Due to circumstances and bad times, I too am suffering from distress and despair today¹. The brave Laxman is lying on the ground after being hit and injured by my Shakti that I shot at him (39).

Hanuman has gone to fetch a medicinal herb that would revive him. Oh you who are so great ("mahāmate"; Kalnemi)²! You should do something that creates an obstacle in Hanuman's way in order to stop him (or at least delay him) (40).

You should assume a form of a hermit using your powers to create illusions, and try to lead the great monkey astray so that the time-slot for using the medicinal herb expires³. After that, you can return home.' (41).

[Note—¹Ravana was so confident of himself, of his inviolable authority, invincibility and power that he thought were supreme and superseded all others in this creation, that he erroneously thought that he was immune to and beyond the purview of the Laws of Nature so much so that despair, sorrow, grief, misery and misfortune that were a natural phenomena to effect all creatures in this mortal world, and no one, including the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram was spared from it, would dare not touch him. So, he was extremely astonished himself that these negative emotions have affected him that fateful night. This is why he uses the phrase "I too am ---".

²Ravana was very selfish, so he uses this term to praise Kalnemi to make him feel honoured and respected so that it would be easy for Ravana to play with his inflated ego in order to prevail upon him to risk his life to somehow stop Hanuman.

³The herb was to be administered before dawn, after which it would be rendered ineffective.]

रावणस्य वचः श्रुत्वा कालनेमिरुवाच तम् ।
 रावणेश वचो मेऽद्य शृणु धारय तत्त्वतः ॥ ४२॥
 प्रियं ते करवाण्येव न प्राणान् धारयाम्यहम् ।
 मारीचस्य यथारण्ये पुराभून्मृगरूपिणः ॥ ४३॥
 तथैव मे न सन्देहो भविष्यति दशानन ।
 हताः पुत्राश्च पौत्राश्च बान्धवा राक्षसाश्च ते ॥ ४४॥

rāvaṇasya vacaḥ śrutvā kālanemiruvāca tam ।
 rāvaṇeśa vaco me'dya śṛṇu dhāraya tattvataḥ ॥ 42॥
 priyaṃ te karavāṇyeva na prāṇān dhārayāmyaham ।
 māricasya yathāraṇye purābhūnmṛgarūpiṇaḥ ॥ 43॥
 tathaiva me na sandeho bhaviṣyati daśānana ।
 hatāḥ putrāśca pauṭrāśca bāndhavā rākṣasāśca te ॥ 44॥

42-44. Hearing these words of Ravana, Kalnemi said to him, 'Oh Lord Ravana! Listen to what I have to say to you, and accept it as the truth and a prudent advice (42).

I will do whatever is good for you, and for doing that I do not care for my own life. [But, say, what is the use, what is the real benefit of doing what you wish me to

do?] Whatever had happened to Marich in the form of the decoy deer in the Dandakaranya forest earlier¹ (43) would also be my fate.

[To wit, like Marich was killed by Lord Ram when he was forced by you to become a deer with a golden hide so that you could steal Sita, it appears that in all likelihood this would be my fate too; I too would die for following your orders.]

Oh the 10-headed Ravana! There is no doubt about it happening. A number of your sons, grandsons and many of your kith and kin, as well as many other demons have already been killed (44).

[Note—¹This incident of the slaying of Marich by Lord Ram is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-41; and Canto 7, verse nos. 1-20.]

घातयित्वाऽसुरकुलं जीवितेनापि किं तव ।
राज्येन वा सीतया वा किं देहेन जडात्मना ॥ ४५॥
सीतां प्रयच्छ रामाय राज्यं देहि विभीषणे ।
वनं याहि महाबाहो रम्यं मुनिगणाश्रयम् ॥ ४६॥

ghātayitvā'surakulaṃ jīvitenaṃpi kiṃ tava ।
rājyena vā sītayā vā kiṃ dehena jaḍātmanā ॥ 45॥
sītāṃ prayaccha rāmāya rājyaṃ dehi vibhīṣaṇe ।
vanam yāhi mahābāho ramyaṃ munigaṇāśrayam ॥ 46॥

45-46. By getting the demon race killed or destroyed one by one in the war, what will you benefit even by living yourself, by having your kingdom with all its inhabitants dead or maimed in war, by having Sita as a trophy of this devastating war, or by being able to retain a body that is outright gross and sinful? (45).

Oh the one with very strong arms (mahābāho)! I sincerely advise you to give Sita back to Sri Ram, and the kingdom to Vibhishan, and then you should renounce the world and go to a pleasant forest inhabited by sages, hermits and ascetics (to do penances and austerities in their company, to repent and atone for your past sinful life, and make strong efforts for redemption of your soul) (46).

स्नात्वा प्रातः शुभजले कृत्वा सन्ध्यादिकाः क्रियाः ।
तत एकान्तमाश्रित्य सुखासनपरिग्रहः ॥ ४७॥
विसृज्य सर्वतः सङ्गमितरान् विषयान् बहिः ।
बहिःप्रवृत्ताक्षगणं शनैः प्रत्यक् प्रवाहय ॥ ४८॥

snātvā prātaḥ śubhajale kṛtvā sandhyādikāḥ kriyāḥ ।
tata ekāntamāśritya sukhāsanaparigrahaḥ ॥ 47॥
visṛjya sarvataḥ saṅgamitarān viṣayān bahiḥ ।
bahiḥpravṛttākṣagaṇam śanaiḥ pratyak pravāhaya ॥ 48॥

47-48. There (in Lanka), have a bath in the morning with clean water (i.e. refresh yourself), perform your Sandhya¹ (i.e. do your religious duty of offering prayers in the

morning) and any other religious sacrament that you routinely observe. Then sit on a comfortable seat (such as a prayer mat) in a lonely and secluded place (47).

Then, gradually, step by step, you should detach yourself from all exterior attachments and contacts with the gross world of senses and sensual pleasures, abandon your attachment with all external objects of this material world, and divert your mind and its attention from the outside world towards your innerself (which is pure consciousness, and is known as the Atma)² (48).

[Note—¹The “Sandhya” is a religious sacrament observed three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening. Prayers are offered to one’s deity during these times. It is derived from the word ‘Sandhi’, meaning a junction point. Hence, it refers to those three times of the day when two phases meet each other, viz. the dawn hours when night and day meet; noon hours when morning meets afternoon hours; and dusk or twilight hours when day meets night once again.

²Kalnemi advises Ravana to meditate and abandon his attachment with this gross material world of sensual objects, for this is the right thing for him to do as it would give him eternal peace, and help his soul to find emancipation and salvation. What he is presently doing and plans to do in future is absolutely wrong; it will tie his soul eternally to suffer from miseries and worries from which he would never find deliverance if he did not heed his (Kalnemi’s) wise advice now.]

प्रकृतेर्भिन्नमात्मानं विचारय सदानघ ।
चराचरं जगत्कृत्स्नं देहबुद्धीन्द्रियादिकम् ॥ ४९॥
आब्रह्मस्तम्बपर्यन्तं दृश्यते श्रूयते च यत् ।
सैषा प्रकृतिरित्युक्ता सैव मायेति कीर्तिता ॥ ५०॥

prakṛterbhinnamātmānaṁ vicāraya sadānagha ।
carācaram jagatkṛtsnaṁ dehabuddhīndriyādikam ॥ 49॥
ābrahmastambaparyantaṁ drśyate śrūyate ca yat ।
saiṣā prakṛtirityuktā saiva māyeti kīrtitā ॥ 50॥

49-50. Oh Anagh¹ (“anagha”; someone who is ‘sinless, pure and faultless’)! Always treat your Atma (soul, pure self, pure consciousness) as being a separate and distinct entity from your ‘Prakriti’ (i.e. your nature; the inherent tendencies and inclinations of your physical gross body).

This whole animate as well as inanimate world is gross. Its components consist of a gross physical body, the mind-intellect apparatus, and the sense organs etc. that are associated with this body (49).

The world has two other aspects, the visual and the audible. The ‘visual world’ is the one which a creature directly sees and witnesses, and the ‘audible world’ is that about which he has only heard of. The entire creation, right from its cosmic aspect where its creator Brahma is present, to its microcosmic aspect pertaining to the physical gross world of the present time where the creature himself lives, comes under this ambit.

It is also called ‘Prakriti’ or Nature. Another name for it is ‘Maya’ because it is illusive and delusory in nature²*(50).

[Note—¹Ravana has been called ‘Anagh’ by Kalnemi because he is talking about the Atma or the soul of Ravana which is his true identity. This Atma is a pure entity because it is pure consciousness which is always sinless and without any worldly taints. It is the gross body which may be sinful, definitely not the Atma.

²Why so? It is because of the paradox that ‘what is seen is not the truth, and the truth is not seen’. The creature thinks that the physical world in which it lives is the real thing because it can see and feel this world and its objects. But the creature makes a grave error of judgement in this—because this world is a creation of the mind, hence it is imaginary and deluding; the world is gross and transient, not stable and universal as something that is ‘True’ ought to be, for ‘truth’ never changes while the world is ever-changing. Hence, it cannot be ‘true’.

Then what is the true ‘Truth’? According to the principles of metaphysics expounded by the Upanishads, this ‘true Truth’, the reality, is known as ‘pure Consciousness’. It is the actual entity that gives life and meaning to everything in existence, but the irony is that it cannot be ‘seen or felt’.

Hence it is said that ‘what is seen is not the truth, and the truth is not seen’.

*Here, Kalnemi advised Ravana to stop pursuing a mirage, stop wasting his time and energy in seeking worldly glory and fame by defeating Lord Ram and gaining his wife Sita as a trophy of war. This will not give him peace or happiness, for even if he succeeds in his effort, this success would be as short-lived as any other thing in this mortal and transient world. So what’s the sense of pursuing something that has no longevity and steadiness?

By addressing Ravana as ‘Anagh’, Kalnemi tries to draw his attention to his true identity, to his ‘pure self’, to his Atma, and wake him up from the sleep of delusions that has made him think that his physical body is his identity. This being the case, Kalnemi asks Ravana as to why is he unwittingly tainting his otherwise taintless Atma by indulging in un-righteous deeds, and evil, sinful behaviour?]

सर्गस्थितिविनाशानां जगद्वृक्षस्य कारणम् ।
लोहितश्वेतकृष्णादि प्रजाः सृजति सर्वदा ॥ ५१॥
कामक्रोधादिपुत्राद्यान् हिंसातृष्णादिकन्यकाः ।
मोहयन्त्यनिशं देवमात्मानं स्वैर्गुणैर्विभुम् ॥ ५२॥

sargasthitivināśānāṃ jagadvṛkṣasya kāraṇam ।
lohitaśvetakṛṣṇādi prajāḥ sṛjati sarvadā ॥ 51॥
kāmakrodhādiputrādyān hiṃsātrṣṇādikanyakāḥ ।
mohayantyaniśaṃ devamātmānaṃ svairguṇairvibhum ॥ 52॥

51-52. It (i.e. Maya—which is delusion-creating cosmic powers of the Supreme Being) creates three types of creatures who are subjects of the supreme Lord.

These three types of creatures have the following characteristics that distinguish one from the other in physical terms: (i) Those who are considered ‘white’ (i.e. creatures with Satvik tendencies), (ii) those who have a ‘rust-iron’ hue (i.e.

creatures with Rajsik tendencies), and (iii) those who have a ‘dark’ feature (i.e. creatures with Tamsik tendencies)¹.

These characters and their bearers form the gross physical body of this huge Tree known as this creation (51).

The same Maya uses its magical powers to create a veil of delusions upon the Atma, the ‘pure-self’ of the creature, making it feel, though erroneously, that there is no difference between his Atma and his gross physical body. To wit, he begins to associate ‘true self’, which is his Atma, with his gross body having characteristics as enumerated above. This implies that the taints associated with the gross body are also applied uncannily to this Atma, which otherwise is pure, holy and taintless.

The Atma of an individual creature is a microcosmic form of the Supreme Atma that has a macrocosmic existence, and is marked by such virtues as being universal, eternal, infinite, constant and blissful. So therefore, the two are virtually similar in their characteristic. Hence, to think that the individual’s Atma is corrupt like the body is a complete wrong deduction, but this is what Maya actually does when it prevails upon the creature to think that his true identity, the Atma, is not separate or different from his gross physical body, thereby imposing upon the Atma all the faults of the body.

As a result of this influence of Maya upon the pure self, a strange situation is created whereby the foolish creature begins to exhibit all the faults associated with this gross world which are symbolically his off-springs—such as having anger, malice, desire, greed and lust, as well as different sorts of attachments and infatuations etc. (52).

[Note—¹The ‘Satvik’ tendencies are the best tendencies amongst the three. They are positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The ‘Rajsik’ tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, passions, selfishness, obsession, expansion etc.

The ‘Tamsik’ tendencies are the worst types leading to vices, perversion, delusions, deception, gloom, anger, ignorance et al.

These are collectively called the ‘Three Gunas’. They are all present in varying ratios in a creature, and together determine the character of any individual. Hence, an individual’s nature and character would depend upon the net effect of how these three react and influence each other.

The colours referred to here are only for symbolic purpose, and not intended to make any racial distinction between two individuals. ‘White’ is the colour for purity and piety; ‘red’ is the colour for worldly emotions that are hot and passionate; and of course ‘dark’ represents everything that is gloomy and worthy of abandoning as being unwanted.]

कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वमुखान् स्वगुणानात्मनीश्वरे ।
आरोप्य स्ववशं कृत्वा तेन क्रीडति सर्वदा ॥ ५३॥
शुद्धोऽप्यात्मा यया युक्तः पश्यतीव सदा बहिः ।
विस्मृत्य च स्वमात्मानं मायागुणविमोहितः ॥ ५४॥

kartṛtvabhokṛtvamukhān svaguṇānātmaniśvare ।
āropya svavaśaṁ kṛtvā tena krīḍati sarvadā ॥ 53॥

śuddho'pyātmā yayā yuktaḥ paśyatīva sadā bahiḥ ।
vismṛtya ca svamātmānaṁ māyāguṇavimohitaḥ ॥ 54॥

53-54. It (the Maya) casts its delusions upon the Atma of the creature, making it think that it is a 'doer' of things, and is also the 'one who enjoys or suffers' from such doings.

As a result of this, the Atma becomes a tool at the hands of Maya, which keeps on playing its tricks on the creature. The Maya keeps on playing with the creature like a child plays with its toy. The creature dances to the tune of Maya like a puppet does at the hands of the puppeteer.

[To wit, once the Maya manages to grip the Atma of a creature, which is the 'true self' of an individual, and bring it under its influence, it becomes easy for it to twist the mind and intellect of the creature in any way it wants; because it has captured his 'soul' in the same way evil spirits control a person's soul. This is the primary cause why the creature falls in its trap; the creature then is overcome by delusions and begins to long for the world which the Maya has created as its offspring.] (53)

When the Atma thus becomes a subject of the delusory influences of Maya, it loses its own wisdom, and the ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong. It forgets its original nature of being pure, untainted, holy and pious; on the contrary it assumes a faulty character of being sinful, evil and pervert.

As a consequence of this unfortunate development, the Atma begins to look at the material gross world of sense objects as its true habitat and destiny—which makes it lust for it passionately; which makes it yearn for it greedily; which makes it look forward to the world for its peace and happiness, oblivious of the fact that it is pursuing a mirage seeking water to quench its thirst for attaining peace and happiness that always elude him, simply because the world itself is a mirage created by Maya (54).

यदा सद्गुरुणा युक्तो बोध्यते बोधरूपिणा ।
निवृत्तदृष्टिरात्मानं पश्यत्येव सदा स्फुटम् ॥ ५५॥
जीवन्मुक्तः सदा देही मुच्यते प्राकृतैर्गुणैः ।
त्वमप्येवं सदात्मानं विचार्य नियतेन्द्रियः ॥ ५६॥
प्राकृतेरन्यमात्मानं ज्ञात्वा मुक्तो भविष्यसि ।
ध्यातुं यद्यसमर्थोऽसि सगुणं देवमाश्रय ॥ ५७॥

yadā sadguruṇā yukto bodhyate bodharūpiṇā ।
nivṛttadrṣṭirātmānaṁ paśyatyeva sadā sphuṭam ॥ 55॥
jīvanmuktaḥ sadā dehī mucyate prākṛtaiguṇaiḥ ।
tvamapyevaṁ sadātmānaṁ vicārya niyatendriyaḥ ॥ 56॥
prakṛteranyamātmānaṁ jñātvā mukto bhaviṣyasi ।
dhyātuṁ yadyasamartho'si saguṇaṁ devamāśraya ॥ 57॥

55-57. When it (Atma) interacts (i.e. comes in contact or has interface) with a wise, learned and self-realised teacher or guide, called a Guru, and the latter ignites the light of wisdom and enlightenment in it (or makes the Atma aware of the nature of its real,

true self which the Atma had forgotten under the influence/spell of Maya), the Atma diverts (or removes) its sight from the external world surrounding it, and instead directs its attention once again towards its 'pure self', seeing it clearly in its crystal clear primary form as an entity that is holy, sublime, pristine pure, wise and enlightened, an entity that has no worldly taints, corruptions, negativities and blemishes of any kind in it (55).

When this happens, the creature who has hitherto erroneously thought that 'his body is his self and identity' is freed from this delusion, thereby becoming truly liberated. It is because he is freed from all bondages and fetters that tie 'him'—i.e. 'his true self known as the Atma'—to this gross, perishable and deluding world of sense objects.

Further, when this happens, he is naturally freed from all things associated with this world, including the effect of its various 'Gunas', good or bad, as enumerated earlier.

Oh Ravana! You must resolve to exercise self-restraint; you ought to distance yourself from your body because it is not 'you'. Instead, you ought to concentrate your attention and meditate upon your 'true form' which is pristine pure, taintless, free from corruption and vices, and sublime (i.e. your pure conscious Atma or soul) (56). By doing so you will realise that the Atma is different from Nature (represented by the physical world—both visual and invisible). As a result, you shall become liberated (from the delusions and misconceptions under which you are at present).

If however, you are unable to concentrate or meditate on the Atma which is pure consciousness, but which you may consider to be too abstract an entity to focus your mind on, then there is another option for you—should rely on the 'Sagun'¹ aspect of the same Supreme Atma that has revealed itself in the form of the Lord (i.e., Sri Ram) by having devotion and affection for him, by worshipping and adoring him, by having faith and trust in him (57).

[Note—¹The Supreme Being has two aspects—one is 'Saguna' and the other is 'Nirguna'. The Nirguna aspect has no attributes and physical form, while the Saguna aspect has known attributes and form.

The Nirguna aspect of the Lord refers to his cosmic form that is has no attributes, is invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing, sublime and subtle. This form is pure cosmic Consciousness, also known as Brahm.

The manifested form of this Nirguna aspect is called Saguna, and it has 'gunas', i.e. it has specific characteristics and virtues.

Brahm's, i.e. pure cosmic Consciousness's, Saguna form is represented by Lord Ram at the plane of our gross physical world, while at the cosmic level the same Saguna form has a more sublime and subtle existence in the form of Lord Vishnu. Since Vishnu is the first revelation of pure cosmic Consciousness, or of 'Brahm', when it decided to manifest itself, Lord Vishnu has almost the same characteristics as Brahm, i.e. he is the Nirguna aspect of Brahm as compared to Lord Ram who is the Saguna aspect of the same Brahm. That is why Lord Vishnu is invisible and omnipresent while Lord Ram has a visible existence that has its physical limitations.

There should not be any confusion in this regard; it is a clear and well defined concept like the light of day. Just as a blind man can't see in day, and for him day and night are the same, ignorant persons fail to understand this basic concept about Brahm, Vishnu and Ram.]

हृत्पद्मकर्णिके स्वर्णपीठे मणिगणान्विते ।
 मृदुश्लक्ष्णतरे तत् जानक्या सह संस्थितम् ॥ ५८॥
 वीरासनं विशालाक्षं विद्युत्पुञ्जनिभाम्बरम् ।
 किरीटहारकेयूरकौस्तुभादिभिरन्वितम् ॥ ५९॥
 नूपुरैः कटकैर्भान्तं तथैव वनमालया ।
 तक्ष्मणेन धनुर्द्वन्द्वकरेण परिसेवितम् ॥ ६०॥
 एवं ध्यात्वा सदात्मानं रामं सर्वहृदि स्थितम् ।
 भक्त्या परमया युक्तो मुच्यते नात्र संशयः ॥ ६१॥

hr̥tpadmakarṇike svarṇapīṭhe maṇigaṇānvite ।
 mṛduślakṣṇatare tatra jānakyā saha saṁsthitam ॥ 58॥
 vīrāsanaṁ viśālākṣaṁ vidyutpuñjanibhāmbaram ।
 kirīṭahārakeyūraukaustubhādibhiranvitam ॥ 59॥
 nūpuraiḥ kaṭakairbhāntaṁ tathaiva vanamālayā ।
 lakṣmaṇena dhanurdvandvakareṇa parisevitam ॥ 60॥
 evaṁ dhyātvā sadātmānaṁ rāmaṁ sarvahr̥di sthitam ।
 bhaktyā paramayā yukto mucyate nātra saṁśayaḥ ॥ 61॥

58-61. [Till this point Kalnemi has expounded upon the Nirguna aspect of the Supreme Being. This form is pure cosmic Consciousness, and it lives in the form of a creature's Atma, his soul, residing in his gross physical body. Meditation on the Atma is akin to worshipping the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma. This leads to bliss and liberation from all miseries associated with the body and the world in which this body lives.

Now, in verse nos. 58-63, Kalnemi describes how to worship the Sagun aspect of the same Supreme Being, who in the present case has manifested himself as Lord Ram.]

In the petals of the heart-like lotus there is a gem-studded, very beautiful golden throne. On it is seated 'he' (Sri Ram—refer verse no. 61) along with Janki (Sita) (58).

He (Sri Ram) is sitting in the 'Viraasan' posture¹, has large eyes resembling lotus petals; his clothes resemble the splendour, brilliance and radiance of a 'creeper-of-light' as they dazzle and shimmer on his divine form.

He is adorned by many ornaments, such as a tiara, a necklace, armlets and the Kaustav Mani² amongst others. The Lord looks extremely charming in his beauteous form (59).

He wears anklets, ear-pins and nose-pins, and a Vanmala³. The Lord is being served by Laxman (his younger brother) holding two bows (one belonging to him and the other kept ready for Lord Sri Ram) (60).

The Lord is the one who resides in the heart of all the creatures as their 'true self' or Atma; as a microcosmic form of pure cosmic Consciousness.

If you (Ravana) meditate upon this view or vision of Lord Sri Ram with full devotion, dedication, conviction, faith and belief, there is no doubt that you will attain emancipation and salvation (61).

[Note—¹The 'Viraasan' is a sitting posture adopted by warriors.

²The ‘Kaustav Mani’ is a jewel worn by Lord Vishnu on his chest.

³The Varmala is a garland worn by Vishnu, generally made of marigold flowers.]

शृणु वै चरितं तस्य भक्तैर्नित्यमनन्यधीः ।
 एवं चेत्कृतपूर्वाणि पापानि च महान्त्यपि ।
 क्षणादेव विनश्यन्ति यथाग्नेस्तूलराशयः ॥ ६२॥

śṛṇu vai caritaṁ tasya bhaktairnityamananyadhīḥ ।
 evaṁ cetkṛtapūrvāṇi pāpāni ca mahāntyapi ।
 kṣaṇādeva vinaśyanti yathāgnestūlarāśayaḥ ॥ 62॥

62. [Kalmemi further says that if it is also not possible for Ravana to do as he has advised him in the aforesaid verses, then he should at least do the following—] You must daily listen to his (Lord Sri Ram's) stories that are inherently holy, pure and divine. While doing this, have full concentration of mind; pay full attention to what is being narrated; and listen to these stories being narrated by the Lord's devotees with devotion and faith.

By doing so, the dark packet that consists of all your previous sins will perish sooner than you expect; it will be destroyed literally in a second just like a huge bundle of cotton perishes in a raging fire¹ (62).

[Note—¹Kalmemi has expounded on three ways of worshipping Lord Ram, a manifestation of the Supreme Being. All these methods or paths of worship lead to the same goal: all grant spiritual bliss and deliverance to the creature; all lead to the creature's emancipation and salvation; all help the spiritual aspirant to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death characteristic of this mortal world, with its attendant miseries, grief and torments; all hand-hold him and lead him towards attainment of eternal beatitude and felicity; all grant his soul eternal bliss and happiness.

(i) The first method espoused by Kalmemi is based on the philosophy of the Upanishads that essentially say that the individual's soul, known as his Atma, is a microcosmic form of the universal and cosmic Soul known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being. The Atma of an individual is his ‘true self’, and it is pure consciousness. Since this Atma is an image of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, it follows that a creature is a microcosmic form of the Parmatma. It is due to delusions created by Maya (the powers of cosmic Consciousness to create delusions and illusions) that a creature thinks that he is different from the Parmatma, and in order to find peace and spiritual happiness he goes searching for the Parmatma, the Lord God, the Supreme Being, to obtain his blessings, oblivious and ignorant of the fact that he has to look no further than his own inner-self to see that Parmatma residing right within him as his own Atma. Once this realisation happens, the creature feels bliss within himself.

Hence, the first method espoused by Kalmemi deals with the form of worship of Lord Ram, who is a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness, that relates to the Nirguna form of the Lord, the form that has no physical and identifiable specific attributes, because it incorporates every aspect of all virtues that exist in this creation

in its cosmic form. It is a universal form of the Lord that is known as Brahm: it is a form that is invisible, subtle, sublime, all-pervading, all-encompassing and cosmic in its essential nature. It is a form that is called the Atma of an individual creature at the microcosmic level of creation, and the Parmatma at the macrocosmic level of existence, both being the same pure Consciousness existing at two levels or planes.

To successful practice this method of worship of the Lord, Kalnemi advises meditation and contemplation upon one's own self, which is pure Consciousness known as the Atma. For this one has to practice self-restraint on one's sense organs and their inherent tendency to be attached with and attracted to this mundane material world. Renunciation is a tool to enable this. This path is called the path of Gyan, the path of wisdom and self-realisation that leads to enlightenment, a path that is usually followed by great sages, hermits and ascetics. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 46-56.}

(ii) The second approach lays stress on the path of Bhakti—the path of devotion, adoration and worship of the Sagun or the visible aspect of the same Lord God known as the Parmatma. This aspect of the Supreme Being relates to one or the other forms in which he had revealed himself for the benefit of his devotees. One such revealed divine form of the Supreme Being is Lord Ram, the Lord whose life and time is narrated in the epic Ramayana. This form has attributes; it has a visible and physical existence unlike the invisible and attribute-less cosmic form of the Lord.

So, worshipping and adoring this Saguna form of the Supreme Being, which in the present case is Lord Ram, becomes easier and more practical for an individual spiritual aspirant because he can easily relate to it and understand about it using the parameters of this physical world that are known to him, with which he is conversant and comfortable, as compared to the Nirguna form which he might find too abstract and difficult to comprehend, and therefore it does not appeal to him. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 57-61.}

Both are the two sides of the same coin, and both lead to liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation; both the lines lead to the same goal of attainment of spiritual bliss, beatitude and felicity; both path lead to Mukti or Moksha.

(iii) And finally, if both these above two paths do not appeal to an individual, Kalnemi prescribes a third and simple method—which is to attentively hear, with devotion, faith and belief, the divine stories of the Lord being narrated by his devotees. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 62.}

Dear Readers, you will appreciate that we, the narrator as well as his listener, the author and his reader, are obviously following this third path expounded by Kalnemi for bringing peace and bliss to the soul, which is the path of 'narration and listening', including of course 'reading', the divine Stories of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, as we are currently engaged in. So blessed are these moments for all of us.]

भजस्व रामं परिपूर्णमेकं विहाय वैरं निजभक्तियुक्तः ।

हृदा सदा भावितभावरूपं अनामरूपं पुरुषं पुराणम् ॥ ६३॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे षष्ठः सर्गः ॥ ६॥

bhajasva rāmaṃ paripūrṇamekaṃ vihāya vairam nijabhaktiyuktaḥ ।

hrdā sadā bhāvitabhāvarūpaṃ anāmarūpaṃ puruṣaṃ purāṇam ॥ 63॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe ṣaṣṭhaḥ
sargaḥ ॥ 6॥

63. You must always worship and adore, have dedication and devotion for, have faith and firm conviction in Lord Sri Ram who is complete in all respects, and is the one of his kind (i.e. the Lord has no parallel; there is no one with whom one can compare the greatness of the Lord with).

You should forsake all animosity and ill-will with him, and instead involve yourself with self-inspired and sustained devotion for the Lord who actually has no name or form (because his primary form is Nirguna).

Verily, in his cosmic form he is known as the ‘Viraat Purush¹’ who is adored and worshipped in the Purans (ancient scriptures).

You must always concentrate your mind and meditate upon such a Lord in your heart. The Lord can assume any form which is compatible and in consonant with the desires, pleasures and wishes of his devotees. [To wit, the Lord assumes a form in which his devotee wishes to worship him.] (63).

[Note—¹The “Viraat Purush” is the cosmic form of the Supreme Being. It is another name for Lord Vishnu. The word ‘Viraat’ means vast; it refers to that form of the Lord that is all-pervading and macrocosmic in nature. The word ‘Purush’ means a Male.

Therefore, the Viraat Purush is the name given to the Supreme Father of creation who has a form as vast and measureless as this creation itself.]

Thus ends Canto 6 of Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand that describes the conversation between Lord Shiva and Uma.

Sub-section: 15.2.3 – Lanka Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 1-41:-

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

कालनेमिवचः श्रुत्वा रावणोऽमृतसन्निभम् ।

जज्वाल क्रोधताम्राक्षः सर्पिरद्धिरिवग्निमत् ॥ १॥

निहन्मि त्वां दुरात्मानं मच्छासनपराङ्मुखम् ।

परैः किञ्चिद्गृहीत्वा त्वं भाषसे रामकिङ्करः ॥ २॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

kālanemivacaḥ śrutvā rāvaṇo'mṛtasannibham ।

jajvāla krodhatāmṛākṣaḥ sarpiradbhirivāgnimat ॥ 1॥

nihanmi tvāṁ durātmānaṁ macchāsanaparāṇmukham ।

paraiḥ kiñcidgrhītvā tvāṁ bhāṣase rāmakīṅkaraḥ ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva continued with his narration, saying—'Oh Parvati! When Ravana heard these wise words of Kalnemi, which were actually equivalent to a shower of life-giving nectar called Amrit raining down on Ravana, he did not like them as he was in the throes of death and overcome with delusions.

Consequentially, he became excessively angry and indignant; he became wrathful and exasperated, and his eyes became fiery red with anger. His general reaction to Kalnemi's advice was as if butter or oil was poured on a burning fire; he spluttered and sizzled in excess of anger and wrathfulness.

[To wit, Ravana became furious at being lectured by Kalnemi. He was not accustomed to being lectured at. He spewed fire and brimstone by his demeanours. He cursed and muttered abuses at the poor fellow, calling him with the most abhorable names, grinding his teeth and clenching his fists to imply that he would twist Kalnemi's neck like one wrings wet cloth to squeeze water out of it.] (1)

Ravana threatened Kalnemi with dire consequences: 'I shall kill you, oh you wicked fellow, for disobeying me. It appears that you have taken something from (i.e. have been bribed by) my enemy, for you speak as if you were a servant of Sri Ram, in his pay-roll!' (2).

कालनेमिरुवाचेदं रावणं देव किं क्रुधा ।
न रोचते मे वचनं यदि गत्वा करोमि तत् ॥ ३॥
इत्युक्त्वा प्रययौ शीघ्रं कालनेमिर्महासुरः ।
नोदितो रावणेनैव हनूमद्विघ्नकारणात् ॥ ४॥

kālanemiruvācedaṃ rāvaṇaṃ deva kiṃ krudhā ।
na rocate me vacanaṃ yadi gatvā karomi tat ॥ 3॥
ityuktvā prayayau śīghraṃ kālanemirmahāsuraḥ ।
nodito rāvaṇenaiva hanūmadvighnakāraṇāt ॥ 4॥

3-4. Then Kalnemi said to Ravana, 'Oh Lord! Why do you become so angry? If you do not like what I have said, then I shall go and do as you tell me' (3).

Saying this, the great demon Kalnemi went from there immediately to create a hindrance, an obstacle, in Hanuman's work (i.e. in his path) at the behest of Ravana (4).

स गत्वा हिमवत्पार्श्वं तपोवनमकल्पयत् ।
तत्र शिष्यैः परिवृतो मुनिवेषधरः खलः ॥ ५॥
गच्छतो मार्गमासाद्य वायुसूनोर्महात्मनः ।
ततो गत्वा ददर्शाथ हनूमानाश्रमं शुभम् ॥ ६॥
चिन्तयामास मनसा श्रीमान् पवननन्दनः ।
पुरा न दृष्टमेतन्मे मुनिमण्डलमुत्तमम् ॥ ७॥

sa gatvā himavatpārśvaṃ tapovanamakalpayat ।
tatra śiṣyaiḥ parivr̥to muniveṣadharāḥ khalah ॥ 5॥
gacchato mārgamāsādyā vāyusūnormahātmanaḥ ।
tato gatvā dadarśātha hanūmānāśramaṃ śubham ॥ 6॥
cintayāmāsa manasā śrīmān pavananandanaḥ ।
purā na dr̥ṣṭametanme munimaṇḍalamuttamam ॥ 7॥

5-7. That impostor and wicked fellow went to the foothills of the Himalayas and created an illusionary Tapovan (i.e. a forest where hermits, ascetics and sages live to do penances and austerities), and seated himself disguised as a hermit surrounded by his disciples (5).

That spot was directly on the path by which Hanuman was going (cruising) through the air. When he reached the site, he saw that beautiful and auspicious looking hermitage (6).

The son of the wind-god (Hanuman) thought to himself, 'When I went by this way on the earlier occasion, I had not seen this magnificent group of hermits and their hermitage (7).

मार्गो विभ्रंशितो वा मे भ्रमो वा चित्तसम्भवः ।
यद्वाऽऽविश्याश्रमपदं दृष्ट्वा मुनिमशेषतः ॥ ८॥
पीत्वा जलं ततो यामि द्रोणाचलमनुत्तमम् ।
इत्युक्त्वा प्रविवेशाथ सर्वतो योजनायतम् ॥ ९॥
आश्रमं कदलीशालखर्जूरपनसादिभिः ।
समावृतं पक्वफलैर्नम्रशाखैश्च पादपैः ॥ १०॥

mārgo vibhramśito vā me bhramo vā cittasambhavaḥ ।
yadvā"viśyāśramapadaṁ dr̥ṣṭvā munimaśeṣataḥ ॥ 8॥
pītvā jalaṁ tato yāmi droṇācalamanuttamam ।
ityuktvā praviveśātha sarvato yojanāyatam ॥ 9॥
āśramaṁ kadaliśālakharjūrapanasādibhiḥ ।
samāvṛtaṁ pakvaphalairnamraśākhaiśca pādapaiḥ ॥ 10॥

8-10. Have I lost my way, or am I having some hallucination or optical illusion in my mind. Well, let me go to that hermitage nevertheless and see (meet) those exalted sages (8), drink water, and after that (having relaxed a bit and refreshed myself) I shall proceed to the Dronachal mountain which is the best among all the mountains'.

Deciding thus, he went to that illusionary hermitage. It was spread in an area of 1 Yojan (roughly 8 miles) in all the directions (i.e. it had a radius of approximately 8 miles) (9).

It was full of fruit trees, such as plantain, date palm and jackfruit etc., which were so laden with ripe fruits that their branches were bent. Besides these trees, there were Sal trees too (10).

वैरभावविनिर्मुक्तं शुद्धं निर्मललक्षणम् ।
तस्मिन्महाश्रमे रम्ये कालनेमिः स राक्षसः ॥ ११॥
इन्द्रयोगं समास्थाय चकार शिवपूजनम् ।
हनूमानभिवाद्याह गौरवेण महासुरम् ॥ १२॥

vairabhāvavinirmuktaṁ śuddhaṁ nirmalalakṣaṇam ।
tasminmahāśrame ramye kālanemiḥ sa rākṣasaḥ ॥ 11॥
indrayogaṁ samāsthāya cakāra śivapūjanam ।

hanūmānabhivādyāha gauraveṇa mahāsuram ॥ 12॥

11-12. That pure and holy looking hermitage was devoid of any hint of animosity, malice, enmity or ill-will. Inside that great and pleasant hermitage, the demon Kalnemi (11) was worshipping Lord Shiva by invoking the great magical trick called 'Indra Yoga' or 'Indrajal'¹.

Hanuman bowed before him with great respect, but at the same time with great sense of self-respect, dignity and honour² (12).

[Note—¹The 'Indrajal' is the name given to practice of witch craft and deception. Kalnemi was worshipping Lord Shiva with a crooked mind. He pretended to be worshipping the Lord but his mind was occupied by other ominous thoughts; he was thinking of means to trap and kill Hanuman. At the same time, he was also worried about his own safety should Hanuman discover his dirty trick.

He was in such a hurry that though he seemed to worship Lord Shiva but there was no Shivalingam there. The meditative posture he adopted and the pretension of worshipping Lord Shiva was intended to mislead Hanuman and make him believe that he was a great ascetic-devotee of Lord Shiva who was devoted to the Nirguna form of the Lord.

²Hanuman was a manifestation of Lord Shiva's eleventh form known as Rudra. So when he observed that Kalnemi was worshipping Shiva, Hanuman felt honoured.

Secondly, Hanuman was a messenger of Lord Ram, the supreme Lord of this creation whom even Lord Shiva worshipped. So therefore, Hanuman was not an ordinary messenger; he took pride and honour in the fact that he represents the Supreme Being.

Thirdly, he wished to subtly tell this hermit that he is bowing before him out of deference to his form as a hermit; for otherwise he would not have cared a dime for who he might be. So the hermit be careful with him.]

भगवन् रामदूतोऽहं हनूमान्नाम नामतः ।
रामकार्येण महता क्षीराब्धिं गन्तुमुद्यतः ॥ १३॥
तृषा मां बाधते ब्रह्मन्नदकं कुत्र विद्यते ।
यथेच्छं पातुमिच्छामि कथ्यतां मे मुनीश्वर ॥ १४॥

bhagavan rāmadūto'haṃ hanūmānnāma nāmataḥ ।
rāmakāryeṇa mahatā kṣīrābधिं gantumudyataḥ ॥ 13॥
tṛṣā māṃ bādhate brahmannudakaṃ kutra vidyate ।
yathēcchāṃ pātumicchāmi kathyatāṃ me munīśvara ॥ 14॥

13-14. Addressing the hermit, Hanuman said, 'Oh the exalted one! I am a messenger of Sri Ram. My name is Hanuman, and I am going to the 'Kshir Sagar' on some great work of my Lord (13).

Oh Brahmin! I am very thirsty and wish to drink a lot of water. Oh great sage! Please tell me the place where there is water here.' (14).

तच्छ्रुत्वा मारुतेर्वाक्यं कालनेमिस्तमब्रवीत् ।
 कमण्डलुगतं तोयं मम त्वं पातुमर्हसि ॥ १५॥
 भुङ्क्ष्व चेमानि पक्वानि फलानि तदनन्तरम् ।
 निवसस्व सुखेनात्र निद्रामेहि त्वरास्तु मा ॥ १६॥

tacchrutvā mārutervākyaṃ kālanemistamabravit ।
 kamaṇḍalugataṃ toyaṃ mama tvaṃ pātumarhasi ॥ 15॥
 bhuṅkṣva cemāni pakvāni phalāni tadanantaram ।
 nivasasva sukhenātra nidrāmehi tvarāstu mā ॥ 16॥

15-16. Hearing these words of Maruti (Hanuman), Kalnemi replied, 'You can drink the water of my Kamandalu (a pot of water carried by hermits; it is generally made from dried, hollowed out, round pumpkin) (15).

Quench your hunger by eating the ripe fruits here, then sleep a while and take some rest. Do not be in such a hurry (16).

भूतं भव्यं भविष्यं च जानामि तपसा स्वयम् ।
 उत्थितो लक्ष्मणः सर्वे वानरा रामवीक्षिताः ॥ १७॥
 तच्छ्रुत्वा हनुमानाह कमण्डलुजलेन मे ।
 न शाम्यत्याधिका तृष्णा ततो दर्शय मे जलम् ॥ १८॥

bhūtaṃ bhavyaṃ bhaviṣyaṃ ca jānāmi tapasā svayam ।
 utthito lakṣmaṇaḥ sarve vānarā rāmaṃvīkṣitāḥ ॥ 17॥
 tacchrutvā hanumānāha kamaṇḍalujalena me ।
 na śāmyatyadhikā tṛṣṇā tato darśaya me jalam ॥ 18॥

17-18. On the strength of my severe penances and austerities (Tapa), I know all about the past, the present and the future. Presently, Laxman and other monkeys have become conscious and have got up (i.e. they have regained their consciousness and have been revived back to life) when Sri Ram saw them or glanced at them with his gracious look that infused new life in them.' [To wit, there is no hurry now. You can relax as much as you wish.] (17).

Hearing this, Hanuman said, 'I have a great thirst. It cannot be quenched by the little water of the Kamandalu. So, show me a pond or a large body of water (18).

[Note—¹ Kalnemi said a lie in order to impress upon Hanuman that there was no need to hurry and worry when he said that he knew all about the past, present and future, and that Laxman and other monkeys were revived by Sri Ram's benevolent glance. Kalnemi used this as a ploy to make Hanuman waste precious time in bathing and relaxing and eating fruits so that he will be late in taking the herb back to Laxman within the allotted time-frame to make the herb effective, for once this time passed the herb won't work.

Besides this, Kalnemi also planned to kill Hanuman while he was asleep and off his guard.]

तथेत्याज्ञापयामास वटुं मायाविकल्पितम् ।
 वटो दर्शय विस्तीर्णं वायुसूनुर्जलाशयम् ॥ १९॥
 निमील्य चाक्षिणीं तोयं पीत्वागच्छ ममान्तिकम् ।
 उपदेक्ष्यामि ते मन्त्रं येन द्रक्ष्यसि चौषधीः ॥ २०॥

tathetyājñāpayāmāsa vaṭuṃ māyāvikalpitaṃ ।
 vaṭo darśaya vistīrṇaṃ vāyusūnorjalāśayam ॥ 19॥
 nimīlya cākṣiṇīṃ toyaṃ pītvāgaccha mamāntikam ।
 upadekṣyāmi te mantraṃ yena drakṣyasi cauṣadhīḥ ॥ 20॥

19-20. Saying 'alright', he ordered an false Brahmachari (a celibate Brahmin who is a student of a hermit), who was created by Kalnemi by using his illusionary powers, 'Oh Brahmachari! Show the son of the wind-god that large pond.' (19).

Turning to Hanuman he said, 'Close your eyes while you drink water¹, and then come to me immediately. I shall teach you a divine Mantra (a magical group of words; in modern parlance, a formulae) by the help of which you will be able to see (recognise) the medicine (herb) that you desire' (20).

[Note—¹Kalnemi wanted Hanuman to keep his eyes closed as he entered the pond because he wanted him not to see an alligator living in the water, so that this giant reptile would catch hold of Hanuman and kill him before he discovers what had happened. But unfortunately for Kalnemi, it was not so easy to fool Hanuman, for he was more than a match for both Kalnemi and the Alligator, as both will eventually be killed by him.]

तथेति दर्शितं शीघ्रं वटुना सलिलाशयम् ।
 प्रविश्य हनुमांस्तोयमपिबन्मीलितेक्षणः ॥ २१॥
 ततश्चागत्य मकरी महामाया महाकपिम् ।
 अग्रासत्तं महावेगान्मारुतिं घोररूपिणी ॥ २२॥

tatheti darśitaṃ śīghraṃ vaṭunā salilāśayam ।
 praviśya hanumāṃstoyamapibanmīlitekṣaṇaḥ ॥ 21॥
 tataścāgatya makarī mahāmāyā mahākapiṃ ।
 agrasattaṃ mahāvegānmārutim ghorarūpiṇī ॥ 22॥

21-22. Then the Brahmin said 'alright' and immediately showed the body of water to Hanuman. He entered it and began drinking water with closed eyes (as advised by Kalnemi) (21).

Just at that instant, a huge she-alligator named Makari, who was formidable and horrible in shape and size, and was very illusive, deceitful and full of dirty tricks, came up quickly to devour the great monkey named Maruti (thinking that Hanuman was foolish and gullible enough to be so easily caught and killed by her dirty tricks) (22).

ततो ददर्श हनुमान् ग्रासन्तीं मकरिं रुषा ।
 दारयामास हस्ताभ्यां वदनं सा ममार ह ॥ २३॥
 ततोऽन्तरिक्षे ददृशे दिव्यरूपधराङ्गना ।
 धान्यमातीति विख्याता हनूमन्तमथाब्रवीत् ॥ २४॥

tato dadarśa hanumān grasantīm makarīm ruṣā ।
 dārayāmāsa hastābhyāṃ vadanam sā mamāra ha ॥ 23॥
 tato'ntarikṣe dadr̥ṣe divyarūpadharāṅganā ।
 dhānyamālīti vikhyātā hanūmantamathābravīt ॥ 24॥

23-24. When Hanuman saw that the she-alligator (Makari) was swallowing him up, he was ferocious with anger, and he tore apart her mouth with his hands. As a result of this, she died instantly (23).

Just at that moment, a woman with a divine form was seen in the sky. Her name was Dhanyamali. She said to Hanuman (24)—

त्वत्प्रादादहं शापाद्धिमुक्तास्मि कपीश्वर ।
 शप्ताहं मुनिना पूर्वमप्सरा कारणान्तरे ॥ २५॥
 आश्रमे यस्तु ते दृष्टः कालनेर्मिमहासुरः ।
 रावणप्रहितो मार्गे विघ्नं कर्तुं तवानघ ॥ २६॥

tvatprasādādahaṃ śāpāddhimuktāsmi kapīśvara ।
 śaptāhaṃ muninā pūrvamapsarā kāraṇāntare ॥ 25॥
 āśrame yastu te dr̥ṣṭaḥ kālanemirmahāsuraḥ ।
 rāvaṇaprahito mārge vighnam kartuṃ tavānagha ॥ 26॥

25-26. Oh the Lord of monkeys! By your grace, I have been liberated and freed from my curse. Previously, I was an Apsara (a celestial damsel working in the court of the king of Gods, Indra). Due to some reason, a sage had cursed me (by which I had become an alligator) (25).

The person you have seen in the hermitage is a great demon called Kalnemi. Oh the sinless, pure and faultless one (i.e. Anagh)! Ravana has sent him to cause obstacles in your path. [So beware of this crooked hermit.] (26).

मुनिवेषधरो नासौ मुनिर्विप्रविहिंसकः ।
 जहि दुष्टं गच्छ शीघ्रं द्रोणाचलमनुत्तमम् ॥ २७॥
 गच्छाम्यहं ब्रह्मलोकं त्वत्स्पर्शाद्धतकल्मषा ।
 इत्युक्त्वा सा ययौ स्वर्गं हनूमानप्यथाश्रमम् ॥ २८॥

muniveṣadharo nāsau munirvipravihiṃsakaḥ ।
 jahi duṣṭam gaccha śīghram droṇācalamanuttamam ॥ 27॥
 gacchāmyaḥam brahmalokam tvatsparśāddhatakalmaṣā ।
 ityuktva sā yayau svargaṃ hanūmānapyathāśramam ॥ 28॥

27-28. That fellow who is disguised as a hermit is not a hermit at all; in fact, he is a killer of Brahmins and sages. You must kill this rascal as soon as you can, very quickly, and then proceed to Dronachal which is the best amongst the mountains (27).

I have become freed from sins and blemishes of all kinds by your touch, and am now going to the abode of Brahma'.

Saying so, she went to the heaven, and Hanuman also went back to the hermitage (28).

आगतं तं समालोक्य कालनेमिरभाषत ।

किं विलम्बेन महता तव वानरसत्तम ॥ २९॥

गृहाण मत्तो मन्त्रांस्त्वं देहि मे गुरुदक्षिणाम् ।

इत्युक्तो हनुमान्मुष्टिं ददं बद्ध्वाह यक्षसम् ॥ ३०॥

āgataṁ taṁ samālokya kālanemirabhāṣata ।

kiṁ vilambena mahatā tava vānarasattama ॥ 29॥

grhāṇa matto mantrāṁstvaṁ dehi me gurudakṣiṇām ।

ityukto hanumānmuṣṭiṁ dṛdhaṁ baddhvāha rākṣasam ॥ 30॥

29-30. Seeing him come back, Kalnemi said, 'Oh the best among the monkeys! What will you gain by delaying any further? (29). Take the Mantra from me and give me my Guru Dakshina (the offering of some gift to the teacher in return for the initiation ceremony by accepting the holy Mantra given by him; in modern terms, the teacher's fees)'.

When Kalnemi said so, Hanuman clenched his fists tight and said to the demon (30)—

गृहाण दक्षिणामेतमित्युक्त्वा निजघान तम् ।

विसृज्य मुनिवेषं स कालनेमिर्महासुरः ॥ ३१॥

युयुधे वायुपुत्रेण नानामायाविधानतः ।

महामायिकदूतोऽसौ हनूमान्मायिनां रिपुः ॥ ३२॥

grhāṇa dakṣiṇāmetāmetryuktṛvā nijaghāna tam ।

visrjya muniveṣaṁ sa kālanemirmahāsuraḥ ॥ 31॥

yuyudhe vāyuputreṇa nānāmāyāvidhānataḥ ।

mahāmāyikadūto'sau hanūmānmāyināṁ ripuḥ ॥ 32॥

31-32. 'Take your fees first', and he hit (punched) him (Kalnemi) hard with his clenched fists. Instantly, the great demon abandoned his disguise of a hermit, and assuming different illusive forms and using various tricks he began to fight with the son of the wind-god (Hanuman). But the latter was the messenger of the greatest of tricksters and magicians that Sri Ram is, and he was an enemy of the lowly, inconsequential demons.

[So, how could Hanuman be affected by these wretched impostors and their dirty tricks? To wit, no matter how hard Kalnemi tried and no matter what tricks he employed, Hanuman always outwitted him.] (31-32).

जघान मुष्टिना शीर्ष्णि भग्नमूर्धा ममार सः ।
ततः क्षीरनिधिं गत्वा दृष्ट्वा द्रोणं महागिरिम् ॥ ३३॥
अदृष्ट्वा चौषधीस्तत्र गिरिमुत्पाद्य सत्वरः ।
गृहीत्वा वायुवेगेन गत्वा रामस्य सन्निधिम् ॥ ३४॥
उवाच हनुमान् राममानीतोऽयं महागिरिः ।
यद्युक्तं कुरु देवेश विलम्बो नात्र युज्यते ॥ ३५॥

jaghāna muṣṭinā śīrṣṇi bhagnamūrdhā mamāra saḥ ।
tataḥ kṣīranidhiṃ gatvā dr̥ṣṭvā droṇaṃ mahāgirim ॥ 33॥
adr̥ṣṭvā cauṣadhīstatra girimutpāṭya satvaraḥ ।
gr̥hītvā vāyuvegena gatvā rāmasya sannidhim ॥ 34॥
uvāca hanumān rāmamānīto'yaṃ mahāgiriḥ ।
yadyuktaṃ kuru deveśa vilambo nātra yujyate ॥ 35॥

33-35. He (Hanuman) hit his (Kalnemi's) head with a clenched fist which resulted in his death due to a cracked skull. Having got rid of this obstacle, Hanuman reached the 'Kshir Sagar' and saw Mt. Dronachal (33).

But he could not find (trace or recognise) the required herbal medicine. So he swiftly uprooted and lifted the mountain itself in his hands, and took off with the speed of wind to where Sri Ram was (34).

When he reached there¹, he said to Sri Ram, 'Oh the Lord of Gods! I have brought you the great mountain. Now do whatever you think fit. It will not be proper to delay any further.' (35).

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that in this version of the Story in Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, the episode of Hanuman being shot by Bharat as he flew over Ayodhya is not mentioned as done in Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha nos. 58-60.]

श्रुत्वा हनूमतो वाक्यं रामः सन्तुष्टमानसः ।
गृहीत्वा चौषधीः शीघ्रं सुषेणेन महामतिः ॥ ३६॥
विकित्सां कारयामास लक्ष्मणाय महात्मने ।
ततः सुप्तोत्थित इव बुद्ध्वा प्रोवाच लक्ष्मणः ॥ ३७॥

śrutvā hanūmato vākyaṃ rāmaḥ santuṣṭamānasaḥ ।
gr̥hītvā cauṣadhīḥ śīghraṃ suṣeṇena mahāmatiḥ ॥ 36॥
cikitsāṃ kārayāmāsa lakṣmaṇāya mahātmane ।
tataḥ suptotthita iva buddhvā provāca lakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 37॥

36-37. Hearing these words of Hanuman, Sri Ram was very pleased. The wise Lord immediately picked (selected) the necessary medicine from that mountain¹ and got the great soul Laxman treated with it through the wise and expert Sushen. Then Laxman became conscious as if he had woken up from a dream (36-37).

[Note—¹Again this is a clear diversion from Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas and the popular belief that the selection of the medicine and its administration were both done by Sushen. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62.}]

Here, it was Sri Ram who had selected the necessary drug and Sushen had only administered it to Laxman as a doctor's assistant in a clinic. Sri Ram did not wish to take the risk of letting Sushen do the selection—for, he might have got it all wrong and jeopardise Laxman's life.]

तिष्ठ तिष्ठ क्व गन्तासि हन्मीदानीं दशानन ।
इति ब्रुवन्तमालोक्य मूर्धन्यवधाय राघवः ॥ ३८॥
मारुतिं प्राह वत्साद्य त्वत्प्रासादान्महाकपे ।
निरामयं प्रपश्यामि लक्ष्मणं भ्रातरं मम ॥ ३९॥

tiṣṭha tiṣṭha kva gantāsi hanmīdāniṃ daśānana ।
iti bruvantamālokyā mūrdhnyavaghrāya rāghavaḥ ॥ 38॥
mārutim prāha vatsādyā tvatprasādānmahākape ।
nirāmayam prapaśyāmi lakṣmaṇam bhrātaram mama ॥ 39॥

38-39. Then Laxman said (to Ravana), 'Oh the 10-headed one! Keep standing. Where will you escape now? I shall kill you right now.'¹

Hearing him say so, Raghav (Sri Ram) smelt the head of Laxman (as a gesture of affection and happiness) (38), and said to Maruti (Hanuman), 'Oh great monkey (mahākape); oh son (vatsā)! It is because of your kindness and grace that I have been able to see my brother Laxman healthy and alive today.'

[Lord Ram thanks Hanuman for his services.] (39).

[Note—¹Laxman's first reaction in challenging Ravana after regaining consciousness shows that during the time he lay unconscious time had stood still for him. So when he woke up from his slumber, he remembered the last moments before fainting, that he was fighting Ravana.]

इत्युक्त्वा वानरैः सार्धं सुग्रीवेण समन्वितः ।
विभीषणमतेनैव युद्धाय समवस्थितः ॥ ४०॥
पाषाणैः पादपैश्चैव पर्वतान्गैश्च वानराः ।
युद्धायाभिमुखा भूत्वा ययुः सर्वे युयुत्सवः ॥ ४१॥

ityuktvā vānaraiḥ sārddham sugrīveṇa samanvitaḥ ।
vibhīṣaṇamatenaiva yuddhāya samavasthitaḥ ॥ 40॥
pāṣāṇaiḥ pādapaiścaiva parvatāgraiśca vānarāḥ ।

yuddhāyābhimukhā bhūtvā yayuḥ sarve yuyutsavaḥ ॥ 41॥

40-41. Having said so, the Lord began preparations for the war with the assistance of Sugriv, Vibhishan and other monkeys (40).

Then the monkeys, who were very eager for battle, started off for the battle-field armed with rocks, trees and summits of mountains (i.e. large boulders and rocks that came in handy to them), etc. (41).

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Section 15.3: Geetawali Ramayan

Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 5-15

Let us take another brief pause at this juncture, before moving forward with this wondrous Story, to look at the episode of Laxman's fainting and his subsequent revival as narrated vividly, with poetic finesse and poignancy, by Goswami Tulsidas in his another classic known as 'Geetawali Ramayan'.

While going through the relevant verses here, we shall also read about the two very poignant moments of exceptional grief and sadness that occur during this episode. The first is when we read how Lord Ram lamented grievously when Laxman was brought to him in an unconscious state and laid down on the ground before him; and second is when we read of how Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, was overwhelmed with regret and remorse when he learnt from Hanuman about what had happened to Laxman during the battle of the previous day, because he felt so helpless and sorry for not being able to render any kind of assistance or aid to his two dear brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, during the time of their misfortune.

For this purpose, in this Section no. 15.3, we shall read from Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 5-15 as follows:

लक्ष्मण—मूर्च्छा
राग केदारा
(6/5)

राम—लषन उर लाय लये हैं।
भरे नीर राजीव—नयन सब अँग परिताप तए हैं॥ 1॥
कहत ससोक बिलोकि बंधु—मुख बचन प्रीति गुथए हैं।
सेवक—सखा भगति—भायप—गुन चाहत अब अथए हैं॥ 2॥
निज कीरति—करतूति तात! तुम सुकृती सकल जए हैं।
मैं तुम्ह बिनु तनु राखि लोक अपने अपलोक लए हैं॥ 3॥
मेरे पनकी लाज इहाँलौं हठि प्रिय प्रान दए हैं।
लागति साँगि बिभीषन ही पर, सीपर आपु भए हैं॥ 4॥
सुनि प्रभु—बचन भालु—कपि—गन, सुर सोच सुखाइ गए हैं।

तुलसी आइ पवनसुत—बिधि मानो फिरि निरमये नए हैं ॥ 5 ॥

lakṣmaṇa-mūcrchā
rāga kēdārā

(6/5)

rāma-laṣana ura lāya layē haiṁ.
bharē nīra rājīva-nayana saba aṁga paritāpa ta'ē haiṁ.. 1..
kahata sasōka bilōki bandhu-mukha bacana prīti gutha'ē haiṁ.
sēvaka-sakhā bhagati-bhāyapa-guna cāhata aba atha'ē haiṁ.. 2..
nija kīrati-karatūti tāta! tuma sukr̥tī sakala ja'ē haiṁ.
mair̥m tumha binu tanu rākhi lōka apanē apalōka la'ē haiṁ.. 3..
mērē panakī lāja ihāṁlaur̥m haṭhi priya prāna da'ē haiṁ.
lāgati sām̐gi bibhīṣana hī para, sīpara āpu bha'ē haiṁ.. 4..
suni prabhu-bacana bhālu-kapi-gana, sura sōca sukhā'i ga'ē haiṁ.
tulasī ā'i pavanāsuta-bidhi mānō phiri niramayē na'ē haiṁ.. 5..

Laxman's Fainting-I

Verse no. 6/5—[In this book “Geetawali”, Goswami Tulsidas has skipped a detailed narration of the War at Lanka, and after describing how Mandodari tried and failed to dissuade Ravana from entering a destructive war and Angad, who was sent by Lord Ram to explore the option of making peace and avoid bloodshed, too tried and failed in his attempt to make Ravana see reason, the poet has come straight to an incident when Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram and his comrade-in-arm in the war, was wounded by an arrow shot by Meghnad, the son of Ravana, during their battle. This story of Laxman’s fainting and his subsequent revival has been narrated in Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/5—to 6/15.

Briefly, the story is this: Upon being shot by a poisonous arrow by Meghnad, Laxman fell unconscious in the battle-field. When the battle for the day ended at sunset, Hanuman found Laxman lying on the ground, so he lifted him and brought him to where Lord Ram was. The Lord grieved and lamented sorely over Laxman’s apparent loss of life. This event spread gloom and loss of all hopes of victory amongst the army of the Lord; everyone was distraught and dismayed no end, while there was obvious rejoicing in Ravana’s camp.

Jamvant, the old bear king who happened to be Brahma, the Creator, in his form, advised that Sushen, the medicine man of Lanka, be brought there, as he would be able to prescribe the herb that would revive Laxman. Hanuman immediately brought him there, lifting his whole house for this purpose. Sushen advised that a herb called “Sanjivani” should be brought immediately from the mountains in the north of the mainland (i.e. one of the mountains of the mighty Himalyan range to the north of the Indian peninsula), and it has to be done quick because the herb has to be administered to Laxman before dawn.

The Lord asked Hanuman to get it, because Hanuman had proved himself as the only one in the whole group who could jump long distances by his crossing of the great ocean in one gigantic leap. So, Hanuman went to the northern mountains, and

unable to decide which herb to pick up, he uprooted the whole mountain in his hand and cruised back to Lanka through the sky like a plane.

Meanwhile, as he was passing over Ayodhya with the huge mountain in one hand, Bharat, the brother of Lord Ram, saw him a streak of light passing over the night sky, and thinking him to be a demon, Bharat shot him down with a headless arrow to investigate the matter. Hanuman fell down, but since the arrow was only a shaft and Hanuman himself was exceptionally strong in body, no mentionable injury occurred to him. He narrated the latest developments to Bharat, sought his permission and once again resumed his journey to Lanka.

He reached just before dawn; Sushen administered the herb and Laxman was revived, sending cheer in the rank and file of the Lord's army while a thick pall of gloom and dejection spread over the demon army.

This event, "the fainting of Laxman and his revival" has been narrated in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62; and (ii) Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/52—6/55 in detail.

In the meanwhile, the probable reason why Tulsidas chose not to describe the details of the War of Lanka in this book, but limit himself to narrating some isolated incidents, such as Mandadori's pleading with Ravna and Angad as an emissary to Ravana's court, is that he had already narrated all other events extensively in his other two version of the Ramayan, viz. "Ram Charit Manas" and "Kavitawali", in their respective Lanka Kands.

As the reader may have noted, the present book "Geetawali" is more focused on Lord Ram, describing the Lord's various moods, emotions and thoughts, his divine deeds and marvelous acts, as well as on some milestone incidents that highlight the role played by some of the more prominent and faithful devotees and followers of the Lord, some of whom had used their wit and words of wisdom to honour and glorify Lord Ram (e.g. Mandadori, Angad), some worshipped him and lived a lived like the Lord himself had led (Bharat), some helped the Lord to complete the task for which he had come down to earth, which was to eliminate the demons, by aiding him in his mission (Sugriv), some who actually acted as the foot-soldier to accomplish the task (Hanuman), some who showed how a soul awaits its deliverance and salvation by seeking the Lord (Sabari, Ahilya), some who made the ultimate sacrifice by laying down their lives in the service of the Lord (Jatau), and some who not only helped the Lord in his day-to-day activity but took upon himself to uphold the sanctity of the words of the Lord even it meant sacrificing his own life in the service of the Lord (Laxman).

We find that each such character finds a mention in Geetawali, and events related to them vis-à-vis Lord Ram are narrated in the book, some such events in great detail (such as was the case of 'Bharat' in Ayodhya Kand), and others a little more conservatively ('Ahilya' in Baal Kand, 'Jatau' and 'Sabari' in Aranya Kand, 'Mandodari' and 'Angad' in Lanka Kand).

In the case of Laxman, he shared a close bond of mutual love and affection with Lord Lord Ram that made him the closest of all the Lord's devotees and associates. The personal sacrifices that Laxman had made were unmatched. He had suffered all the pains, the miseries, the tribulations and the physical difficulties that Lord Ram had undergone during the fourteen years in the forest in his endeavour to finally eliminate the demons, something that Bharat had missed, albeit the latter's devotion for the Lord was in no way less than that of Laxman. Even Lord Ram has

expressly acknowledged this fact. {Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/7, stanza no.1.}

Laxman was Lord Ram's only companion and friend in the days when the Lord found himself absolutely desolate, dejected, hopeless and inconsolable after Sita was abducted. Imaging what would have happened if Laxman was not at his side in those crucial moments when Lord Ram discovered Sita was stolen: he was completely dejected, distraught, crestfallen and helpless, swooning in distress, about to faint, and on the verge of well nigh losing all courage and hope, and wishing to lie down and dye. At that time it was Laxman who had lent him his shoulder, who encouraged the Lord to gather himself and face the situation bravely rather than surrendering meekly, because those who have courage and resilience are the winners in the end, and this was the need of the hour. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 30.}

Whenever Lord Ram was attacked by the ferocious demons, it was Laxman who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Lord, and there are umpteen instances of it. Then, throughout the fourteen years of exile in the wilderness, Laxman had kept vigil during the night and other times when Lord Ram and Sita lied down to rest. {This particular fact is clearly hinted at in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90.}

Further, Laxman took it upon himself to ensure that all the words of honour that Lord Ram gave to others, the promises the Lord had made, are kept, even if it meant putting his own life in danger, as is highlighted in the current verse no. 6/5, stanza no. 4 of Geetawali as narrated herein below.

And to top it all, Laxman made the ultimate sacrifice that anyone can make: preferring to die in the cause of the Lord, the event that is the subject matter of the present verse nos. 6/5—6/15 of Geetawali.

Therefore, the event of Laxman fainting and the subsequent developments are narrated to show how Lord Ram loved his younger brother intensely, inspite of the fact that he had violated the Lord's order not to leave Sita alone, and which one disobedience on the part of Laxman had led to all the subsequent sufferings and miseries the Lord as well as Laxman himself had to endure.

Further, this incident sort of acts as a bridge of information that links the Lord Ram and his condition and whereabouts towards the end of his fourteen year exile period which was about to end, and Bharat who was eagerly awaiting the Lord's return to Ayodhya, for we shall soon see that after the full narration of this event of Laxman's fainting and revival, Tulsidas immediately starts on the next important milestone in the story of the Ramayan: viz. the Lord's victory in the War of Lanka, and his return to Ayodhya.]

[When Laxman fainted at being shot by an arrow of Meghnad, Hanuman brought the wounded Laxman to where Lord Ram was.]

Lord Ram lifted Laxman and clasped him to his bosom. His lotus-like eyes were filled with tears, and his entire body was extremely weary with lamentation, contrition, sorrow and anguish (1).

Seeing the face of his brother, he was overwhelmed with sorrows and anguish and said these woeful words soaked in deep regret but full of affection and love for Laxman: 'It appears that all the qualities and characteristics of an excellent servant, a friend, a devotee or worshipper and a brotherhood are about to set¹ (2).

[¹That is to say: “Since Laxman has all these grand and desirable qualities and characteristics in him, if he dies then it would be equivalent of all these noble virtues coming to an end for good.”

Lord Ram is expressing his intense love and affection as well as respect for Laxman; he acknowledges Laxman’s sacrifices for him and says that he is extremely obliged to him. In Ram Charit Manas, Lord Ram has said that one can find all other relations in this world, but it is impossible to find a loving, faithful, devoted and dear brother: refer, Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 61.]

Oh Dear (brother Laxman)! You have acquired great fame and renown in the world by the virtue of your noble characters, and your good and virtuous deeds.

By keeping this mine body (i.e. by keeping myself alive) without you (at my side), I have only earned a bad name and a lot of infamy² (3).

[² “To wit, one one side of the scale are you, Laxman, who has laid down your life for me; and on the other side of the scale is me, Ram, who has used all your services and let you face the wrath of the enemy which I should have faced myself instead. Tell me my dear brother, what face do I have to live without you?”

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 61.]

Ah, alas! You are indeed so vigilant and resolute about upholding my vows that you had laid down your life for it.

That is why, though the ‘Shakti’ (an arrow with a specially charged tip and so potent that it cannot go in vain) was aimed at Vibhishan, you had borne it like a shield.³ (4).

[³The story goes that Ravana had aimed his arrow to shoot down Vibhishan, but Laxman interceded and accepted the arrow himself. This was done by him to protect Vibhishan from any harm so as to uphold Lord Ram’s promise of giving him unconditional protection. This is what the Lord means here: Laxman laid down his life like a true friend and brother to keep the Lord’s words that he would give full protection to Vibhishan.

This incident is narrated in “Adhyatma Ramayan” of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-8.]

Hearing these mournful words of lamentation being spoken by Lord Sri Ram, the bears, monkeys and Gods became very disheartened, dejected, depressed, anguished, forlorn, gloomy and sad⁴.

Tulsidas says that just at this moment, the son of the Wind-God (Hanuman) appeared (with the life saving Sanjivani herb) as if he was the Creator (Brahma) himself, and infused new life in him (Sri Ram)⁵ (5).

[⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 61.

⁵Brahma is the Creator and the one who injects life in the body of a living being at the time of its birth. So Tulsidas means that when a new lease of life was granted to Laxman by Hanuman by bringing the herb that revived him, it was like he played the role of the Creator vis-à-vis Laxman.]

मोपै तो न कछू है आई।
 ओर निबाहि भली बिधि भायप चल्यो लखन-सो भाई॥ 1॥
 पुर, पितु-मातु, सकल सुख परिहरि जेहि बन-बिपति बँटाई।
 ता सँग हौं सुरलोक सोक तजि सक्यो न प्रान पठाई॥ 2॥
 जानत हौं या उर कठोरतें कुलिस कठिनता पाई।
 सुमिरि सनेह सुमित्रा-सुतको दरकि दरार न जाई॥ 3॥
 तात-मरन, तिय-हरन, गीध-बध, भुज दाहिनी गँवाई।
 तुलसी मैं सब भाँति आपने कुलहि कालिमा लाई॥ 4॥

rāga sōraṭha

(6/6)

mōpai tō na kachū hvai ā'ī.
 ōra nibāhi bhalī bidhi bhāyapa calyō lakhana-sō bhā'ī.. 1..
 pura, pitu-mātu, sakala sukha parihari jēhi bana-bipati baṁṭā'ī.
 tā saṁga hauṁ suralōka sōka taji sakyō na prāna paṭhā'ī.. 2..
 jānata hauṁ yā ura kaṭhōratēm kulisa kaṭhinatā pā'ī.
 sumiri sanēha sumitrā-sutakō daraki darāra na jā'ī.. 3..
 tāta-marana, tiya-harana, gīdha-badha, bhuja dāhinī gaṁvā'ī.
 tulasī mairi saba bhāṁti āpanē kulahi kālimā lā'ī.. 4..

Laxman's Fainting-II

Verse no. 6/6—[Lord Ram laments and grieves—] ‘Alas! I couldn't do anything! Today, Laxman, who was matchless as a brother, upheld the rules and sanctity of brotherhood, and most unfortunately, he has gone now (died) (1).

He, who had resolutely forsaken the city, father, mother and all types of comfort and happiness to share the troubles and tribulations of my forest exile¹—I could not abandon my sorrows and send my soul with him to the abode of Gods (i.e. I could not die with him) (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 61.]

It appears that Vajra (the strong and hard weapon of Indra) has obtained its hardness (toughness, sternness) from my hardened (stiff, emotionless) heart.

Verily, this is why perhaps why my heart did not crack by recalling and remembering the affection and love that Laxman had for me (as soon as I heard that he has fallen to the ground in the battle-field) (3).

Alas! I was the cause for my father's (Dasrath's) death, my wife (Sita) was abducted due to my misfortunes, the vulture king (Jatau) too lost his life for my cause, and now I had to lose this right arm of mine (i.e. Laxman). Thus, I have tarnished the reputation of my whole clan in all of my actions² (4).’

[²Lord Ram laments that the events of his life will be remembered by history as one in which many souls had to suffer for the sake of one individual: for instance,

(a) king Dasrath died because he could not bear separation from Lord Ram, and his death could have been avoided if the Lord paid heed to Sumantra and his own mother Kaushalya and stayed back at Ayodhya; (b) Sita was kidnapped because of his carelessness as he ought to have sternly refused her request to bring the deer because the forest was full of dangers and he would not venture to take a grave risk such as this; (c) Jatau died also due to him, because it was due to his attempt to protect Sita from being taken away by Ravana; and (d) it is now Laxman who too is on the verge of losing his life due to Lord Ram, because Laxman could have stayed comfortably at Ayodhya, but he chose to go with the Lord to the forest, share all the Lord's pains and miseries, and not he is on his death bed because he chose to lend his helping hand to Lord Ram in his war efforts to get Sita back.

In short, Lord Ram laments that so many people suffered because of their association with him. It is he who has misfortune writ large in his destiny, and it is he who has dragged other innocent souls to suffer alongside with him.

The Lord regrets that all the great kings of the Raghu dynasty were known for providing solace and succour to others, and not for being instrumental in their pain and sufferings like Lord Ram has been.]

(6 / 7)

मेरो सब पुरुषारथ थाको ।
 बिपति बँटावन बंधु-बाहु बिनु करौं भरोसो काको ॥ 1 ॥
 सुनु, सुग्रीव ! साँचेहू मोपर फेर्यो बदन बिधाता ।
 ऐसे समय समर-संकट हौं तज्यो लषन-सो भ्राता ॥ 2 ॥
 गिरि, कानन जैहैं साखा-मृग, हौं पुनि अनुज-सँघाती ।
 हैहै कहा बिभीषनकी गति रही सोच भरि छाती ॥ 3 ॥
 तुलसी सुनि प्रभु-बचन भालु-कपि सकल बिकल हिय हारे ।
 जामवंत हनुमंत बोलि तब, औसर जानि प्रचारे ॥ 4 ॥

(6/7)

mērō saba puruṣāratha thākō.
 bipati baṁṭāvana bandhu-bāhu binu karaum bharōsō kākō.. 1..
 sunu, sugrīva! sāṁcēhū mōpara phēryō badana bidhātā.
 aisē samaya samara-saṅkaṭa haum tajyō laṣana-sō bhrātā.. 2..
 giri, kānana jaihairi sākhā-mṛga, haum puni anuja-saṁghātī.
 hvaihai kahā bibhīṣanakī gati rahī sōca bhari chātī.. 3..
 tulasī suni prabhu-bacana bhālu-kapi sakala bikala hiya hārē.
 jāmavanta hanumanta bōli taba, ausara jāni pracārē.. 4..

Laxman's Fainting-III

Verse no. 6/7—[Lord Ram continues with his grieving and lamenting—] ‘All my manly courage, resilience, strength, valour and vigour seem to have become tired now (“mērō saba puruṣāratha thākō”; i.e. I have lost the courage, the resolution and the

spirit to do anything further now; I have lost all hopes and feel doomed and dismayed exceedingly).

Without my brother who had shared my woes and troubles, and who was the strength of my arms and an embodiment of my courage, who else should I rely upon now in his absence? [To wit, I say, no one can ever replace Laxman.] (1).

Listen, Sugriv! The Creator has indeed turned his face away from me (i.e. he has become opposed and malicious towards me). For, this is why when the fear of war is looming large and the war is imminent, the Creator has contrived it that Laxman-like brother would also forsake me. [I am so unfortunate and evil-omened that Laxman who represented my arm, my strength, my courage, my valour, and was my friend and companion of all times, has left me at this crucial juncture when the war is about to start. Surely and without gainsay it appears that the envious Creator is hell-bent at tormenting me and wreaking his vengeance upon me, and he had therefore devised this device of falling Laxman to make a mockery of me.] (2).

The monkeys would go back to the mountains and forests (from whence they had come), while I would follow my brother Laxman (i.e. I would too die), but my only worry and concern now is: what, then, will be the fate of Vibhishan?¹ (3).'

[¹Such a remarkable observation of the gracious and munificent Lord! He is more concerned about Vibhishan whom he had given shelter and refuge, with a promise of protecting him and restoring his honour by crowning him the king of Lanka, in the same court in which his elder brother Ravana had kicked him and insulted him. Now what would happen? Laxman is almost dead, Lord Ram says that he too will die due to grief, and the monkeys and bears would go back to their respective lands—and what about Vibhishan? He would be left high and dry; he would be marooned alone in an island that is surrounded by sharks, with no where to run away! Ravana would now become wroth with exceeding wrath upon him, and vent his anger upon him with exceeding vengeance, torturing him viciously, especially when he treats Vibhishan as a traitor, a betrayer and a turncoat.

The Lord's worry is not limited to this; it is more profound and sinister: Lord Ram has a reputation of living upto his words of granting protection to his devotees, to those who have been rejected by the world and have taken shelter and refuge with the Lord; but what about this reputation now if the tide of war goes against him, as seems the case with the loss of Laxman? The poor Vibhishan would be the worst hit. This prospect worries Lord Ram more than anything else.

Forsooth it shows how much the Lord is concerned about the good, the well-being and the welfare of his devotees and those who surrender themselves to him.]

Tulidas says that hearing such mournful lamentations of the Lord, words that were soulful and full of remorse, contrition and regrets, all the monkeys and bears became extremely anguished, agitated and weary.

At this mournful, woeful and pitiful moment, (the bear king) Jamvant summoned Hanuman, and encouraged him (to come to the rescue of all and save the day by doing what was the need of the hour—which was to arrange for a medicine man and bring the necessary herbs he prescribes, without delay and second thoughts)² (4).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55.]

राग मारू
(6/8)

जौ हौं अब अनुसासन पावौं ।
तौ चंद्रमहि निचोरि चैल—ज्यों, आनि सुधा सिर नावौं ॥ 1 ॥
कै पाताल दलौं ब्यालावलि अमृत—कुंड महि लावौं ।
भेदि भुवन, करि भानु बाहिरो तुरत राहु दै तावौं ॥ 2 ॥
बिबुध—बैद बरबस आनौं धरि, तौ प्रभु—अनुग कहावौं ।
पटकों मीच नीच मूषक—ज्यों, सबहिको पापु बहावौं ॥ 3 ॥
तुम्हरिहि कृपा, प्रताप तिहारेहि नेकु बिलंब न लावौं ।
दीजै सोइ आयसु तुलसी—प्रभु, जेहि तुम्हरे मन भावौं ॥ 4 ॥

rāga mārū

(6/8)

jau haum̐ aba anusāsana pāvaur̐.
tau candramahi nicōri caila-jyōm̐, āni sudhā sira nāvaur̐.. 1..
kai pātāla dalaum̐ byālāvali amṛta-kunḍa mahi lāvaur̐.
bhēdi bhuvana, kari bhānu bāhirō turata rāhu dai tāvaur̐.. 2..
bibudha-baida barabasa ānaur̐ dhari, tau prabhu-anuga kahāvaur̐.
paṭakaur̐ mīca nīca mūṣaka-jyaur̐, sabahikō pāpu bahāvaur̐.. 3..
tumharihi kṛpā, pratāpa tihārēhi nēku bilamba na lāvaur̐.
dījai sō'i āyasu tulasī-prabhu, jēhi tumharē mana bhāvaur̐.. 4..

Hanuman's assurance to Lord Ram

Verse no. 6/8—[Hanuman consoled Lord Ram not to grieve for Laxman as long as he, Hanuman, is with him. He encouraged the Lord to have strength and courage. He assured the Lord by saying—] ‘If I get your permission, I will wring the moon as if it were a piece of cloth, and squeeze the Amrit (nectar of life) out of it, bring it to you (in order to revive Laxman)—and then only I will bow my head before you! (1).

Or, should I kill the legendary serpents in the nether world who are protecting the pitcher of Amrit, and bring it to the surface (so that it can be given to Laxman to bring him back to life)?

If that did not serve the purpose, should I crack the universe, throw the Sun out of it, and bring Rahu, the enemy of the Sun, and seat him in the vacant place (caused by throwing the Sun out) and close the cavity (so that the Sun cannot rise over the world again, and Laxman can remain in suspended animation till the time a remedy is found, and till the time the demons are vanquished and Vibhishan is put on the throne of Lanka, a matter that is causing you so much worry)¹? (2).

[¹In those days, wars were fought only during the day time. If the Sun is pushed out from the sky and his eternal enemy Rahu is placed in the vacant space in his place, the day won't dawn, and so the war wouldn't start. In the meanwhile,

Hanuman would go alone in the city during the darkness of the night and do away with Ravana and his ilk. Then he would put Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka.]

Not only this, I shall prove my loyalty to my Lord (Sri Ram) only when I will bring Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the Gods, forcefully. [And as forcefully make him contrive a device whereby Laxman can be revived.]

Or, shall I trounce 'death' underfoot like a humble mouse, and make the creatures fearless from it? [To wit, if the Lord permits, I would kill 'death' itself, or at least keep it pressed under my foot till it dies of its own due to strangulation. Once the 'death' is done away with, the fear of it would be eliminated for all times to come. This would mean that no one would die henceforth; and obviously Laxman would too be spared from the clutches of 'death'.] (3).

Lord! It is because (or on the strength) of your grace and your might that I shall not delay a whit nor think for a moment in carrying out these works in full as promised by me to you.

Hence, oh Lord of Tulsidas (tulasī-prabhu), order me to do whatever you think fit, and which would please you and will make me (more) endeared to you² (4).'

[²It hurts and pains my heart when I see you in this pitiful condition. Tell me, have you forgotten me and my abilities? Don't you remember that when everything seemed lost and there was no hope of ever finding where Sita was, especially when our group was confronted by the formidable barrier of the ocean and the prospect of single-handedly entering the fortified city of the demons, a virtual forbidden place where even the Gods durst not peep, and coming back alive, it was I who had cheerfully done the imaginable. I had not only crossed the ocean, trounced the demons' morale and strength, but had burnt their so-called invincible city of Lanka to a smouldering heap of burnt out buildings and gardens, and had safely brought back the news of Sita. And you had then acknowledged my deeds publicly.

Now then, I prithee, why don't you take my service now; why don't you put me to good use? Do you doubt me or my loyalty or my abilities? There is aught naught that I canst do for you, if only I get your nod. And in all sooth, I am eagerly waiting for this nod!]

(6/9)

सुनि हनुमंत-बचन रघुबीर ।

सत्य, समीर-सुवन ! सब लायक, कह्यो राम धरि धीर ॥ 1 ॥

चहिये बैद, ईस-आयसु धरि सीस कीस बलऐन ।

आन्यो सदनसहित सोवत ही, जौलौं पलक परै न ॥ 2 ॥

जियै कुँवर, निसि मिलै मूलिका, कीन्हीं बिनय सुषेन ।

उठ्यो कपीस, सुमिरि सीतापति चल्यो सजीवनि लेन ॥ 3 ॥

कालनेमि दलि बेगि बिलोक्यौ द्रोनाचल जिय जानि ।

देखी दिव्य ओषधी जहँ तहँ जरी, न परि पहिचानि ॥ 4 ॥

लियो उठाय कुधर कंदुक-ज्यौं, बेग न जाइ बखानि ।

ज्यौं धाए गजराज-उधारन सपदि सुदरसनपानि ॥ 5 ॥

आनि पहार जोहारे प्रभु, कियो बैदराज उपचार ।

करुनासिंधु बंधु भेंट्यो, मिटि गयो सकल दुख-भार ॥ 6 ॥

मुदित भालु कपि—कटक, लह्यो जनु समर पयोनिधि पार।
 बहुरि ठौरही राखि महीधर आयो पवनकुमार॥ 7॥
 सेन सहित सेवकहि सराहत पुनि पुनि राम सुजान।
 बरषि सुमन, हिय हरषि प्रसंसत बिबुध बजाइ निसान॥ 8॥
 तुलसिदास सुधि पाइ निसाचर भए मनहु बिनु प्रान।
 परी भोरही रोर लंकगढ़, दर्ई हाँक हनुमान॥ 9॥

(6/9)

sunī hanumanta-bacana raghubīra.
 satya, samīra-suvana! saba lāyaka, kahyō rāma dhari dhīra.. 1..
 cahiyē baida, īsa-āyasu dhari sīsa kīsa bala'aina.
 ān'yō sadanasahita sōvata hī, jaulaur̃ palaka parai na.. 2..
 jiyai kuṃvara, nisi milai mūlikā, kīnhīm binaya suṣēna.
 uṭhyō kapīsa, sumiri sītāpati calyō sajīvani lēna.. 3..
 kālanēmi dali bēgi bilōkyau drōnācala jiya jāni.
 dēkhī dibya oṣadhī jahaṃ tahaṃ jarī, na pari pahicāni.. 4..
 liyō uṭhāya kudhara kanduka-jyaur̃, bēga na jā'i bakhāni.
 jyaur̃ dhā'ē gajarāja-udhārana sapadi sudarasanapāni.. 5..
 āni pahāra jōhārē prabhu, kiyō baidarāja upacāra.
 karunāsindhu bandhu bhēṇṭyō, miṭi gayō sakala dukha-bhāra.. 6..
 mudita bhālu kapi-kaṭaka, lahyō janu samara payōnidhi pāra.
 bahuri ṭhaurahī rākhi mahīdhara āyō pavanakumāra.. 7..
 sēna sahita sēvakahi sarāhata puni puni rāma sujāna.
 baraṣi sumana, hiya haraṣi prasansata bibudha bajā'i nisāna.. 8..
 tulasidāsa sudhi pā'i nisācara bha'ē manahu binu prāna.
 parī bhōrahī rōra laṅkagarha, da'i hāmka hanumāna.. 9..

Hanuman's Glorious Achievement:

The Bringing of the Sanjivani Herb that Revived Laxman

Verse no. 6/9—Hearing the words of Hanuman, Raghubir (Lord Ram) felt reassured and please, and he patiently said, 'It is true, oh son of the Wind-God! You can indeed do all these things (1).

Now, there is first and foremost the immediate need of a physician (a doctor, a medicine man who uses herbs in the traditional method of treatment of diseases or ailments; a 'Vaidya').

Keeping the Lord's orders on his head (i.e. he carried out the orders immediately on priority basis), the strong monkey (Hanuman) brought a 'Vaidya' who was asleep in his home, by scooping up the entire house in the fraction of a moment so small that one could not bat an eye-lid during the course of the time taken in this process¹ (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 55.]

The Vaidya was named Sushen. He said politely, 'If the Sanjivani herb can be brought during the night itself (before sunrise), then the prince (Laxman) can be revived.'

As soon as he heard this, the lord of monkeys (Hanuman) got up, remembered (invoked) Lord Sri Ram (in his heart and mind), and started-off to bring the herb² (3).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 55 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Hanuman did not feel it necessary to take an express oral permission of Lord Ram before the journey, as this was implied when the Lord gave his permission to bring the medicine man named Sushen. Hanuman simply invoked the Lord's strength by remembering him in his heart before he launched on his journey to the northern mountains where this rare herb was to be found.]

On the way he slayed Kalnemi³, and soon saw Mt. Dronachal and recognised it by his sharp intellect. There he saw numerous herbs scattered here and there, but he could not specify (specifically recognise) the herb needed to revive Laxman⁴ (4).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.

It so happened that a spy told Ravana that Sushen has been taken away, and he has given some advice to the enemy, i.e. Lord Ram. Hanuman has been deputed to go bring the necessary herb, and he is on his way through the passage of the sky. Immediately then, Ravana forced one of his demons named Kalnemi to go and stop Hanuman. This demon assumed the form of a hermit and created an illusion of a pond and a hermitage in the path of Hanuman. Flying overhead, when Hanuman saw this green patch of land with a water body, he decided to refresh himself with a drink of fresh water. On the ground he met this imposter Kalnemi who tried to poison him in the guise of giving him water to drink from his water pot. Hanuman meanwhile asked him to wait, and let him first go and take a bath in the pond. While he was bathing, another demoness who lived in it as a crocodile caught hold of Hanuman's feet and began pulling him inside the deep waters of the pond, whereat Hanuman killed him by tearing his mouth into two by pulling his jaws. At the time of death, this demoness resumed her original form of an Apsara (celestial damsel). She warned Hanuman about Kalnemi. So, Hanuman came back to this deceitful hermit and did him to death. The great wonder is that at the time of his death, this demon pronounced the holy name of Lord Ram, by the virtue of which he found his deliverance. This incident astonished Hanuman and pleased him at the same time. He was astonished that even demons had a soul that was yearning for salvation, and that they could find deliverance by saying the holy name of Lord Ram. This fact please him very much, and reinforced his belief in the mystical powers of Lord Ram and his divine name.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

Then he lifted the entire mountain like it were a ball (playfully, without any effort)⁵.

No one can describe his speed and swiftness of that time. It appeared that the discus-bearing Lord Vishnu is rushing (dashing) forward to save the elephant king Gajraaj (from the jaws of death)⁶ (5).

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58.

It so happened that Hanuman could not recognise the specific herb needed to revive Laxman. He had but little time in his hands to research and procrastinate. So he thought it wise to scoop the whole mountain and take it back to Lanka.

⁶The story of the Elephant King named "Gajraaj" is this: In the ancient country of Dravid (the present day South India), there was a kingdom called Pandyaraaj whose

king was named Indradumna. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and used to offer regular worship to the Lord with great diligence. Once, sage Agastya passed that way with his retinue of disciples. The king was so engrossed in the worship of the Lord that he did not notice the sage and neither did he get up to welcome him or pay his obeisance to him. This annoyed the sage and he cursed—‘You are like a haughty and wild elephant who pays no heed to those standing in the front. Therefore, you deserve to become an elephant—so you would take a birth as an elephant.’ When the king died he became an elephant in a pleasant island in the middle of the Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean of milk.

He had a majestic body and was very strong in his herd. Once he was playing with his she-elephants and companions in a large and beautiful pond. In this pond lived an alligator/crocodile who was actually a Gandharva (a semi-god) named Huhu in his previous life and had become an alligator due to a curse of sage Deval. The alligator /crocodile caught hold of the leg of the elephant and started pulling him inside the deep lake. The Gaja himself and all his companions tried their best but failed to free him from the mouth of the alligator. A long tussle followed and the elephant became completely exhausted. When the situation became so bad that the Gaja, the elephant, was about to sink fully inside the water, he broke a lotus flower and offered it to Lord Vishnu as his last worship and offering before dying. The merciful Lord rushed instantly astride his mount, called the Garud, to save him. Reaching the spot within a moment, the Lord pulled the Gaja out of the water with one hand, and with the other he opened the mouth of the alligator to yank the leg of the elephant free from its clutches. Then the Lord cut off the alligator’s head with his circular weapon known as the Chakra.

Both the alligator/crocodile and the elephant found liberation—the alligator/crocodile reverted to his earlier form of a Gandharva, and Gaja the elephant assumed a divine form similar to that of the Lord and went to his abode in the heaven.]

In this swift way, he brought the mountain and bowed before the Lord. And the Vaidya (Sushen) administered the proper herb (drug) to Laxman (so that he was instantly revived).

Thereafter, the ocean of mercy and compassion, Lord Ram, embraced his brother, and the entire burden caused by this unpleasant episode was removed⁶ (6).

[⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.]

The community (i.e. the army) of bears and monkeys was exceedingly jubilant as if they have already crossed the ocean of war. [With the revival of Laxman, not only Lord Ram but the entire army of the Lord too regained their lost hopes and spirits. A loud chorus of greetings and cheer rang out in their rank and file.]

Thence, Hanuman took the mountain and placed it at its proper place⁷ (7).

[⁷Hanuman also took Sushen and placed his house at the spot from where he had brought it earlier. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

At that time, the most wise Lord Sri Ram, accompanied by the whole army, repeatedly praised his servant (follower, devotee: Hanuman) even as the Gods showered flowers (upon Hanuman), became joyous in their hearts, played their

trumpets/kettle-drums to celebrate the occasion, and praised him profusely in laudatory terms (8).

Tulsidas says that when the demons heard this news (of Laxman's revival), they appeared to become lifeless (discouraged, despaired, hopeless and panicky)⁸.

At the crack of dawn, when Hanuman roared, there was a tumult and panic in Lanka (9).

[⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

राग केदारा

(6 / 10)

कौतुक ही कपि कुधर लियो है।

चल्यो नभ नाइ माथ रघुनाथहि, सरिस न बेग बियो है॥ 1॥

देख्यो जात जानि निसिचर, बिनु फर सर हयो हियो है।

पर्यो कहि राम, पवन राख्यो गिरि, पुर तेहि तेज पियो है॥ 2॥

जाइ भरत भरि अंक भेंटि निज, जीवन-दान दियो है।

दुख लघु लषन मरम-घायल सुनि, सुख बड़ो कीस जियो है॥ 3॥

आयसु इतहि, स्वामि-संकट उत, परत न कछू कियो है।

तुलसिदास बिदर्यो अकास, सो कैसेकै जात सियो है॥ 4॥

rāga kēdārā

(6/10)

kautuka hī kapi kudhara liyō hai.

calyō nabha nā'i mātha raghunāthahi, sarisa na bēga biyō hai.. 1..

dēkhyō jāta jāni nisicara, binu phara sara hayō hiyō hai.

paryō kahi rāma, pavana rākhyō giri, pura tēhi tēja piyō hai.. 2..

jā'i bharata bhari aṅka bhēṅṭi nija, jīvana-dāna diyō hai.

dukha laghu laṣana marama-ghāyala suni, sukha baṛō kīsa jiyō hai.. 3..

āyasu itahi, svāmi-saṅkaṭa uta, parata na kachū kiyō hai.

tulasidāsa bidaryō akāsa, sō kaisēkai jāta siyō hai.. 4..

Hanuman-Bharat Meeting-I

Verse no. 6/10—[Tulsidas now describes the incident that occurred while Hanuman was returning to Lanka with the mountain and the herb. As he flew in the night sky with the glittering herbs all decorating the sides of the huge mountain, and also due to his speed, from the ground it appeared that a comet is passing through, or a demon is flying away. Bharat saw this spectacle, and apprehending that something was amiss, he shot a headless arrow to bring down this mysterious being. Thereat, Hanuman fell to the ground, but even as he fell he muttered aloud the holy name of Lord Ram. Bharat was shocked to hear the Lord's name, and came rushing forward to investigate. He met Hanuman and they exchanged notes. Bharat enquired about the

whereabouts and welfare of the Lord, whereat Hanuman briefed him of the latest developments.

Bharat was full of regrets and contrition. He was torn on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand he had the orders from Lord Ram to stay in Ayodhya and take care of it and its citizens till the time the Lord comes back, and on the other hand he felt the urge to go to the Lord's aid. The second option was impractical from the tidings of the state of affairs that Hanuman gave him. What would Bharat do alone, and it was impossible to assemble an army at such short notice and cover a huge distance from Ayodhya to Lanka. Besides this, the Lord already had an able army at his disposal. It made no sense to add to the confusion.

Then there was no time: Hanuman had to rush because the herb had to be given to Laxman before dawn, and it was already late in the night. There were no planes in Ayodhya. So, giving thoughts to all the matters and weighing the pros and cons, Bharat thought it prudent to let Hanuman resume his journey forthwith, without any delay or demurring.

These developments have been narrated herein below in verse nos. 6/10—6/14.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 60.]

Hanuman playfully scooped up (and lifted) the mountain. Then, bowing his head to Raghunath (Sri Ram), he started on the way back through the path of the sky. No one had the speed and swiftness that Hanuman had at that time (1).

Seeing him passing over (Ayodhya) and thinking that he was some demon, Bharat shot a headless arrow (i.e. only the shaft) at his heart.

Thus shot, he (Hanuman) cried aloud 'Ram' as he fell down upon the ground. It seemed that the magnetic pull of the city of Ayodhya had sucked his strength.

Meanwhile, the Wind God kept the huge mountain aloft (to protect Ayodhya from being crushed under its expanse and weight) (2).

Then Bharat, having heard Hanuman exclaim 'Ram', went near him, lifted him in his arms, and gave him the boon (blessing) of life. [That is, Bharat removed the arrow stuck in his body, gave him emergency treatment and first aid so that Hanuman was immediately revived back and his wound tended to.]

Hearing that Laxman was wounded caused a little whit of worry and sadness to Bharat, but seeing that Hanuman was alive was a greater source of joy for him¹ (3).

[¹This is because getting wounded is not a great source of worry for a brave warrior; it is part of the game and a way of life for them, to which all great warriors are trained to cope with and are accustomed to. But getting proper medicine in time for Laxman was far more important.

This is the reason that finding Hanuman alive and active was a greater source of joy for Bharat—for now the medicine would reach Laxman, who was lying wounded in Lanka, on time. This would make it sure that Laxman rises hale and hearty.

The power of herbs to give instant relief from injury and serious wounds is proved in the case of Hanuman also. Just like Laxman, Hanuman too was shot by an arrow. If he could be revived so easily and quickly by Bharat, then surely it is obvious that Bharat knew very well the powers and potentials of herbs to give immediate relief

and heal the wound. So he was not unduly worried about Laxman as he knew that once the proper medicine was applied on his wound and even given orally, Laxman would be out of danger immediately. What was more important now was to make sure that the bearer of that medicine, in this case it was Hanuman, reaches him soon and within the time frame.

Bharat was very relieved to see that Hanuman was alright and out of danger; he was daring to resume his journey. Say, what would have happened if Hanuman was so seriously injured that he wouldn't have been able to resume his journey with the huge mountain in hand? No one else knew the location where Lord Ram and Laxman were present at that time: it was a far away land beyond the end of the land, in the middle of the vast ocean where no human had set foot till that date. No one in Ayodhya either knew the way to go there, nor would they dare to go. So it was extremely important that Hanuman was alright, hale and hearty after this accident.

This is the reason why Bharat was more happy at Hanuman's recovery than being sad at Laxman's injury.]

The Lord (Sri Ram) has ordered him (Bharat) to stay at Ayodhya while there is a looming danger of war on his (Lord's) head—this caused a huge consternation and dilemma for Bharat, but he could not do anything.

Tulsidas compares Bharat's dilemma and perplexity to the question: if the sky is torn, how do we sew it? (There is no plausible solution to it; there is no answer to it) (4).

(6 / 11)

भरत—सत्रुसूदन बिलोकि कपि चकित भयो है।
 राम—लषन रन जीति अवध आए, कैधौ मोहि भ्रम,
 कैधौ काहू कपट ठयो है॥ 1॥
 प्रेम पुलकि, पहिचानिकै पदपदुम नयो है।
 कह्यो न परत जेहि भाँति दुहू भाइन
 सनेहसों सो उर लाय लयो है॥ 2॥
 समाचार कहि गहरु भो, तेंहि ताप तयो है।
 कुधर सहित चढ़ौ बिसिष, बेगि पठवौ, सुनि
 हरि हिय गरब गूढ़ उपयो है॥ 3॥
 तीरतें उतरि जस कह्यो चहै, गुनगननि जयो है।
 धनि भरत ! धनि भरत ! करत भयो,
 मगन मौन रह्यो मन अनुराग रयो है॥ 4॥
 यह जलनिधि खन्यो, मथ्यो, लँघ्यो, बाँध्यो, अँचयो है।
 तुलसिदास रघुबीर बंधु—महिमाको सिंधु
 तरि को कबि पार गयो है?॥ 5॥

(6/11)

bharata-satrusūdana bilōki kapi cakita bhayō hai.
 rāma-laṣana rana jīti avadha ā'ē, kaidhaum mōhi bhrama,

kaidhaurṁ kāhū kapaṭa ṭhayō hai.. 1..
 prēma pulaki, pahicānikai padpaduma nayō hai.
 kahyō na parata jēhi bhāṁti duhū bhā'ina
 sanēhasōṁ sō ura lāya layō hai.. 2..
 samācāra kahi gaharu bhō, tēhi tāpa tayō hai.
 kudhara sahita caṛhau bisīṣa, bēgi paṭhavaurṁ, suni
 hari hiya garaba gūrha upayō hai.. 3..
 tīratēm utari jasa kahyō cahai, gunaganani jayō hai.
 dhani bharata! dhani bharata! karata bhayō,
 magana mauna rahyō mana anurāga rayō hai.. 4..
 yaha jalanidhi khan'yō, mathyō, laṁghyō, bāṁdhyō, aṁcayō hai.
 tulasidāsa raghubīra bandhu-mahimākō sindhu
 tari kō kabi pāra gayō hai?.. 5..

Hanuman-Bharat Meeting-II

Verse no. 6/11—Seeing Bharat and Shatrughan (who were look-alikes of Sri Ram and Laxman respectively), Hanuman was very confused and perplexed.

He wondered: has Lord Ram and Laxman won victory in the war and returned to Ayodhya, or is this an illusion (as I seem to be hallucinating)?

Or is this some sort of ploy, mischief or deception (created by the enemy, the demons) to deceive me? (1).

Then when he (Hanuman) recognised them (and realized the truth that they were indeed the brothers of Lord Ram), he was thrilled with affection and bowed his head (reverentially) at their lotus-feet.

The way those two brothers (endearingly, affectionately, enthusiastically, emotionally and eagerly) embraced him (Hanuman) cannot be described in words (2).

Then he (Hanuman) gave them (i.e. updated them with) the whole news (about Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita), and said urgently, 'I am getting late'.

Hearing all this, Bharat was overcome with grief and anguish, and said, 'You climb on (ride, mount) my arrow with the mountain; I shall send you immediately to where Lord Ram is.' Hearing these words, a sense of pride emerged in the heart of Hanuman, albeit covertly¹ (3).

[¹Hanuman was proud because he vainly thought that he is so heavy, and added to his own weight was the weight of the mountain—how can the arrow lift them both, he wondered. So, he mounted the arrow to test its ability. He discovered to his amazement that the arrow could actually lift him with the mountain in his hand when Bharat raised his bow to shoot the arrow with Hanuman astride on it.

Hanuman's pride vanished when he found that he looked like a mere fly atop the huge shaft of Bharat's arrow. So he climbed down from it as he felt he would be blown away or slip once the arrow was air-borne.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 60 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

He began to sing the glories and good fame (virtues, valour, strength etc.) of Bharat, for the latter's excellent qualities and noble characters had won him over (or overwhelmed him).

His mind was submerged in love, affection and endearment for Bharat, and saying 'Bharat is great; Hail him', he was so benumbed with surging emotions (and astonishment) that he fell silent (as he was unable to say anything more) (4).

Tulsidas (compares the fame and glory of Bharat with an ocean and) says, 'This physical ocean on the earth was dug up (by the sons of king Sagar), was churned (by the gods and demons in some ancient time in search of Amrit, the elixir of bliss and eternal life), was leapt across and measured (by Hanuman), was bridged or tamed (by the monkey architects Nal and Neel), and was drunk (by sage Agastya). But no poet (or any of the learned bards) has ever been able to cross the symbolic ocean represented by immensity of Bharat's greatness of glories, the immaculacy of his character, the auspiciousness of his nature and thoughts, and the excellency of his noble virtues which are matchless, famous and known world-wide. [To wit, though it is easy to fathom the physical ocean, it is impossible to measure the glories and virtues of Bharat. They are profound, immense and countless.] (5).

(6 / 12)

होतो नहि जौ जग जनम भरतको ।
 तौ, कपि कहत, कृपान-धार मग चलि आचरत बरत को ? ॥ 1 ॥
 धीरज-धरम धरनिधर-धुरहूँतें गुर धुर धरनि धरत को ? ।
 सब सदगुन सनमानि आनि उर, अघ-औगुन निदरत को ? ॥ 2 ॥
 सिवहु न सुगम सनेह रामपद सुजननि सुलभ करत को ? ।
 सृजि निज जस-सुरतरु तुलसी कहँ, अभिमत फरनि फरत को ? ॥ 3 ॥

(6/12)

hōtō nahi jau jaga janama bharatakō.
 tau, kapi kahata, kṛpāna-dhāra maga cali ācarata barata kō?.. 1..
 dhīraja-dharama dharanidhara-dhurahūṁtēm gura dhura dharani dharata kō?..
 saba sadaguna sanamāni āni ura, agha-auguna nidarata kō?.. 2..
 sivahu na sugama sanēha rāmapada sujanani sulabha karata kō?..
 sṛji nija jasa-surataru tulasī kahañ, abhimata pharani pharata kō?.. 3..

Hanuman-Bharat Meeting-III
 (Hanuman Praises the Glory of Bharat)

Verse no. 6/12—[In this verse, Hanuman praises the excellent virtues of Bharat and his sense of love and devotion for Lord Ram. A similar praise for Bharat is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 325; Chaupai line nos. 3-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 326.

Refer also to: Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 2/79—2/81.]

Hanuman said, ‘Had Bharat not been born in this world, who would have set such an exemplary example of an immaculate life led in accordance with the best principles of living in a righteous and honourable way, because it is not an easy path to follow as it is similar to walking on the edge of a sharp sword¹ (1).

[¹Bharat had shown by his example what is the meaning of deep love, affection, devotion, worship, reverence, steadfastness of vows, austerities, penances, renunciation, sacrifice, selflessness, righteousness, probity, propriety, brotherhood, spirit of surrender etc. He did not preach, but lived such a life. In the world where we live, practicing these principles is a most difficult proposition, fraught more with the danger of faltering and failing midway than of any achieving any measurable and commendable success.]

Who would have borne in this world the burden of Dhiraj (“dhīraja”; having great patience, tolerance, courage, forbearance and fortitude, as well as of upholding the principles of Dharma (“dharama”; righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility, virtuous conduct), which are heavier than the burden of mountains (dharanidhara-dhurahūmtēm gura)?

Who else would have, on the one hand, respectfully and willingly accepted in his heart all the good virtues and noble characters that one is expected to inculcate and practice (saba sadaguna sanamāni āni ura), and, on the other hand, resolutely drive away or banish everything that is regarded as unrighteous, unethical, improper, vile and evil (agha-auguna nidarata kō)? (2).

Besides this, the virtue of having love and devotion for the lotus-like feet of Lord Sri Ram (sanēha rāmapada), which is not easily possible (i.e. difficult) even for Lord Shiva to access or have (sivahu na sugama)—who would have made it so easily accessible for those who are pious and noble at heart (sujana) by showing them how it can be actually practiced if it was not Bharat (sulabha karata kō)?

Who would have created the all wish-fulfilling Tree of Gods (“surataru”) out of his own glories, good virtues and fame (sr̥ji nija jasa) to produce the desired fruits (“abhimata pharani pharata kō”; of devotion, worship, veneration, love and affection for Lord Ram that ultimately leads to emancipation and salvation of the soul) for Tulsidas (tulasī kahaṁ)?² (3).

[²Tulsidas means that for him and for all other devotees of Lord Ram, Bharat had set an example of devotion, love, surrender and service for the Lord. These virtues are like the fruits of the Kalpa Tree, the Tree of Gods, that fulfil all spiritual needs of the seeker.]

(6 / 13)

सुनि रन घायल लषन परे हैं।
 स्वामिकाज संग्राम सुभटसों लोहे ललकारि लरे हैं॥ १॥
 सुवन—सोक, संतोष सुमित्रहि, रघुपति—भगति बरे हैं।
 छिन—छिन गात सुखात, छिनहिं छिन हुलसत होत हरे हैं॥ २॥
 कपिसों कहति सुभाय, अंबके अंबक अंबु भरे हैं।
 रघुनंदन बिनु बंधु कुअवसर, जद्यपि धनु दुसरे हैं॥ ३॥
 ‘तात ! जाहु कपि सँग’, रिपुसूदन उठि कर जोरि खरे हैं।

प्रमुदित पुलकि पैत पूरे जनु बिधिबस सुढर ढरे हैं॥ 4॥
 अंब-अनुजगति लखि पवनज-भरतादि गलानि गरे हैं।
 तुलसी सब समुझाय मातु तेहि समय सचेत करे हैं॥ 5॥

(6/13)

sunī rana ghāyala laṣana parē hair̥.
 svāmikāja saṅgrāma subhaṭasōm lōhē lalakāri larē hair̥.. 1..
 suvana-sōka, santōṣa sumitrahi, raghupati-bhagati barē hair̥.
 china-china gāta sukhāta, chinahim̐ china hulasata hōta harē hair̥.. 2..
 kapisōm kahati subhāya, ambakē ambaka ambu bharē hair̥.
 raghunandana binu bandhu ku'avasara, jadyapi dhanu dusarē hair̥.. 3..
 'tāta! jāhu kapi saṁga', ripusūdana uṭhi kara jōri kharē hair̥.
 pramudita pulaki painta pūrē janu bidhibasa suḍhara ḍharē hair̥.. 4..
 amba-anujagati lakhi pavanaja-bharatādi galāni garē hair̥.
 tulasī saba samujhāya mātu tēhi samaya sacēta karē hair̥.. 5..

Hanuman meets Laxman's Mother Sumitra

Verse no. 6/13—Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, heard (the news) that Laxman is lying wounded in the battle-field, and that he had fought valiantly with the warrior of the opposite side, i.e. Meghnad, for the sake of his Lord (Sri Ram) (1).

At this information, she was indeed extremely anguished and worried at the condition of her son, albeit at the same time she felt happy and satisfied that he (Laxman) has accepted Raghupati's (Sri Ram's) devotion¹.

[¹To wit, Sumitra was glad that her son Laxman has obeyed her advice that she gave him at the time of departure for the forest. He has lived upto her expectation by faithfully and loyally serving his Lord Sri Ram like a true devotee and follower should do, and to prove his faith and love for Lord Ram he has cheerfully made the supreme sacrifice by laying down his life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 74—to Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 75 wherein Sumitra has very explicitly advised Laxman to treat Lord Ram and Sita as his father and mother respectively, and make all sincere efforts in good faith to serve them to the best of his ability. So when she heard from Hanuman's accounts that Laxman was lying mortally wounded because he had fought for the Lord's cause, she felt very contented in her heart.]

She was swaying between two extremes of emotions: at one moment her body got agitated and shivered by overwhelming sorrows and grief (at the ominous news that Hanuman had brought, especially that her dear son Laxman was mortally wounded and on the verge of death), and the next moment she recovered herself and regained her poise, feeling cheerful and proud (about her son Laxman and his noble deeds, that he has lived upto her expectations and stood fast in his vows of love and loyalty for Sri Ram). (2).

Then, mother Sumitra had tears in her eyes and said to Hanuman earnestly, 'It is because of grave misfortunes and malignant forces of destiny that Sri Ram has been separated from his brother (Laxman) though both of them (Sri Ram and Laxman) had their bows with them² (3).

[²The two brothers were well armed and were competent enough to protect themselves and each other. They had defeated most fearsome demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. It is only because of malicious and unfavourable stars that Laxman is dying and his brother Sri Ram could not protect him from getting harmed.]

[Then she turned towards Shatrughan and said—] ‘Dear! You go with Hanuman!’ Immediately on hearing it, Shatrughan stood up with hands joined together at the palms (as a gesture of humble submission and a signal that he fully agrees with what has been ordered him to do). His body was overcome with thrill, and he was so glad as if all the bets had been set in his favour³ (4).

[³Shatrughan was raring to go with Hanuman and help Lord Ram in the war, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the Lord and replacing Laxman should it so happen that he is not revived. He saw in this his chance to prove that his love and affection and loyalty for Lord Ram was no less even by a whit than that of Bharat or Laxman.]

Seeing such a condition of the mother and the younger brother (Shatrughan), both Hanuman as well as Bharat became contrite and remorseful.

Tulsidas says that the mother, on her part, when she observed the depressed mental state of the three (Hanuman, Bharat and Shatrughan), immediately recovered her self and overcame her emotions. She acted prudently now, and alerted the three about the urgency of the task at hand⁴. (5).

[⁴When Sumitra saw that Bharat, Hanuman and Shatrughan have become overcome with grief and sorrows, thereby losing their wits, their sense of judgement, prudence and wisdom in a surging tide of gloomy emotions, she immediately recovered her composure and decided to act wisely. She realized that what she had ordered, that Shatrughan should go with Hanuman to join the battle at Lanka, was most impractical and grave in its import. There are a variety of reasons why it was improper and rash to send Shatrughan away to Lanka because any reckless action could be ruinous and detrimental to the welfare of all, specially when a calamitous war was looming over Sri Ram.

Shatrughan had been taking care of the affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya during the long period of absence of Bharat who was living in self-imposed exile as a recluse, and Lord Ram who was away in the forest. Such impulsive actions as sending Shatrughan to a far away land at so short a notice would leave Ayodhya without a care-taker, and it would result in total chaos and anarchy.

Then there was the question of his actually traveling to Lanka: while Hanuman could fly in the sky, how will Shatrughan go? If he is made to mount on Hanuman’s shoulders, that would only add an additional weight on him because he has to carry the mountain too. It will also slow him down, and it would be suicidal because it was necessary that he swiftly reached Lanka so that the herb could be administered to Laxman before dawn. Hanuman would be in a quandary: he would not be able to refuse to carry Shatrughan on his back as it would seem very bad and impolite, but it would be very cumbersome for him to carry an additional weight of Shatrughan, in addition to the weight of the great mountain that he was already bearing in his hand, who is sure to be heavily armed and carry some extra weapons and arsenal for Lord Ram and Laxman as the two brothers had nothing but their bows and arrows at the time. So that practically rules out any way by which Shatrughan can reach Lanka in the short course of the remaining time of the night.

Secondly, she loved Shatrughan and Bharat no less than she loved Sri Ram and Laxman. She did not wish to take the fateful, horrific risk of sending another son to face an uncertain future, for the outcome of the ongoing war at Lanka was yet unknown and unpredictable—as all wars are!

This explains why Sumitra immediately changed her decision of sending Shatrughan with Hanuman. That Shatrughan remained in Ayodhya and didn't go to Lanka is a fact, and in the context of this verse and especially stanza no. 4, this is the only plausible explanation for it.]

(6 / 14)

बिनय सुनायबी परि पाय ।
 कहौ कहा, कपीस ! तुम्ह सुचि, सुमति, सुहृद सुभाय ॥ 1 ॥
 स्वामि-संकट-हेतु हौ जड़ जननि जनम्यो जाय ।
 समौ पाइ, कहाइ सेवक घट्यो तौ न सहाय ॥ 2 ॥
 कहत सिथिल सनेह भो, जनु धीर घायल घाय ।
 भरत-गति लखि मातु सब रहि ज्यौ गुड़ी बिनु बाय ॥ 3 ॥
 भेंट कहि कहिबो, कह्यो यों कठिन-मानस माय ।
 'लाल ! लोने लषन-सहित सुललित लागत नाँय' ॥ 4 ॥
 देखि बंधु-सनेह, अंब सुभाउ, लषन-कुठाय ।
 तपत तुलसी तरनि-त्रासुक एहि नये तिहुँ ताय ॥ 5 ॥

(6/14)

binaya sunāyabī pari pāya.
 kahaurṁ kahā, kapīsa! tumha suci, sumati, suhṛda subhāya.. 1..
 svāmi-saṅkaṭa-hētu haurṁ jara janani janamyō jāya.
 samau pā'i, kahā'i sēvaka ghaṭyō tau na sahāya.. 2..
 kahata sithila sanēha bhō, janu dhīra ghāyala ghāya.
 bharata-gati lakhi mātu saba rahi ज्याuṁ gurī binu bāya.. 3..
 bhēṇṭa kahi kahibō, kahyō yōṁ kaṭhina-mānasa māya.
 'lāla! lōnē laṣana-sahita sulalita lāgata nāṁya'.. 4..
 dēkhi bandhu-sanēha, amba subhā'u, laṣana-kuṭhāya.
 tapata tulasī tarani-trāsuka ēhi nayē tihūṁ tāya.. 5..

Bharat and Kaushalya's Message for Lord Ram

Verse no. 6/14—[Bharat said to Hanuman—] 'Oh Kapis (i.e. Hanuman, the lord of the monkeys)! When you reach Lord Ram, please catch hold of his feet (on my behalf) and convey my prayer to him. What more can I tell you? You are by nature of a pure and wise mind and intellect (suci), have wisdom (i.e. maturity of thought: sumati), and are of an amiable, friendly, brotherly and affable temperament (suhṛda subhāya) (1).

My wicked mother (Kaikeyi) has given birth to me to give (or to be the cause of) a lot of trouble to the Lord (Sri Ram)¹. How unfortunate and evil-lucked I am that when the

time came to help the Lord, I could not provide any service to him inspite of being called his servant (here meaning, his ‘younger brother’ and ‘not a menial servant’).’ (2).

[¹Bharat refers to Lord Ram going to the forest and suffering from all the subsequent horrors because of his wicked mother Kaikeyi who was so extremely selfish that she wished to make her son, Bharat, the king, and in her evil over-zeal she inflicted uncountable miseries on Lord Ram, and Laxman and Sita were too dragged into the vortex of this misery by the virtue of their love for the Lord. Bharat laments that in the end it was he who proved to be the villain of the piece, albeit he was absolutely innocent and had no inkling of his mother’s vicious nature till it was too late.]

Saying thus, he became was overcome with emotions of love and affection, benumbed like a person, no matter how brave and valiant and courageous he is, becomes weary and lacking in energy due to his serious wounds².

Seeing this condition of Bharat, all the mothers³ became distraught and heavy at heart like a kite without an air current to support it (3).

[²A brave warrior’s spirit is not broken by the physical injuries he suffers during battle, but grave injuries to the body do indeed sap his energy and vigour, and makes him physically crippled and unable to continue the fight. This is what is meant by getting ‘weary due to wounds’.

³The ‘other mothers’ here are Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, and Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram. It should be noted that the third mother, i.e. Kaikeyi, was shunned by Bharat for the rest of his life. {Refer: Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/37.}

Hence, Kaikeyi was forced to hide her face in obscurity for life in some inner part of the royal palace. It were Sumitra and Kaushalya who came rushing to the spot when the word spread that Bharat has met some messenger of Lord Ram.]

[Then Kaushalya, mother of Lord Ram, said—] ‘Dear (Hanuman)! Meet Sri Ram and tell him that his stern hearted (emotionless) mother has said these words—“Oh son! Your name looks adorable only when conjoined (i.e. in conjunction, accompanied) with that of my lovely son Laxman.”’⁴ (4).

[⁴She means that you will be adored, admired or welcomed only when you come back to Ayodhya with Laxman by your side. Conversely, it means that it would be better if Sri Ram does not show his face in Ayodhya without Laxman who has laid down his life for him.

To Lord Ram’s credit, this is exactly what he said while lamenting for Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-17 that precede Doha no. 61.]

Tulsidas observes that Hanuman, who could torment even the scorching sun⁵, was himself now being tormented by the three sorrows originating from the surge of affection on part of Bharat (and his frustration and despair), at the statement of the mother (that Sri Ram could not return without Laxman), and at the thought of Laxman’s wound (and the chances of his revival) (5).

[⁵This alludes to his childhood episode when he had lunged forward to eat the sun thinking it to be a ripe red fruit in the sky.]

(6 / 15)

हृदय घाउ मेरे पीर रघुबीरै ।
 पाइ सजीवन, जागि कहत यों प्रेमपुलकि बिसराय सरीरै ॥ 1 ॥
 मोहि कहा बूझत पुनि पुनि, जैसे पाठ-अरथ-चरचा कीरै ।
 सोभा-सुख, छति-लाहु भूपकहँ, केवल कांति-मोल हीरै ॥ 2 ॥
 तुलसी सुनि सौमित्रि-बचन सब धरि न सकत धीरौ धीरै ।
 उपमा राम-लषनकी प्रीतिकी क्यों दीजै खीरै-नीरै ॥ 3 ॥

(6/15)

hṛdaya ghā'u mērē pīra raghubīrai.
 pā'i sajjivana, jāgi kahata yōm prēmapulaki bisarāya sarīrai.. 1..
 mōhi kahā būjhata puni puni, jaisē pāṭha-aratha-caracā kīrai.
 sōbhā-sukha, chati-lāhu bhūpakahaṁ, kēvala kānti-mōla hīrai.. 2..
 tulasī suni saumitri-bacana saba dhari na sakata dhīrau dhīrai.
 upamā rāma-laṣanakī prītikī kyōm dījai khīrai-nīrai.. 3..

Laxman's Revival

Verse no. 6/15—[Coming back to the battle-field, Tulsidas resumes his narration—]
 When Laxman was revived back to life after administration of the Sanjivini herb and asked how he felt, he forgot about any pain or wound afflicting his body, and said cheerfully with an emotionally thrilled body, 'My heart has suffered only the wound, but its pain is actually felt by Raghubir (Sri Ram)'¹ (1).

[¹The Shakti or the energized arrow that Meghnad had shot, had hit Laxman on the chest, near his heart. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54.

Though he was revived by the herb, the physical wound would take some time to heal and its scar to blend with the skin tissue. It cannot be expected that is healed by magic as if nothing had happened. The healing process of the physical wound and its scar would take some time.

What Laxman means here is that albeit the physical wound was suffered by him, the real pain in the form of extreme shock and profound agony and grief was suffered by Lord Ram.

Laxman says that as far as he is concerned, nothing serious has happened; getting injured in the battle-field is a part of a warriors life. What actually matters is this trifling issue was the cause of so much pain and agony for Lord Ram.]

Even as someone asks a parrot about the meaning of the words it is repeatedly pronouncing, so why do you all repeatedly pester me with such irrelevant queries²?

[²A parrot learns the words by heart and chatters incessantly what he has learnt, but he does not understand an iota of it. So, when everyone around him asked him how he felt, he got annoyed. Laxman says all his feelings rest with Sri Ram; his personal feelings have no consequence. No one understands the special emotional bond of love and affection that he and Lord Ram share. It is clear in the next instance—]

The richness, glamour, magnificence, majesty and joy that is associated with the possession of a diamond, or the pain of loss and the pride of getting or acquiring it

belongs to the king (who wears or possesses it), whilst only the intrinsic value and glitter belongs to the diamond³ (2).

[³Here, Lord Ram is like the ‘king’, and Laxman is like the ‘diamond’. It is the king who knows the real worth of the diamond. If it is rare and priceless, the king will exult when he possesses it, and if he loses it he would go into severe bout of dejection and despair, and would barter any thing he possesses if someone brings that diamond to him.

The diamond does not know its value or worth or qualities or characteristics; it is the king who knows them. It is the king who feels the pain of losing a priceless diamond; it is he who rejoices on getting it. The diamond only serves the king mutely by adding to his joys and pleasures and splendour and grandeur when he wears it; it only exacerbates his agony and pain when it is lost.

Similarly, Laxman’s value is known and measured only by Lord Ram: it is he only who knows how important Laxman is in his life. No one else can judge it.]

Tulsidas says that hearing such emotional words of Laxman that were marked by humility, modesty and submission, even those who are renowned for their patience, courage and fortitude would be moved and become emotional and sentimental.

Forsooth and in all sooth, the bond of love and affection betwixt Lord Ram and Laxman is so intangible and profound that no comparison can be made; nay, not even with ‘water and milk’ (khīrai-nīrai)⁴ (3).

[⁴Usually poets and bards compare the inseparable relationship between two individuals by comparing it with the relationship of water with milk. They are both inseparable from one another. But sometimes this comparison fails: for water can be drained out or evaporated from milk, leaving only the latter’s solidified constituents.

But in the case of Lord Ram and Laxman, the bond is so strong and abiding and unbreakable that either both live together, or none of them lives.]

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Section 15.4: Kavitawali Ramayan

Kavitawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 52-55

We have read above, in Section 15.3, what ‘Geetawali Ramayan’ says about those critical moments during the epic War of Lanka when Laxman was wounded. Now, a more crisper version is presented in Kavitawali Ramayan. Let us have a quick read of it, and then move on to the next phase of the epic War.

This episode, of Laxman’s fainting and revival, is narrated in Kavitawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 52-55 as follows:

The Fainting of Laxman

मानी मेघनादसौ प्रचारि भिरे भारी भट,
आपने अपन पुरुषार्थ न ढील की।

घायल लखनलालु लखि बिलखाने रामु,
 भई आस सिथिल जगन्निवास-दीलकी ।।
 भाईको न मोहु छोहु सीयको न तुलसीस
 कहैं 'मैं बिभीषनकी कछु न सबील की' ।
 लाज बाँह बोलेकी, नेवाजेकी सँभार-सार
 साहेबु न रामु-से बलाइ लेउँ सीलकी ।।52 ।।

52. mānī mēghanādasōm pracāri bhirē bhārī bhaṭa,
 āpanē apana puruśāratha na ḍhīla kī.
 ghāyala lakhanalālu lakhi bilakhānē rāmu,
 bha'ī āsa sithila jagannivāsa-dīlakī..
 bhā'ikō na mōhu chōhu sīyakō na tulasīsa
 kahaim 'mairim bibhīśanakī kachu na sabīla kī'.
 lāja bāmha bōlēkī, nēvājēkī saṁbhāra-sāra
 sāhēbu na rāmu-sē balā'i lē'uṁ sīlakī..52..

Verse no. 6/52—Many brave warriors, who were proud of their bravery, clashed with Meghnad, and they did not refrain from showing their valour, strength and prowess. Seeing Laxman injured, Lord Ram started weeping and wailing in distress, and the heart of him (Ram), who is the abode of the world, lost all hopes. The Lord of Tulsidas does not worry about the loss of his own brother, or Sita, but is terribly upset that he could not make any suitable arrangement for Vibhishan. He is more worried about Vibhishan because he is very sensitive to his responsibilities towards the latter (since he has taken the Lord's refuge). There is no master or Lord compared to Lord Ram—I (Tulsidas) say it earnestly and bow before this unique character, natural disposition and quality of Sri Ram (to look after the welfare of his dependants).

[Note—This incident, i.e. 'the fainting of Laxman and his subsequent revival, has been described also in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62; and (ii) Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 5-15.]

कानन बासु दसाननु सो रिपु
 आननश्री ससि जीति लियो है ।
 बालि महा बलसालि दल्यो
 कपि पालि बिभीषनु भूपु कियो है ।।
 तीय हरी, रन बंधु पर्यो
 पै भर्यो सरनागत सोच हियो है ।
 बाँह-पगार उदार कृपाल
 कहाँ रघुबीरु सो बीरु बियो है ।।53 ।।

53. kānana bāsu dasānanu sō ripu
 ānanaśrī sasi jīti liyō hai.
 bāli mahā balasāli dalyō
 kapi pāli bibhīśanu bhūpu kiyō hai..
 tīya harī, rana bandhu paryō
 pai bharyō saranāgata sōca hiyō hai.
 bāmha-pagāra udāra kṛpāla

kahām raghubīru sō bīru biyō hai..53..

Verse no. 6/53—In spite of hardships of living in a forest and having an enemy as formidable as Ravana, the beauty of the countenance of Sri Ram's face has surpassed (won over) that of the Moon. He slayed most powerful Bali and protected Sugriva (from Bali's torment), and made Vibhishan the king of Lanka. On the other hand, his wife was stolen (kidnapped) and brother has fallen in the battle-field—still Sri Ram is worried about him who has sought refuge at his feet (about Vibhishan). Indeed, where would one find such a benevolent, magnanimous and merciful Lord as Sri Ram to give protection to those who have sought the protection of his arms?

लीन्हो उखारि पहारु बिसाल,
चल्यो तेहि काल, बिलंबु न लायो ।
मारुतनंदन मारुतको, मनको,
खगराजको बेगु लजायो ।।
तीखी तुरा 'तुलसी' कहतो,
पै हिउँ उपमाको समाउ न आयो ।
मानो प्रतच्छ परब्रतकी नभ
लीक लसी, कपि यों धुकि धायो ।।54 ।।

54. līnhō ukhāri pahāru bisāla,
calyō tēhi kāla, bilambu na lāyō.
mārutanandana mārutakō, manakō,
khagarājakō bēgu lajāyō..
tikhī turā 'tulasī' kahatō,
pai hi'ēṁ upamākō samā'u na āyō.
mānō prataccha parabbatakī nabha
līka lasī, kapi yōṁ dhuki dhāyō..54..

Verse no. 6/54—[When the physician named Sushen prescribed the herb called Sanjivani found in the Himalayan Mountains, Hanuman went north to fetch it from Dronachal Mountain, but unable to recognize the herb he uprooted the entire mountain].

Without wasting any time, he (Hanuman) immediately uprooted the huge mountain and started back towards Lanka. He left to shame even wind, Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu) and mind in speed and swiftness.

Tulsidas says that he tried in vain to find anything to compare with his speed and swiftness of movement as he darted across the sky, so he has abandoned the attempt (to describe it). Hanuman leapt so fast and darted like a streak of lightening across the sky that he left a trail behind him in it (i.e. he moved so fast that the mountain appeared to stretch from point-to-point across the sky).

चल्यो हनुमान, सुनि जातुधान कालनेमि
पठ्यो, सो मुनि भयो, पायो फलु छलि कै ।
सहसा उखारो है पहारु बहु जोजनको,
रखवारे मारे भारे भूरि भट दलि कै ।।
बेगु, बलु, साहस, सराहत कृपाल रामु,
भरतकी कुसल, अचलु ल्यायो चलि कै ।

हाथ हरिनाथके बिकाने रघुनाथ जनु,
सीलसिंधु तुलसीस भलो मान्यो भलि कै ।। 55 ।।

55. calyō hanumāna, suni jātudhāna kālanēmi
paṭhayō, sō muni bhayō, pāyō phalu chali kai.
sahasā ukhārō hai pahāru bahu jōjanakō,
rakhavārē mārē bhārē bhūri bhaṭa dali kai..
bēgu, balu, sāhasa, sarāhata kṛpāla rāmu,
bharatakī kusala, acalu lyāyō cali kai.
hātha harināthakē bikānē raghunātha janu,
sīlasindhu tulasīsa bhalō mān'yō bhali kai..55..

Verse no. 6/55—Hearing that Hanuman had gone to fetch the life-restoring herb, Ravana sent a demon called Kalnemi to intervene and stop him. He assumed the form of a hermit and (in an attempt to cheat and trap Hanuman) got killed himself. Hanuman easily lifted a very large mountain, many miles long, killed and destroyed numerous demons and the greatest of warriors.

‘Look, Hanuman has brought back the mountain and the news of welfare of Bharat.’ Saying this, the merciful Lord Ram was lavish in his praise of Hanuman’s valour, fame, courage and swiftness as if the Lord was highly indebted and obliged to him.

The Lord of Tulsidas, i.e. Lord Ram, blessed and obliged Hanuman in all possible ways.”

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Chapter 16

Battle with Kumbhakaran and His Death

Once Laxman was brought back to life, there was loud rejoicing and a thunderous cheer in Lord Ram’s camp as if a bright sun has shone from behind a thick blanket of dark clouds that a few moments ago had engulfed the whole army of the Lord in a thick veil of despair, despondency and lost hopes, while the opposite prevailed now in Ravana’s camp where a similar dark pall of gloom marked by dejection, despondency and lost hopes descended heavily on it, as if it was transferred magically to it from the Lord’s camp by the fiat of fate and a decree of destiny which destined aught but the doom and destruction of the cruel, sinful, evil, pervert and unholy demon race.

Now starts the next phase of the epic War of Lanka, and the third day of the battle. Ravana woke up his brother Kumbhakaran and prevailed upon him to join the war for the honour of the demon race and their family. Kumbhakaran gave a tough fight to Lord Ram and his army, but by-and-by he fell down and met his end. But what a wonderful end it was—for at the time of his death his soul emerged from his body as a brilliant shaft of light and directly entered Lord Ram’s holy body, symbolising the merger of the individual creature’s Atma with the Supreme Atma, the ‘Parmatma’, represented by Lord Ram.

This sort of end is regarded as the best destiny for the soul of a dying creature whereby the soul is freed from the fetters of the gross body to which it was bound till now, to attain eternal liberation and deliverance by merging with its parent known as the Supreme Soul, also called the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being to become one and inseparable with the latter. This exalted destiny of the soul is called ‘Mukti’ as it is an eternal form of freedom from this gross mundane world marked by the cycle of birth and death with its attendant chain of endless miseries, pains, grief and torments. This destiny is also called ‘Moksha’ because now onwards there is no return of the soul to this mundane world and its countless miseries and pains. It helps the soul to attain eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity. It is a much sought-after destination for the soul for which great sages, ascetics and hermits, those who are wise, enlightened and self-realised, do so many sacrifices, perform so many religious duties, and suffer hardships voluntarily.

Though Kumbhakaran was a demon by his body, but his soul, which incidentally was his ‘true self’, was extremely pure and holy, for otherwise this destiny was not at all possible for him.

We shall now commence reading about the ferocious battle between Kumbhakaran and Lord Ram, and his final deliverance at the hands of the Lord. This confrontation occurred on the third day of the Great War.

For this narration, we shall be reading the relevant verses from the two classics ‘Ram Charit Manas’ and ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, as we have been doing till now, in the following two Sections of this Chapter no. 16:

Section 16.1: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72.

Section 16.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 40-70; Canto 8, verse nos. 1-30; 49-52. This narration from Adhyatma Ramayan also has sage Narad’s prophesy where he tells Lord Ram how the events will unfold in the battle-field in the next few days.

Now therefore, let us commence with our narration.

Section 16.1: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72.

यह बृत्तांत दसानन सुनेऊ । अति बिषाद पुनि पुनि सिर धुनेऊ ॥ ५ ॥

ब्याकुल कुंभकरन पहिं आवा । बिबिध जतन करि ताहि जगावा ॥ ६ ॥

yaha bṛttānta dasānana sunē'ū. ati biṣāda puni puni sira dhunē'ū. 5.
byākula kumbhakarana pahim āvā. bibidha jatana kari tāhi jagāvā. 6.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard of this development (that Laxman had regained consciousness, is hale and hearty as earlier, and that he seething with anger and full of

wrath, raring to face the demons in the battle-field with renewed vigour and vengeance), he was crestfallen, gloomy and flabbergasted.

Being overcome with a sense of hopelessness, despondency and consternation, and fearing for the worst, Ravana repeatedly beat his head in frustration and exasperation¹. (5)

Agitated and exasperated, Ravana went to Kumbhakaran (his younger brother), and employed different methods to wake him up from his deep slumber². (6)

[Note—¹Ravana was elated when he heard earlier that Laxman was fatally wounded and lay unconscious in the battle-field. He welcomed this news because if something ill happened to Laxman, it would mean Lord Ram would be extremely demoralized, and that would bear negatively on his will to fight the rest of the war with vigour and enthusiasm. Not only the Lord himself, but his whole army too would be overcome with gloom and loss of hope with Laxman fallen, and it is an axiom that an army with low morale has lost the battle even before it actually commences. So the news of Laxman's fainting at the end of the previous day's battle was a matter of rejoicing for the demons.

Ravana had done all he could to stop Hanuman from bringing the required herb that would revive Laxman; or at least delay him from bringing it within the allotted time slot. But all his hopes were dashed when the news came that Laxman has got up hale and hearty, and he is cheerful and full of vigour as earlier. Ravana was astonished that Laxman would not show any signs of fatigue or pain, and from what he was informed of Laxman it seemed that the latter was completely comfortable and relaxed as if he had just got up from a refreshing sleep.

This unexpected development unveiled Ravana's darkest fears lurking in his heart, stoking terror in him, for now he feared for the worst. He was sure that now Laxman would unleash the full force of his wrath and unreserved vengeance upon him and the rest of the demons army as a means of punishing them, and to exact the severest retribution from the whole demon race. And Laxman's wrath was no ordinary anger; he was a personified form of Seshnath, the legendary thousand-headed celestial Serpent, and when this Serpent begins to pour out his scorching venom, it would virtually boil the whole demon race in a cauldron of fire from which there is no escape.

Ravana also feared that the monkey and bear army would now fight with extra vengeance and renewed energy, and with the knowledge and experience of what they could do with the demons as witnessed in the previous days of battle, the future seemed hopelessly dark, gloomy and doomed.

Moreover, Ravana was highly worried and full of consternation about the safety of his son Meghanad, because it was he who had wounded Laxman the previous day in the battle-field, and hence it was natural that Meghanad would be Laxman's first target to be brought down in the next day's battle; Meghanad would have to bear the brunt of Laxman's wrath if he was seen by the latter in the battle-field.

This is the simple and obvious reason why Ravana chose not to send Meghanad into the battle ground the next day; instead he decided to request Kumbhakaran, Ravana's younger brother, to lead the demon forces in the next day's battle.

²Kumbhakaran had got a boon from Brahma, the creator, that he would sleep for long times at a stretch, for six months continuously. It was because when Brahma saw his huge body and excellent appetite, he felt that if this fellow were to eat daily then the whole creation would suffer from a virtual famine as he would devour everything worth eating sooner rather than latter. So the creator asked goddess Saraswati, the goddess of speech and wisdom, to corrupt his mind so that he asks for a boon to sleep, which Brahma would gladly grant instantly, without losing a moment and giving Kumbhakaran a chance to realize the stupidity of his request. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.}

If we closely examine the narrative of the Ramayan, any version we chose to read, one thing will be found to be common—that Kumbhakaran came to learn about the destructive war, and the reason why it started, only now when Ravana went to arouse him from his deep sleep and asked him to help by joining the war for the honour of the family and the demon race. Kumbhakaran was astonished by this request, and he saw Ravana's face pale and ridden with worries, something he had never ever seen before. So he asked his brother what has happened, upon which Ravana disclosed about Sita's abduction, and the subsequent developments leading to the current war.

It is because he had been fast asleep all through; and he was not at all aware of what calamity had befallen upon the unfortunate demon race due to the madness of his brother Ravana. As we shall soon read below, when Kumbhakaran comes to learn about the ill developments, he chided Ravana and remonstrated with him in the strongest possible terms.

That Kumbhakaran would sleep for long periods of time suited Ravana well enough though, because with Vibhishan too kept out of the way and marginalized by allowing him to follow his religious practices privately in seclusion, Ravana ensured that he was free to do whatever he wished to do, with no one to oppose him. And when Vibhishan dared to oppose Ravana once, he was kicked out of the kingdom unceremoniously (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 41).

Since Kumbhakaran was in deep slumber, it was difficult to wake him up easily. So many methods were employed: perhaps loud music was played right beside his ears; perhaps he was poked by sharp pointed weapons; perhaps something was inserted in his nose and ears and mouth to titillate him; perhaps his creeper-like body hairs were pulled; perhaps giant demons danced and thumped on his chest.]

जागा निसिचर देखिअ कैसा । मानहुँ कालु देह धरि बैसा ॥ ७ ॥
कुंभकरन बूझा कहु भाई । काहे तव मुख रहे सुखाई ॥ ८ ॥

jāgā nisicara dēkhi'a kaisā. mānahuṁ kālu dēha dhari baisā. 7.
kumbhakarana būjhā kahu bhāī. kāhē tava mukha rahē sukhāī. 8.

When at last the demon (Kumbhakaran) woke up, he looked like a gigantic and fearful personification of Kaal, the god of death, itself. (3)

Looking around he saw Ravana close by. Observing that Ravana had a pale face and a countenance that seemed to be overcast with dark clouds of fear and worries, Kumbhakaran enquired, 'Oh brother, what is the matter; why is your face so pale, and

why is your countenance so lifeless, dry and withered? What is so serious a thing to afflict you so much?’ (4)

कथा कही सब तेहिं अभिमानी । जेहि प्रकार सीता हरि आनी ॥ ९ ॥
 तात कपिन्ह सब निसिचर मारे । महा महा जोधा संघारे ॥ १० ॥
 दुर्मुख सुररिपु मनुज अहारी । भट अतिकाय अकंपन भारी ॥ ११ ॥
 अपर महोदर आदिक बीरा । परे समर महि सब रनधीरा ॥ १२ ॥

kathā kahī saba tēhiṁ abhimānī. jēhi prakāra sītā hari ānī. 9.
 tāta kapinha saba niscara mārē. mahā mahā jōdhā saṅghārē. 10.
 durmukha suraripu manuja ahārī. bhaṭa atikāya akampana bhārī. 11.
 apara mahōdara ādika bīrā. parē samara mahi saba ranadhīrā. 12.

Ravana proudly told him about the whole affair, about how he had stolen Sita and brought her to Lanka¹. (9)

Ravana said, ‘My dear (tāta). The monkeys have slayed a greater part of the demon army; all the great among demon warriors have been killed. (10)

The most formidable demons warriors, such as the ones who had the most ferocious countenances (durmukha), those who were renowned enemies of the gods and terrified them with their mere presence (suraripu), those who devoured human beings and used them as their fodder (manuja ahārī), those warriors who had huge bodies (atikāya --- bhārī), those were steady and sturdy in the battle-field (akampana)--- (11),

--- In addition to them, the great demon named Mahodar, and many more like him (apara mahōdara ādika bīrā)—well, unfortunately, all have fallen dead in the battle-field.’ (12)

[Note—¹What was there for Ravana to be so proud of? Well, Ravana meant that it was a matter of great pride for him to have been able to bring Sita because it was not an easy task. Why was it not an easy task? It is because her husband, Lord Ram, was a mighty brave warrior, one who had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva to marry Sita in Janakpur, and was an incarnate Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, and therefore fact that Lord Ram could not protect his wife Sita while Ravana took her away was naturally a great feat in its own right, something to boast of.

This above reason is from the perspective of this gross mortal world. But if we are to go deeper, then the meaning changes: from the spiritual perspective Ravana rejoiced that at last he has found a way to compel the Supreme Being to come all the way from heaven right up to his doorstep, in Lanka, to grant his soul liberation and deliverance from the cage of a sinful demon-body in which it is trapped, and thereby grant emancipation and salvation to him, all done so easily and without the hassles of having to undergo hardships associated with the usual methods that lead to this exalted destiny of the soul, such as doing Tapa (penance, austerity), Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Vairagya (renunciation), Yagya (sacrifices), Vrat (religious observances) etc.

Great sages, ascetics and hermits spend their lifetime searching for the Lord but fail; yet Ravana managed to get the same Lord come fact-to-face before him, and then compelled the Lord to free his soul from the evil body of a demon by piercing it with his arrows to let the soul escape from it. So was this not a great achievement by Ravana to be worthy of being proud of? Surely it was; and so he was.]

दो०. सुनि दसकंधर बचन तब कुंभकरन बिलखान ।
जगदंबा हरि आनि अब सठ चाहत कल्याण ॥ ६२ ॥

dōhā.

sunī dasakandhara bacana taba kumbhakaraṇa bilakhāṇa.
jagadambā hari āni aba saṭha cāhata kalyāṇa. 62.

Hearing the words of Ravana, the one with ten shoulders (dasakandhara), Kumbhakaraṇa was taken aback; he lamented gravely and expressed his displeasure unreservedly.

Sternly admonishing Ravana for his misadventure, Kumbhakaraṇa said, ‘Oh you wicked and stupid one. After having abducted the Mother of the World (jagadambā hari āni), how foolish it is of you to expect anything good for yourself? Say, how incongruous and incredulous it is for you to expect wellness after what you have done!’¹ (Doha no. 62)

[Note—¹One will not fail to observe that Kumbhakaraṇa’s advice is on the same lines of what Vibhishan had said earlier at the time when Ravana kicked him out. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 38; and Doha no. 40 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}]

Let us take a deeper look at the episode of Kumbhakaraṇa—from the moment he was woken up by his elder brother Ravana, the way he reacted when first informed by him of Sita’s abduction, the way he has blessed and congratulated his younger brother Vibhishan for taking refuge with Lord Ram a little while later when the two met each other in the battle-field, and the final moments of his death when his soul, his Atma, emerged from his body as a brilliant shaft of light to go straight and enter the divine body of Lord Ram—because we have much to learn and know from it.

My dear reader, do thou wot what is so special about this episode? Well, read on: let us have an open mind, a broad perspective, and let us have knowledge that is eclectic and wide-angled.

First, it is known that Kumbhakaraṇa used to sleep for six months at a time, wake up for a single day, and then go back to sleep for another six-month period. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.} When he was woken up by Ravana and told about his abduction of Sita, Kumbhakaraṇa was not only astonished but also expressed excessive shock and horror at this news. This clearly implies that when he last went to sleep approximately six months ago, Sita hadn’t been stolen by Ravana by then, and she was abducted sometime after Kumbhakaraṇa last went to sleep—because he was totally ignorant of this incident of Sita being abducted and kept hostage in Lanka, for if he had been aware of it then previously there is no sense in Ravana informing him about it now, and besides this, the way Kumbhakaraṇa reacted with utter dismay and great shock on

being informed of Sita's abduction clearly shows that he was totally ignorant of this development. {Apropos: Doha no. 62 herein above.}

These facts lead us to conclude that 'not more than six months had elapsed between the time Sita was abducted by Ravana and the outbreak of the war'. Remember: Kumbhakaran had yet not completed his normal sleeping time of 'six months' as is evident from Ravana forcing him awake by employing many different means. {Apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62 herein above.}

And, soon after the war ended, Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya with his entourage aboard an air plane known as Pushpak. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 119.}

This leads us to conclude that the War of Lanka was fought at the fag end of Lord Ram's fourteen years of forest exile, for immediately after than he returned to Ayodhya.

The second important observation is this: At the time of death, Kumbhakaran's soul had emerged as a brilliant shaft of light to enter the divine body of Lord Ram, leading to his final deliverance and attainment of emancipation and salvation. This rare happening had even surprised the gods and sages who were astonished that a demon would attain such an exalted destiny for himself, when his 'Atma' would merge with the 'Parmatma', the supreme Atma, to become one with it, a destiny that is extolled in laudatory terms in the Upanishads. From the perspective of metaphysics, Kumbhakaran had attained true 'Moksha', a destiny which marks dissolution of the soul and its merger with the cosmic Soul from where there is no return. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 71 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Well, come to think of it—not every one has this great privilege; not even the greatest of sages and ascetics and hermits who spend their entire lifetime doing meditation, contemplation, austerities, penances, sacrifices, and practicing many assorted religious vows and observances are able to achieve this kind of end. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 104 said in reference to Ravana, the only other character in the Story of the Ramayan to attain this exalted stature that grants exemplary beatitude and felicity to the soul of a dying creature.}

What does this mean? Surely it points to the fact that Kumbhakaran's Atma, his 'true self', his soul, was very pure and holy, though the body might have been evil and sinful. But no, that was also not the case as it appears to be on the face. Kumbhakaran had not indulged in cruelty and mayhem like Ravana, he had not indulged in tormenting the creatures and making life hell for them like Ravana. How come so? Because he had been sleeping for six months, and on the one day he woke up he spent it on eating and drinking, only to retire to sleep once again. This clearly and irrefutably means that he had not gone on any bloody campaigns to terrorize the world; he had not soaked his hands with blood of poor creatures. So therefore, even his demon body was not spoiled with the blood of innocent creatures like the way other demons' bodies had been.

Then, this was not all. The world thought that Kumbhakaran was 'sleeping', but a wise man who has read the Upanishads and understands their philosophy would have a completely different take on it. To wit, Kumbhakaran had been lying in a "Yoga Nidra", a deep sleep state of consciousness entered into by enlightened ascetics when they rise to a higher level in the practice of Yoga (meditation). It's that state when the Atma, the 'true self', which is pure consciousness, completely detaches itself from the body of a creature, both at its gross level that is related to the sense organs and known as the 'Jagrat or waking state', as well as at its subtle level related

to the mind-intellect complex known as the 'Swapna or dreaming state', to attain the third exalted state of existence of the consciousness that is known as 'Sushupta or deep sleep state'. This latter state of existence is a transitional stage between the first two states and the fourth state of spiritual bliss known as the 'Turiya state', beyond which is the fifth and final stage marked by full attainment of beatitude and felicity and is known by the name 'Turiyateet', i.e. that which is 'beyond Turiya'.

Now well, so Kumbhakaran was not sleeping the way we understand someone to be asleep; he was in a 'Yoga Nidra' for six month period when the ignorant world thought he was sleeping the way we understand the word to mean.

So that means he was silently doing Yoga (meditation) by practicing Pranayam (breath control exercises prescribed in Yoga) during those six months.

If this is so, if it is argued that he was doing Yoga during sleep as explained above, then how do we explain his eating and drinking heartily on the day he was awake? Well, well, my dear readers. Haven't I said at the beginning of this note that those who understand the philosophy of the Upanishads would think differently about Kumbhakaran sleeping and eating?

Let us explain. Kumbhakaran was not eating food to feed his gross physical body, or to enjoy food for its taste or flavour, but he was eating as an offering made to the 'Pran', the vital life-giving force of Nature, known as the vital winds, which personify Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, that resided in his body. It was just like the way food is offered to the sacred fire during a fire sacrifice. The food-offerings put in the fire pit of a fire sacrifice are meant for the fire god who represents the cosmic fire element, known as the 'Vaishnavar Agni', which provides strength and energy and nutrition to all other gods representing other elements of creation. To wit, the offerings made to the sacred fire are actually meant for the different gods who represent the many elements of creation that are essential for existence of the world.

We have ample proof of this esoteric concept in the Upanishads. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad, which is the 16th Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 52-53 says that the best form of a fire sacrifice is not done internally when the worshipper offers all that he eats as an offering to Brahm, the Supreme Being, represented by the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides in his own body in the form of the 'Pran', the vital winds that keep his body alive.

The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, which is the 29th Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 15 clearly states that the cosmic 'Pran', the life infusing and life sustaining factor of Nature, is known as the Vaishwanar (Pran) as well as the Viraat Purush (the cosmic Male; the Supreme Being). Since the entire creation is a manifestation of this Viraat Purush, it follows that the Pran residing inside the body as the life-sustaining vital winds (such as Pran, Apaana, Urdyan, Vyan and Samaana) are the microcosmic revelation of the cosmic Vaishwanar.

The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 2 enunciates the Mantra for sanctifying food offered to Brahm, the Supreme Lord who resides in the body of the worshipper in the form of his Pran, the vital winds that keep him alive.

And then, the Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 12 describes the Mantras which are used to honour the five vital winds as representative of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

So therefore, when we read that upon waking up Kumbhakaran had gulped down buffaloes and jars of wine, it must be kept in mind that in ancient times animal sacrifices were normal during the rituals associated with a formal fire sacrifice, and so was the use of wine in some secret and obscure forms of worship rituals practiced by certain ancient tribes. This form of worship was not mainstream though, but

nevertheless if was practiced; it was called ‘Vaam panth’, the path of worship that is not normal and away from the routine. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

The third remarkable thing we observe is the way Kumbhakaran has lavishly praised Vibhishan for his decision to surrender to Lord Ram and take refuge with the Lord. He has called Vibhishan a ‘jewel’ of the demon race, and has asked him to continue with his devotion to Lord Ram. This also means that Kumbhakaran’s soul was as pious as that of Vibhishan. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 64 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-9 that precede it.}

A question now arises: If all what is said herein above is true, then why did Kumbhakaran fought ferociously with the monkey and bears, without any mercy?

Well, the answer is this: He wished to remain loyal to his race and family; he wished not to go down in the pages of history as a betrayer of his own people like Vibhishan had been; he wished to die a martyr’s death, as a brave warrior, instead of as a coward who turned his back to the enemy who was at the throat of his clan. His brother Ravana had pleaded with him to go join the battle for the honour of his family and race, so Kumbhakaran could not turn this request down.

There is one more outstanding point to note: When Vibhishan had told Ravana that he had committed a grave error by abducting Sita and he should give her back to Lord Ram, Ravana had become fierce with anger, kicking Vibhishan out of the kingdom. But remarkably no such outrage was expressed by Ravana when Kumbhakaran says almost the same thing. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede it (relating Vibhishan); (ii) Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63 (Kumbhakran’s advice).}

What may have been the probable reason for Ravana overlooking Kumbhakaran’s apparent favour of Lord Ram? The answer is simple: A fierce war was underway, and Ravana needed strong hands to tackle a formidable enemy. Ravana knew well enough that Kumbhakaran was a mighty warrior who had virtually the same potential as he himself had. So it would not have been wise and prudent to antagonize him at this crucial juncture, because his services were immediately needed. Vibhishan, on the other hand, was not a great warrior; he was of a pious mind and a peaceful person; he did not have the same quality of ruthlessness, viciousness and battle-field valour as his other two brothers, Ravana and Kumbhakaran, had.

So therefore, keeping in mind the requirements of the war and one’s usefulness in it as viewed from Ravana’s perspective of the things, Vibhishan was dispensable, but Kumbhakaran was not. Hence, Vibhishan was kicked out, but Kumbhakaran was tolerated.

Not only this, Kumbhakaran has openly thanked his fate that he was so fortunate that he would now be able to see a personified beautiful form of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram straight before his eyes; how lucky was he. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 63 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

This thought is remarkably similar to that of Marich who too had felt similarly happy that he would get a chance to see the beauteous form of Lord Ram at close quarters. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

Lord Ram, the all-knowing and omniscient Lord of the world, knew these secret thoughts of Kumbhakaran, and so he provided both of them, Marich earlier and

Kumbhakaran now, an exalted destiny for their souls. Both were shot by the arrow of Lord Ram, and both attained deliverance for their souls.

There is another very interesting interpretation of the event of “Ravana waking up Kumbhakaran from his deep slumber”. Ravana thought to himself that if Kumbhakaran was not woken up now, but allowed to sleep in his usual way, then he will miss the golden opportunity of finding deliverance at the hands of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, himself, who has come all the way to his very doorstep to provide this reward to him? How will Kumbhakaran’s soul, i.e. his Atma—which Ravana knew to be holy and pure consciousness like his own Atma—attain freedom from the gross body of a demon if he keeps on sleeping and avoids being killed by Lord Ram in the battle-field, because only when his body gets pierced by the arrows of the Lord would his Atma find a chance to escape from it and migrate to its parent form known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is represented by Lord Ram? So it was necessary to wake him up and motivate him to go and voluntarily offer his body as a sacrifice so that his ‘pure conscious self’, his Atma, could find emancipation and salvation.

The war was to end very soon, and Lord Ram would then immediately return home to Ayodhya. All those demon warriors, including Ravana himself, who had joined the war, would be granted the spiritual reward of liberation and deliverance of their souls by the grace of the Lord. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

To wit, this was not an ordinary war waged by Ravana; it was a sort of a ‘fire sacrifice’ undertaken by him to ensure that his sinful demon friends, the whole lot of them, find a chance to break free from the cycle of sins and evils to which they were ignorantly and involuntarily hooked, by offering themselves to the sacred fire symbolised by the war in which the Supreme Being has himself come to accept such offerings. Just as gross things are burnt when put in a raging fire and only pure metal survives, just as all impurities of gold are burnt when it is put in the fire, leaving pure gold in its wake, the sinful and evil gross body of the demons were reduced to ashes in a symbolic way when they got killed in the battle-field—because for a true warrior, death in the battle-field, fighting the enemy bravely and gallantly, is equivalent to the greatest of sacrifices that can be done by a person during a religious fire ceremony, which is ‘self-sacrifice’—thereby granting deliverance, emancipation and salvation to their soul which is always pure and holy.

If Kumbhakaran was allowed to sleep and escape being slayed by Lord Ram while every one of the demon race got this rare honour of personally having a chance to see the Supreme Being from such close quarters while engaging in a hand-to-hand war in close proximity with him, and dying while uttering his holy name to attain emancipation and salvation, it would be a grave injustice done to Kumbhakaran if he was also not made a part of this great self-sacrifice ceremony organized by Ravana, the king of the demon race.

Verily indeed and forsooth, it would have been him very selfish and unjust for Ravana if he had not first sent all those who were loyal to him to receive the spiritual reward of liberation, deliverance, emancipation, salvation, and attainment of eternal peace and beatitude before he himself stood up to receive it.

If this is the logic behind Ravana pushing all the demons to the battle-field to get themselves killed in order to enable them to attain deliverance from their gross demon body, then why did he spare Vibhishan from attaining this exalted fate? It is because Vibhishan was the only one in the entire demon race who lived a life that was visibly saintly, pious and holy, while all the other demons lived a life that was visibly

sinful, evil and cruel. Ravana left Vibhishan behind to carry forward the family's name to future generations, as well as to lead all those demons who survived the war by being anointed as the next king of Lanka. And this is actually what had happened—for after the war ended, Vibhishan was appointed as the next king of the kingdom of the demons of Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 116.}}

चौ०. भल न कीन्ह तैं निसिचर नाहा । अब मोहि आइ जगाएहि काहा ॥ १ ॥

अजहूँ तात त्यागि अभिमाना । भजहु राम होइहि कल्याणा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhala na kīnha tair̃ nīsicara nāhā. aba mōhi ā'i jagā'ēhi kāhā. 1.
ajahūṃ tāta tyāgi abhimānā. bhajahu rāma hō'ihī kalyānā. 2.

[Kumbhakaran said to Ravana—] 'Oh you lord (king) of the demon race (nīsicara nāhā)! What you have done is not at all good and advisable. Now that the damage has already been done, what is the use of your waking me up now at this late stage (for nothing can be done now by me to rectify the grave mistakes committed by you)¹? (1)

But still I would like to advise you that it is never too late to make amends for one's errors that are committed inadvertently by him due to some reason, while there is still time for doing it. So you ought to discard your ego and abandon your haughtiness even at this stage, and instead seek your welfare and well-being by worshipping Lord Ram and paying your obeisance to him (before the things go out of hand)². (2)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran essentially says that if his brother Ravana had woken him up earlier for consultation before stealing Sita, which was done to avenge the insult of Supernakha by Lord Ram for her pervert behaviour and attempt to corrupt the Lord, and which has ended in the start of this devastating war, then Kumbhakaran would have surely stopped Ravana from taking this rash action. If he still wanted to avenge Supernakha's insult, some other less dangerous means could have been devised.

But that chance has been lost now; for the war has already commenced. Kumbhakaran laments this and says that it would have been so much better if Ravana had woken him earlier before the situation went out of control.

²However, still there was hope; still something can be done to salvage the situation and prevent a calamity from happening. But for this it was obligatory that Ravana would have to overcome his ego and stubborn nature; he would have to prepare to make compromises; he would have to become polite and amenable. He will have to send a hint to Lord Ram that he was ready for a peaceful settlement; that he was ready to pay a tribute to end the war. It's worth it.

Vibhishan too had advised Ravana in the same way as Kumbhakaran does now—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.]

हैं दससीस मनुज रघुनायक । जाके हनूमान से पायक ॥ ३ ॥
अहह बंधु तैं कीन्हि खोटाई । प्रथमहिं मोहि न सुनाएहि आई ॥ ४ ॥

hair̥m dasasīsa manuja raghunāyaka. jākē hanūmāna sē pāyaka. 3.
ahaha bandhu tair̥m kīnhi khōṭā'ī. prathamahir̥m mōhi na sunā'ēhi ā'ī. 4.

Oh ten-headed Ravana. Can the Lord of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Ram) be an ordinary human being if Hanuman serves him and becomes his messenger; is it ever possible that Hanuman would serve an ordinary man¹? (3)

Oh my dear brother; you have committed a serious mistake, a grave error, by not coming to me earlier and telling me everything. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, it is not possible that Hanuman would ever serve someone who is an ordinary human being. It is because Hanuman is a manifestation of Rudra, the eleventh form of Lord Shiva, the Great God and the third Deity of the Trinity.

Kumbhakaran draws Ravana's attention to the many stupendous and heroic deeds of Hanuman, such as his crossing the ocean, the burning of Lanka, the single-handed crushing of a huge demon army, the bringing of the mountain with the herb, and so on. Is this the feat of an ordinary monkey? Is Ravana blind not to see what stares in his eyes? Say, why would Hanuman, who has such magnificent abilities, ever wish to serve a human being? Naturally there is more than what meets the eye.]

कीन्हेहु प्रभु बिरोध तेहि देवक । सिव बिरंचि सुर जाके सेवक ॥ ५ ॥
नारद मुनि मोहि ग्यान जो कहा । कहतेउँ तोहि समय निरबहा ॥ ६ ॥

kīnhēhu prabhu birōdha tēhi dēvaka. siva birañci sura jākē sēvaka. 5.
nārada muni mōhi gyāna jō kahā. kahatē'uṁ tōhi samaya nirabahā. 6.

What a stupid folly have you indulged in by creating animosity with the Lord (Sri Ram) who is served (revered, worshipped and adored) by all the gods, including Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation and the third god of the Trinity) and Biranchi (i.e. Brahma, the creator of this physical world)¹. (5)

I would have enlightened you about the information that sage Narad had given me in long time back (if you had told me about your plans earlier), but it is too late for it now². (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed by others also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance (i) Malyawant has advised the same thing to Ravana in Lanka Kand, Doha no. 48-b; (ii) the teacher of Kaagbhusund has said the same thing to the latter in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 106; (iii) Vibhishan too reiterates this thing to Ravana in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38; (iv) Mandodari, Ravana's wife, has done it in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6; (v) and Ravana's messenger named Suka endorses this view in Sundar Kand, Doha no. 56-a.

To wit, everyone who could muster courage felt that Ravana was committing a grave error by being hostile to Lord Ram, and that he would be doing great favour to the demon race by apologizing and making amends with the Lord.

²What was this knowledge that Narad had imparted to Kumbhakaran which he refers to here? It is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 59-65.

Kumbhakaran told Ravana about this meeting as follows: “I once met sage Narad while spending a night in a large city. When I asked the sage from whither he was coming, he told me he had been to the court of the gods in heaven. There I heard the gods talking about their prayer to Lord Vishnu to help them overcome the horrors from which they are suffering due to Ravana’s cruelty. Lord Vishnu has promised them that he would personally take charge of the matter, come down to the mortal world in the form of Lord Ram, and eliminate their tormentor. Narad then went his way. If I had had a chance I would have told you about this meeting and warned you, but unfortunately that chance was missed, perhaps because the Lord did not wish to alert you, so he prevailed upon my mind and made me forget it.”

We have read earlier that Vibhishan has also told Ravana about the impending doom as soon as he was informed about it by a messenger of sage Pulastya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 39-b.]

अब भरि अंक भेंटु मोहि भाई । लोचन सुफल करौं मैं जाई ॥ ७ ॥

स्याम गात सरसीरुह लोचन । देखौं जाइ ताप त्रय मोचन ॥ ८ ॥

aba bhari aṅka bhēṇṭu mōhi bhāī. lōcana suphala karaūṁ maim jāī. 7.
syāma gāta sarasīruha lōcana. dēkhauṁ jā'i tāpa traya mōcana. 8.

But anyway, whatever has happened has happened for good (for Lord Ram is so merciful and kind and compassionate that it certainly cannot be otherwise).

[And what is this ‘good’? It is this—] Now embrace me affectionately and bless me, for now I shall go and feel blessed by seeing the beauteous form of Lord Ram (which will be an excellent reward for my eyes and their ability to see)¹. (7)

[What will I see that would make me feel so blessed and fortunate?] I shall go and see, to my heart’s content, the divine form of the Lord that has a dark complexion and lotus-like eyes; it is a holy form that grants liberation and deliverance from all the three torments that are associated with this mundane gross world; it is form that eliminates all the sufferings from which a creature suffers interminably in this world².’ (8)

[Note—¹Wonderful indeed! Kumbhakaran embraces his dear brother Ravana to bid him good-bye, and to thank him for not forgetting to remember him when the time came for the deliverance of the souls of the members of the demon race. He heartily thanked Ravana for waking him up so that he does not miss the bus by not being able to avail of this golden chance of attaining freedom from the ignominy of having a demon body, as well as attaining an eternal form of life as compared to a mortal one that he has at present.

Let's elaborate this a bit more. The body of a creature is mortal and perishable; it takes a birth and dies. Any thing that has a beginning (birth) and an end (death) does not come within the definition of being eternal; it is mortal with a limited span of life. The soul of the creature, called his Atma, is his 'true self', and it is pure consciousness, which is an eternal entity, as opposed to his body which is gross and mortal.

As long as this Atma lives inside the body and thinks, though erroneously, that the body is its identity, the creature remains mortal and gross. But when the Atma of a creature overcomes this ignorance and finds freedom from this delusion, it realizes that its true nature is eternal and pure consciousness. When this enlightenment dawns inside the creature, he is said to be self-realised. He also realizes that his Atma is but a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Being. This Atma transcends the limitations of time and space; it is an eternal and universal entity.

Hence, when a chance is afforded to a wise, enlightened and self-realised person to discard his mortal, gross and perishable body, and give his Atma the chance to attain eternity by escaping from the body, to fly out of it like a freed bird escaping from its cage into the broad wide space of the sky beyond, never to return to the cage and get trapped again, the lucky person who gets a chance to voluntarily shed his body and let his Atma emerge from it to find eternal freedom from this bondage would profusely thank his stars and feel ecstatic, exuberant and exhilarated.

This fortunate person would especially thank, feel highly grateful and obliged to someone who makes this exalted destiny possible for him. So therefore, Kumbhakaran now thanks and feels highly grateful to his brother Ravana for giving him this chance; he expresses his happiness by affectionately embracing Ravana and telling him that he will forever remain thankful to him for letting him "have the rare reward of possessing eyes and their ability to see by being able to look at the divine form of Lord Ram from so close quarters".

Now, come to think of it. Kumbhakaran knew very well that he is going to die soon, but still he feels so happy. Well, he was not going to die an ordinary death that would keep his soul trapped in the cycle of birth and death—for that would have been a matter of concern, and certainly nothing to rejoice. But he was going to gain an eternal life, to become immortal, to attain emancipation and salvation, to enjoy the fruit of beatitude and felicity.

Kumbhakaran was to meet the Supreme Being personally in the form of Lord Ram; he was to offer his gross evil body of a demon as a sacrifice to ensure liberation and deliverance of his pure and sinless Atma that was unfortunately trapped in it. So then, there was no cause for any regret; such a death was not dying, but it was the stepping stone to an eternal life.

Remember the sacred words of the Holy Bible when it is said: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." {Holy Bible, New Testament, St. John, Chapter 11, verse nos. 25-26.}

And once again, a creature who has faith in the Lord, who believes in the mercy of the Lord, who decides to go and face the Lord, who mentally surrenders before him, is blessed by the Lord never to perish for he grants them eternal life. Has it not been said in the Holy Bible that "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." {Holy Bible, New Testament, St. John, Chapter 10, verse nos. 27-28.}

So, Kumbhakaran was indeed very fortunate and privileged that he had this wisdom inspite of being a demon. And Lord Ram, who is omniscient and all-knowing, duly appreciated his sentiments and inner thoughts—for at the time of Kumbhakaran's death his Atma emerged from his gross body in the form of a brilliant shaft of light and was welcomed by Lord Ram who allowed it enter his own body and become one with his own self. Indeed, forsooth, truly and without gainsay, what an excellent form of death did Kumbhakaran have—for he merged with the Supreme Being to become one with him!

Well, well, my dear readers—who says that Kumbhakaran was 'killed'? No he wasn't killed; he was rather granted an exalted existence by being one with the Supreme Being, by being one like him. Come to think of it: even great sages, hermits and ascetics yearn for it, but it eludes them; but it was so easily available to the so-called sinful demon Kumbhakaran.

One very important point, from the spiritual perspective, is proved by it. Lord God does not care of what kind of body a creature has; the Lord is only concerned by the purity of the inner thoughts of the creature and the readiness of his soul to embrace the Lord.

²The three 'traitaaps' are the following: Adhibhautik = related to the physical world; Adhidaivik = related to opposed stars and gods; and Adhyatmik = related to spiritual aspects.

When Marich went to Lord Ram's hermitage in the form of a golden deer so that he could entice the Lord to come after him in order to catch him when requested to do so by Sita, because she wished to keep this strange deer as a pet, Marich felt overjoyed that he would get a rare privilege, which was an honour and a spiritual reward, of repeatedly glancing at the divine form of Lord Ram as the Lord pursued him from behind, trying to overcome and catch him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}]

दो०. राम रूप गुन सुमिरत मगन भयउ छन एक ।

रावन मागेउ कोटि घट मद अरु महिष अनेक ॥ ६३ ॥

dōhā.

rāma rūpa guna sumirata magana bhaya'u chana ēka.

rāvana māgē'u kōṭi ghaṭa mada aru mahiṣa anēka. 63.

Kumbhakaran was overcome with a surge of emotions as he remembered the divine glories and virtues of Lord Ram; he closed his eyes and remained silent for a moment¹.

Recovering himself from his spiritual reverie that for a moment had lifted his soul to a transcendental plane of existence where one feels the nectar of profound bliss and ecstasy overflowing in his inner-self, Kumbhakaran regained his composure after a while, reverting back to the physical world. He asked Ravana to provide him with multiple jars of wine and hordes of buffaloes (to make a hearty meal before he sallies out of the fort to take on the enemy)². (Doha no. 63)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran was immersed in a sea of bliss when he realized that his final chance to attain liberation and deliverance of his soul has arrived. As has been said

earlier, he was actually practicing Yoga Nidra, a meditative form of sleep wherein the physical gross body appears to be sleeping but the creature remains awake internally at the subtle level of existence and practices meditation. Kumbhakaran felt that his meditation has borne him its due rewards; that now his dream of attaining freedom from the gross body of a demon will be fulfilled.

From a spiritual point of view, he closed his eyes for a while and drew in a deep breath to enjoy a blissful state of transcendental existence. From a worldly point of view, he braced himself for the horrors that he would face soon in the battle-field, and harden himself and firm his resolve to face bravely the pain of certain death like a true warrior.

²Once again, from the spiritual point of view, he was finishing his symbolic fire sacrifice by making the last offerings to the Pran, the presiding deity residing in his body that represent the vital winds that keep the body alive and active, by offering it the buffalo and wine that he requested. When a fire sacrifice was done, such offerings were normal at the end of the ritual. This concept has been described earlier in detail as a note to Doha no. 62 herein above.

But from the worldly perspective, he was eating and drinking and refreshing himself before going out to the battle front.]

चौ०. महिष खाइ करि मदिरा पाना । गर्जा बज्राघात समाना ॥ १ ॥

कुंभकरन दुर्मद रन रंगा । चला दुर्ग तजि सेन न संगी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mahiṣa khā'i kari madirā pānā. garjā bajrāghāta samānā. 1.

kumbhakarana durmada rana raṅgā. calā durga taji sēna na saṅgā. 2.

After having eaten the buffaloes and drunken wine, Kumbhakaran roared with a thunderous noise resembling a clap of thunderbolt¹. (1)

Kumbhakaran was intoxicated with the will to fight, and was enthused with dare devilry. He sallied out of the fort of Lanka, leaving for the battle-field alone, not even bothering to take his army of demon warriors with him in his rash excitement². (2)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran perhaps belched loudly after a hearty meal, and it produced a thunder-like noise. The wine prepared him for the battle as it helped him to become so excessively intoxicated that all the fears and doubts that he may have had were overcome, and so were all his inhibitions and reservations, making him rash and bold.

Remember: He was certain of his death; and if a person is sure that he is walking to his own death he needs a lot of self-control and motivation to push him forward. Wine was a sure-shot formula that dulled his mind and suppressed his wisdom. Kumbhakaran willingly used this formula because he was not sure of himself; he thought that may be at the last moment he might stop fighting and surrender himself to Lord Ram just like the way Vibhishan had done. That was something he would not prefer, for that would mean his soul will not be freed from the cage of a demon-body in which it is trapped. Kumbhakaran wanted to attain emancipation and salvation, and what better chance will he ever get in life if he missed this present golden opportunity of having Lord Ram kill his body by piercing

it with his arrows, thereby allowing his soul, his Atma, to escape from this cage like a freed bird.

Even Baali, the monkey king and brother of Sugriv, had preferred to die this way—to die before Lord Ram, to die while seeing the divine form of the Lord: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 and Chanda line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 10.

Earlier we read that the vulture Jatau has said the same thing at the time of his death: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 31.

So therefore, Kumbhakaran drank gallons of wine and ate tonnes of buffalo meat to get sufficiently intoxicated and energized to valiantly face the horrors of the battle, as well as to avoid becoming emotional and come under the influence of the weakness of his heart at the last moment when he sees Lord Ram face-to-face. He did not want to live; he wished to die with Lord Ram standing before him—first with the objective of attaining deliverance of his soul, second with the objective of receiving Lord Ram's grace and blessings that are bound to come to him unasked for, and third with the objective of dying like a warrior who would gladly embrace martyrdom rather than surrender timidly before his enemy.

²Kumbhakaran left the fort of Lanka and walked cheerfully to the battle-field all alone. He was not afraid of anything as he knew that he was brave and strong and competent enough to tackle all worldly enemies and armies, and he was not afraid of death either as he knew that the so-called impending 'death' was limited to his gross physical body which he knew is destined to die one day or the other, because the body of a living being is mortal and perishable like the world in which it lives; he also knew that this so-called death is actually a chance for his soul, his Atma that is his pure conscious 'true self', to attain eternal freedom from the cage of a demon body in which it is trapped at the moment.

Hence, it was a moment to rejoice and welcome, and not something to be afraid of or regret about. So why should he need the support of any army; why should he let the world think that he was a timid demon who was afraid to face his enemy—because for Kumbhakaran Lord Ram was not an enemy but a redeemer of his soul. Kumbhakaran rather thanked his stars that he has got this opportunity to see the Lord up close, and this thought made him so elated and ecstatic and exhilarated that he did not care who is with him or not with him.

Besides this, there was one more thought in Kumbhakaran's mind. He was certain that death would come to him that day, and that he was willingly and cheerfully embracing this death because it would free him from the cycle of birth and death, and provide him with the chance to attain eternal life—because it would not be an ordinary death, it would be a blessing-in-disguise for him as it would be granted by the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram himself. But not all demons thought that way; not all demons had this eclectic wisdom; not all demons were willing to offer their mortal body to attain eternity for their soul. So why should he drag reluctant fellow creatures to the sacrificial fire pit symbolized by the battle-field against their free will?

Spiritual path is a path that ought to be chosen voluntarily and out of one's free will, and not under any kind of duress, for then its sublime purpose is lost. Therefore, forcing the demon warriors to jump in the fire pit of death if they were unwilling to do so would be tantamount to committing sin from the viewpoint of Kumbhakaran because he had different views of death as compared to the ordinary

demons—for he had the good fortune of being wise, enlightened and self-realised enough to understand that this ‘death’ is actually liberating for his soul, something others might not have, something others might not think.

So Kumbhakaran thought: why should he force other demons to join him in battle to die, as this would be like forcing them to commit suicide, and this would taint his Atma during the last moments of his worldly existence when he was on the threshold of attaining eternal deliverance? Why should he commit avoidable sin? He wisely concluded therefore that he should not do anything that would act as an unwanted impediment to his deliverance, emancipation and salvation at the last moment.

Of course from the worldly point of view it seems that he did not bother if the demon army was following him or not as he was very intoxicated with gallons of wine inside him, but if we delve deeper into the thought processes of Kumbhakaran we would conclude that he had other thoughts in his mind as outlined herein above when he decided to go it alone in the day’s battle with Lord Ram.]

देखि बिभीषनु आगें आयउ । परेउ चरन निज नाम सुनायउ ॥ ३ ॥

अनुज उठाइ हृदयँ तेहि लायो । रघुपति भक्त जानि मन भायो ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi bibhīṣanu āgēm āya'u. parē'u carana nija nāma sunāya'u. 3.
anuja uṭhā'i hṛdayaṁ tēhi lāyō. raghupati bhakta jāni mana bhāyō. 4.

When Vibhishan saw Kumbhakaran coming to the battle-field, he came forward to meet the latter. Vibhishan paid his respects to him by falling at his feet (i.e. by prostrating before him) and introducing himself by name¹. (3)

He (Kumbhakaran) lifted his younger brother (Vibhishan) and clasped him to his bosom. Realising that Vibhishan was a devotee of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram), Kumbhakaran liked him very much; he felt very glad in his heart while embracing Vibhishan². (4)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran had got so excessively drunk and intoxicated that he could not recognize Vibhishan when the latter came to bow before him. So Vibhishan had to tell him who he was by identifying himself by his name.

²Kumbhakaran was happy that at least one member of his family was pious and devoted to the Lord. This would ensure that the family blood would continue to the next generation; that the name of his family would not be obliterated for all times to come because of the recklessness and madness of his elder brother Ravana.

We shall read in the verses that follow herein below that Kumbhakaran would bless Vibhishan and tell him that he has taken the right decision of surrendering himself to Lord Ram.]

तात लात रावन मोहि मारा । कहत परम हित मंत्र बिचारा ॥ ५ ॥

तेहिं गलानि रघुपति पहिं आयउँ । देखि दीन प्रभु के मन भायउँ ॥ ६ ॥

tāta lāta rāvana mōhi mārā. kahata parama hita mantra bicārā. 5.
tēhiṁ galāni raghupati pahim āya'uṁ. dēkhi dīna prabhu kē mana bhāya'uṁ.
6.

Vibhishan explained his position and why he left the family by saying, ‘My dear brother (tāta)! Ravana had kicked me even though I was telling him something that I had thought over and decided was the best for him¹. (5)

I felt very sad and humiliated with this treatment; it was because of it that I was filled with remorse and decided to come to Lord Ram². Fortunately for me, the Lord liked me and welcomed me when he realized that I was sad, miserable and unfairly treated³.’ (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 41.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 41.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

सुनु सुत भयउ कालबस रावन । सो कि मान अब परम सिखावन ॥ ७ ॥
धन्य धन्य तैं धन्य बिभीषन । भयहु तात निसिचर कुल भूषन ॥ ८ ॥
बंधु बंस तैं कीन्ह उजागर । भजेहु राम सोभा सुख सागर ॥ ९ ॥

sunu suta bhaya'u kālabasa rāvana. sō ki māna aba parama sikhāvana. 7.
dhan'ya dhan'ya tairṁ dhan'ya bibhīṣana. bhayahu tāta nīsicara kula bhūṣana. 8.
bandhu bansa tairṁ kīnha ujāgara. bhajēhu rāma sōbhā sukha sāgara. 9.

Kumbhakaran affectionately replied, ‘Listen my son (sunu suta)¹! Ravana is under the influence of Kaal (death), and so would he ever listen to any advice to the contrary, no matter how good and sincere it may be²? (7)

Vibhishan, you are very lucky, you are very fortunate, and I repeat it that you are extremely lucky and exceptionally fortunate. Verily indeed, you are like a jewel in the family, as well as in the race of the demons. (8)

My dear brother, you have brought great glory and honour to our clan and to our family name—that in spite of being born as a demon you had the wisdom and the foresight to devote yourself to Lord Ram, to adore the Lord and worship him.

Go, be devoted to Lord Ram, and worship him who is an embodiment of all good virtues and glories³! (9)

[Note—¹One must note how Kumbhakaran addresses Vibhishan; he calls him a “son”. It is an extremely endearing way in which Kumbhakaran addresses his younger

brother, hinting to the latter clearly that he was full of appreciation for his decision to leave Lanka and take refuge with Lord Ram.

Further, Kumbhakaran hinted to Vibhishan that he was fighting this battle as it was his worldly duty and moral obligation to do so on behalf of Ravana as the latter was the king of the demon race and head of the family, and therefore his orders had to be carried out; but personally he (Kumbhakaran) was against it and he fully endorsed Vibhishan's approach.

An honourable man is one who does his duty, no matter what it is, with full diligence and to the best of his abilities. So Kumbhakaran silently told Vibhishan that he would fight with everyone who comes to face him, and this would include Vibhishan if he steps forward to engage him in a duel. But let Vibhishan know and be assured that there is no ill-will in Kumbhakaran's heart against him; that he blesses Vibhishan with the best in life and a great future like he would have blessed his own 'son'.

²To wit, Ravana's end has come. He is in the grip of Kaal, the god of death. This being the case, he will never pay heed to anything that could save him from death, as it is now his fate, as it is destined to happen that way, and it cannot be otherwise because it is the decree of his destiny.

³To wit, my dear son and brother, I truly salute you for it. I laud you; I thank you; I honour you; I love you; and I am proud of you. God bless you with all the blessings in this world. I am so happy that at least one of us had the wisdom and the prudence to abandon sins and vices, and instead live a quiet life of piety, holiness and purity, a life dedicated to the Lord, a life of devotion and worshipping of the Lord, a life away from sin, evil and perversion.

You are praise-worthy. I hereby grant you permission to be devoted to Lord Ram who is a personified form of the Supreme Being. Both I and Ravana are your elder brothers, so now you have the permission of one of them to pursue your spiritual path with diligence. Go; find peace and happiness in your life. Remember: You have my full and heart-felt blessings.]

दो०. बचन कर्म मन कपट तजि भजेहु राम रनधीर ।

जाहु न निज पर सूझ मोहि भयउँ कालबस बीर ॥ ६४ ॥

dōhā.

bacana karma mana kapaṭa taji bhajēhu rāma ranadhīra.
jāhu na nija para sūjha mōhi bhaya'uṁ kālabasa bīra. 64.

Worship and be devoted to Lord Ram, who is a resolute warrior in the battle-field¹, with your words, your deeds and your thoughts. [To wit, serve the Lord diligently to the best of your abilities; employ all your means to serve him.]

But go away now, for I have become virtually blind under the influence of my own Kaal (death), and I am unable to distinguish between a friend and an enemy².
(Doha no. 64)

[Note—¹The word “ranadhīra” that is used in the text can be applied to Lord Ram as well as to Vibhishan. If it is applied to Vibhishan, then the 1st line of the Doha would

read as follows: “Oh my brother who is firm and steady in the battle-field. I advise you to be fully devoted to Lord Ram, and employ all the means at your command, such as your words, deeds and thoughts, to keep serving him.”

Howbeit, if it is applied to Lord Ram, then the version given above in the main text will hold good. This author personally feels, though, that the interpretation as given in the paragraph above of this note is nearer to the spirit of the interview between Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan. But at the same time, the word can also be applied to Lord Ram equally well because immediately Kumbhakaran engages in a battle with the Lord who firmly stands his ground inspite of the demon’s ruthless and brutal charge at him, and finally bringing Kumbhakaran down after a ferocious battle.

²Kumbhakaran tells Vibhishan to go away because all eyes were riveted on them; all the demons and the monkeys were closely watching their meeting. They were supposed to be rivals; so Kumbhakaran thought that if Vibhishan lingered any longer than needed, then his new friends in Lord Ram’s camp, the monkey and bear chiefs, would immediately become suspicious of him and his intentions. They will think he was plotting something against them. Then there were fair chances that they would go and poison Lord Ram’s ears against Vibhishan; perhaps even point out to the Lord their meeting at a distance. Though Kumbhakaran was sure that Lord Ram would not so easily be misled against Vibhishan, yet it was the time of war, and during such times even a harmless incident can prove fatal and arouse suspicions, as nerves are on edges, and trust and faith and friendship become very fragile and the first victims of suspicion and doubt.

So therefore, it was not good for Vibhishan to stay near Kumbhakaran any longer; rather it was dangerous for him. Vibhishan got the hint, for we read in the verses that follow herein below that he immediately went and informed Lord Ram of Kumbhakaran’s arrival in the battle-field. It was certainly a very wise move by Vibhishan because it prevented the seed of doubt and suspicion from germinating in the minds of the monkeys and bears.]

चौ०. बंधु बचन सुनि चला बिभीषन । आयउ जहँ त्रैलोक बिभूषन ॥ १ ॥

नाथ भूधराकार सरीरा । कुंभकरन आवत रनधीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bandhu bacana suni calā bibhīṣana. āya'u jhaṁ trailōka bibhūṣana. 1.

nātha bhūdharākāra sarīrā. kumbhakarana āvata ranadhīrā. 2.

Hearing the words of his brother (Kumbhakaran), Vibhishan left him immediately and came to the place where Lord Ram, the jewel of the whole world consisting of three divisions (trailōka bibhūṣana) was present. [To wit, after meeting his brother and paying his respects to him, Vibhishan came back to Lord Ram’s place.]¹ (1)

On reaching Lord Ram, Vibhishan reported, ‘Oh Lord! The mighty Kumbhakaran who has a colossus body resembling a living mountain, and who is very resolute and firm in battle, is coming to the battle-field.’ (2)

[Note—¹When the news arrived that Kumbhakaran has emerged from the gates of the fort of Lanka, Vibhishan went to meet him. He was with Lord Ram at that time like

other senior commanders of the Lord's army, and so naturally it follows that he had the Lord's permission to go and meet Kumbhakaran. Even if it is argued that there is no proof that Vibhishan was by the side of Lord Ram when Kumbhakaran stepped into the battle-field, but it certainly Vibhishan would not dare to take the bold step of going to meet his elder brother without the Lord's explicit permission, as it would not be taken lightly by his fellow commanders in the Lord's army who were always suspicious of him and doubtful of his intentions because he was Ravana's brother; besides this, it would be tantamount to breach of discipline and against probity for him to openly go and meet someone from the side of the Lord's enemy.

So therefore, Vibhishan had gone to meet Kumbhakaran with the full knowledge of Lord Ram.

As to why he came directly to the Lord immediately after meeting his elder brother, this has already been explained in a note to Doha no. 64 herein above. Remember: Kumbhakaran has explicitly told him to go away, but he implicitly meant to tell Vibhishan that he should go to Lord Ram and report to him that Kumbhakaran is coming his way.]

एतना कपिन्ह सुना जब काना । किलकिलाइ धाए बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥
लिए उठाइ बिटप अरु भूधर । कटकटाइ डारहिं ता ऊपर ॥ ४ ॥

ētanā kapinha sunā jaba kānā. kilakilā'i dhā'ē balavānā. 3.
li'ē uṭhā'i biṭapa aru bhūdhara. kaṭakaṭā'i dārahim tā ūpara. 4.

As soon as the brave monkey (and bear) warriors heard this (and received a signal from Lord Ram, their supreme commander), they rushed forward with a shrill cry and a sharp yell. (3)

They picked up huge boulders and large trees, and dumped them violently upon him (Kumbhakaran). (4)

कोटि कोटि गिरि सिखर प्रहारा । करहिं भालु कपि एक एक बारा ॥ ५ ॥
मुखो न मनु तनु टस्यो न टास्यो । जिमि गज अर्क फलनि को मास्यो ॥ ६ ॥

kōṭi kōṭi giri sikhara prahārā. karahim bhālu kapi ēka ēka bārā. 5.
muryō na manu tanu ṭaryō na ṭaryō. jimi gaja arka phalani kō māryō. 6.

The monkeys and bears simultaneously hurled countless rocks that were as large as summits of mountains upon him, and such attacks were repeated in quick succession. (5)

But none of them had any effect on Kumbhakaran, for he remained firm on his ground and stuck to his position, neither feeling intimidated internally in his heart and mind, nor showing any external sign of fear or alarm by turning back in the same way as hurling fruits of the swallow-wort plant (*Calotropis Gigantea*) makes no effect on a mighty elephant¹. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, Kumbhakaran was not deterred in the least by the ferocity of the attack by the monkeys and bears. He not only stood his ground, but even moved ahead fearlessly and relentlessly as if nothing bothered him, bludgeoning his way through the rank and file of the monkey army like a gigantic battle-ram, crushing some underfoot and devouring others whom he grabbed and squeezed tight in his hands before tucking them in his cave-like mouth—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precedes Doha no. 67 herein below.

We read about a similar attack by the monkeys in Valmiki's Ramayan, in its Lanka Kand, Canto 66, verse nos. 10-11.]

तब मारुतसुत मुठिका हन्यो । पश्यो धरनि व्याकुल सिर धुन्यो ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि उठि तेहिं मारेउ हनुमंता । घुर्मित भूतल परेउ तुरंता ॥ ८ ॥

taba mārutasuta muṭhikā han'yō. paryō dharani byākula sira dhun'yō. 7.
puni uṭhi tēhiṁ mārē'u hanumantā. ghurmita bhūtala parē'u turantā. 8.

Observing the predicament of his companions, the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) stepped in the fray; he punched Kumbhakaran with his clenched fists so ferociously that the demon couldn't bear the force of it and fell down on the ground quite agitated, beating his head in frustration and annoyance¹. (7)

Not to be outwitted, he (Kumbhakaran) gathered courage and got up, and then retaliated by hitting Hanuman viciously. This hit made Hanuman swoon and fall to the ground immediately². (8)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran was so confident of his own strength and invincibility that he had never, even in his wildest of dreams, imagined that someone would dare to hit him so powerfully and with such a mighty force that he would swoon and fall down under its impact. So when Hanuman posted a clenched fistful on him, Kumbhakaran was for a shock of his life; he was stunned and confounded that it would actually come to happen one day to him. He beat his head in disgust and to curse himself that he wasn't prepared for this eventuality; that he had not taken due precautions and kept himself alert when he saw Hanuman approaching him menacingly. Kumbhakaran swore to himself that if he had been a little more careful, this wouldn't have happened.

²Both Hanuman and Kumbhakaran were mighty warriors of unmatched valour. Hanuman first punched and fell his opponent Kumbhakaran, and then the latter got up and hit back, felling the former. This description of the duel makes it look very natural and as likely to have actually happened, and lends a sense of reality and earthiness, a sort of worldliness to a war that otherwise appears to be a fable right out of a fantasy tale.]

पुनि नल नीलहि अवनि पछारेसि । जहँ तहँ पटकि पटकि भट डारेसि ॥ ९ ॥
चली बलीमुख सेन पराई । अति भय त्रसित न कोउ समुहाई ॥ १० ॥

puni nala nīlahi avani pachārēsi. jaham̐ tahaṁ paṭaki paṭaki bhaṭa ḍārēsi. 9.
calī balīmukha sēna parāṭī. ati bhaya trasita na kō'u samuhāṭī. 10.

Being outraged by Hanuman's dare devilry, he (Kumbhakaran) lost his cool and went on the offensive. Lunging forward angrily, he grabbed Nala and Neela (the other two great monkey warriors accompanying Hanuman) and dashed them violently on the ground; then he grabbed any of the monkey or bear warriors whom he managed to lay his hand on, and dashed them to the ground in a similar fashion, here and there wherever he could. (9)

The result was that the army of monkeys and bears started beating a hasty retreat; they were so terrified that none gathered courage to stand his ground and retaliate¹. (10)

[Note—¹When Kumbhakaran showed his true wrath, the army of monkeys and bears scattered like dry leaves scattering under a powerful storm; they fell under his onslaught like nine pins crumbling en-masse. There was utter chaos in the army, and no monkey or bear warrior dared to look back as they scampered to safety.]

दो०. अंगदादि कपि मुरुछित करि समेत सुग्रीव ।
काँख दाबि कपिराज कहूँ चला अमित बल सींव ॥ ६५ ॥

dōhā.

aṅgadādi kapi muruchita kari samēta sugrīva.
kāṁkha dābi kaporāja kahuṁ calā amita bala sīnva. 65.

Kumbhakaran made Angad, Sugriv and other monkey warriors faint and fall down.

Then he (Kumbhakaran), who was endowed with stupendous valour, might and strength, grabbed the unconscious Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, and tucked him under his arms (in his arm-pit) as he moved on in the battle-field¹. (Doha no. 65)

[Note—¹A question here arises: How could Kumbhakaran take away Sugriv cocked under his arms when Hanuman, the bravest of the monkey warriors, was present in the battle-field; why did Hanuman not intervene and free Sugriv; why did he not stop Kumbhakaran from grabbing an unconscious Sugriv and take him away unchallenged?

The answer is simple, and it is this: Hanuman was already unconscious and lying on the battle ground—apropos: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha. So obviously he couldn't intervene to help any of his friends who bore the brunt of Kumbhakaran's ire.

We shall also read about it in Chaupai line no. 4 that follows Doha no. 65 herein below where it is said that as soon as Hanuman regained his consciousness he began searching for Sugriv. This clearly means that when Kumbhakaran had tucked Sugriv under his arm-pit, Hanuman was unconscious and unaware of anything.

The other question is this: Why did Kumbhakaran select Sugriv instead of Angad to be taken as a hostage? The answer is this: Angad's father Baali had humiliated Ravana in some time in the past by tucking him under his arm (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24). So Kumbhakaran wanted to settle

scores; he thought to himself thus: “Baali had carried off my brother Ravana under his arms, so I will now carry Baali’s brother Sugriv to square the old pending account.”

Another reason is this: Sugriv was not only the king of the monkey race but also the chief commander of Lord Ram’s army, as well as the Lord’s chief advisor. Sugriv’s capture would demoralize the rank and file of the monkey army, and would also make Lord Ram feel despondent and worried. The news that other brave warriors were already lying unconscious would aggravate the sense of loss and hopelessness amongst the Lord’s warriors.

Remember: It was war-time, and during such times any small thing that could act as a demoralizing factor for the enemy was welcome. So therefore, thought Kumbhakaran, such small steps would go a long way to help his brother Ravana during the course of the war. If the monkey army felt that their king Sugriv was dead, if Lord Ram got the impression that Sugriv was no more, he and his brother Laxman would be rudely shaken; and with them losing hope of victory, Ravana would have won the war in a symbolic way. This view is endorsed in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 67, verse no. 71.]

चौ०. उमा करत रघुपति नरलीला । खेलत गरुड़ जिमि अहिगन मीला ॥ १ ॥

भृकुटि भंग जो कालहि खाई । ताहि कि सोहइ ऐसि लराई ॥ २ ॥

जग पावनि कीरति बिस्तरिहिहिं । गाइ गाइ भवनिधि नर तरिहिहिं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

umā karata raghupati naralīlā. khēlata garura jimi ahigana mīlā. 1.

bhṛkuṭi bhaṅga jō kālahi khāī. tāhi ki sōha'i aisi larāī. 2.

jaga pāvani kīrati bistarihahiṁ. gā'i gā'i bhavanidhi nara tarihahiṁ. 3.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this magnificent Story, continued with his narration and told his consort goddess Parvati, whose other name was Uma, as follows—]

‘Oh Uma! Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) is playing around in the battle-field sportily with the demons like an ordinary human being would just like Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, would play around with serpents¹. (1)

Verily indeed, does this kind of (cat-and-mouse; seesaw) war that Lord Ram is engaged in with the demons behooves the Lord who can exterminate even Kaal (the deity of death; the deity of time and age) by merely raising his eyebrows against the latter? [Surely not; but he acts in the way he does for the following reason:-] (2)

Surely he does it (i.e. he fights a war like an ordinary human would do in this world) so as to leave behind a legendary Story that would help to spread and establish his glories and fame in the world for generations to come when they are read, listened to and recited. This would purify the world and the heart of the Lord’s devotees who will find an easy means to cross over this symbolic ocean of mortal existence to reach its other shore to attain deliverance and bliss by singing and narrating this magnificent Story of the Lord’s wondrous deeds (that defy logic and explanation)². (3)

[Note—¹To wit, though Lord Ram is the Supreme Being in his primary form, because his true form is Lord Vishnu, the cosmic Lord of the universe, yet he acts like an ordinary human being while being engaged in a war with the demons. The Lord could have exterminated the demons by his mere desire, but still he goes through the act of waging a war, and suffering setbacks and making gains in it, just like a human knight would have done. But one must not be misled by this adventure to doubt the Lord's supremacy.

Why then did he act in such an ordinary way? This question is answered in verse no. 3 here—it was to give the world a magnificent story which the people would be able to easily relate to and understand, a story that would be so wonderful and fascinating that it would be read and repeated over and over for generations to come, providing a simple means to ordinary people to remember the Lord and sing his glories in a way that would be charming, interesting and enjoyable for them, a story that would capture their imagination and keep them enthralled.

Garud is an inveterate enemy of serpents; he gobbles up the most poisonous of snakes easily. But if we read that Garud had been surrounded by serpents and fought a seesaw, pitched battle with them, sometimes chasing them away and at other times being chased by them, at one moment gaining an upper hand on them and at other moment seeming to lose ground to them, then this would be very interesting for the reader.

And just like Garud merely playing around with the serpents for his own joy and entertainment, for he could have easily devoured them if he had so wanted, Lord Ram too plays with the demons just for the fun of it, for had the Lord wanted to eliminate them then he could have done it even without a war, for Lord Ram is the Lord of Death; he is the Lord who controls death and destiny of all living beings.

²Here is the clue: If the war of Lanka was not fought, if there was no characters like Ravana and Kumbhakaran, how would we have had the Story of the Ramayan, and how would the world have known of Lord Ram? There were so many kings in the illustrious family of the line of King Raghu; all were great and famed kings and righteous rulers in their own rights. Not only them, the world has a rich history of great and illustrious kings and emperors whose exploits and virtues have been glorified and recorded as histories and biographies by scribes, and sung by bards down the centuries. But they are not regarded as manifestations of the Supreme Being. Therein lies the wonder and glory of the Story of Ramayan.

Had the Supreme Being brought to an end the demon race by merely invoking the normal Laws of Nature—that everything and everyone that comes to this mortal world has to die, that all who have taken a birth must die too when their time comes—the end of the cruel demons would have been a natural process and a forgone conclusion. But then we won't have had the 'Story of the Ramayan'!

This answers why Lord Ram played around like an ordinary man. This glorious and divine Story of the Ramayan has been providing spiritual solace and bliss to generations of human beings; it has brought the Supreme Being, who is otherwise invisible, without attributes and too abstract to be understood by an ordinary man, within his reach. The Story of the Ramayan evokes devotion and love for the Lord God; it generates affectionate emotions and sentiments that are conducive to spiritual elevation and bliss; it brings the Lord God so much the nearer to his devotee.

If nothing else then at least this Story provokes debates and discussions, it keeps the interest to know more about Lord Ram alive by its wondrous episodes, it

keeps the fire of devotion, faith and belief in the Lord God ignited, it acts as a beckon of hope for those forsaken by the world because it tells them that the merciful, compassionate and kind Lord Ram is there in an invisible form to help them.

To wit, it helps in resurrection of a drowning hope for salvation and emancipation of the creature.]

मुरुछा गइ मारुतसुत जागा । सुग्रीवहि तब खोजन लागा ॥ ४ ॥
सुग्रीवहु कै मुरुछा बीती । निबुकि गयउ तेहि मृतक प्रतीती ॥ ५ ॥

muruchā ga'i mārutasuta jāgā. sugrīvahi taba khōjana lāgā. 4.
sugrīvahu kai muruchā bītī. nibuki gaya'u tēhi mṛtaka pratītī. 5.

When his fainting spell ended and Hanuman regained his consciousness, he immediately began searching for Sugriv. (4)

Meanwhile, Sugriv too regained his consciousness, but he pretended to be dead and lifeless. So Kumbhakaran carelessly dropped him to the ground (thinking it to be too cumbersome to keep him pressed under his arm because he could not use this arm in the battle). (5)

काटेसि दसन नासिका काना । गरजि अकास चलेउ तेहिं जाना ॥ ६ ॥
गहेउ चरन गहि भूमि पछारा । अति लाघवँ उठि पुनि तेहि मारा ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि आयउ प्रभु पहिं बलवाना । जयति जयति जय कृपानिधाना ॥ ८ ॥

kāṭēsi dasana nāsikā kānā. garaji akāsa calē'u tēhim jānā. 6.
gahē'u carana gahi bhūmi pachārā. ati lāghavaṁ uṭhi puni tēhi mārā. 7.
puni āya'u prabhu pahim balavānā. jayati jayati jaya kṛpānidhānā. 8.

Sugriv got up on the sly and bit Kumbhakaran's nose and ears with his sharp teeth, and then made a loud yell as he jumped off towards the sky. It was then that Kumbhakaran realized that Sugriv was alive. (6)

He (Kumbhakaran) grabbed him (Sugriv) by the leg, and pulling him down, he dashed the latter on the ground. But Sugriv showed great agility by getting up instantly and retaliating by hitting Kumbhakaran back hard. (7)

After stunning Kumbhakaran for a while with his fierce jab, the brave Sugriv came back to Lord Ram, raising a slogan in the Lord's honour, saying: 'Hail Lord Ram who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and grace; Glory be to you.' (8)

नाक कान काटे जियँ जानी । फिरा क्रोध करि भइ मन ग्लानी ॥ ९ ॥
सहज भीम पुनि बिनु श्रुति नासा । देखत कपि दल उपजी त्रासा ॥ १० ॥

nāka kāna kātē jiyam̐ jānī. phirā krōdha kari bha'i mana glānī. 9.
sahaja bhīma puni binu śruti nāsā. dēkhata kapi dala upajī trāsā. 10.

When Kumbhakaran got his with together he realized that his ears and nose have been bitten off. This infuriated him no end; he was overcome with vehemence and anger, feeling ashamed at himself and was overwhelmed with regret (that his carelessness has made him look ridiculous)¹. (9)

On the one hand he had a colossal body, and added to it was the macabre sight of his fearsome face from which the nose and the ears had been yanked off (creating huge cave-like cavities on his hideous face from which streams of blood gushed out). This sight was so frightening that it sent chill in the rank and file of the monkey army; they were sore scared and extremely terrified by this horrifying view of Kumbhakaran. (10)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran regretted his error of judgment when he dropped Sugriv, thinking him to be dead. Had he been a little more careful he could have wrung Sugriv tight to squeeze the life out of him like one wrings wet cloth to squeeze water. But it was a lost chance.]

दो०. जय जय जय रघुबंस मनि धाए कपि दै हूह ।
एकहि बार तासु पर छाड़ेन्हि गिरि तरु जूह ॥ ६६ ॥

dōhā.

jaya jaya jaya raghubansa mani dhā'ē kapi dai hūha.
ēkahi bāra tāsu para chārēnhi giri taru jūha. 66.

[When the monkey warriors saw that Hanuman, Sugriv and the rest, whom Kumbhakaran had hit so hard that they had all fainted, have regained their consciousness and are fighting-fit, they let out a shrill cry of joy and turned back to launch a vicious counter-attack on their enemy, the demon Kumbhakaran.]

Roaring enthusiastically, and repeatedly cheering and praising the glory of Lord Ram, the jewel of the race of king Raghu (raghubansa mani), the monkey hordes rushed forward to launch a fresh wave of attack on Kumbhakaran, dumping clusters of huge boulders and large trees of varying sizes and shapes on him all at once (almost burying him under the rubble). (Doha no. 66)

चौ०. कुंभकरन रन रंग बिरुद्धा । सन्मुख चला काल जनु क्रुद्धा ॥ १ ॥
कोटि कोटि कपि धरि धरि खाई । जनु टीड़ी गिरि गुहाँ समाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kumbhakarana rana raṅga birud'dhā. sanmukha calā kāla janu krud'dhā. 1.
kōṭi kōṭi kapi dhari dhari khāī. janu ṭīṛī giri guhām̐ samāī. 2.

Kumbhakaran was so intensely infused with the heat of war and greatly maddened with the passion to fight to the end that he faced his enemy fearlessly. Brushing aside the heaps of rocks and trees that had gathered around him in huge mounds, he was seething with anger as he marched against the monkeys and bears like a personified form of Kaal, the god of death, himself coming forward to wreak his vengeance upon them. (1)

He grabbed large numbers of monkeys on whom he could lay his hand, and put them in his wide-open cavernous mouth, a sight that reminded one of swarms of locusts entering a huge cave¹. (2)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran had a gigantic body; his mouth was exceptionally large and cave-like in proportion to his huge body. The monkeys he grabbed and dumped inside his mouth did not die; rather they were safe inside it like locusts are inside a cave. After entering the mouth these monkeys bit it from the inside, and hastily escaped from the many holes in it—like the ears and the nose, and even through the open mouth even as Kumbhakaran was busy dumping more monkeys inside it—this will be clear in Chaupai line no. 4 herein below. It was like locusts freely entering and leaving the cave.

What a fantastic imagery! Imagine a tall mountain with a deep cave that has a large main opening on one of its sides, and many other smaller openings in the form of various crevices and fissures on the sides of the mountain that lead to the interior of the cave through a network of tunnels and channels. Locusts and other insects freely enter and exit thorough these openings; while the main mouth of the cave serves as the chief entry-exit route but one would also see thin lines of insects making their way inside the cave and then exiting through it by the many tunnels and channels leading to the cave from the sides of the mountain.

The same thing was observed here with respect to the monkeys—the majority of them escaped directly through his wide open mouth, the rest jumped out through the openings of the ears and nose that led out from the buckle-cavity of the demon's mouth.

Remember one more thing: Kumbhakaran had grabbed and dumped inside his mouth not only the monkeys but also the bears in his mad spree of catching and devouring them as will be evident in Chaupai line no. 4 herein below.]

कोटिन्ह गहि सरीर सन मर्दा । कोटिन्ह मीजि मिलव महि गर्दा ॥ ३ ॥
मुख नासा श्रवनन्हि कीं बाटा । निसरि पराहिं भालु कपि ठाटा ॥ ४ ॥

kōṭinha gahi sarīra sana mardā. kōṭinha mīji milava mahi gardā. 3.
mukha nāsā śravananhi kīṁ bātā. nisari parāhiṁ bhālu kapi ṭhātā. 4.

He (Kumbhakaran) caught hold of multitudes of monkey warriors and crushed them either by rubbing them viciously against his own body or squeezing them hard with his hands (fingers), before letting them fall to the ground and getting covered with dust. (3)

Meanwhile, large groups of monkeys and bears were seen escaping in droves from his cavernous mouth and running away¹. (4)

[Note—¹See note appended to verse no. 2 herein above. It is pertinent to note here that Kumbhakaran was thrusting large numbers of monkeys and bears inside his mouth without tearing them apart with his teeth; he was not chewing or biting them before dumping them inside the cavity of the mouth. This is the reason why none of them died; they swarmed out of the mouth-cavity as soon as they were inside it.

Only those unfortunate ones whom he rubbed against his body or squeezed with his hand actually died.]

रन मद मत निसाचर दर्पा । बिस्व ग्रसिहि जनु एहि बिधि अर्पा ॥ ५ ॥
मुरे सुभट सब फिरहिं न फेरे । सूझ न नयन सुनहिं नहिं टेरे ॥ ६ ॥

rana mada matta nisācara darpā. bisva grasihi janu ēhi bidhi arpā. 5.
murē subhaṭa saba phirahim na phērē. sūjha na nayana sunahim nahim ṭērē.
6.

Kumbhakaran was intoxicated with pride and heated with the passion of war as he relentlessly unleashed his destructive wrath on the battle-field as if the Creator has offered him a chance and a mandate to devour (exterminate) the world in this way. (5)

All the great warriors in the monkey and bear army turned their back to the battle-field; no amount of cajoling and encouraging words would make them change their minds from desisting from battle and countering Kumbhakaran. They could not see anything clearly with their eyes, and they would not respond to any call because they did not hear properly (as a result of the trauma that they had gone through)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The monkeys and bears who managed to escape with their lives were so dazed and traumatized by their horrifying experience that they lost the will and enthusiasm to fight any more. There was so much confusion and consternation amongst their rank and file that for a moment it seemed difficult to control them and turn them around; there was complete chaos and panic in the army of Lord Ram.]

कुंभकरन कपि फौज बिडारी । सुनि धाई रजनीचर धारी ॥ ७ ॥
देखी राम बिकल कटकाई । रिपु अनीक नाना बिधि आई ॥ ८ ॥

kumbhakarana kapi phauja biḍārī. suni dhā'ī rajanīcara dhārī. 7.
dēkhī rāma bikala kaṭakā'ī. ripu anīka nānā bidhi ā'ī. 8.

When the demon army heard that Kumbhakaran had scattered the army of monkeys and bears, it rushed forward¹. (7)

In the mean time, Lord Ram observed that the situation was alarming as his army was in serious trouble, feeling helpless and agitated, and at the same time a large number of enemy warriors, the demons, have entered the battle-field². (8)

[Note—¹We have read earlier in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64 that Kumbhakaran had gone to the battle-field all alone; he had left the demon army behind. The demon warriors were already reeling under the bitter experience of being pounded and pummeled by the ferocity of attack by the monkeys and bears that they themselves feared facing them again, and so were initially reluctant to accompany Kumbhakaran as he stepped out on the battle ground. But when they saw that their leader has managed to scatter the enemy and crush it, they became encouraged to fight once more. So they gathered their courage and dashed forward.

²Lord Ram had been watching the proceedings from his control-and-command camp. He observed that his army was in panic and scattered. Now was the time for him to step in to save the situation. And this he did as we shall read in the next Doha.]

दो०. सुनु सुग्रीव बिभीषन अनुज सँभारेहु सैन ।
मैं देखउँ खल बल दलहि बोले राजिवनैन ॥ ६७ ॥

dōhā.

sunu sugrīva bibhīṣana anuja saṁbhārēhu saina.
maiṁ dēkha'um̐ khala bala dalahi bōlē rājivanaina. 67.

The lotus-eyed Lord Ram summoned his chief commanders and said, 'Listen Sugriv, Vibhishan and Laxman (the Lord's younger brother). You take charge of the army, while I will see if I can tackle this wicked fellow and his wild forces (i.e. Kumbhakaran and the demon army)'. (Doha no. 67)

चौ०. कर सारंग साजि कटि भाथा । अरि दल दलन चले रघुनाथा ॥ १ ॥
प्रथम कीन्हि प्रभु धनुष टँकोरा । रिपु दल बधिर भयउ सुनि सोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kara sārāṅga sāji kaṭi bhāthā. ari ḍala dalana calē raghunāthā. 1.
prathama kīnhi prabhu dhanuṣa ṭaṁkōrā. ripu dala badhira bhaya'u suni sōrā.
2.

Arming himself with his famous bow known as 'Sarang'¹ that he held in his hand, and a quiver full of arrows that was tied to his waist, Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram) went forward to tackle the enemy (Kumbhakaran) and his army. (1)

The Lord first twanged his mighty bow so loudly that it produced a thunderous sound which had the effect of deafening the enemy hordes². (2)

[Note—¹The 'Sarang bow' is held by Lord Vishnu. Since Lord Ram was a manifestation of Vishnu, it is said that the bow he held was called 'Sarang'.

It is believed that this 'Sarang bow' was crafted by Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods, especially for Lord Vishnu, and its original length was 9 feet. According to mythological accounts, during the War of the Gods during Sata-yuga, the first era of the 4-era celestial cycle of creation and destruction according to Hinduism, a huge

castor-oil tree was produced. It measured approximately 25 feet. Out of the stem of this tree, Vishwakarma devised the following Bows: one bow of 9 feet length for Lord Vishnu which was called Sarang, one bow of 7 feet length for Lord Shiva which was called Pinak, one bow of 5 feet length for Lord Ram which was called Kodand (or Kodanda), one bow of 3 feet length for Arjun of the Pandava race, and it was called Gandiva, and the remaining part of the tree, measuring 1 foot, was used to make the flute of Lord Krishna which was called Vanshi.

This is why Lord Ram is often addressed as the Lord who holds the Kodand bow—i.e. Kodand Ram. He is also called the Lord with the Sarang bow because he was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu—and hence known as ‘Sarang Pani’, i.e. the Lord who holds the Sarang bow in his hand.

Now presently we read here that Lord Ram had held the ‘Sarang bow’, instead of his usual ‘Kodand bow’, and its twang had deafened the demons. How and when did this Sarang bow of Lord Vishnu come to Lord Ram?

If we examine Ram Charit Manas it will be abundantly clear that both the terms, i.e. ‘Kodand bow’ and ‘Sarang bow’, were used for the same bow held by Lord Ram. This will be clear by-and-by when we come to read about the Lord’s battle with Ravana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 86.}

Though it is true that the Sarang bow was crafted for the exclusive use of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, by Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods, during the legendary war between the gods and the demons, and the Kodand bow was specially made by him for Lord Ram, but since Lord Ram was none other than Lord Vishnu himself in a human form, these two terms for the Lord’s bow were used interchangeably.

So though normally Lord Ram’s bow was referred to as the ‘Kodand bow’, but when the time came for the Lord to slay the two great demons, Kumbhakaran and Ravana, the term ‘Sarang bow’ is used for the Lord’s bow. This is to indicate that it was actually Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram who was fulfilling his words given to the gods and mother earth that he would himself eliminate the sinful demons. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 68 with reference to Kumbhakaran; and (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86 with reference to Ravana.}

Now, a question arises: When, where and from whom did Lord Ram get this Sarang bow? This is an interesting question, and if we carefully examine the Story of Ram Charit Manas, the answer is found in it, and it is this: The Bow of Lord Vishnu, known as Sarang, was handed over to Lord Ram by sage Parashuram at the venue of the Lord’s marriage ceremony in Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284.

It so happened that sage Parashuram was very angry when Lord Ram had broken the old bow of Lord Shiva, known as Pinak, to fulfill the vow of king Janak, Sita’s father, that he would marry his daughter to anyone who could lift and break the bow. It was because sage Parashuram worshipped Lord Shiva, and he felt that breaking of the bow had insulted his deity. A heated argument followed, and in spite of all his threats and angry outbursts to punish Lord Ram the sage failed to even raise his arms against the Lord. This stunned Parashuram as he had a reputation of being merciless and unforgiving, and once he decided to punish someone, no one could dare to save his victim. So, the sage was mightily astonished at his inability to harm either Lord Ram or his younger brother Laxman. Surely, he thought when he calmed down a bit, that there must be more to Lord Ram than what meets the eye; he had a subtle

feeling that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. To test his hunch, the sage gave the Lord the ‘bow of Lord Vishnu’, i.e. the Sarang bow, and to his amazement he observed that this bow went on its own to Lord Ram, who received it easily. This miraculous event confirmed to sage Parashuram that Lord Ram was no one else but Lord Vishnu himself in this form. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

It was therefore with this bow, i.e. the ‘Sarang’, that Lord Ram had killed the mighty demons to fulfill the promise made to the gods and mother earth in his primary form as Lord Vishnu that he would personally intervene to eliminate the demons to save the world from their cruelty and terror. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.}

And this is why the demons could not stand against Lord Ram, because this Sarang bow was no ordinary bow; it was the bow of the almighty Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

At this juncture it ought to be noted that in the Story of the Ramayan, Lord Ram has been addressed as a holder of both the Sarang bow and the Kodanda bow. There is a specific verse which uses this term ‘Kodand’ to indicate how fierce the Lord would be for those who try to disrupt peace, harmony and order in the Lord’s creation—because the term ‘Kodand’ includes the word ‘Danda’ which means punishment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91.}

²When Lord Ram pulled the string of his formidable bow right back up to his ear and then let it go with a snap, there was a deafening twang, so loud and piercing that it ruptured the eardrums of some of the demon warriors present in the vicinity, or numbed the faculty of hearing in others. Some were rendered permanently deaf, while others lost their ability to hear for varying lengths of time.]

सत्यसंध छाँड़े सर लच्छा । कालसर्प जनु चले सपच्छा ॥ ३ ॥

जहँ तहँ चले बिपुल नाराचा । लगे कटन भट बिकट पिसाचा ॥ ४ ॥

satyasandha chāṁṛē sara lacchā. kālasarpa janu calē sapacchā. 3.
jaham̐ taham̐ calē bipula nārācā. lagē kaṭana bhaṭa bikaṭa pisācā. 4.

Lord Ram, who was of a firmness of purpose, had strength of resolution, was vigorous in his actions, and true and firm in his resolve (*satyasandha*) to exterminate the cruel demons, shot a hail of countless arrows, which flew towards the enemy (Kumbhakaran and his army) like so many winged serpents¹. (3)

These were not ordinary arrows, but were called ‘Naracha’²; countless such Naracha arrows started their flight towards the enemy hordes, and as soon as they reached their target they began mowing down and slicing the fierce looking ogres (demons) into pieces. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 92.

²The Naracha (nārācā) is a special sort of arrow made entirely of hardened iron; it has five fins, instead of four as in ordinary arrows, to stabilize it during flight. These arrows were like modern-day cruise missiles, and they homed on to their targets with great precision. To wit, none of the arrows shot by Lord Ram went to waste; each felled at least one demon warrior, if not more. They were shot in rapid succession, and the sky seemed to be covered by a blanket of arrows that swooped down on the demon warriors, nailing them all down to the earth.

A question arises: how could so many thousands of arrows be shot from a single bow? Well, remember that it was not an ordinary bow; it was the Sarang bow, a mystical bow of Lord Vishnu, the almighty Lord of the world. Besides this, we are reading about a time long in the past when there were many things of which we cannot have an idea today. So in all likelihood, these arrows were unique weapons which multiplied after being shot like the cluster bombs or multiple missile launchers of today. It will be wrong to think that such things are merely figments of fertile imagination just because we don't have or know of such things today; this doesn't prove that they did not exist in the time of which we are reading about.

For instance, our ancestors living even say a hundred years ago could not have imagined that one day their descendents would have an instrument known as 'telephone' that would help them talk with each other directly over long distances; or a time say fifty-sixty years ago when we had 'wired telephone' instruments, that there would one day be a small hand-held thing called a 'cell phone' which would enable people to communicate with each other while they would be moving, and talk across continents and seas as if they were speaking with each other face to face.]

कटहिं चरन उर सिर भुजदंडा । बहुतक बीर होहिं सत खंडा ॥ ५ ॥
घुर्मि घुर्मि घायल महि परहीं । उठि संभारि सुभट पुनि लरहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kaṭahim carana ura sira bhujadaṇḍā. bahutaka bīra hōhim sata khaṇḍā. 5.
ghurmi ghurmi ghāyala mahi parahim. uṭhi sambhāri subhaṭa puni larahim. 6.

Some of the demons got their legs cut; some had their chest pierced; some had their heads cut off; some had their arms torn away; while some were chopped into as many seven small pieces. (5)

The demon warriors swooned and rolled over on the ground, falling down dead or unconscious. Only a few amongst them who were exceptionally brave and energetic could firm up their courage to stand again to fight. (6)

लागत बान जलद जिमि गाजहिं । बहुतक देखि कठिन सर भाजहिं ॥ ७ ॥
रुंड प्रचंड मुंड बिनु धावहिं । धरु धरु मारु मारु धुनि गावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

lāgata bāna jalada jimi gājahim. bahutaka dēkhi kaṭhina sara bhājahim. 7.
ruṇḍa pracaṇḍa muṇḍa binu dhāvahim. dharu dharu māru māru dhuni gāvahim. 8.

As soon as the arrows struck them, the demon warriors roared and yelled like thunder. Others who were timid, they simply ran away in terror to escape being hit. (7)

Extremely fierce looking headless torsos of demon warriors, whose heads had been severed from the trunk, ran amok in angry frenzy, helter-skelter everywhere in the battle-field, letting out chilling war cries, scowling menacingly, and howling wildly in a chorus: 'catch hold of the enemy; kill-kill'. (8)

[Note—Surely, it was a blood-curdling, horrifying and deadly scene that was enacted on the battle-field of Lanka.]

दो०. छन महुँ प्रभु के सायकन्हि काटे बिकट पिसाच ।

पुनि रघुबीर निषंग महुँ प्रबिसे सब नाराच ॥ ६८ ॥

dōhā.

chana mahum̐ prabhu kē sāyakanhi kātē bikaṭa pisāca.
puni raghubīra niṣaṅga mahum̐ prabisē saba nārāca. 68.

Lord Raghubir's (i.e. Lords Ram's) formidable arrows cut through the fearsome ogres (the demon army) in an instant (i.e. very quickly), and after completing their mission these arrows known as Narach returned to Lord's quiver¹. (Doha no. 68)

[Note—¹This answers another question: From where did Lord Ram get access to so many countless arrows to fight the long war with the demons as a quiver has a limited capacity to hold them? The arrows would come back to the Lord who used them again and again, repeatedly; or he returned them to his quiver if there was no further need for them, to be used later on.

This is also not far-fetched, for in our modern world today we have re-usable rockets that are used in space flights, or take the example of an ordinary air-plane that is reused over and over again. Or even a boomerang that comes back to its thrower or shooter.

Remember: These arrows were not bombs that would explode and disintegrate; they were made of solid iron rods that could be reused.]

चौ०. कुंभकरन मन दीख बिचारी । हति छन माझ निसाचर धारी ॥ १ ॥

भा अति क्रुद्ध महाबल बीरा । कियो मृगनायक नाद गँभीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kumbhakarana mana dīkha bicārī. hati chana mājha nisācara dhārī. 1.
bhā ati krud'dha mahābala bīrā. kiyō mṛganāyaka nāda gaṁbhīrā. 2.

Kumbhakaran was flabbergasted and dumbfounded at the thought that the whole demon army was decimated while he watched helplessly; it was a shameful thing for him to have happened in his presence. (1)

This infuriated him greatly, and he let out a thunderous and terrifying yell like that of a roaring lion overcome with anger. (2)

कोपि महीधर लेइ उपारी । डारइ जहँ मर्कट भट भारी ॥ ३ ॥
आवत देखि सैल प्रभु भारे । सरन्हि काटि रज सम करि डारे ॥ ४ ॥

kōpi mahīdhara lē'i upārī. ḍāra'i jaham̐ markṭa bhaṭa bhārī. 3.
āvata dēkhi saila prabhu bhārē. saranhi kāṭi raja sama kari ḍārē. 4.

He angrily picked up huge mountain-like rocks and forcefully dumped them wherever he could see groups of monkey warriors assembled at a place¹. (3)

When Lord Ram saw what was happening, he shot another volley of arrows that hit these falling rocks and reduced them to dust before they hit the ground and could crush (harm) the monkey army². (4)

[Note—¹So what happened then? Some of the monkeys ran away from the spot to save themselves, while some were buried under the rubble.

²It was like our modern-day anti-missile systems that intercept an incoming hostile missile and neutralizes it before it strikes the target on the ground.

Once the rocks were hit by Lord Ram's arrows, they were reduced to dust and rained down on the ground. But dust doesn't kill; rocks do. This gave great relief to the Lord's army.]

पुनि धनु तानि कोपि रघुनायक । छाँड़े अति कराल बहु सायक ॥ ५ ॥
तनु महुँ प्रबिसि निसरि सर जाहीं । जिमि दामिनि घन माझ समाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

puni dhanu tāni kōpi raghunāyaka. chāṁṛē ati karāla bahu sāyaka. 5.
tanu mahum̐ prabisi nisari sara jāhīm̐. jimi dāmini ghana mājha samāhīm̐. 6.

Then Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram) pulled his (Sarang) bow tight and angrily shot many more powerful and fierce arrows (at Kumbhakaran). (5)

These arrows entered the colossus body of Kumbhakaran and escaped from it (without harming him much) just like stabs of lightening can be seen shooting through thick dark clouds and vanishing from sight¹. (6)

[Note—¹Kumbhakaran's huge dark body is likened to a bank of thick dark clouds; and the arrows to the streaking lightening in the cloud. When the arrows struck Kumbhakaran he gave a loud yell just like the thunder that is heard in the cloud in the wake of a stab of lightening passing through it. Then these arrows escaped from the other side of his body to return to Lord Ram's quiver—apropos: Doha no. 68 herein above.

These arrows produced light due to friction as they passed through his body, and by the time they emerged from his body to return to Lord Ram's quiver they had cooled down.]

सोनित स्रवत सोह तन कारे । जनु कज्जल गिरि गेरु पनारे ॥ ७ ॥

बिकल बिलोकि भालु कपि धाए । बिहँसा जबहि निकट कपि आए ॥ ८ ॥

sōnita sravata sōha tana kārē. janu kajjala giri gēru panārē. 7.
bikala bilōki bhālu kapi dhā'ē. bihaṁsā jabahiṁ nikaṭa kapi ā'ē. 8.

Blood flowing in streams from the dark body of Kumbhakaran resembled red coloured water flowing out of spouts on the sides of a huge dark mountain of solidified soot. (7)

Seeing that he (Kumbhakaran) was confused and in a miserable condition, and therefore unlikely to retaliate and attack them, the emboldened monkey warriors rushed towards him. But to their utter dismay and astonishment, as soon as they came within reach, Kumbhakaran roared with laughter.

[Why did he laugh? The answer is given in the Doha that follows.] (8)

दो०. महानाद करि गर्जा कोटि कोटि गहि कीस ।

महि पटकइ गजराज इव सपथ करइ दससीस ॥ ६९ ॥

dōhā.

mahānāda kari garjā kōṭi kōṭi gahi kīsa.
mahi paṭaka'i gajarāja iva sapatha kara'i dasasīsa. 69.

He (Kumbhakaran) roared thunderously as he grabbed countless monkeys that were nearest to him, dashing them to the ground like a wild elephant catching hold of anything by its trunk and smashing it to the ground, all the while raising a war cry in favour of the ten-headed Ravana. (Doha no. 69)

[Note—¹This is the reason why Kumbhakaran had laughed in verse no. 8 herein above. He felt amused and thought that these monkeys were really stupid fellows when they came near him, thinking that they would vanquish him now that he was wounded and confused by the attack launched by Lord Ram. Little did they know about the kind of stern stuff that Kumbhakaran made of—for as soon as they came with his grasp he grabbed as many of the monkeys as he could and started smashing them to the ground so violently that they would be killed instantly.]

चौ०. भागे भालु बलीमुख जूथा । बृकु बिलोकि जिमि मेष बरूथा ॥ १ ॥

चले भागि कपि भालु भवानी । बिकल पुकारत आरत बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhāgē bhālu balīmukha jūthā. bṛku bilōki jimi mēṣa barūthā. 1.
calē bhāgi kapi bhālu bhavānī. bikala pukārata ārata bānī. 2.

Scarcely had Kumbhakaran started his brutal offensive by grabbing and thrashing the hordes of bears and monkeys, when they panicked, fleeing helter-skelter in terror, just like flocks of sheep disperse, as fast as they can for the fear of dear life, at the sight of a wolf approaching them. (1)

[Lord Shiva paused for a moment to recapitulate the scene of the battle-field as the army of Lord Ram scampered for cover and ran in total disarray under the hammering of Kumbhakaran's brutal offensive. Then he resumed his narrative, addressing his consort who was listening to this magnificent Story being told to her—]

‘Oh Bhavani (“bhavānī”; name of Lord Shiva's consort)! As soon as he (Kumbhakaran) launched his vicious attack, the monkeys and bears began running away from him, to escape his grasp and certain agonizing death, as fast as they could, all the while letting out pitiful cries of distress and woe. (2)

यह निसिचर दुकाल सम अहई । कपिकुल देस परन अब चहई ॥ ३ ॥
कृपा बारिधर राम खरारी । पाहि पाहि प्रनतारति हारी ॥ ४ ॥

yaha nisicara dukāla sama ahaī. kapikula dēsa parana aba cahaī. 3.
krpā bāridhara rāma kharārī. pāhi pāhi pranatārati hārī. 4.

They agitatedly cried out: ‘This ferocious demon is akin to a severe famine which wants to descend on the land of the monkey race by being determined to annihilate all its members by way of killing them mercilessly, without a regret¹. (3)

Oh Lord Ram who vouchsafes the bounty of his mercy and grace upon those who are suffering and under great distress just like the shower of cool rain from the rain-bearing cloud provides relief to the parched earth below that is suffering from severe famine due to prolonged drought (krpā bāridhara)².

Oh Lord who is famed as the slayer the demon named Khar (rāma kharārī)! We invoke your gracious nature and stellar virtues that you invariably defend those who are suffering and have sought your protection by taking refuge at your feet (pranatārati hārī).

Prithee oh the merciful and compassionate Lord; we plead with thee repeatedly and most earnestly to protect us, to save us, to shield us from this horrifying prospect which stares right at our face now (pāhi pāhi). [To wit, oh Lord, nothing else can save us now except thine intervention.]’ (4)

[Note—¹Here, Kumbhakaran is likened to the angry deity of death and destruction who mercilessly unleashes his wrath upon humble and weak creatures who are unable to stand against him, for some offence he took due to some unknown reason and decided to destroy the poor creatures by sending famine, drought and pestilence upon them so as to cause intense horror, suffering and misery on the populace, and to annihilate them.

²Just like rain is the only solution to death, misery and ruin caused by severe drought that causes famine and hunger, the only way out of Kumbakaran's deadly assault on the monkey-and-bear army is when Lord Ram intervenes and directly engages him in a duel, and then getting rid of this ferocious demon by felling him with his arrows.

This is why the terror-stricken monkeys and bears recall how Lord Ram had slayed the demon Khar. The episode of Khar's battle with Lord Ram and his ultimate slaying is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21.

If this happens, i.e. if Lord Ram takes on Kumbakaran directly in a duel, then the latter's attention would be diverted away from the monkeys and bears as he would now have to focus on Lord Ram to tackle him; it would provide great relief to the poor monkeys and bears who are very panicky now and fear for their dear lives.]

सकरुन बचन सुनत भगवाना । चले सुधारि सरासन बाना ॥ ५ ॥

राम सेन निज पाछें घाली । चले सकोप महा बलसाली ॥ ६ ॥

sakaruna bacana sunata bhagavānā. calē sudhāri sarāsana bānā. 5.
rāma sēna nija pāchēm ghālī. calē sakōpa mahā balasālī. 6.

When the almighty Lord (“bhagavānā”, Lord Ram) heard this pitiful cry and pleadings of his army, he immediately decided to step in to protect his warriors. So the Lord wasted no time as he took his bow and arrow and started for the battle-field instantly, even as he was stringing the bow and mounting his formidable arrow on it while he was on his way¹. (5)

The most powerful and mighty Lord Ram (mahā balasālī) ordered his army to remain behind him as he angrily made his way to the battle front. (6)

[Note—¹There was no time to be wasted; each second was crucial. So Lord Ram hastily grabbed his bow and arrow and hastened to the battle-field. He stringed his bow and arranged the arrow on it while he was on his way to the ground to engage Kumbakaran in a fierce duel.]

खैँचि धनुष सर सत संधाने । छूटे तीर सरीर समाने ॥ ७ ॥

लागत सर धावा रिस भरा । कुधर डगमगत डोलति धरा ॥ ८ ॥

khaiñci dhanuṣa sara sata sandhānē. chūṭē tīra sarīra samānē. 7.
lāgata sara dhāvā risa bharā. kudhara ḍagamagata ḍōlati dharā. 8.

Lord Ram pulled the string of his bow and shot a volley of a hundred arrows at Kumbakaran; the arrows pierced through the demon's body and entered it. (7)

No sooner had the arrows pierced through his body than Kumbakaran's anger knew no bounds; he lurched forward, full of wrath and vengeance. The earth trembled and the mountains shook by the violent thumping of his heavy feet as he dashed towards Lord Ram. (8)

लीन्ह एक तेहिं सैल उपाटी । रघुकुल तिलक भुजा सोइ काटी ॥ ९ ॥
धावा बाम बाहु गिरि धारी । प्रभु सोउ भुजा काटि महि पारी ॥ १० ॥

līnha ēka tēhiṁ saila upāṭī. raghukula tilaka bhuajā sō'i kāṭī. 9.
dhāvā bāma bāhu giri dhārī. prabhu sō'u bhuajā kāṭi mahi pārī. 10.

He (Kumbhakaran) lifted a mountain (i.e. a huge rock that resembled a mountain because of its size) in his (right) arm (to attack Lord Ram with it), but the Lord, who was the best in the race of kings of Raghu's line (raghukula tilaka), immediately cut-off that arm. (9)

So he (Kumbhakaran) picked up another mountain with his left arm (bāma bāhu) and rushed at the Lord, whereat the Lord cut-off that arm too and fell it to the ground. (10)

काटें भुजा सोह खल कैसा । पच्छहीन मंदर गिरि जैसा ॥ ११ ॥
उग्र बिलोकनि प्रभुहि बिलोका । ग्रसन चहत मानहुँ त्रैलोका ॥ १२ ॥

kāṭēṁ bhuajā sōha khala kaisā. pacchahīna mandara giri jaisā. 11.
ugra bilōkani prabhuhi bilōkā. grasana cahata mānahuṁ trailōkā. 12.

With both his two arms chopped-off, the wicked demon appeared to resemble the huge Mt. Mandar after its two wings were cut-off¹. (11)

Kumbhakaran became wroth with exceeding wrath; he glared menacingly at Lord Ram with fiery eyes, and his angry visage implied that he would annihilate the entire world and devour it with fierce vengeance. (12)

[Note—¹In ancient times it is said that mountains could fly or glide in the sky like huge birds do because they had wings. Indra, the king of gods, feared that if due to some reason these mountains would fall on some part of the world, everything underneath them would be crushed to pulp. So he chopped-off their wings, so that they lose their ability to cause harm to the world and its creatures, whereat the mountains became permanently grounded on the earth.

Comparing Kumbhakaran with Mt. Mandar is to impress about his gigantic size and weight.]

दो०. करि चिक्कार घोर अति धावा बदनु पसारि ।
गगन सिद्ध सुर त्रासित हा हा हेति पुकारि ॥ ७० ॥
dōhā.

kari cikkāra ghōra ati dhāvā badanu pasāri.
gagana sid'dha sura trāsita hā hā hēti pukāri. 70.

He (Kumbhakaran) screamed wildly and lunged forward furiously with wide open mouth (to gobble up anyone who came his way), whereat the gods and mystics, who were watching the proceedings from their stations in the sky, recoiled in horror, exclaiming 'Oh my; alas-alack; oh dear me, it's so horrifying'¹. (Doha no. 69)

[Note—¹It was a hideous and terrifying sight indeed to see Kumbhakaran in this state—with both his arms sliced-off his gigantic body and blood spouting out of the open wounds which themselves resembled large openings on the side of a mountain from which red water gushed out, and his mouth wide open showing not only his sharp teeth and yelping tongue but also reminding one of the opening of a huge cave that leads into to a dark, dank and cavernous interior. Added to this frightening spectacle were his two huge reddened eyes that protruded from his ugly face like two gigantic fireballs ready to spew fire and brimstone on the world to burn and roast it alive, not to mention the hot breath blowing out of his nostrils that gave the impression of hot scorching wind blowing over the earth at the time of doomsday. To wit, Kumbhakaran looked nothing less than a ferocious dragon that has gone mad with anger.]

चौ०. सभय देव करुनानिधि जान्यो । श्रवन प्रजंत सरासनु तान्यो ॥ १ ॥
बिसिख निकर निसिचर मुख भरेऊ । तदपि महाबल भूमि न परेऊ ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sabhaya dēva karunānidhi jān'yō. śravana prajanta sarāsanu tān'yō. 1.
bisikha nikara nisicara mukha bharē'ū. tadapi mahābala bhūmi na parē'ū. 2.

Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, observed that the gods had become alarmed and terrified; so (to reassure them that there was nothing to fear from Kumbhakaran) he pulled the string of his bow tight, pulling it right back up to his ears¹. (1)

The volley of arrows shot by the Lord filled the gaping mouth of the demon, but even then the most powerful, most strong and most valorous demon did not yield nor fall to the ground². (2)

[Note—¹The Lord held the bow in one of his out-stretched hands, mounted an arrow on the bow, and then pulled its string back with his other hand till it reached his ears, to make the string extremely taught so that when the grip over it was removed the arrow would be shot forth with a mighty force.

²The arrows shot by Lord Ram stuffed Kumbhakaran's mouth tight, making it impossible for him to yell or scream any longer; yet he kept on moving forward towards the Lord. When the demon stopped his high-decibel shrieking, a sudden calm descended on the battle-field.]

सरन्धि भरा मुख सन्मुख धावा । काल त्रोन सजीव जनु आवा ॥ ३ ॥
तब प्रभु कोपि तीब्र सर लीन्हा । धर ते भिन्न तासु सिर कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

saranhi bharā mukha sanmukha dhāvā. kāla trōna sajīva janu āvā. 3.
taba prabhu kōpi tībra sara līnhā. dhara tē bhinna tāsū sira kīnhā. 4.

With his mouth stuffed with arrows, he (Kumbhakaran) rushed forward, and this fearful sight gave the impression that the deity of death, known as Kaal, has assumed the form of a quiver filled with deadly arrows to wreak his vengeance on the battle-field. (3)

Then the Lord (Sri Ram) angrily took a powerful arrow and shot it at him; this arrow chopped-off Kumbhakaran's head, severing it from his trunk. (4)

सो सिर परेउ दसानन आगें । बिकल भयउ जिमि फनि मनि त्यागें ॥ ५ ॥
धरनि धसइ धर धाव प्रचंडा । तब प्रभु काटि कीन्ह दुइ खंडा ॥ ६ ॥

sō sira parē'u dasānana āgēm. bikala bhaya'u jimi phani mani tyāgēm. 5.
dharani dhasa'i dhara dhāva pracaṇḍā. taba prabhu kāṭi kīnha du'i khaṇḍā. 6.

That severed head was flung off (due to powerful force with which it was severed from the trunk by the arrow), and it ultimately landed (with a heavy thud) in front of the ten-headed Ravana. When he saw it he was overcome with grief and distress in the same way as a serpent loses the luminescent sac present on its hood (phani mani tyāgēm)¹. (5)

Meanwhile, the head-less torso of Kumbhakaran continued with its advance with great speed, and it appeared that the ground below it was subsiding due to its weight. To bring this fearful spectacle to an end, Lord Ram shot another arrow which cut the torso into two pieces. (6)

[Note—¹According to legend, there is a special class of serpents that carry a luminous sac on its hood. It is formed by some kind of secretion from the skin on the serpent's head, and it solidifies to form a globule from which a soft light effuses. It is believed that the serpent can see only in this light when it comes out of its hole during the night to search for food. If this luminescent sac is lost, the poor creature becomes blind; it repeatedly dashes its head on the ground in regret and grief until it dies. The illuminated sac looks like a jewel on the hood of the serpent, and the serpent without this jewel is like a king without his crown.

This example is usually employed to highlight the extent of grief and misery a person suffers from when something or someone extremely close to him or important to him is suddenly lost or snatched away, leaving him utterly dismayed, extremely distraught, and overwhelmed with gloom and hopelessness, leaving him with a feel and sense of helplessness and haplessness.

To wit, when Ravana saw the severed head of his dear brother Kumbhakaran, the rug was pulled from under his feet; he was overcome with extreme distress and grief. He was unable to come to terms with the reality that Kumbhakaran was no

more, and for some time he felt everything was lost, for not only did he lose his brother but he also lost a powerful warrior and companion and a close family member at a time when a ferocious war was underway. Kumbhakaran's death sounded like the death knell to Ravana; his hopes for victory were dashed; it was the first sure sign to him that things were going to turn ugly and awry and ruinous for him and the rest of the demon race for the simple reason that it was not a joke to kill Kumbhakaran, and Ravana knew it to so.]

परे भूमि जिमि नभ तें भूधर । हेठ दाबि कपि भालु निसाचर ॥ ७ ॥
तासु तेज प्रभु बदन समाना । सुर मुनि सबहिं अचंभव माना ॥ ८ ॥

parē bhūmi jimi nabha tēm bhūdharma. hēṭha dābi kapi bhālu nisācara. 7.
tāsu tēja prabhu badana samānā. sura muni sabahim acambhava mānā. 8.

The two severed parts of Kumbhakaran's body fell to the ground so heavily as if two mountains were falling to the ground from the sky, crushing many monkeys, bears and demons who came in the way. (7)

His (Kumbhakaran's) soul left his mortal body in the form of a shaft of light and went straight to enter the divine body of Lord Ram¹. It was a miraculous event, and most unexpected, which amazed the gods and sages who were surprised at it². (8)

[Note—¹Here, Kumbhakaran's pure conscious soul, known also as his Atma, his 'true self', emerged from his gross body to merge with the Supreme Atma, known as the Parmatma, represented by Lord Ram, to become one with it. According to principles of metaphysics, this is the best destination for the individual creature's Atma, his 'pure conscious self', whereby it becomes one with the Supreme Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, by merging its self with the latter. This is the final dissolution for the soul of the creature, for then there is no more return to the cycle of birth and death. It is the best form of death when the individual's Atma attains eternity; the Atma attains liberation and deliverance in the true sense; it is attainment of salvation and emancipation for the creature; it grants enduring bliss, beatitude and felicity to the 'self'.

This sort of deliverance of the soul is called 'Moksha'; it is a state from which there is no return to the mortal world. It is the ultimate destination for the soul, the Atma, which is the 'true self' and the pure consciousness of the creature, wherein it merges with its primary form known as the cosmic Consciousness to become one with it, and inseparable from it.

Only one other individual has been so lucky and privileged as to attain such an exalted destiny in the whole story of the Ramayana, and he is Ravana, for his Atma too merged with Lord Ram at the time of his death—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²Why were the gods and the sages astonished when they saw Kumbhakaran's soul entering the divine body of Lord Ram? It is because they thought that Kumbhakaran would go to hell, and such an exalted destiny for his soul was not expected by them.

But this incidence proves that Lord Ram does not care what sort of body a creature has; the Lord is only concerned with the purity of his inner-self and his Atma.

The very fact that Kumbhakaran's Atma, his soul that was nothing but pure consciousness, left his demon-body to enter the holy body of the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram proves that no matter what Kumbhakaran said or did in the external world, internally he was pious and holy, and his soul was untainted by the nature of his external form, i.e. his body of a demon, or the deeds done by him with this body which were deemed to be sinful, evil and vile.

Kumbhakaran recognized the spiritual fact that the body and the soul, the latter known also as the Atma, are two distinct entities; he recognized the fact while the physical body is gross and perishable, the Atma on the other hand is pure, sublime and eternal; that the Atma is a creature's 'true self', as opposed to his body which is merely the Atma's habitat in this world; and this Atma is microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma.

A creature who truly understands this universal principle of metaphysics is said to be illustrious, wise, enlightened and self-realised. So, Kumbhakaran was able to keep his Atma separate from his body in the sense that he never allowed the Atma to be affected by anything the body did. This enlightened approach to life helped him to maintain a clear inner-self and a clear conscience even while his body was decried as being that of a demon, a body that is deemed to be evil, sinful, pervert and vice, a body with all the negativities and degrading characters that are automatically attached to the term 'demon'.

It was therefore possible for him to retain the holiness and purity of his inner-self and his Atma which entitled him to attain an exalted destiny for his soul by making it merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram who was none else but the Supreme Being himself in this form.

Indeed and without gainsay, what a fortunate soul Kumbhakaran's was that it obtained a destiny that eludes even the soul of the greatest of sages and hermits.

Lord Ram was of an exceptional good nature and stellar grace. He had no internal ill-will against anybody. What he was doing by way of slaying the demons was merely a call of duty and fulfilling of his obligation as the caretaker and well-wisher of this creation—because these demons had caused untold misery and pain to the creatures of the world, and it was obligatory for the Lord to stop this madness.

Lord Ram played his game wisely; he shot two birds with the same arrow. On the one hand he provided relief, solace and succour to the world by eliminating these cruel demons, and simultaneously, on the other hand, he ensured that these poor and unfortunate demons could find liberation and deliverance for their souls by granting them this opportunity in the battle-field. So what the world thought was the 'death' of the demons, was actually a means of their deliverance, emancipation and salvation—this is clearly and explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

Normally those who are evil, sinful, pervert and cruel are condemned to hell; and surely heaven is not a place for them. But Lord Ram was so merciful, gracious, kind, compassionate, forgiving, benevolent and magnanimous by his inherent nature that he decided to welcome and accept Kumbhakaran warmly at his own place by way of opening the door of his heart for him in a symbolic way, and it was done by allowing his soul to enter his own body at the time it exited from the Kumbhakaran's demon-body. It was a rare gesture of grace and kindness shown by Lord Ram in the face of what was happening just a moment ago when both he and the demon were literally baying for each other's blood.

Thus, the merciful Lord Ram not only prevented the demon from going to hell, but he even went to the extent of accepting and welcoming Kumbhakaran

warmly by granting the latter's soul a place in his own self in a symbolic way by allowing his soul to enter his body. It was a gesture that clearly meant that Kumbhakaran had not been condemned to hell, but elevated to an exalted stature where he would abide for ever in the company of the Supreme Being in heaven, where the Lord himself abides.

Surely, it was a moment of celebration—for a victory on the battle-field, as well as to salute the greatness of Lord Ram.]

सुर दुंदुभीं बजावहिं हरषहिं । अस्तुति करहिं सुमन बहु बरषहिं ॥ ९ ॥
 करि बिनती सुर सकल सिधाए । तेही समय देवरिषि आए ॥ १० ॥
 गगनोपरि हरि गुन गन गाए । रुचिर बीररस प्रभु मन भाए ॥ ११ ॥
 बेगि हतहु खल कहि मुनि गए । राम समर महि सोभत भए ॥ १२ ॥

sura dundubhīm bajāvahim haraṣahim. astuti karahim sumana bahu baraṣahim. 9.

kari binatī sura sakala sidhā'ē. tēhī samaya dēvariṣi ā'ē. 10.

gaganōpari hari guna gana gā'ē. rucira bīrarasa prabhu mana bhā'ē. 11.

bēgi hatahu khala kahi muni ga'ē. rāma samara mahi sōbhata bha'ē. 12.

The gods exulted and celebrated the occasion by playing their musical drums with great élan. They praised Lord Ram and showered bountiful flowers upon the Lord from their stations in the sky. (9)

After the gods had offered their prayers and gone their way (to their respective abode in the heaven), the celestial sage Narad came there (i.e. at the site of the battle between Lord Ram and Kumbhakara)¹. (10)

He stood in the sky and offered his prayers to Lord Ram, praising the Lord in high laudatory terms for his stellar qualities and excellent virtues, such as his valour, courage, steadfastness, fortitude and martial skills (which helped in eliminating one of the greatest and most feared demon of the race) as well as the Lord's graciousness, compassion, benevolence and magnanimity (that he granted deliverance, salvation and emancipation to a demon). This pleased the Lord immensely². (11)

Sage Narad finally requested Lord Ram to get rid of the chief wicked fellow (i.e. Ravana) at the earliest, and then he went his way.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram looked admirable and adorable in the battle-field. (12)

[Note—¹It is obvious here that sage Narad was not there at the time the battle raged on the ground and other gods were watching it from their station in the sky. Why was Narad absent earlier? The answer is this: He was the son of Brahma, the creator, and thus he was privy to many kinds of information that other gods had no access to. He had heard it from his father, Brahma the creator, what would happen when during the course of the war; so he wasn't so eager to watch the battle betwixt Lord Ram and Kumbhakaran live as other gods had been doing out of curiosity. Narad was aware that the death of Kumbhakaran was pre-destined in the day's battle, so what was the need, and the use, to jostle around and find an elbow room for himself to stand in the

crowd of eager gods who were milling around over the site of the battle? It was always better to avoid a crowded place when a dangerous duel was underway, for in case the demon lunged towards the gods then there would be stampede, and all hell would break loose.

Come to think of it: Narad was correct in this respect as it is proved during the battle with Ravana, for once it so happened that in the heat of battle he had angrily lunged at the gods standing in the sky, vowing to thrash them black and blue to exact a vehement revenge from them for their having the temerity of praying to Lord Vishnu in his form as Lord Ram for his destruction, whereat there was a stampede amongst the crowd of gods as they ran madly to escape from Ravana's wrath. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 86—where we read that the gods have prayed to Lord Ram to slay Ravana without much waste of time; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 96—where we read that Ravana had attacked the gods who were watching the battle from the sky, roaring fiercely at them, scowling at them and threatening them all, chasing them so menacingly that there was a virtual stampede amongst the gods who ran helter-skelter for their safety.}

Sage Narad was a saintly figure; he did not like to enjoy bloodshed and mayhem like the other gods, so he thought it better to avoid the scene while the battle was underway. He came to offer his obeisance to Lord Ram and praise his good nature and stellar virtues. Narad was so happy that Lord Ram granted deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of Kumbhakaran, while the other gods were happy only because one of their enemies was dead.

²Lord Ram noted that none of the other gods had said a single word in his honour or even praised him for fulfilling a part of the promise made to the gods by Lord Vishnu when he had promised the gods that he would go down to earth personally as Lord Ram to eliminate the demons. The gods were so selfish that they were only concerned that one of their arch enemies was out of the way, but had no time to offer as much as a formal 'thank you' to Lord Ram. On the other hand there was sage Narad who acknowledged the good nature of the Lord in providing liberation and deliverance to the Atma of Kumbhakaran who was decried by others as being a sinful demon who ought to be condemned to hell.

Nay, Lord Ram not only prevented the demon from going to hell, but the merciful Lord even went to the extent of accepting and welcoming Kumbhakaran warmly by granting the latter's soul a place in his own self in a symbolic way by allowing his soul to enter his body. It was a gesture that clearly meant that Kumbhakaran had not been condemned to hell, but elevated to an exalted stature where he would abide for ever in the company of the Supreme Being in heaven where the Lord himself abides.

To wit, Lord Ram noted his difference in attitude between sage Narad and the rest of the gods, and therefore he very appreciated and felt glad at Narad's words.]

छं०. संग्राम भूमि बिराज रघुपति अतुल बल कोसल धनी । १ ।

श्रम बिंदु मुख राजीव लोचन अरुन तन सोनित कनी ॥ २ ॥

भुज जुगल फेरत सर सरासन भालु कपि चहु दिसि बने । ३ ।

कह दास तुलसी कहि न सक छबि सेष जेहि आनन घने ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

saṅgrāma bhūmi birāja raghupati atula bala kōsala dhanī. 1.
 śrama bindu mukha rājīva lōcana aruna tana sōnita kanī. 2.
 bhuja jugala phērata sara sarāsana bhālu kapi cahu disi banē. 3.
 kaha dāsa tulasī kahi na saka chabi sēṣa jēhi ānana ghanē. 4.

Lord Ram—who was endowed with majestic powers and glory, and who was a jewel in the line of Kings of king Raghu’s race and the Lord of Ayodhya (known in ancient times as ‘Kaushal’)—looked adorable as he stood in the battle-field. (Chanda line no. 1)

The Lord looked so bewitchingly charming with drops of sweat glistening on his attractive face, his eyes like red-hued lotus flowers, his body covered with blood splattered all over it --- (Chanda line no. 2),

---And he was calmly toying with his bow and arrow with his two hands, while the monkeys and bears surrounded him on all the sides. (Chanda line no. 3)

[Speaking for himself, the principal author of this classic epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, i.e. Goswami Tulsidas makes this observation—] ‘Tulsidas, the humble servant of Lord Ram, says that when Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent who has a thousand mouths, cannot completely narrate the glory of Lord Ram, then say how is it ever possible for a humble man like him to sing the Lord’s glory, praise him for his grace, and describe his beauteous form in the battle-field even by a fraction of their immensity.’¹ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas expresses his inability to sufficiently describe the glory and virtues of Lord Ram, as well as his captivating charm that enthralls the heart of the beholder, because he finds himself incompetent to do so. He says that when the great Seshnath could not sufficiently do it with a thousand mouths, how can he do it with only a single mouth? So there is no regret in it. Rather, he is happy that he could do service to his dear Lord Ram by singing his glories to the best of his ability, and in whatever little manner he could do.

And what was so special, so unique, so laudatory, and so noble and honourable in Lord Ram’s actions? It is answered below.]

दो०. निसिचर अधम मलाकर ताहि दीन्ह निज धाम ।
 गिरिजा ते नर मंदमति जे न भजहिं श्रीराम ॥ ७१ ॥

dōhā.

nisicara adhama malākara tāhi dīnha nija dhāma.
 girijā tē nara mandamati jē na bhajahiṁ śrīrāma. 71.

[Lord Shiva, the principal narrator of the divine Story of the Ramayan, said to his consort, goddess Parvati, the daughter of the King of Mountains, who was listening to the narrative—] ‘Oh Girija! The demon (Kumbhakaran) was vile, evil and a mine of

sins. Even he was vouchsafed an exalted destiny by Lord Ram who granted his soul an abode where the Lord himself dwelt.

Say then how unfortunate and dumb-witted is a creature who would, in his stupid folly, not adore and worship and honour such a glorious and munificent Lord as Sri Ram (who graced even a demon and vouchsafed him with a grant of liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation, in spite of his having a sinful body).’ (Doha no. 71)

[Note—Lord Shiva observes that only a great fool would desist from bowing before the greatness of Lord Ram; only one who is an utter fool and has completely bankrupted his mind of all senses and wisdom would search other Lords for the grant of favour, succour and solace instead of seeking these blessings directly from Lord Ram—because there is no other Lord who is as welcoming, amiable and friendly, as well as great, graceful, kind, compassionate, forgiving, merciful, benevolent, magnanimous and munificent as Lord Ram anywhere in this creation.]

चौ०. दिन कें अंत फिरीं द्वौ अनी । समर भई सुभटन्ह श्रम घनी ॥ १ ॥
 राम कृपाँ कपि दल बल बाढ़ा । जिमि तृन पाइ लाग अति डाढ़ा ॥ २ ॥
 छीजहिं निसिचर दिनु अरु राती । निज मुख कहें सुकृत जेहि भाँती ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dina kēm anta phirīm dvau anī. samara bhaī subhaṭanha śrama ghanī. 1.
 rāma kṛpāñ kapi dala bala bāṛhā. jimi tṛna pā'i lāga ati dāṛhā. 2.
 chījahim nisicara dinu aru rātī. nija mukha kahēm sukrṭa jēhi bhāñtī. 3.

At the end of the day, when there was eventide, the armies of both the sides returned to their respective camps¹. (1)

The hordes of monkey and bear warriors were infused with a surge of energy and enthusiasm when Lord Ram graced them after they assembled in the camp in the same way as a dwindling fire is re-ignited into its full ferocity with a little help from some fresh twigs that are added to it². (2)

On the other hand, the opposite prevailed in the demon camp. They were overcome with ever rising regret and gloom, feeling utterly helpless and hapless. [Their confidence in themselves and their king Ravana were shattered.]

The condition of the demon ranks was like the case of one advertising one's own noble and meritorious deeds—because by doing so the rewards that accrue due to such deeds quickly dwindle and eventually disappear³. (3)

[Note—¹This marked the end of the third day of the epic War of Lanka. Kumbhakaran was slayed during this day.

²The monkeys and bears were well-nigh exhausted and weary by the end of the day of fierce battle with Kumbhakaran. But when Lord Ram looked over his army to take stock of the situation, his graceful look had such magical charm that it spread immediate cheer in the rank and file of the warriors.

The Lord's benevolent smile and graceful manners instilled confidence in the monkey and bear warriors. He told them that they need not worry at all about the outcome of the war in general, and the course of the war day-by-day, as they had witnessed today how he, Lord Ram, could easily handle the most ferocious of demons and take care of them.

The warriors were reassured and highly enthused; they were full of energy, confidence and the raring to go, for the death of Kumbhakaran in a single day's battle had not only cheered and invigorated the army of Lord Ram but it also marked a major milestone towards ultimate victory. All the weariness and doubts and consternations of the monkeys and bears were dispelled, and this soared the morale of the Lord's army to new heights.

³There is message here—and it is that one ought to show great modesty, humility and restraint when it comes to telling others about one's good deeds. Boasting and talking about them, to advertise the good deeds in the hope that such information would bring praise and honour to the doer, has just the opposite effect, for such boasting and advertising neutralizes the good effects and diminishes the rewards that accrue to a person due to whatever noble and meritorious deeds he does. It is a case of diminishing returns.

Similarly, the demons were getting low on morale and numbers with the passage of every single day of the war. It was because they had always boasted of their might, strength, invincibility and powers, and now it had boomeranged upon them.]

बहु बिलाप दसकंधर करई । बंधु सीस पुनि पुनि उर धरई ॥ ४ ॥

रोवहिं नारि हृदय हति पानी । तासु तेज बल बिपुल बखानी ॥ ५ ॥

bahu bilāpa dasakandhara karaī. bandhu sīsa puni puni ura dharaī. 4.
rōvahiṁ nāri hṛdaya hati pānī. tāsu tēja bala bipula bakhānī. 5.

The ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) lamented and grieved in many a ways; he clasped the severed head (of his dear brother Kumbhakaran) close to his heart even as he beat his head repeatedly in abject despair, deep agony, and aggravated frustration. (4)

At the same time as Ravana lamented and grieved gravely for Kumbhakaran, the women of the household too beat their hearts even as they soulfully mourned and wept for him, extolling Kumbhakaran's exemplary valour and strength, and praising his virtues and singular abilities in laudatory terms¹. (5)

[Note—¹The ladies of the demon king Ravana's household had lamented and grieved immensely in a similar way when Meghanad, the son of the demon king Ravana, was killed, and also when the demon king himself was killed in the war. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 77—when Meghanad died; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 104—when Ravana died.}

The death of Kumbhakaran was a major milestone in the epic War of Lanka, and it was a body-blow to Ravana as his demise had the effect of a warrior losing one of his limbs while the battle with the adversary was still raging fiercely.

Kumbhakaran was no ordinary demon warrior; he was a member of the ruling family, and a younger brother of the demon king Ravana. With his death Ravana lost a friend and brother who was not only a close family member but also his sincere well-wisher. The unfortunate Ravana had already lost the support of another of his brothers, i.e. Vibhishan, whom he had humiliated so much by kicking him in full court that he abandoned him. Ravana's arrogance and haughty manners had begun to slowly pull the rug from under his feet, and his slow decline into ruin was aided by the burden of his unabated sins and evil ways that were weighing down heavily upon him, unraveling his great reputation as an invincible warrior who could bring even the mighty gods to kneel down before his might. The great and mighty demon race—which Ravana had so assiduously nourished, fostered and encouraged, against which even the deity of death known as Kaal would have trembled, a race that had become the supreme terror of the world against which no power in creation dared to raise its head in opposition—was surely and certainly heading to its sunset hour, as everything would ultimately head to in this mortal world.

To wit, Ravana pulled his demons along with him as he tottered to his own destruction. With his two major supports, his brothers Vibhishan and Kumbhakaran, gone, Ravana was virtually marooned. Though there were other commanders in the demon army, but Ravana could not rely on them as much as he would on his own family members. There was no one except his valiant son Meghanad left now in the family to give him courage and company, and lead the charge against the enemy. And therefore, his last hopes were pinned on Meghanad, whom he will send next to the battle front.

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Section 16.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 40-70; Canto 8, verse nos. 1-30.

Before proceeding further with the rendering of this magnificent and fascinating Story of the Epic War of Lanka, with its vivid narrative of events of singular dare devilry, valour, fortitude and courage, let us pause for a while to recount how 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of Veda Vyas describes this episode of Kumbhakaran's death.

It is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 40-70; and Canto 8, verse nos. 1-30.

By reading about the same incident or episode of the epic Story of the Ramayana as narrated by two independent narrators who lived in different periods of time, which in our present case is Goswami Tulsidas who narrated Ram Charit Manas, and sage Veda Vyas who penned Adhyatma Ramayan, the reader benefits in many ways: one, he gets to view the same picture from two different angles that present two independent perspectives of it; two, he reads how the same episode has been viewed

and interpreted by two independent learned observers who were separated from each other by thousands of years, which implies that the main outline of the event being related by them actually did happen, and it is not a fanciful idea generated by the creative imagination any single author's fertile mind; and three, it helps to refresh the reader's memory about the details of the event under consideration, enabling it to be engraved more abidingly in his mind when he happens to read it once again, albeit as narrated by another narrator.

Presently, it seems that two different great souls, Tulsidas and Veda Vyas, over two different periods of time, have got the intuition to describe the same incident of the great Story of the Ramayan in their own unique style, with focus on different aspects of the same event which they chose to describe. It is therefore an excellent idea to read the Story of the Ramayan, which forms the basis of our own "Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka", from more than one classical book, and so it is wonderful to read about Kumbhakaran's death from Adhyatma Ramayan after reading it from Ram Charit Manas.

So, let's get going:-

(i) Sub-section 16.1.1: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 40-70:-

इत्युक्त्वा वानरैः सार्धं सुग्रीवेण समन्वितः ।
 विभीषणमतेनैव युद्धाय समवस्थितः ॥ ४०॥
 पाषाणैः पादपैश्चैव पर्वताग्रेष्व वानराः ।
 युद्धायाभिमुखा भूत्वा ययुः सर्वे युयुत्सवः ॥ ४१॥

ityuktvā vānaraiḥ sārḍham sugrīveṇa samanvitaḥ ।
 vibhīṣaṇamatenaiva yuddhāya samavasthitaḥ ॥ 40॥
 pāṣāṇaiḥ pādapaiścaiva parvatāgraiśca vānarāḥ ।
 yuddhāyābhimukhā bhūtvā yayuḥ sarve yuyutsavaḥ ॥ 41॥

[After Laxman had been revived by administration of the medicinal herb brought by Hanuman, cheer spread amongst the rank and file of Lord Ram's army. Every monkey and bear warrior was highly excited raring to go to take on the might of the enemy, the demon forces. After thanking Hanuman profusely for being instrumental in saving the life of Laxman, Lord Ram summoned his war council led by his chief commanders Sugriv and Vibhishan; he began urgent discussions for the next steps to be taken, and to prepare for the battle of the next day.]

40-41. Having thanked Hanuman (for the help in reviving Laxman), Lord Ram began earnest preparations for the war with the assistance of Sugriv, Vibhishan and other monkeys (40).

Then the monkeys, who were very eager for battle, started off for the battle-field, armed with rocks, trees, summits of mountains (i.e. large boulders) and sundry other things they could lay their hands on, things that they could use to attack their enemy (41).

रावणो विव्यथे रामबाणैर्विद्धो महासुरः ।
 मातङ्ग इव सिंहेन गरुडेनेव पन्नगः ॥ ४२॥
 अभिभूतोऽगमद्राजा राघवेण महात्मना ।
 सिंहासने समाविश्य राक्षसानिदमब्रवीत् ॥ ४३॥

rāvaṇo vivyathe rāmabāṇairviddho mahāsuraḥ ।
 mātaṅga iva siṃhena garuḍeneva pannagaḥ ॥ 42॥
 abhibhūto'gamadrājā rāghaveṇa mahātmanā ।
 siṃhāsane samāviśya rākṣasānidamabravīt ॥ 43॥

42-43. In the meanwhile, the great demon Ravana had become extremely agitated, vexed and confounded when he was hit and severely wounded by Lord Sri Ram's arrows, just like an elephant becomes agitated and terribly frightened when it is under a fierce attack by a lion, or a snake is when attacked by Garud (the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu, said to be such an inveterate enemy of serpents that he would gobble a snake as soon as he sights one)¹ (42).

The demon king Ravana was defeated at the hands of the great Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) and beat a hasty retreat; he went to Lanka for the time being. He sat on his throne and addressed the demons who had assembled around him (43)—

[Note—¹An elephant, on the face of it, seems to have an upper hand over the lion in a fierce combat between the two because it has a larger body and looks more powerful and stronger than a lion, but when the lion begins its attack in right earnest the poor elephant seems helpless. After offering some strong resistance initially in the combat, the elephant finally panics because it becomes clear to him that he is no match for the lion, and if he does not manage to shake the lion off him and run away, then death is a foregone conclusion.

Similarly, Garud, the name given to the celestial Eagle or Heron who is said to be the mount of Lord Vishnu, would swoop down on a serpent and kill it instantly. Initially the serpent would try its best to bite the mighty bird or wrap itself tightly around it to squeeze it to death, but soon it gives up the struggle as the Garud begins to gobble it up.

In the present context it implies that Lord Ram's form of a human being who was civil and amiable, was no match for the colossus size of Ravana's body as well as his frightening visage and menacing demeanours. But when the duel commenced betwixt the two, Lord Ram had a quick upper hand over his adversary, creating an alarming situation for Ravana inasmuch as that had he not escaped from the battle front he would have been killed even before the combat ended. So Ravana was very scared, and he scampered away to the safety of his fort of Lanka where all other demon warriors assembled for a quick war council to take a stock of the situation.]

मानुषेणैव मे मृत्युमाह पूर्वं पितामहः ।
 मानुषो हि न मां हन्तुं शक्तोऽस्ति भुवि कश्चन ॥ ४४॥
 ततो नारायणः साक्षान्मानुषोऽभून्न संशयः ।
 रामो दाशरथिर्भूत्वा मां हन्तुं समुपस्थितः ॥ ४५॥

mānuṣeṇaiva me mṛtyumāha pūrvam pitāmahaḥ ।
 mānuṣo hi na māṃ hantum śakto'sti bhuvi kaścana ॥ 44॥
 tato nārāyaṇaḥ sāḥśānmānuṣo'bhūnna saṃśayaḥ ।
 rāmo dāśarathirbhūtvā māṃ hantum samupasthitaḥ ॥ 45॥

44-45. [Ravana said—] 'In some ancient time, the grandfather of creation, i.e. Brahma the creator, had forecast my death at the hands of a human, but there is no man in this world who can ever kill me (44).

Hence, there is no doubt¹ that Lord Narayan (Lord Vishnu) himself has manifested as a human being in the form of Lord Sri Ram, the son of king Dasrath (of Ayodhya), and he has come here to kill me (45).

[Note—¹Why was Ravana so sure that Lord Ram was no ordinary human being but Lord Vishnu himself? It is because in the duel between him and the Lord, it was the first time in his life that Ravana felt so alarmed and scared for his life. So he deduced that there must be more to Lord Ram than what meets the eye. Putting two and two together he arrived at the obvious conclusion that there is no other explanation for things as they are unfolding except that it is Lord Vishnu himself who has assumed the form of Lord Ram in order to get rid of him.]

अनरण्येन यत्पूर्वं शप्तोऽहं राक्षसेश्वर ।
 उत्पत्स्यते च मद्दंशे परमात्मा सनातनः ॥ ४६॥
 तेन त्वं पुत्रपौत्रैश्च बान्धवैश्च समन्वितः ।
 हनिष्यसे न सन्देह इत्युक्त्वा मां दिवं गतः ॥ ४७॥
 स एव रामः सञ्जातो मदर्थे मां हनिष्यति ।
 कुम्भकर्णस्तु मूढात्मा सदा निद्रावशं गतः ॥ ४८॥

anaranyena yatpūrvam śapto'haṃ rākṣaseśvara ।
 utpatsyate ca madvaṃśe paramātmā sanātanaḥ ॥ 46॥
 tena tvam putrapautraiśca bāndhavaiśca samanvitaḥ ।
 haniṣyase na sandeha ityuktvā māṃ divaṃ gataḥ ॥ 47॥
 sa eva rāmaḥ sañjāto madarthe māṃ haniṣyati ।
 kumbhakarnaṣtu mūḍhātmā sadā nidrāvaśaṃ gataḥ ॥ 48॥

46-48. In some ancient time, Anaranya had cursed me, saying 'Oh king of demons! The truthful and eternal Supreme Being, the Lord God, will incarnate (or reveal) himself in my family (46), and, without doubt, you along with your sons, grandsons, kith and kin, compatriots and friends et al, will die at his hands'. And having said so, he had gone to heaven (47).

So therefore I have no doubt that it is the same Supreme Being who has manifested himself for me in the form of Lord Sri Ram, and likewise it is also certain that he will kill me. My brother Kumbhakarn is a very foolish and stupid fellow; he is always under the influence of sleep (i.e. he is so singularly lazy and without ambitions that he always prefers to sleep, and do nothing else in his life) (48).

तं विबोध्य महासत्त्वमानयन्तु ममान्तिकम् ।
 इत्युक्तास्ते महाकायास्तूर्णं गत्वा तु यत्नतः ॥ ४९॥
 विबोध्य कुम्भश्रवणं निन्यू रावणसन्निधिम् ।
 नमस्कृत्य स राजानमासनोपरि संस्थितः ॥ ५०॥

taṁ vibodhya mahāsattvamānayantu mamāntikam ।
 ityuktāste mahākāyāstūrṇaṁ gatvā tu yatnataḥ ॥ 49॥
 vibodhya kumbhaśravaṇaṁ ninyū rāvaṇasannidhim ।
 namaskṛtya sa rājānamāsanopari saṁsthitaḥ ॥ 50॥

49-50. You must go and wake him up, and then bring him here.'

[To remove confusion, the reader must refer to verse no. 43 where Ravana was surrounded by other demons when he returned from the battle-field. He is addressing those demons.]

When he said so, the demons, who all had colossal and fearsome bodies, said 'alright', and they immediately rushed to carry out the orders given to them. They went to Kumbhakarn and engaged themselves in right earnest to wake him up from his deep slumber by employing umpteen numbers of methods. When they finally succeeded in arousing him from his sleep, they conveyed to him Ravana's urgent message and then brought him to the place where Ravana was waiting for him. There he (Kumbhakarn) showed his respects to the king of the demon race (i.e. Ravana) and sat down on his designated seat (49-50).

[Note—Ravana mortally feared facing Lord Ram in the battle-field because he knew that the Lord would surely slay him as had been prophesized long ago. So instead of leading the war from the front as a king is expected to do, and as Ravana had always been doing during his countless campaigns to conquer the world and the heaven, this time he preferred to send others in his stead so that, if possible, he could escape the trap of death. He would presently send his brother Kumbhakara, and then when the latter is killed in the battle, he would next send Meghanad, his beloved son, to face the wrath of Lord Ram. It is only when no other family member is left for him whom he can send as his proxy would he himself step into the battle-field, to fight unto death.

By sending one after another great fighter to face Lord Ram in the battle-field instead of fighting the Lord himself as he was expected to do, Ravana's intention or his strategy was to wear out the Lord by adopting the tactic of attrition, so that by the time his own turn comes the Lord would have already been exhausted and war-weary, while he would be fresh and sprightly enough to launch a fierce offensive. So, Ravana himself waited for the last moment to strike hard at the war-weary enemy. It was a military strategy employed by him, but it proved to be in vain because he could not change the fiat of fate and the decree of destiny.]

तमाह रावणो राजा भूतरं दीनया गिरा ।
 कुम्भकर्णं निबोध त्वं महत्कष्टमुपस्थितम् ॥ ५१॥
 रामेण निहताः शूराः पुत्राः प्रौत्राश्च बान्धवाः ।
 किं कर्तव्यमिदानीं मे मृत्युकाल उपस्थिते ॥ ५२॥

tamāha rāvaṇo rājā bhrātaraṃ dīnayā girā ।
 kumbhakarna nibodha tvaṃ mahatkaṣṭamupasthitam ॥ 51॥
 rāmeṇa nihatāḥ sūrāḥ putrāḥ prautrāśca bāndhavāḥ ।
 kiṃ kartavyamidāniṃ me mṛtyukāla upasthite ॥ 52॥

51-52. Then king Ravana said in a most pitiful way to his brother, 'Oh Kumbhakarn, listen to me. A great trouble has presented itself before us (51).

Sri Ram has killed the great warriors, sons, grandsons, relatives, compatriots and friends of our demon race. The time of my death (i.e. my end) appears to have come. What should I do now? I am very perplexed and confused, and am unable to decide what to do. So do please give me your advice (52).

एष दाशरथी रामः सुग्रीवसहितो बली ।
 समुद्रं सबलस्तीर्त्वा मूलं नः परिकृन्तति ॥ ५३॥
 ये राक्षसा मुख्यतमास्ते हता वानरैर्युधि ।
 वानराणां क्षयं युद्धे न पश्यामि कदाचन ॥ ५४॥

eṣa dāśarathī rāmaḥ sugrīvasahito balī ।
 samudraṃ sabalastīrtvā mūlaṃ naḥ parikṛntati ॥ 53॥
 ye rākṣasā mukhyatamāste hatā vānarair Yudhi ।
 vānarāṇāṃ kṣayaṃ yuddhe na paśyāmi kadācana ॥ 54॥

53-54. This son of Dasrath, i.e. Lord Sri Ram, along with the forces of Sugriv (i.e. the army of monkeys and bears), has successfully crossed the ocean, and has now surrounded (besieged) us from all the sides; he and his fierce warriors are slowly nibbling away at our very roots.

[To wit, like rodents that destroy a flourishing garden or verdant forest by steadily nibbling away at the roots of plants and trees, burrowing through the soil and striking directly at their roots, or gnawing at the fruits and leaves, dealing a death knell upon all vegetation, this son of Dasrath and his unrestrained army of reckless monkeys and bears have managed to come to our dear land of Lanka. Now they are gradually chopping away at us; they have besieged our fort and chipping away steadily at our defenses; they run amok all over the fort at their own free will, killing our great warriors one by one, weakening us and making us hollow from within. What appeared the other day to be an impregnable fort of Lanka has now become exceedingly vulnerable; its defenses are on the verge of collapse, and the morale of our army has become very fragile due to relentless ferocious attack by the enemy and our steadily diminishing ranks.] (53).

All our chief demons (i.e. commanders of the army etc.) have been killed at the hands of the monkeys, but we are not able to see any reduction in the numbers of the monkey (and bear) warriors in the battle-field.

[To wit, it seems that we are at the receiving end of thrashing by Fate in this frightening war. Our numbers are dwindling rapidly, and the morale of our warriors is fast sinking, while that of our enemy seems to be on the ascendant. It's a gravely

alarming situation; a day so gloomy and dark that we had never expected would ever come to us has now come knocking at our door overnight.] (54).

नाशयस्व महाबाहो यदर्थं परिबोधितः ।
भ्रातुरर्थे महासत्त्व कुरु कर्म सुदुष्करम् ॥ ५५॥
श्रुत्वा तद्रावणेन्द्रस्य वचनं परिदेवितम् ।
कुम्भकर्णो जहासोच्चैर्वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ॥ ५६॥

nāśayasva mahābāho yadartham paribodhitah ।
bhrāturarthe mahāsattva kuru karma suduṣkaram ॥ 55॥
śrutvā tadrāvaṇendrasya vacanam paridevitam ।
kumbhakarṇo jahāsoccairvacanam cedamabravīt ॥ 56॥

55-56. Oh the most valiant and valorous one! You must destroy them—that is why I have woken you up. Oh the great and brave warrior! Do this impossible and difficult task for the sake of your brother.' (55).

Hearing these gloomy and distressed words of their king Ravana, Kumbhakarn burst out, laughing derisively. He said (56)—

पुरा मन्त्रविचारे ते गदितं यन्मया नृप ।
तदद्य त्वामुपगतं फलं पापस्य कर्मणः ॥ ५७॥
पूर्वमेव मया प्रोक्तो रामो नारायणः परः ।
सीता च योगमायेति बोधितोऽपि न बुध्यसे ॥ ५८॥

purā mantravicāre te gaditaṁ yanmayā nrpa ।
tadadya tvāmupagataṁ phalaṁ pāpasya karmaṇaḥ ॥ 57॥
pūrvameva mayā prokto rāmo nārāyaṇaḥ paraḥ ।
sītā ca yogamāyeti bodhito'pi na budhyase ॥ 58॥

57-58. 'Oh king! When you had consulted me earlier, I had told you then also—the fruits of your past sins have indeed borne fruits today (57).

I had already told you (i.e. I had already warned you; I had already advised you) that Sri Ram is the Supreme Lord of the world known as Lord Narayan (i.e. Lord Vishnu) who is beyond everything, and Sita is his Yog Maya¹, but unfortunately you don't seem to understand anything inspite of my trying my best to make you see reason and think rationally (58).

[Note—¹The 'Yog Maya' is the Lord's supernatural power to bring together the different forms of his cosmic energy to do things that are otherwise not possible. It also refers to the ability of the Lord to create delusions that are so real life-like that even the wisest of creatures are taken for a ride by the illusion it creates.

In the present case Ravana seems to think that he has abducted and brought home a prince's wife and her husband, Lord Ram, could not protect her. But what he forgets is that, one, it is only a shadow of the real Sita that he has managed to abduct, and two, it is the way the Lord wants it to be that he had managed to steal her*, and

not because he had the real strength and ability to do so on his own accord, against the wishes of the Lord. {*Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 1-4.}]

एकदाहं वने सानौ विशालायां स्थितो निशि ।
दृष्टो मया मुनिः साक्षान्नारदो दिव्यदर्शनः ॥ ५९॥
तमब्रुवं महाभाग कुतो गन्तासि मे वद ।
इत्युक्तो नारदः प्रह देवानां मन्त्रणे स्थितः ॥ ६०॥

ekadāhaṃ vane sānau viśālāyāṃ sthito niśi ।
dṛṣṭo mayā muniḥ sākṣānnārado divyadarśanaḥ ॥ 59॥
tamabravaṃ mahābhāga kuto gantāsi me vada ।
ityukto nāradaḥ prāha devānāṃ mantraṇe sthitaḥ ॥ 60॥

59-60. One night I was sitting on a large rock in the forest. At that time I saw the celestial sage Narad (59).

I said, 'Oh the most exalted and fortunate one (mahābhāga)! Tell me where are you going now?' When I had asked this, Narad replied, 'I was attending a very confidential meeting of the Gods (in heaven) (60).

तत्रोत्पन्नमुदन्तं ते वक्ष्यामि शृणु तत्त्वतः ।
युवाभ्यां पीडिता देवाः सर्वे विष्णुमुपागताः ॥ ६१॥
उचुस्ते देवदेवेशं स्तुत्वा भवत्या समाहिताः ।
जहि रावणमक्षोभ्यं देव त्रैलोक्यकण्टकम् ॥ ६२॥

tatrotpannamudantaṃ te vakṣyāmi śṛṇu tattvataḥ ।
yuvābhyāṃ pīditā devāḥ sarve viṣṇumupāgatāḥ ॥ 61॥
ūcuste devadeveśaṃ stutvā bhaktyā samāhitāḥ ।
jahi rāvaṇamakṣobhyaṃ deva trailokyakaṇṭakam ॥ 62॥

61-62. Whatever transpired there, I shall tell you verbatim; listen. Being extremely tormented and vexed by you two brothers (Ravana and Kumbhakarn), all the Gods approached Lord Vishnu (to find out a way to end the misery, fear and suffering these gods are subjected due to you two brothers) (61).

They offered prayers to the most exalted supreme Lord of Gods; these prayers were offered with immense devotion, faith, submission and humility. The gods pleaded: 'Oh Lord! This fellow Ravana has created great horrors for us; we are feeling utterly helpless against his might; he has caused immense distress, misery and agony to us. He (Ravana) has become a virtual thorn for all the three divisions of the world¹. Hence oh gracious Lord of the world, kindly do something soon to eliminate him, please get rid of this scourge of the entire world as soon as it is possible (62).

[Note—¹The three divisions of the world are the following: the heaven, the earth and the nether world.]

मानुषेण मृतिस्तस्य कल्पिता ब्रह्मणा पुरा ।
 अतस्त्वं मानुषो भूत्वा जहि रावणकण्टकम् ॥ ६३॥
 तथेत्याह महाविष्णुः सत्यसङ्कल्प ईश्वरः ।
 जातो रघुकुले देवो राम इत्यभिविश्रुतः ॥ ६४॥

mānuṣeṇa mṛtistasya kalpitā brahmaṇā purā ।
 atastvaṃ mānuṣo bhūtvā jahi rāvaṇakaṇṭakam ॥ 63॥
 tathetyāha mahāviṣṇuḥ satyasaṅkalpa īśvaraḥ ।
 jāto raghukule devo rāma ityabhiviśrutaḥ ॥ 64॥

63-64. In an earlier time, the creator Brahma had destined (literally, written, foretold, decided, prescribed and prophesized) that his death would be at the hands of a human. So, oh gracious and kind Lord, you should become a human being and eliminate (destroy) this Ravana-like thorn (that is causing untold suffering to this creation)' (63).

Then the great Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being and the Lord of all, and who is steadfast in keeping his vows and is true to his words, assured the gods, saying, 'Alright; it shall be so'.

Now the same Lord has revealed himself as Lord Sri Ram in the family of the great king Raghu (of the kingdom of Ayodhya) (64).

स हनिष्यति वः सर्वानित्युक्त्वा प्रययौ मुनिः ।
 अतो जानीहि रामं त्वं परं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥ ६५॥
 त्यज वैरं भजस्वाद्य मायामानुषविग्रहम् ।
 भजतो भक्तिभावेन प्रसीदति रघूत्तमः ॥ ६६॥

sa haniṣyati vaḥ sarvānityuktvā prayayau muniḥ ।
 ato jānīhi rāmaṃ tvaṃ paraṃ brahma sanātanam ॥ 65॥
 tyaja vairam bhajasvādya māyāmānuṣavigraham ।
 bhajato bhaktibhāvena prasīdati raghūttamaḥ ॥ 66॥

65-66. He will slay you all'. Saying this, the sage (Narad) went his way. Hence, you must recognise and realize the fact that Lord Sri Ram is none but Brahm, the Supreme Lord of creation who is eternal, truthful and supreme (65).

With this wisdom and insightful thought, you will be doing the right thing by abandoning all forms of confrontation, hostility, ill-will, animosity, opposition and belligerence with this image of the Supreme Lord, for remember that the human form of Sri Ram is merely an illusion that hides the Lord's true form, which is none else but the Supreme Being himself.

You must adore, worship and have devotion for Lord Sri Ram instead of harbouring any kind of enmity or ill-will against him; you must not have a hostile attitude towards the Lord. The most exalted of the Raghus (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) becomes easily pleased with those who worship and adore him, those who pay their obeisance to him with full devotion, reverence, faith, conviction, humility, dedication and submission (66).

भक्तिर्जनित्री ज्ञानस्य भक्तिर्मोक्षप्रदायिनी ।
 भक्तिहीनेन यत्किञ्चित्कृतं सर्वमसत्समम् ॥ ६७॥
 अवताराः सुबहवो विष्णोर्लीलानुकारिणः ।
 तेषां सहस्रसदृशो रामो ज्ञानमयः शिवः ॥ ६८॥
 रामं भजन्ति निपुणा मनसा वचसाऽनिशम् ।
 अनायासेन संसारं तीर्त्वा यान्ति हरेः पदम् ॥ ६९॥

bhaktirjanitrī jñānasya bhaktirmokṣapradāyini ।
 bhaktihīnena yatkiñcitkṛtaṁ sarvamasatsamam ॥ 67॥
 avatārāḥ subahavo viṣṇorlīlānukāriṇaḥ ।
 teṣāṁ sahasrasadrśo rāmo jñānamayaḥ śivaḥ ॥ 68॥
 rāmaṁ bhajanti nipuṇā manasā vacasā'niśam ।
 anāyāsenā saṁsāraṁ tīrtvā yānti hareḥ padam ॥ 69॥

67-69. Bhakti (which refers to sincere devotion, submission and complete dedication to the Lord God) is the mother of 'Gyan' (enlightenment, wisdom, gnosis, truthful knowledge of reality), as well as a provider of emancipation and salvation to the creature. If a person has no Bhakti in him, if he has not devotion and faith in any thing he does, if he is not fully dedicated and committed in any thing that he endeavours to do, if he lacks conviction and sincerity in his efforts, then all his efforts go in vain, whether they are related to spiritual matters or to worldly matters¹. (67)

Lord Vishnu had many incarnations, and in all of them he had done playful activities which are called the 'Lord's Leela', or the Lord's sports that were played in accordance with the form that the Lord had assumed.

But this incarnation or manifestation of the Supreme Lord as 'Lord Sri Ram' is an embodiment of enlightenment, wisdom, gnosis and truthful knowledge (Gyan), and hence it is nothing else but an image of 'Shiva' (i.e. an embodiment of the all the virtues that Lord Shiva stands for)².

This being the case, the incarnation of the Supreme Being as Lord Ram is equivalent to thousands of other incarnations (because it is personified form of 'Shiva', one who is true, pure, holy, divine, self-realised, enlightened, and the most exalted of them all) (68).

Those who worship Sri Ram sincerely, most diligently and devotedly, with their mind and heart as well as by their words and thoughts, at all times of their existence every day and night, are sure to easily cross this mundane, gross and mortal world that normally keeps a creature trapped in a cycle of birth and death, to attain final deliverance, emancipation and salvation for themselves. They attain an exalted destination for themselves by way of going to the supreme abode of Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu) in heaven (69).

[Note—¹The idea is that merely saying that "I am a devotee of God and I worship him" won't help the creature a wee whit unless one is very sincere and truly devoted to the Lord in his mind and heart, in his actions and deeds, in his thoughts and words. Mere lip-service won't help; it can please the world but it won't please the Lord.

²Lord Shiva stands for the virtues of the soul that are beautiful and pristine pure; the Lord symbolizes the purity of soul, its holiness, piety, wisdom, truth, enlightenment, self-realisation, renunciation and detachment; Lord Shiva stands for the glory of the soul and its freedom from all worldly attachments and material attractions.

Amongst all the incarnations of Lord Vishnu on this earth, the one in the form of Lord Sri Ram is regarded as the best in all respects. Lord Sri Ram is a personification of ‘Shiva’ because he stands for the virtues and the beauty of the soul which is pure cosmic Consciousness.

Further, Shiva is called a Mahadeva, the ‘Great God’—implying here that Lord Ram is also a Great God, and not an ordinary human being as he appears to be. Like Lord Shiva, Lord Ram too is the most exalted soul; he is sagacious, erudite, wise, enlightened, self-realised and auspicious; he is like a true hermit who remains detached from and dispassionate towards the external world of sense objects. Like Lord Shiva who remains eternally peaceful and blissful in his internal self, Lord Ram’s inner self too remains in a state of eternal bliss, peace, serenity and beatitude.

To wit, Lord Ram epitomises those excellent characters which make a man great and exalted, a perfect human being.]

ये राममेव सततं भुवि शुद्धसत्त्वा ध्यायन्ति
तस्य चरितानि पठन्ति सन्तः ।
मुक्तास्त एव भवभोगमहाहिपाशैः सीतापतेः
पदमनन्तसुखं प्राप्नुयन्ति ॥ ७०॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे सप्तमः
सर्गः ॥ ७॥

ye rāmameva satataṃ bhuvi śuddhasattvā dhyāyanti
tasya caritāni paṭhanti santaḥ ।
muktāsta eva bhavabhogamahāhipāśaiḥ sītāpateḥ
padamanantasukhaṃ prayānti ॥ 70॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde yuddhakāṇḍe saptamaḥ
sargaḥ ॥ 7॥

70. Those persons who are truly saintly, who have a pure and pious heart, and devote themselves in meditating on Lord Ram, in thinking about nothing else but Lord Ram, and in reading the divine story of Lord Ram in this world—such persons are sure to find freedom from the misery and pain associated with the great snare that traps a creature to this gross mortal world of transmigration; they attain an exalted destination for their souls in the form of gaining access to the eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity that are embodied in the lotus-like feet of Lord Sri Ram, the divine Lord (husband) of Sita. (70)

[Note—We observe that Kumbhakaran has emphasized the importance of ‘Bhakti’ in one’s spiritual pursuit. Without this eclectic and singularly excellent virtue, success would elude a spiritual aspirant.

The other point he lays stress on is to remember Lord Ram, a manifestation of the Supreme Being, during every moment of one's life. He nevertheless adds a caveat here—and it is that this should be done with a clean, pious, devoted and pure heart as well as a mind that is free from all worldly taints and corruptions; it should be done with sincerity, devotion and dedication.

And the third point is that he shows a practical way to do it—which is to narrate and listen to the Lord's divine and glorious stories that describe the Lord's deeds during his manifestation in this world. However, it is absolutely necessary while doing so that one must not harbour any sort of doubt about the Lord's true identity; one should be absolutely convinced that Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Being himself, and not an ordinary human being as he physically appears to be.

If one follows the advice given by Kumbhakaran, then it is certain that one would easily cross the vast and virtually intractable ocean that is represented by this gross, mundane world marked by all sorts of pains, miseries and torments associated with the constantly rotating cycle of life and death in it, to reach the other side, which implies attainment of freedom from all these torments, and have abiding peace, happiness, joy, bliss and beatitude for one's self.]

Thus ends Canto 7 of Lanka Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that describes the conversation between Lord Shiva and his divine consort named Uma.

(ii) Sub-section 16.1.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-30:-

॥अष्टमः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

कुम्भकर्णवचः श्रुत्वा भ्रुकुटीविकटाननः ।

दशग्रीवो जगादेदमासनादुत्पतन्निव ॥ १॥

त्वमानीतो न मे ज्ञानबोधनाय सुबुद्धिमान् ।

मया कृतं समीकृत्य युध्यस्व यदि रोचते ॥ २॥

॥aṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

kumbhakarṇavacaḥ śrutvā bhrukuṭīvikaṭānanaḥ ।

daśagrīvo jagādedamāsanādutpatanniva ॥ 1॥

tvamānīto na me jñānabodhanāya subuddhimān ।

mayā kṛtaṁ samīkṛtya yudhyasva yadi rocate ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva—'Oh Parvati! Hearing the words of Kumbhakarn (Canto 7, verse nos. 57-70), the countenance and eyebrows, i.e. the facial expressions, of Ravana, the one with ten necks (daśagrīvo), became very fierce and wrathful. He almost leapt up from his seat in disgust and anger, and rebuffed Kumbhakarn with scorn and sarcasm in his tone (1), 'I know you are very wise, but I have not called you to preach me now. If

you like, you can regard my deeds as being correct and in proper order, and enter the war on my behalf (for I am not in a mood to listen to lectures at this moment; I don't like it) (2).

नो वेदच्छ सुषुप्त्यर्थं निद्रां त्वां बाधतेऽधुना ।
 रावणस्य वचः श्रुत्वा कुम्भकर्णो महाबलः ॥ ३॥
 रुष्टोऽयमिति विज्ञाय तूर्णं युद्धाय निर्ययौ ।
 स लङ्घयित्वा प्राकारं महापर्वतसन्निभः ॥ ४॥
 निर्ययौ नगरात्तूर्णं भीषयन् हरिसैनिकान् ।
 स ननाद महानादं समुद्रमभिनादयन् ॥ ५॥

no cedgaccha suṣuptyartham nidrā tvām bādhate'dhunā ।
 rāvaṇasya vacaḥ śrutvā kumbhakarṇo mahābalaḥ ॥ 3॥
 ruṣṭo'yamiti vijñāya tūrṇam yuddhāya niryayau ।
 sa laṅghayitvā prākāraṁ mahāparvatasannibhaḥ ॥ 4॥
 niryayau nagarāttūrṇam bhīṣayan harisainikān ।
 sa nanāda mahānādaṁ samudramabhinādayan ॥ 5॥

3-5. If you don't agree, then go back and sleep. You must be feeling uncomfortable for being woken up too early; so go and complete your sleep! [And don't worry about me; I am competent to tackle the situation on my own. Scoot from here and lie down once again. No one would disturb you again.]'

Hearing these sarcastic and acerbic taunts of Ravana, the brave Kumbhakarn (3) realised that his brother Ravana is very angry, wrathful and annoyed.

Not to exacerbate matters any further that would probably lead to a shameful showdown between the two brothers (and also because he was aware of the fate of the demon race according to what he had heard from sage Narad), he (Kumbhakarn) set off for the battle front immediately.

Kumbhakkarn, who was as huge as a mountain in his body, stepped across (4) the ramparts of the walled city of Lanka (like a colossus taking a giant step), and with only a few steps he came out in the battle-field¹.

He then roared aloud so fearfully and thunderously that the whole army of monkeys and bears was petrified with mortal fear, and lost its wits. The sound waves generated by his roar reverberated in the sky and rolled over the earth, hitting the ocean so hard that it too rumbled and roared in resonance even as its waters heaved and waves rebounded violently (5).

[Note—¹Kumbhakarn was so huge that he could not get through the exit gates of the city walls, for they were too small for his large body. So, he just stepped across them in a giant, Gulliver-like step. One can very well visualize the sight of Kumbhakarn standing: he was like a Giant, towering so high as to touch the sky.]

वानरान् कालयामास बाहुभ्यां भक्षयन् रुषा ।
 कुम्भकर्णं तदा दृष्ट्वा सपक्षमिव पर्वतम् ॥ ६॥
 दुद्रुवुर्वानराः सर्वे कालान्तकमिवाखिलाः ।

भूमन्तं हरिवाहिन्यां मुद्गरेण महाबलम् ॥ ७॥

vānarān kālayāmāsa bāhubhyāṃ bhakṣayan ruṣā ।
kumbhakarnaṃ tadā dr̥ṣṭvā sapakṣamiva parvatam ॥ 6॥
dudruvurvānarāḥ sarve kālāntakamivākhlāḥ ।
bhramantaṃ harivāhinyāṃ mudgareṇa mahābalaṃ ॥ 7॥

6-7. Then, becoming fiercely angry, he started to destroy the army and annihilate the monkeys and bears by catching hold of them, and devouring them wholesale. Kumbhakarn then looked like a huge winged mountain¹ (6).

All the monkeys and bears began fleeing in terror from there in extreme great haste just like all the creatures try to escape from the clutches of death-god called Yam when he comes to catch them in his snare and take them to hell.

Kumbhakarn roared violently as he freely roamed in the battle-field, romping and rampaging unchecked through the ranks of the army of monkeys and bears, with a very heavy dumb-bell in hand as his only weapon (with which he battered the enemy warriors and bludgeoned them to death) (7).

[Note—¹His dark colossus body resembled a huge mountain, while his two arms protruding from the sides of his gigantic body looked like the outstretched wings of a huge bird. The general appearance of Kumbhakarn was like that of a huge dinosaur or some other horrifying, abominable creature that roamed the surface of the earth in early times.]

कालयन्तं हरीन् वेगाद्भक्षयन्तं समन्ततः ।
चूर्णयन्तं मुद्गरेण पाणिपादैरनेकधा ॥ ८॥
कुम्भकर्णं तदा दृष्ट्वा गदापाणिर्विभीषणः ।
ननाम चरणं तस्य भ्रातुर्ज्येष्ठस्य बुद्धिमान् ॥ ९॥

kālayantaṃ harīn vegādbhakṣayantaṃ samantataḥ ।
cūrṇayantaṃ mudgareṇa pāṇipāḍairanekadhā ॥ 8॥
kumbhakarnaṃ tadā dr̥ṣṭvā gadāpāṇirvibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
nanāma caraṇaṃ tasya bhrāturjyeṣṭhasya buddhimān ॥ 9॥

8-9. Everywhere the extremely strong and powerful Kumbhakarn was killing the monkeys and bears relentlessly; swiftly swallowing them up, or reducing them to pulp by either crushing and grinding them under his heavy feet, or pounding and thrashing them with his clenched fists (8).

In the mean time, Vibhishan, who was wise and observant, and was holding a battle mace in his hands, saw all this unfold before his eyes. He came forward and bowed at the feet of his elder brother (Kumbhakarn, to show respect to him) (9).

विभीषणोऽहं भ्रातुर्मे दयां कुरु महामते ।
रावणस्तु मया भ्रातर्बहुधा परिबोधितः ॥ १०॥
सीतां देहीति रामाय रामः साक्षाज्जनार्दनः ।

न शृणोति च मां हन्तुं खड्गमुद्यम्य चोक्तवान् ॥ ११॥

यिक् त्वां गच्छेति मां हत्वा पदा पापिभिरावृतः ।

चतुर्भिर्मन्त्रिभिः सार्धं रामं शरणमागतः ॥ १२॥

vibhīṣaṇo'haṃ bhrāturme dayāṃ kuru mahāmate ।

rāvaṇastu mayā bhrātarbahudhā paribodhitaḥ ॥ 10॥

sītāṃ dehīti rāmāya rāmaḥ sāksājjanārdanaḥ ।

na śṛṇoti ca māṃ hantum khaḍgamudyamya cōktavān ॥ 11॥

dhik tvāṃ gaccheti māṃ hatvā padā pāpibhirāvṛtaḥ ।

caturbhirmantribhiḥ sārḍhaṃ rāmaṃ śaraṇamāgataḥ ॥ 12॥

10-12. Vibhishan said, 'Oh the wise one (mahāmate)! I am your brother Vibhishan. Have mercy on me¹. Oh my dear brother! I had tried repeatedly to tell and explain to Ravana (10) that he should give Sita back to Sri Ram because the latter is none but Lord Janardan² (i.e. Lord Vishnu) himself in a personified form. But it is so unfortunate that he did not listen to me; on the contrary, he drew his sword to kill me. (11)

He reproached me most scornfully, saying with disgust in his tone: 'Shame to you; get away from here.'

Surrounded as he is by sinful, corrupt and pervert courtiers, he did not hesitate a moment to kick me in full court. Then, accompanied by four ministers, I came to take shelter with Lord Sri Ram and seek refuge at the Lord's holy feet³ (12).

[Note—¹When Vibhishan saw Kumbhakarn coming to the battle front, he decided to go and meet him. One reason was to explain to him why he had left Lanka, and the other reason is to pray to him not to punish him for his action. That is why Vibhishan says “have mercy on me”; he requests Kumbhakarn to excuse him for having abandoned his family and race to join the enemy's camp, for he will explain why he did it, and then he further pleads that he be spared from incurring Kumbhakarn's wrath because the fault was not his but that of Ravana.

In the verses that follow herein below we shall see that Kumbhakarn shows his great affection to his younger brother Vibhishan and agreeing with him that Ravana is not ready to listen to any sane advice because he is under the grip of death. Kumbhakarn blesses Vibhishan and says that the latter had done the right thing by seeking refuge with Lord Ram, as this decision of his would ensure that the demon race would not completely be annihilated. The meeting between the two brothers was cordial and brotherly, with no sign of animosity or hatred betwixt them. When they parted, probably there were tears in their eyes. This is in sharp contrast with the way Vibhishan and Ravana parted with each other—it was a very bitter and angry parting; it was marked by disgust and rancour. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 27-36.}

²The word “Janardan” refers to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world. It means the Lord who is very kind, compassionate and merciful towards his humble creatures; he takes care of them all and ensures their welfare and well-being.

³Vibhishan explains to Kumbhakarn why he deserted his elder brother Ravana. He says that while he was trying to make Ravana see reason, the latter took offense and

publicly humiliated him. It was intolerable an insult, so Vibhishan says that he decided to abandon Lanka and seek refuge with Lord Ram.]

तच्छ्रुत्वा कुम्भकर्णोऽपि ज्ञात्वा भ्रातरमागतम् ।
समालिङ्ग्य च वत्स त्वं जीव रामपदाश्रयात् ॥ १३॥
कुलसंरक्षणार्थाय राक्षसानां हिताय च ।
महाभागवतोऽसि त्वं पुरा मे नारदाच्छ्रुतम् ॥ १४॥

tacchrutvā kumbhakarṇo'pi jñātvā bhrātaramāgatam ।
samāliṅgya ca vatsa tvam jīva rāmapadāśrayāt ॥ 13॥
kulasamrakṣaṇārthāya rākṣasānām hitāya ca ।
mahābhāgavato'si tvam purā me nāradācchrutam ॥ 14॥

13-14. Hearing these words and finding that his own brother Vibhishan has come to meet him, Kumbhakarn affectionately hugged him, clasping his dear brother close to his heart. He (Kumbhakarn) said, 'Oh son (vatsa)! You live a long life (tvam jīva)! By taking shelter and refuge in the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram (13), you have ensured that you will live long to take care of the future welfare of our demon race. On some previous occasion, I had heard from sage Narad that you are a great devotee of the Lord (14).

[Note—Compare this with how Ravana had treated Vibhishan. This seemingly normal meeting between two brothers marks a stark difference between Ravana and Kumbhakarn. While Ravana's mind and heart were completely overshadowed by perversion, wickedness and sinfulness, and he was full of pride, ego and haughtiness, making him singularly stubborn, ruthless and reckless, Kumbhakarn on the other hand was more reasonable, sober, prudent, courteous, wise and cultured in his demeanours and thoughts.

We have already read that Kumbhakarn too had tried to tell Ravana the same thing that Vibhishan had told him earlier, and on both the occasions there was no effect on Ravana.

One outstanding feature of the meeting between Kumbhakarn and Vibhishan is how they met, and the circumstances around it—they embraced each other like two affectionate siblings meeting for the last time, with no bitterness in their hearts, though they were in opposite camps. Vibhishan has bowed to his elder brother Kumbhakarn to pay his respects to him (verse no. 9), and the latter has picked him up and embraced him affectionately, calling Vibhishan his 'son' (verse no. 13).]

गच्छ तात ममेदानीं दृश्यते न च किञ्चन ।
मदीयो वा परो वापि मदमतविलोचनः ॥ १५॥
इत्युक्तोऽशुमुखो भ्रातृश्रणावभिवन्द्य सः ।
रामपार्श्वमुपागत्य चिन्तापर उपस्थितः ॥ १६॥

gaccha tāta mamedānīm drśyate na ca kiñcana ।
madiyo vā paro vāpi madamattavilocanaḥ ॥ 15॥

ityukto'srumukho bhrātuścaraṇāvabhivandya saḥ ।
rāmapārśvamupāgatya cintāpara upasthitaḥ ॥ 16॥

15-16. Oh my dear (tāta)! You must go away from me now for my eyes are wild and intoxicated by wine. I cannot see (i.e. differentiate between) who is my own or who is opposed to me.

[To wit, I have drunk so much that my mind is not under my control. The wine has got its firm hold on me, making me intoxicated so much that I am not able to judge who is my friend and who is my foe. So, before I cause you any harm, it is better you go away from me. But my dear brother, I bless you.]' (15).

When his brother (Kumbhakarn) had said so, tears welled-up in Vibhishan's eyes. He bowed at his (Kumbhakarn's) feet, and overcome by worries and filled with remorse, he came back and stood before Lord Sri Ram (16).

[Note—¹Vibhishan was moved by the way his elder brother Kumbhakarn met and blessed him. He was filled with gratitude and affection for his elder brother for the brotherly emotions he had shown him, and this aggravated the sense of remorse and sorrow in the heart of Vibhishan for he felt great pity and sympathy for Kumbhakarn because the latter had become a victim of circumstances. Vibhishan realized that Kumbhakarn did not wish to fight this war as he felt it was uncalled for, that he held a view that was similar to that of Vibhishan's regarding Lord Ram, and that he decided to enter the battle-field because he thought it was the proper thing to do to remain loyal and faithful to his family and the demon race, for it was his moral duty and obligation to obey the commands of his king like a true soldier who does not question the orders given to him by his chief commander, whether such orders are right or wrong is not for him to judge.

Vibhishan pondered over the matter and realized that there was also another reason that had made Kumbhakarn decide to remain loyal to Ravana, instead of abandoning him like Vibhishan had done. Kumbhakarn had little choice before him; he did not face the same situation as Vibhishan had faced which had compelled the latter to leave Lanka and take refuge with Lord Ram. There was a difference between his own case and that of his brother Kumbhakarn's case, and it was this: While Ravana had publicly humiliated Vibhishan by kicking him, he had not shown any disrespect to Kumbhakarn. So therefore, while Vibhishan's leaving Ravana was justified to a great extent, Kumbhakarn would not be able to justify a similar action if he had decided to leave Lanka and seek refuge with Lord Ram.

Vibhishan was filled with pity for Kumbhakarn, that he will have to die for an unjust cause, but at the same time he had great sympathy for him because he had no choice left before him. Vibhishan was overcome with a lot of remorse and grief, and the intensity of his sorrow was increased because of the love and affection that Kumbhakarn had shown him.

Vibhishan was also worried because he would be forced to play a part in the death of his brother Kumbhakarn, especially when the latter had shown so much affection for him. It was a situation which confounded Vibhishan, and filled him with excess of remorse and grief.]

कुम्भकर्णोऽपि हस्ताभ्यां पादाभ्यां पेषयन् हरीन् ।
चचार वानरीं सेनां कालयन् गन्धहस्तिवत् ॥ १७॥

दृष्ट्वा तं राघवः क्रुद्धो वायव्यं शस्त्रमादरात् ।
 विक्षेप कुम्भकर्णाय तेन चित्छेद रक्षसः ॥ १८॥
 समुद्रं दक्षहस्तं तेन घोरं ननाद सः ।
 स हस्तः पतितो भूमावनेकानर्दयन् कपीन् ॥ १९॥

kumbhakarn'o'pi hastābhyāṃ pādābhyāṃ peṣayan harīn ।
 cacāra vānarīm senām kālayan gandhahastivat ॥ 17॥
 dr̥ṣṭvā taṃ rāghavaḥ kruddho vāyavyaṃ śastramādarāt ।
 cikṣepa kumbhakarnāya tena ciccheda rakṣasaḥ ॥ 18॥
 samudgaram dakṣahastaṃ tena ghoram nanāda saḥ ।
 sa hastaḥ patito bhūmāvanekānardayan kapīn ॥ 19॥

17-19. Kumbhakarn roamed wildly and unhindered around the monkey army, rampaging, romping and stamping his way through it, freely battering, thrashing and crushing the monkey and bear warriors with his hands and feet, like he were a personified form of a wild and crazy elephant who represents death itself (17).

Seeing him run amok in the middle of his army, Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) became very annoyed and excessively angry. The Lord took cognizance of the matter and shot a special weapon called 'Vayavyastra'¹. With the help of that weapon, the Lord severed the right arm of the demon (18); this arm had held the dumb-bell (by which Kumbhakarn was hitting the monkeys and bears viciously). At this, the demon began shrieking violently. His arm (which was torn away due to the strike of this unique weapon) fell on the ground, crushing many monkeys and bears in its wake (19).

[Note—¹The “Vayavyastra” (vāyavyaṃ śāstra) is a powerful weapon that is as forceful and dynamic as the wind in its fiercest form. The wind element is one of the five elements in creation, and its wild aspect is revealed in the form of a strong gale, a fierce tornado, a howling hurricane or a churning cyclone and the like that can cause untold havoc on land and sea by uprooting huge trees, tearing off roofs of houses, toppling all manners of structures, capsizing ships, causing gigantic tidal waves and making the ocean heave and roar as if it is the doomsday.

This weapon is used by invoking the powers of the wind-god, and thus it is powered and propelled by the wind element. When it strikes, there is a huge explosion that creates a vacuum, and everything around is either blown away and torn apart, or violently sucked in and squeezed to pulp. Its effect is a combination of an explosion and an implosion. So when it hit Kumbhakarn, his hand which held his weapon, the dumb-bell, was torn away from his body, and it then fell with a heavy thud over the army of monkeys and bears, crushing a good many of them under its huge size and weight.]

पर्यन्तमाश्रिताः सर्वे वानरा भयवेपिताः ।
 रामराक्षसयोर्युद्धं पश्यन्तः पर्यवस्थिताः ॥ २०॥
 कुम्भकर्णश्छिन्नहस्तः शालमुद्यम्य वेगतः ।
 समरे राघवं हन्तुं दुद्राव तमथोऽच्छिनत् ॥ २१॥

paryantamāśritāḥ sarve vānarā bhayavepitāḥ ।
 rāmarākṣasayoryuddhaṁ paśyantaḥ paryavasthitāḥ ॥ 20॥
 kumbhakarnaśchinnahastaḥ śālamudyamya vegataḥ ।
 samare rāghavaṁ hantuṁ dudrāva tamatho'cchinat ॥ 21॥

20-21. [The following verses describe the fierce duel between Lord Sri Ram and Kumbhakarn—] Then all the monkeys and bears, who were scattered here and there in the battle field, stood aside, astounded and terrified, as they watched the duel between Lord Sri Ram and the demon (Kumbhakarn) (20).

When his right hand was severed, Kumbhakarn took hold of a big Sal tree (in his left hand) and rushed towards Raghav (Sri Ram) to hit him hard with it (21).

शालेन सहितं वामहस्तमैन्द्रेण राघवः ।
 छिन्नबाहुमथायान्तं नर्दन्तं वीक्ष्य राघवः ॥ २२॥
 द्वावर्धचन्द्रौ निशितावादायास्य पदद्वयम् ।
 चिच्छेद पतितौ पादौ लङ्काद्वारि महास्वनौ ॥ २३॥

śālena sahitaṁ vāmahastamaindreṇa rāghavaḥ ।
 chinnabāhumathāyāntaṁ nardantaṁ vīkṣya rāghavaḥ ॥ 22॥
 dvāvardhacandrau niśitāvādāyāsyā padadvayam ।
 ciccheda patitau pādau laṅkādvāri mahāsvanau ॥ 23॥

22-23. But Raghav (Sri Ram) cut-off his left arm that held the Sal Tree using a weapon called 'Indra's weapon'. When Lord Raghav (Sri Ram) observed that inspite of having both his arms severed Kumbhakarn there was no respite from his violence as he became more aggressive, roaring and shrieking violently as he lunged forward for another bout of vicious attack (22), Lord Ram mounted two arrows that had crescent-shaped tips (shaped like a sickle) and shot them. These two arrows sliced off Kumbhakarn's two legs, one each, and flung them off; the severed legs finally landed at the gate of Lanka with a tremendous thud (23).

निकृत्तपाणिपादोऽपि कुम्भकर्णोऽतिभीषणः ।
 वडवामुखवद्वक्त्रं व्यादाय रघुनन्दनम् ॥ २४॥
 अभिदुद्राव निनदन् गडुश्चन्द्रमसं यथा ।
 अपूर्यच्छित्तान्गैश्च सायकैस्तद्रघूत्तमः ॥ २५॥

nikṛttapāṇipādo'pi kumbhakarṇo'tibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
 vaḍavāmukhavadvaktraṁ vyādāya raghunandanam ॥ 24॥
 abhidudrāva ninadan rāhuścandramasaṁ yathā ।
 apūrayacchitāgraiśca sāyakaistadraghūttamaḥ ॥ 25॥

24-25. In spite of having all his limbs (hands and legs) cut-off, the most ferocious and fierce Kumbhakarn rushed towards Raghunandan (Sri Ram) with a mouth wide open like a wild mare, and shrieking and yelling wildly (24).

He appeared like Rahu rushing towards the Moon-God to gobble him up¹. But the most exalted of the Raghus (Sri Ram) filled his gaping mouth (i.e. stuffed it) with a volley of very sharp arrows (25).

[Note—¹According to ancient mythological tradition, ‘Rahu’ was a demon whose head was severed by Lord Vishnu because he was trying to cheat others by disguising himself as one of the gods and sitting amongst them at the time when Amrit, the nectar or ambrosia of eternity that was derived by the churning of the celestial ocean, was being distributed between the gods and the demons. His true identity, that he was a demon and not a god, was revealed by the sun and the moon gods. This made Rahu an eternal enemy of these two gods. Since a few drops of Amrit had already fallen in his open mouth before it was severed, he could not die. It was a piquant situation; so the creator Brahma blessed him that though his severed head cannot be stitched back on his trunk, yet he will live, and to live he needed some periodic nourishment by way of something to eat. So it was provided that whenever he felt hungry he could devour the sun and the moon gods. This boon resulted in the occurrence of the solar and the lunar eclipses when it is believed that these two gods are gobbled up by Rahu. But fortunately, Rahu has his head severed from his trunk; so the sun and the moon soon emerge from the hole at the lower end of Rahu’s head after they enter it through his mouth.

The natural phenomenon known as the solar and the lunar eclipse are attributed to this boon given to Rahu. When he starts eating these two gods, the light of the disc of the sun and the moon gets diminished progressively; when they are fully inside his mouth the eclipse is said to be complete; and when they slowly slip out of the severed end of Rahu’s head, the eclipse gradually fades away, and finally comes to an end when Rahu leaves his victims and goes away.

The idea here is that Kumbhakarn dashed forward with an open mouth to devour Lord Ram just like the case of Rahu rushing towards the sun and the moon to gobble them up.]

शरपूरितवक्त्रोऽसौ चुक्रोशातिभयङ्करः ।
 अथ सूर्यपूतीकाशमैन्द्रं शरमनुत्तमम् ॥ २६॥
 वज्राशनिसमं रामश्चिक्षेपासुरमृत्यवे ।
 स तत्पर्वतसङ्काशं स्फुरत्कुण्डलदंष्ट्रकम् ॥ २७॥
 चकर्त रक्षोऽधिपतेः शिरो वृत्रमिवाशनिः ।
 तच्छिरः पतितं लङ्काद्वारि कायो महोदधौ ॥ २८॥

śarapūritavaktro'sau cukrośātibhayaṅkaraḥ ।
 atha sūryapratīkāśamaindraṃ śaramanuttamam ॥ 26॥
 vajrāśanisamaṃ rāmaścikṣepāsuramṛtyave ।
 sa tatparvatasāṅkāśaṃ sphuratkuṇḍaladaṃṣṭrakam ॥ 27॥
 cakarta rakṣo'dhipateḥ śiro vṛtramivāśaniḥ ।
 tacchiraḥ patitaṃ laṅkādvāri kāyo mahodadhau ॥ 28॥

26-28. In spite of having his mouth stuffed with arrows, the most ferocious and fierce demon Kumbhakarn continued to yell and shriek wildly. Then Sri Ram mounted the

Indra's arrow, which was considered the best amongst them all, and which was as dazzling and splendid as the sun (26).

That arrow was sturdy, infallible, invincible, hard and strong as the Bajra (the weapon of Indra). Sri Ram shot it at the demon to finally kill him. That arrow went through his head—which was like a huge mountain, and had large ear-rings as well as a glittering row of teeth—to sever it from his trunk in the same way as the Bajra of Indra had cut-off the head of the demon Vrittasur in some ancient time. The head fell at the gates of Lanka, while the torso fell in the ocean (28).

शिरोऽस्य रोधयद्द्वारं कायो नक्राद्यचूर्णयत् ।

तो देवाः सन्नयस्यो गन्धर्वाः पन्नगाः खगाः ॥ २९॥

सिद्धा यक्षा गुह्यकाश्च अप्सरोभिश्च राघवम् ।

ईडिरे कुसुमासारैर्वर्षन्तश्चाभिनन्दिताः ॥ ३०॥

śiro'sya rodhayaddvāraṃ kāyo naktṛādyacūrṇayat ।

tato devāḥ sarṣayo gandharvāḥ pannagāḥ khagāḥ ॥ 29॥

siddhā yakṣā guhyakāśca apsarobhiśca rāghavam ।

īḍire kusumāsāirvarṣantaścābhinanditāḥ ॥ 30॥

29-30. That head blocked the gate of Lanka, while the torso crushed numerous marine creatures that lived in the ocean and blocked the movement of the whirlpools present in it. Seeing that Kumbhakarn has died, there was wide-spread celebrations amongst all the creatures; everyone welcomed it, including the Gods, the sages and hermits, the Gandharvas (celestial musicians), the subterranean creatures such as serpents, the air-borne creatures such as the birds (29), the Siddhas (mystics), the Yakshas (a type of demi-Gods), the cave dwellers (both humans such as hermits, as well as animals such as lions etc.), the Apsaras (celestial damsels or courtesans of Indra's court), and all the rest besides them—everyone became extremely pleased and happy. They showered flowers over Lord Raghav, sang his glories, and said prayers in his honour (30).

[Note—Verse nos. 18-29 describe how Kumbhakarn was killed. It was a one-to-one duel. No army had accompanied the demon, and during the last moments even the monkeys and bears had stood aside to watch the awe inspiring spectacle of the Ram-Kumbhakarn war.]

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Chapter 17

The Second Battle with Meghanad and His Death

Section 17.1: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78.

When Kumbhakaran died, a thick pall of gloom descended upon the family of Ravana in particular, and the whole of the demon race in general; there was a widespread sense of abject despair and dejection. Ravana and the ladies of his household wept bitterly and inconsolably, lamenting and grieving gravely for Kumbhakaran. At that moment of grief and despondency, Meghanad, the son of Ravana, came to condole with them. He soothed his father Ravana, encouraging him to show courage and resilience in the face of this calamity that has befallen the family as well as the demon race. He told his father Ravana not to despair, for he would show his true mettle and avenge his uncle's death in the battle of the next day.

And true to his word, Meghanad fought ferociously in the battle that followed, spreading terror in the enemy's camp. He felled Laxman, Sugriv and Vibhishan, and other brave warriors such as Hanuman, Angad, Nal and Neel too were severely battered by him. Then he ensnared Lord Ram in a coil of serpents, but the Lord was however freed when Garud, the Lord's celestial mount in the form of the legendary Eagle, was sent by sage Narad and other gods to free him. Garud came and devoured all the serpents that had tightly coiled themselves around Lord Ram's body, thus freeing him.

Meanwhile, Jamvant, the aged chief of the bears, fought valiantly with Meghanad in a fierce hand-to-hand duel during which the latter threw a spear at him, which Jamvant grabbed and threw back at Meghanad, thereby making him swoon and fall down. Then Jamvant caught hold of him and dumped him in Lanka.

When Meghanad recovered his consciousness and saw his father Ravana, he felt utterly ashamed at himself. So he decided to perform a fire sacrifice that would make him invincible and protected from death. When this news arrived in Lord Ram's camp through a spy of Vibhishan, the Lord sent his brother Laxman along with Angad and other brave monkey warriors with a clear instruction to get rid of Meghanad in any way that they thought fit according to the prevailing situation. They went and disturbed Meghanad's fire sacrifice, preventing him from completing it successfully. In the ferocious do-or-die battle that followed, Meghanad was finally slayed by Laxman when he shot a powerful arrow at him, which pierced through his chest and killed him.

Hanuman picked up Meghanad's body and dumped it in front of the gate of Lanka. Meghanad's death was the final nail that sealed Ravana's fate—for now he was sure that with his brother Kumbhakaran and son Meghanad dead, there was nothing left for him to look forward to, but to valiantly die a warrior's death, with

dignity and honour and self respect, fighting till the last breath with all the might, courage and valour that he could garner for himself.

The episode of Meghanad's battle and his subsequent death at the hands of Laxman has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78.

Meghanad had entered the fray on the 4th day of the war, does a fire sacrifice during the night as demons usually do, and his death the next day marked the 5th day of the war.

Now, let us commence with our reading of this fascinating battle that lead to Meghanad's death:

मेघनाद तेहि अवसर आयउ । कहि बहु कथा पिता समुझायउ ॥ ६ ॥

देखेहु कालि मोरि मनुसाई । अबहिं बहुत का करौं बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥

इष्टदेव सैं बल रथ पायउँ । सो बल तात न तोहि देखायउँ ॥ ८ ॥

mēghanāda tēhi avasara āya'u. kahi bahu kathā pitā samujhāya'u. 6.
dēkhēhu kāli mōri manusā'ī. abahim bahuta kā karaum barā'ī. 7.
iṣṭadēva saim bala ratha pāya'uṁ. sō bala tāta na tōhi dēkhāya'uṁ. 8.

At that time (when everyone was mourning and lamenting sorely for Kumbhakaran) Meghanad came in; he comforted his father (Ravana) and consoled him in various ways by citing many stories that are told on such occasions to provide reassurance to those who are grieving for their departed loved ones. (6)

Meghanad encouraged Ravana to show resilience and patience with these reassuring words: 'Tomorrow you shall see my extraordinary valour and heroism about which I do not want to speak in detail now (for at this juncture it would look as if I am bragging). (7)

My dear father (tāta)! The unmatched strength and unparalleled powers, as well as the war chariot that I had been gifted by the deity whom I worship (iṣṭadēva saim bala ratha pāya'uṁ)¹, I had never show them to you till now (because there was no occasion for it). [But be comforted in your heart as the time has arrived for me to unveil them to you now.] (8)

[Note—¹In ancient time when Ravana had launched his campaign to conquer the world, Meghanad had done a severe fire sacrifice with sage Shukracharya, who was the Guru, i.e. the moral preceptor and advisor, of the demon race, as its head priest. Shukracharya made Meghanad perform seven fire sacrifices, viz. Agnishtov, Ashwamedh, Bahusuvānak, Rajsuya, Gomegh, Vaishnav-yagya and Maheshwar-yagya. As a reward of these religious sacrifices, Meghanad was granted certain things that made him invincible and formidable in battle. These were the following: (i) A chariot that had the unique ability to fly in the air, was unbreakable, and it could go unhindered anywhere as was desired by its rider; (ii) Mystical powers that are

associated with Maya, which enabled him to create delusions and illusions to confound his enemy, such as making him vanish from sight and creating sudden darkness that would confuse his enemy because he won't be able to see anything; (iii) Powerful weapons such as a quiver that never exhausted its supply of arrows, an invincible bow that could invariably subdue the enemy against whom it was used, and many other mystical weapons that would crush the enemy without fail. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 25, verse nos. 7-10.}

Here Meghanad is referring to these unique and magnificent weapons that he has decided to employ in the next day's battle.]

एहि बिधि जल्पत भयउ बिहाना । चहुँ दुआर लागे कपि नाना ॥ ९ ॥
 इत कपि भालु काल सम बीरा । उत रजनीचर अति रनधीरा ॥ १० ॥
 लरहिं सुभट निज निज जय हेतू । बरनि न जाइ समर खगकेतू ॥ ११ ॥

ēhi bidhi jalpata bhaya'u bihānā. cahuṃ du'āra lāgē kapi nānā. 9.
 ita kapi bhālu kāla sama bīrā. uta rajanīcara ati ranadhīrā. 10.
 larahiṃ subhaṭa nija nija jaya hētū. barani na jā'i samara khagakētū. 11.

The whole night was thus spent in mourning and grieving, as well as reassurances given by Meghanad in a sorrowful voice. At last when the dawn broke on the horizon, a large number of monkeys and bears surrounded all the gates of the fort (of Lanka) to lay seize of the city¹. (9)

On this side were the ferocious monkeys and bears who personified Kaal (death) itself, while on the other side were their opponents, the equally ferocious demons who were war veterans and extremely steadfast in the battle-field. (10)

Each side was fighting valiantly with the object of attaining victory over the other. Oh the prominent one amongst the birds ("khagakētū"; i.e. Garud)²! It was a singularly awe-inspiring and such a blood-chilling war that it defies description; one cannot fully describe its horrors, its intensity, its magnitude in words—because its not feasible and not possible.

[To wit, words have a limited scope, and no matter how good a poet or a narrator is, he would not be able to do proper justice to the actual scene that unfolded in the battle-field no matter how best he tries to capture the sight by employing words to describe it. So therefore, much is left to the imagination of the reader who is at liberty to visualize the fighting on the ground and the horrors of this war according to his own understanding.] (11)

[Note—¹This was the beginning of the 4th day of the war.

²There are three primary narrators of the Story of Ram Charit Manas—one is Lord Shiva who tells it to his consort goddess Uma, also known as Parvati or Girija, the second is the saintly crow Kaagbhusund who narrates this magnificent Story to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu and the king of birds, and the third is sage Yagyawalkya who narrates this Story to sage Bharadwaj. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 30.}

But for all practical purposes we find during our reading of this wonderful Story that Goswami Tulsidas, the author of this grand epic named 'Ram Charit Manas', has relied primarily on either Lord Shiva or Kaagbhusund as his source. The reason is that these two are the most ancient narrators of this Story. It was first conceptualized in the heart and mind of Lord Shiva who narrated it to Parvati, but that was done at such a sublime and subtle level of existence of consciousness that it was not heard by the ordinary world in which we live. It is because Lord Shiva is a 'God' and Parvati is a Goddess, and both of them do not have a physical body like creatures in this world have. So their dialogue remained in the form of cosmic vibrations that no creature of the world could hear.

But fortunately sage Kaagbhusund heard this Story directly from Lord Shiva, and he in his turn narrated it to Garud, the king of birds, who came to visit him in his hermitage in this mortal world. So therefore, the second narrator was Kaagbhusund; his narration was the first narration in this physical world.

Later on, sage Yagyawalkya received this Story from sage Kaagbhusund. So, Yagyawalkya not only became the third narrator but also the one from whom the Story spread in the human race. In this way, this divine Story descended from heaven in a gradual manner and made available to us in this mortal world.]

दो०. मेघनाद मायामय रथ चढ़ि गयउ अकास ।

गर्जेउ अट्टहास करि भइ कपि कटकहि त्रास ॥ ७२ ॥

dōhā.

mēghanāda māyāmaya ratha caḍhi gaya'u akāsa.
garjē'u aṭṭahāsa kari bha'i kapi kaṭakahi trāsa. 72.

Meghanad mounted his special chariot which had certain magical powers, and rode on it to the sky¹. Once there, he roared so thunderously and in such a fearful manner that it sent a chill down the spine of the monkeys and the bears, causing terror amongst them. (Doha no. 72)

[Note—¹This chariot had some unique qualities that were specific to it, such as its ability to fly like a plane in the sky, to stand at a fixed point in the air, and become invisible when needed. This chariot was very illusive, and to catch it was well-nigh impossible.

Meghanad chose to go up in the air to have a vantage point from which he could survey the whole battle-field. It also gave him an added advantage of quick mobility and safety from direct attack by the monkeys and bears who would find it rather difficult to pursue and engage him in the sky as compared to the ease with which they could have surrounded and thrashed him if he were on the ground.

Meghanad got his name from the fact that he could laugh or speak so loudly, with a high-pitched roar that it sounded like a deafening clap of thunder. So when he roared in anger, the monkeys and bears trembled in fear, and for a moment, were almost deaf.]

चौ०. सक्ति सूल तरवारि कृपाना । अङ्ग सङ्ग कुलिसायुध नाना ॥ १ ॥

डारइ परसु परिघ पाषाणा । लागेउ बृष्टि करै बहु बाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

sakti sūla taravāri kṛpānā. astra sastra kulisāyudha nānā. 1.
ḍāra'i parasu parigha pāṣānā. lāgē'u br̥ṣṭi karai bahu bānā. 2.

Meghanad used a formidable array of weapons to attack the army of monkeys and bears on the ground below from his high position in the sky. He rained down upon them a volley of sharp and powerful lancets, spears, tridents, swords, sickles, scimitars and the like—all of which were extremely effective like the weapon known as Vajra¹ (kulisāyudha). (1)

Besides the above, he also used battle-axes, battle-rams, huge boulders, and a hail of ferocious arrows against his enemy². (2)

[Note—¹The 'Vajra' is the invincible weapon of Indra, the king of gods. Here it means that all the weapons discharged by Meghanad were as strong, powerful and infallible as the Vajra of Indra.

²One can imagine the ferocity of the attack by Meghanad. The weapons he used from high up in the sky must have cut through the rank and file of the monkeys and bears like a farmer using his cutting tools to reap his harvest.]

दस दिसि रहे बान नभ छाई । मानहुँ मघा मेघ झरि लाई ॥ ३ ॥

धरु धरु मारु सुनिअ धुनि काना । जो मारइ तेहि कोउ न जाना ॥ ४ ॥

dasa disi rahē bāna nabha chāṭi. mānahuṁ maghā mēgha jhari lāṭi. 3.
dharu dharu māru suni'a dhuni kānā. jō mārā'i tēhi kō'u na jānā. 4.

All the ten directions¹ were covered by arrows as if a dark cloud of doomsday is pouring its deadly rain of death and destruction upon the ground below. (3)

Everywhere and in all directions, left, right and center, there were chilling yells and angry shouts calling out 'kill, kill', and in the ensuing bedlam and the pandemonium that followed no one knew who was being killed, or who the killer was². (4)

[Note—¹The ten directions are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.

The idea is that the whole sky and land, as far as the eyes could see, were covered by a thick blanket of arrows.

²There was complete chaos and mayhem on the battle ground. First there was the rain of deadly weapons, then there was the fearful darkness in every direction, and added to this was the horror of indiscriminate death accompanied by yells and moaning of those dying; compounding the fearful scene and making the matters worse were the mad clashes of warriors who thrashed anyone they encountered, not discriminating between friend and foe, because the combatants were literally blinded with passion

and extremely provoked by anger that is natural during a close combat between two powerful armies vying with each other for victory. The warriors madly shouted in chorus ‘kill-kill; thrash-pound’; there was pandemonium and bedlam in the battle-field, and in the utter confusion that arose from this free-for-all, no one could know who was killing whom.]

गहि गिरि तरु अकास कपि धावहिं । देखहिं तेहि न दुखित फिरि आवहिं ॥ ५ ॥
 अवघट घाट बाट गिरि कंदर । माया बल कीन्हेसि सर पंजर ॥ ६ ॥
 जाहिं कहाँ व्याकुल भए बंदर । सुरपति बंदि परे जनु मंदर ॥ ७ ॥

gahi giri taru akāsa kapi dhāvahiṃ. dēkhahiṃ tēhi na dukhita phiri āvahiṃ. 5.
 avaghaṭa ghāṭa bāṭa giri kandara. māyā bala kīnhēsi sara pañjara. 6.
 jāhiṃ kahāṃ byākula bha'e bandara. surapati bandi parē janu mandara. 7.

The monkeys and bears grabbed huge boulders and rocks and jumped into the sky to intercept Meghanad, but by that time he vanished from sight¹. When the warriors couldn't find him, they felt frustrated, and returned back in disgust. (5)

In the meanwhile, Meghanad employed his skills to create illusions to fabricate false paths, valleys and mountain caves that were all filled with sharp arrows (in an attempt to trap and kill the monkeys and bears who tried to flee and hide somewhere). (6)

Finding all escape routes thus blocked, the monkey and bear warriors became panicky. It was like the case of Mt. Mandrachal being imprisoned by the magical charm of Indra, the king of gods². (7)

[Note—¹It has already been said that Meghanad's chariot had the unique ability to vanish from sight—apropos Doha no. 72 herein above. So, when the monkey and bear warriors reached the spot where they saw Maghanad a few moments ago, he sneaked away undetected, and couldn't be intercepted. Repeated attempts to catch up with him failed, and so the monkeys and bears became frustrated and disgusted.

²Mt. Mandrachal had the ability to fly freely because it is believed that it had wings. But when Indra spun his magical charm around it, the great mountain forgot how to fly. This instance is cited here to mean that though these monkey and bear warriors were very brave and powerful fighters, but they felt themselves helpless against the might of Meghanad's magical powers to create delusions; they felt trapped and confused by the appearance of so many mysterious passages, valleys and caves even though they actually didn't exist. These warriors forgot that this sight was a mere illusion created by Meghanad, and therefore there was nothing to fear about.]

मारुतसुत अंगद नल नीला । कीन्हेसि बिकल सकल बलसीला ॥ ८ ॥
 पुनि लछिमन सुग्रीव बिभीषन । सरन्हि मारि कीन्हेसि जर्जर तन ॥ ९ ॥

mārutasuta aṅgada nala nīlā. kīnhēsi bikala sakala balasīlā. 8.
puni lachimana sugrīva bibhīṣana. saranhi māri kīnhēsi jarjara tana. 9.

All the strong and valiant warriors, such as Hanuman, Angad, Nala and Neela etc., were left stunned and agitated. (8)

After that, he (Meghanad) directed his attention on Laxman, Sugriv and Vibhishan; he assailed them all by shooting volleys of arrows that pierced through their bodies and severely wounded them. (9)

पुनि रघुपति सैं जूझै लागा । सर छाँड़इ होइ लागहिं नागा ॥ १० ॥
ब्याल पास बस भए खरारी । स्वबस अनंत एक अबिकारी ॥ ११ ॥
नट इव कपट चरित कर नाना । सदा स्वतंत्र एक भगवाना ॥ १२ ॥
रन सोभा लागि प्रभुहिं बँधायो । नागपास देवन्ह भय पायो ॥ १३ ॥

puni raghupati saim̐ jūjhai lāgā. sara chām̐ra'i hō'i lāgahim̐ nāgā. 10.
byāla pāsa basa bha'e kharārī. svabasa ananta ēka abikārī. 11.
naṭa iva kapaṭa carita kara nānā. sadā svatantra ēka bhagavānā. 12.
rana sōbhā lagi prabhuhiṁ baṁdhāyō. nāgapāsa dēvanha bhaya pāyō. 13.

Finally, he (Meghanad) engaged Lord Ram in a fierce duel; he shot powerful arrows that transformed themselves into serpents when they hit the Lord. (10)

These serpents managed to ensnare Lord Ram who is famed as the slayer of demon Khar; it is such an irony that the Lord who is eternally independent and free, who is without a beginning or an end as he is eternal and infinite, who is one and non-dual, and who has no faults in him that are normally associated with this mortal world, should get trapped by a snare of serpents that tightly coiled themselves around him.

[Why did this happen; why did Lord Ram, who is eternally free from all sorts of delusions, allow himself to be caught in this one? This question is answered in the next verse.] (11)

Verily, though Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is always free and independent, yet he decided to get tied in a snare of serpents just to play out his role as a human being to perfection like an expert actor ought to¹. (12)

The fact of the matter is that the almighty and omnipotent Lord Ram wished to uphold the dignity of a duel and adhere to the norms associated with a battle where there are ups and downs during a combat, and a warrior, no matter how strong and powerful he might be, cannot always have the upper hand over his adversary.

The Lord did this to imply that since he had assumed the form of a human being, he is subject to all the limitations that apply to this race. His form as an ensnared warrior who remained calm and poised inspite of being tied with a rope of serpents imparted a unique charm and beauty to the battle-field; it was a singularly captivating sight that enthralled the mind of the beholder amidst the general scene of the battle-field that was marked by bloodshed, bedlam and mayhem.

The sight of Lord Ram trapped in a snare of serpents sent waves of fear rolling amongst the gods (who were watching the proceedings from their stations in the sky). [The gods became alarmed and terrified when they saw Lord Ram ensnared in a tight grip of serpents that coiled themselves around him. It was a nightmare for the gods.] (13)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram willingly allowed himself to be caught in the snare of magical serpents thrown by Meghanad because the Lord is an expert actor, and so he wished to play his role of a human being to perfection. Being the almighty and omnipotent Lord God of the world, had the Lord wanted he could have remained free and very easily neutralize this formidable weapon of Meghanad, but that would not be like an ordinary man, for it would obviously have been a display of superhuman powers, an act which the Lord wished to avoid.]

दो०. गिरिजा जासु नाम जपि मुनि काटहिं भव पास ।
सो कि बंध तर आवइ व्यापक बिस्व निवास ॥ ७३ ॥

dōhā.

girijā jāsu nāma japi muni kāṭahim bhava pāsa.
sō ki bandha tara āva'i byāpaka bisva nivāsa. 73.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this glorious story, says to his consort Parvati, whose other name was Girija as she was the daughter of the King of Mountains—]

‘Oh Girija! The Lord whose name is so divine and holy that when great sages and hermits repeat it during their meditative sessions they are able to cut through the formidable snare that ties the soul of a creature to this gross mortal world of transmigration, and thereby find deliverance for themselves, say how can that supreme Lord be tied in a snare of false snakes?’¹ (Doha no. 73)

[Note—¹To wit, it is not true that Meghanad was actually able to tie Lord Ram in a snare of snakes, because it was simply impossible to do so for reasons cited in this Doha. But the illusion that Meghanad created was so perfect that it gave the impression that the Lord was indeed trapped in his snare, and this illusion was further sustained because the Lord himself wished to maintain this impression.

Why so? The answer is given in Chaupai line nos. 12-13 that precede Doha no. 73 herein above. The Lord had to act his role of a human being to perfection for he wished to honour the words of the creator Brahma that Ravana and his compatriots would be killed only by a human being*, and so it was necessary that the Lord must actually behave like an ordinary man in order to keep Brahma’s words. Had Lord Ram used his supernatural powers to free himself from this magical snare, the very purpose of his assuming the form of a human being would be defeated, for then his true identity as the Supreme Being would be known to one and all, and if that happened and he still went ahead to eliminate the demons led by their king Ravana then it would be in gross violation of Brahma’s solemn words. That would not be good under any circumstance as it would undermine the Creator’s dignity and authority. This is why Lord Ram willingly accepted to be tied up by a snare of snakes created by Meghanad.

*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 177.]

चौ०. चरित राम के सगुन भवानी । तर्कि न जाहिं बुद्धि बल बानी ॥ १ ॥

अस बिचारि जे तग्य बिरागी । रामहि भजहिं तर्क सब त्यागी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

carita rāma kē saguna bhavānī. tarki na jāhiṁ bud'dhi bala bānī. 1.
asa bicāri jē tagya birāgī. rāmahi bhajahiṁ tarka saba tyāgī. 2.

[Lord Shiva told his consort called Bhavani—] ‘Oh Bhavani! What the Supreme Being did in his human manifestation as Lord Ram is so mysterious and beyond comprehension of mortal creatures that it cannot be subjected to worldly logic and interpretation of the mind. Hence, it cannot be described by the power of speech or understood by application of the power of reasoning, and therefore there should not be any debates and arguments regarding the Lord’s deeds and actions (for all of them are exceedingly mysterious and beyond comprehension of the mind-intellect complex)¹. (1)

Taking this into consideration, those who are enlightened about this Truth concerning Lord Ram, are wise and prudent enough to have devotion for the Lord, to worship and adore the Lord in a dispassionate manner, without getting unnecessarily perturbed and perplexed at what the Lord does in his human form, because no matter how hard they try they would only be wasting their time and energy in the futile exercise of attempting to unravel these secrets by applying logic and reasoning to understand them, for they are bound to fail in this exercise. (2)

[Note—¹ Similar idea is expressed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—for instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 341.

The idea is that a wise and enlightened person ought not to allow himself to be dragged into the whirlpool of doubts and confusions by applying unnecessary logic and reasoning to understand every thing about Lord Ram, as it would only vex his spirit and create misunderstanding regarding the Supreme Being because the latter is beyond the reach of the mind and the intellect. Such an exercise, if attempted, would only lead to more and more perplexities and uneasiness of the soul, instead of granting any worthwhile result in the form of peace and stability of the mind; so it’s better to avoid it altogether.]

ब्याकुल कटकु कीन्ह घननादा । पुनि भा प्रगट कहइ दुर्बादा ॥ ३ ॥

जामवंत कह खल रहु ठाढ़ा । सुनि करि ताहि क्रोध अति बाढ़ा ॥ ४ ॥

बूढ़ जानि सठ छाँड़ेउँ तोही । लागेसि अधम पचारै मोही ॥ ५ ॥

अस कहि तरल त्रिसूल चलायो । जामवंत कर गहि सोइ धायो ॥ ६ ॥

byākula kaṭaku kīnha ghananādā. puni bhā pragaṭa kaha'i durbādā. 3.
 jāmvanta kaha khala rahu ṭhāṛhā. suni kari tāhi krōdha ati bāṛhā. 4.
 būṛha jāni saṭha chāmṛē'uṁ tōhī. lāgēsi adhama pacārai mōhī. 5.
 asa kahi tarala trisūla calāyō. jāmvanta kara gahi sō'i dhāyō. 6.

Meghanad (“ghananādā”; one who roared like the sound of like thunder) made the whole army of monkeys and bears extremely agitated and perplexed by his skillful maneuverings and employment of magical tricks. After remaining illusive for some time, he reappeared once again, and began using offensive and threatening language. (3)

Jamvant, the chief of the bears, challenged him, saying, ‘Oh you rascal; keep standing (to face me).’

Meghanad became excessively furious when he heard it. (4)

He angrily shot back at Jamvant, saying caustically, ‘I had spared you hitherto fore considering your old age. But how ungrateful you lowly fellow are that, instead of feeling obliged to me, you choose to challenge and remonstrate me. Woes betide you, oh you wretch!’ (5)

Saying these wrathful words, Meghanad shot a shimmering hot trident at Jamvant; the latter grabbed it immediately and lunged aggressively towards his attacker to hit him back with the same trident. (6)

मारिसि मेघनाद कै छाती । परा भूमि घुर्मित सुरघाती ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि रिसान गहि चरन फिरायो । महि पछारि निज बल देखरायो ॥ ८ ॥

mārisi mēghanāda kai chātī. parā bhūmi ghurmita suraghātī. 7.
 puni risāna gahi carana phirāyō. mahi pachāri nija bala dēkharāyō. 8.

He (Jamvant) hit Meghanad in his chest with this trident so violently that the tormentor of gods reeled under its impact, swooned, and then fell down on the ground. (7)

Then Jamvant showed his valour by catching hold of Meghanad by his leg in a fury, swung him round and round, and then dashed him against the ground. (8)

[Note—¹Whatever sense that was left in Meghanad after being attacked by the trident was now surely gone, and he remained prostrated on the ground, completely lifeless for some moments. This was the first time in his life that Meghanad had had to face this situation, and he wasn’t prepared for it. So it came to him as a shock that totally unnerved him. First was the violent strike by the powerful trident, and then in quick succession came this vicious dashing on the ground; this left little time for him to recover his breath and wits, and for some moment he lay dazed and motionless on the ground like a corpse.

Jamvant was responding to Meghanad’s comment that he had desisted from attacking the former out of deference to his old age when a person becomes physically weak—apropos verse no. 5 herein above. Jamvant wished to tell Meghanad that he

owes nothing to him, and a warrior does not want to live on charity or mercy of his enemy. He might be old in body but that does not mean that he lacks in strength, power, courage and valour.]

बर प्रसाद सो मरइ न मारा । तब गहि पद लंका पर डारा ॥ ९ ॥
इहाँ देवरिषि गरुड़ पठायो । राम समीप सपदि सो आयो ॥ १० ॥

bara prasāda sō mara'i na mārā. taba gahi pada laṅkā para ḍārā. 9.
ihāṁ dēvariṣi garuṛa paṭhāyō. rāma samīpa sapadi sō āyō. 10.

Due to the boons that Meghanad had, he did not die¹. So Jamvant seized him by his legs and tossed him away in such a way that he landed in Lanka. (9)

Meanwhile, the celestial sage Narad sent Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who is renowned for his ability to devour serpents) who came immediately to Lord Ram. (10)

[Note—Meghanad was granted a boon by Lord Brahma, the creator, that he would die only at the hands of someone who hasn't slept and hasn't had a proper meal for fourteen years. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 64-65; and Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 11, verse no. 175.}

The question arises: 'from whom and when did Laxman learn the skill that enabled him to remain alive without eating and sleeping for such a long time?' Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas itself where it is expressly mentioned that sage Vishwamitra had imparted this singularly unique Vidya (esoteric knowledge) to the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, when he was taking them to his hermitage in order to eliminate the demons who had been defiling his fire sacrifice. This Vidya imparted to the two brothers the skill to survive without eating, drinking and sleeping. This mystical ability and its esoteric knowledge would stand them in good stead when they would eventually go to the forest where proper food, drink and sleep would be virtually impossible.

The grateful sage had also given them some very rare weapons that were exclusive and could only be used by a person who is entitled to use them, for they were sort-of locked by a password in the form of some Mantra, which could have been some sort of a special combination of words, letters or phrases that would unlock the fierce potentials of the concerned weapon upon invocation. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

According to Valmiki's Ramayan, Brahma gave him a boon that he could only be killed if his enemy managed to reach the site where he would be doing some fire sacrifice to gain victory over the enemy, disrupt his sacrifice and attack him simultaneously. {Refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka Kand, Canto 85, verse nos. 14-15.}

We shall soon read in the verses that follow herein below that in order to honour Brahma's words, Lord Ram would send Laxman along with others to disrupt the fire sacrifice that Meghanad was performing to gain victory in the war, and in the ensuing scuffle he was killed by Laxman. It ought to be noted here that Laxman hadn't slept or eaten properly for the entire fourteen years he stayed with Lord Ram in the forest—and so he fitted in perfectly to be the one who was eligible to slay Meghanad as ordained by Brahma.]

दो०. खगपति सब धरि खाए माया नाग बरूथ ।

माया बिगत भए सब हरषे बानर जूथ ॥ ७४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

khagapati saba dhari khā'ē māyā nāga barūtha.

māyā bigata bha'ē saba haraṣē bānara jūtha. 74 (a).

The king of birds, i.e. Garud, caught hold of the serpents that were created by Maya (delusions) spread by Meghanad, as a result of which Lord Ram appeared to be tied in their snare because they had wrapped themselves tightly around his body. Garud gobbled up all these serpents, thereby freeing the Lord from their clutches¹.

As soon as this delusion was dispelled and Lord Ram became free once again, there was cheer and exhilaration all around as the monkeys and bears rejoiced at this positive turn of events. (Doha no. 74-a)

[Note—¹Garud was utterly confounded that Lord Ram, who was deemed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of the world, could be so easily tied by ordinary serpents. Garud wondered how could this be possible, and since it had actually happened then surely Lord Ram was not what he is made out to be: Is he an ordinary human prince, or is it true that he is actually a manifestation of Lord Vishnu himself as the gods and the scriptures affirmed him to be? Garud could not reconcile the two opposing pictures, and he was overcome with utter confusion and doubt about Lord Ram's true nature and identity. This confusion had been worrying his mind and heart so much that he sought clarification to settle the matter once and for all; so he later on approached sage Narad who sent him to the creator Brahma, who in turn referred him to Lord Shiva because the latter is considered not only as the wisest and the most enlightened amongst all the gods but also the one who is specially qualified to answer Garud's query regarding Lord Ram's true nature and identity as Lord Shiva worshipped Lord Ram and adored him as his chosen deity, using Lord Ram's holy name as his preferred Mantra for doing mediation and other spiritual pursuits.

Lord Shiva decided that it would be better to send Garud to the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund for the divine discourse that would remove Garud's confusion, because both of them were birds and so it would be easy for them to converse with each other in their own language. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

What followed is the divine discourse given by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund for the benefit of Garud, a discourse that came to be known as the famed "Kaagbhusund Ramayan". It is narrated in full in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Doha no. 125. Fortunately, this Ramayan has been dealt with thoroughly in English by the humble author of this current Book the reader is reading now, and is also available on the same websites where this current Book is available.]

गहि गिरि पादप उपल नख धाए कीस रिसाइ ।

चले तमीचर बिकलतर गढ़ पर चढ़े पराड़ ॥ ७४ (ख) ॥

gahi giri pādapa upala nakha dhā'ē kīsa risā'i.
calē tamīcara bikalatara gaṛha para caṛhē parā'i. 74 (b).

Reinvigorated with energy and renewed enthusiasm, the furious monkey and bear warriors launched a fresh wave of vicious attack by arming themselves with mountainous rocks and boulders, huge trees and anything else they could lay their hands upon.

The ferocity of the retaliatory attack by Lord Ram's army was so intense that the demon warriors fled in panic, rushing back into the fort of Lanka (as fast as they could, to escape being slaughtered). (Doha no. 74-b)

चौ०. मेघनाद कै मुख्छा जागी । पितहि बिलोकि लाज अति लागी ॥ १ ॥

तुरत गयउ गिरिबर कंदरा । करौं अजय मुख अस मन धरा ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

mēghanāda kai murachā jāgī. pitahi bilōki lāja ati lāgī. 1.

turata gaya'u giribara kandarā. karauṁ ajaya makha asa mana dharā. 2.

Meanwhile, when Meghanad recovered from his fainting spell, and when he saw his father Ravana he felt very ashamed at himself¹. (1)

He immediately went into a mountain cave, telling himself determinedly that he would perform a fire sacrifice that would make him virtually invincible in the war. (2)

[Note—¹Meghanad had excessively boasted earlier about his stellar martial skills, assuring his father Ravana that he would avenge the killing of his uncle Kumbhakaran—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 72. Now, what face did he have to show his father? Instead of coming home proudly as a victor, he had been dumped unconscious, like a sac, at his father's foot, lying prostrate on the ground like a battered and defeated warrior. So where was his boast and bluster now?]

इहाँ बिभीषन मंत्र बिचारा । सुनहु नाथ बल अतुल उदारा ॥ ३ ॥

मेघनाद मुख करइ अपावन । खल मायावी देव सतावन ॥ ४ ॥

जौं प्रभु सिद्ध होइ सो पाइहि । नाथ बेगि पुनि जीति न जाइहि ॥ ५ ॥

ihāṁ bibhīṣana mantra bicārā. sunahu nātha bala atula udārā. 3.

mēghanāda makha kara'i apāvana. khala māyāvē dēva satāvana. 4.

jauṁ prabhu sid'dha hō'i sō pā'ihī. nātha bēgi puni jīti na jā'ihī. 5.

Here, in Lord Ram's camp, Vibhishan thought to himself that it would be wise to tell the Lord about this development¹. So he approached the Lord and said, 'Listen my Lord of immense strength and magnanimity. (3)

The evil Meghanad, who employs deceit and vile methods to accomplish his goal, and who is a known tormentor of gods, is performing a fire sacrifice with malefic intentions. (4)

Oh Lord, should he be able to complete it successfully then it would be impossible to defeat him.' (5)

[Note—¹Surely this shows that there were spies in Lanka who had kept Vibhishan abreast of the developments inside the fort. These demons were the ones who were disillusioned with Ravana and had a secret desire to overthrow him. They had sided with Vibhishan in the hope that when the tide of war turns against Ravana and he is trounce, it is certain that Vibhishan would be the next king of Lanka, and if they joined him now, albeit quietly, then they would be rewarded in due course. Truly this behaviour is treason and betrayal, but it is what actually happens everywhere during a war.]

सुनि रघुपति अतिसय सुख माना । बोले अंगदादि कपि नाना ॥ ६ ॥
 लछिमन संग जाहु सब भाई । करहु बिधंस जग्य कर जाई ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह लछिमन मारेहु रन ओही । देखि सभय सुर दुख अति मोही ॥ ८ ॥
 मारेहु तेहि बल बुद्धि उपाई । जेहिं छीजै निसिचर सुनु भाई ॥ ९ ॥
 जामवंत सुग्रीव बिभीषन । सेन समेत रहेहु तीनिउ जन ॥ १० ॥

sunī raghupati atisaya sukha mānā. bōlē aṅgadādi kapi nānā. 6.
 lachimana saṅga jāhu saba bhāī. karahu bidhansa jagya kara jāī. 7.
 tumha lachimana mārēhu rana ōhī. dēkhi sabhaya sura dukha ati mōhī. 8.
 mārēhu tēhi bala bud'dhi upāī. jēhim chījai nīsicara sunu bhāī. 9.
 jāmavanta sugrīva bibhīṣana. sēna samēta rahēhu tīni'u jana. 10.

When Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) heard this, he felt very glad¹. He summoned Angad and other monkeys [6] and instructed them, 'Oh brothers (bhāī)²! All of you go along with Laxman³ and destroy his (Meghanad's) fire sacrifice [7]. (6-7)

You Laxman, listen to me. You must slay this demon in the battle. I feel hurt when I observe that the gods are terrified of him. (8)

So, employ whatever tactic you deem fit according to the situation on the ground, and use your martial skills, strength and wisdom to somehow get rid of him so that the demons are demoralized and emotionally defeated⁴. (9)

Jamvant, Sugriv and Vibhishan—you three stay back with the rest of the army.⁵ (1)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram feel glad when Vibhishan told him about Meghanad performing a fire sacrifice? Well, it was a proof that Vibhishan was loyal to him, and it also proved him correct when he had taken a decision to welcome Vibhishan inspite of stiff opposition and strong reservations expressed against it by all the monkey

advisors at the time when Vibhishan had come to seek Lord Ram's refuse after being kicked out by Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²By calling the monkey warriors “brothers”, Lord Ram instantly established a close rapport and an emotional connect with them. They all felt that Lord Ram was not someone who was an outsider for whom they were fighting a war that did not concern them directly, but that the Lord was very dear to them all and they were fighting for someone who was like a family member for the monkey race. By this single word “brother”, the wise Lord Ram had endeared the rank and file of the whole army so much that the monkey and bear warriors were ready to die for him.

³Why did Lord Ram select Laxman to lead this campaign? We have read earlier that Meghanad had defeated Laxman during their first encounter when Laxman had been gravely wounded and fell down unconscious—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54.

Lord Ram wanted to give Laxman a chance to redeem his self-esteem and reputation by slaying Meghanad to avenge his defeat earlier.

⁴With Kumbhakran already dead, Meghanad's death would completely demoralize the demon army as well as their king Ravana, and this would weaken their resolve to continue with the war; and even if they decided not to turn back at this late stage then at least they would be fighting half-heartedly. This would ensure victory for the Lord's army which was now in a great fighting spirit.

⁵So, who went with Laxman to fight with Meghanad? This answer is given in Doha no. 74 herein below. Laxman was accompanied by Angad, Neela, Nala, Mayand, Nala, and the valiant warrior Hanuman. They were close friends and stood together in thick and thin. They led the assault from the front; they were commanders and leading warriors of troops under their supervision. On the other hand, Sugriv, who was the king of the monkeys, Jamvant, who was the chief of the bears, and Vibhishan, who was a royal member of the demon race and a brother of Ravana, and had come to seek refuge with the Lord, were senior advisors of the Lord and top generals of his army.]

जब रघुबीर दीन्हि अनुसासन । कटि निषंग कसि साजि सरासन ॥ ११ ॥

प्रभु प्रताप उर धरि रनधीरा । बोले घन इव गिरा गँभीरा ॥ १२ ॥

जौं तेहि आजु बधे बिनु आवौं । तौ रघुपति सेवक न कहावौं ॥ १३ ॥

जौं सत संकर करहिं सहाई । तदपि हतउँ रघुबीर दोहाई ॥ १४ ॥

jaba raghubīra dīnhi anusāsana. kaṭi niṣaṅga kasi sāji sarāsana. 11.

prabhu pratāpa ura dhari ranadhīrā. bōlē ghana iva girā gaṁbhīrā. 12.

jauṁ tēhi āju badhēm binu āvaurṁ. tau raghupati sēvaka na kahāvaurṁ. 13.

jauṁ sata saṅkara karahim sahāī. tadapi hata'um raghubīra dōhāī. 14.

When Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave warrior in the family of king Raghu) had issued these instructions, Laxman prepared to leave; he tied his quiver properly to his waist and stringed his bow as he got ready to depart. (11)

Invoking the glory and the majesty of Lord Ram in his heart, Laxman said with a stern and deep voice that resonated like thunder [12], 'If I come back without slaying him (Meghanad), then I shall forfeit the right to be called a sincere servant of Lord Ram [13]. (12-13)

Verily I make a vow that even if thousands of Shivas (who is deemed to be the god of death and war as he is responsible for bringing life to an end in this creation) come out to help him (Meghanad) and obstruct his demise, I say on oath by invoking the name of my revered Lord Ram (Raghubir) that I would still slay him, no matter what happens.¹ (14)

[Note—¹For Laxman no one in this world mattered more than Lord Ram and his honour; if a situation arose where he had to make a choice between Lord Ram and anyone else, his choice will surely and certainly be in the favour of Lord Ram, even if it meant to turn the world upside down. This decision of Laxman to stand by Lord Ram at all costs is clear earlier also when he had sternly and fearlessly taken sage Parashuram to task for attempting to brow-beat and threaten the Lord when he had broken the bow of Lord Shiva during the marriage ceremony of Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281.

A similar approach of Laxman is seen when the news arrived that Bharat, their brother, is coming to the forest with a huge army to meet Lord Ram. Though Bharat's intention was absolutely above board as he wished to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya, but the news that a huge army was accompanying Bharat gave the wrong impression that he is coming to fight the Lord and defeat him to ensure that he can ascend the throne of the kingdom and there is no one to claim it later on. At that time too, Laxman had threatened to kill Bharat if he dared raise his head against Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230.

The use of the term 'thousands of Shivas' is a figure of speech that simply means that even if multitudes of forces of multiple strengths join hands to protect Meghanad, still Laxman would defeat them.]

दो०. रघुपति चरन नाइ सिरु चलेउ तुरंत अनंत ।
अंगद नील मयंद नल संग सुभट हनुमंत ॥ ७५ ॥
dōhā.

raghupati carana nā'i siru calē'u turanta ananta.
aṅgada nīla mayanda nala saṅga subhaṭa hanumanta. 75.

*Anant (another name of Laxman, signifying that he was eternal in his primary form as Lord Seshnath, the thousand hooded celestial serpent who supports the world on his hoods) bowed his head reverentially before Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)¹ and set out to accomplish his assigned mission (to eliminate Meghanad).

He was accompanied by Angad, Neela, Mayand, Nala, and Hanuman who had exceptional skills and was a valiant warrior (and they too followed Laxman's example

by first bowing their heads before Lord Ram before starting on their mission). (Doha no. 75)

{*This Doha can also be read as follows: “Anant (Laxman), Angad, Neela, Mayand, Nala, along with the skilled and valiant (saṅga subhaṭa) Hanuman, bowed their heads before Lord Ram to pay their respects to him and seek his blessings as they started on their mission (of eliminating Meghanad as instructed by the Lord_.”}

[Note—¹When Laxman had gone to face Meghanad on the first occasion, he hadn’t paid his obeisance to Lord Ram by bowing his head before the latter, as a result of which he had to suffer an ignominious defeat at the hands of Meghanad who successfully shot him down, making him faint and fall unconscious in the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 52, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54.

Even others who accompanied him at that time neglected this etiquette, and so they too suffered a humiliating defeat during the duel with Meghanad.

So, having learnt a bitter lesson, Laxman and his companions did not forget to pay their respects to Lord Ram by bowing before him to seek his blessings at the time they started on their mission to tackle Meghanad. The result was they succeeded in their mission this time; they easily managed to overcome and slay Meghanad.

If we examine the proceedings of the war carefully we will find that on every occasion when the monkey and bear warriors missed paying their due respects to Lord Ram before an assault on the enemy forces, they were forced to retreat and suffer greatly. Let’s see such instances now.

During the first day of the war, the monkeys and bears went to the battle-field after bowing before Lord Ram, and thus they became victorious—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 39; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 42; Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 43; Doha no. 44; and Doha no. 47.

On the second day, however, they did not follow this protocol, and hence had to suffer defeat and battering at the hands of Meghanad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

A similar situation prevailed on the third day of the war too—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 65; Doha no. 64; Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 67.

On the fourth day also the monkey troops committed the same error of not paying their respects to Lord Ram before commencement of the day’s battle, and thus suffered heavily—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 72; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 74.

That was enough for them, and so they took special caution to bow their heads before Lord Ram on the fifth day of the war when they went out to deal with Meghanad.]

चौ०. जाइ कपिन्ह सो देखा बैसा । आहुति देत रुधिर अरु भैंसा ॥ १ ॥

कीन्ह कपिन्ह सब जग्य बिधंसा । जब न उठइ तब करहिं प्रसंसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jā'i kapinha sō dēkhā baisā. āhuti dēta rudhira aru bhainsā. 1.
kīnha kapinha saba jagya bidhansā. jaba na uṭha'i taba karahim prasansā. 2.

When the Kapis (the monkeys; named in Doha no. 75 herein above) went to the site (where Meghanad was performing his fire sacrifice to make him invincible and conquer his enemy), they found him offering blood and sacrificing live buffalos as offerings to the fire¹. (1)

The Kapis destroyed his evil sacrifice², but when they observed that inspite of this grave provocation he remained unmoved and continued with his rituals, they began to praise him³. (2)

[Note—¹Since only the Kapis went to the actual spot of Meghanad's fire sacrifice, it clearly means that Laxman stood outside the cave where it was being performed, in order to guard the cave's mouth to make sure that Meghanad did escape from there, and also that no demon is allowed to go in to his aid from the outside.

How did the Kapis and Laxman go to know about the exact location of this secret fire sacrifice? Well, it was disclosed by Vibhishan himself (Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 75), because he was Ravana's brother and privy to all the secrets of Lanka.

This site was well protected and known only to a selected few. It is written in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 131, verse nos. 181-184 that this place was near a great Banyan tree and was guarded by a plethora of formidable obstacles, such as poisonous snakes, huge and strong elephants, raging fire, fierce wind, and deep trenches filled with water. Laxman destroyed them by employing the following counter measures: he destroyed the serpents by using the Garud weapon; the elephants by using Parvat weapon, i.e. a weapon that turned into a huge mountain and crushed the enemy upon whom it falls; the Water weapon which doused the raging fire; by Storm was neutralized by asking Hanuman, the son of the wind god, to inhale it; and the Vayabyastra, the explosive fire weapon, the heat of which dried up the water filled trenches.

However, Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 13-14 says that a huge army was guarding Meghanad's fire sacrifice, and so Vibhishan told Laxman to destroy it. This means two things—viz. (i) Vibhishan had accompanied them to help them conquer Meghnad, and (ii) that a huge army of demons had been guarding the fire sacrifice, making it necessary for Laxman to engage them in a battle while the Kapis went inside to destroy the fire sacrifice itself and engage Meghanad in a duel.

A similar idea is expressed in Valmiki's Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 86, verse no. 14.

²A question may be asked, and an objection may be raised: 'Destroying an ongoing fire sacrifice is an offense; it is a sinful act. So why did the Lord's messengers do it; why did they commit an offense by destroying a fire sacrifice of Meghanad?'

Well, the answer is this: The Lord's messengers wanted to teach the demons a lesson by giving them the same treatment that they had been meting out to the sages, seers and hermits whose fire sacrifices they had been destroying for a long time; the Lord's messengers wished to administer the demons the same medicine that they had been using to subdue and torment others.

Secondly, the fire sacrifice that Meghanad was doing was an evil form of the ritual as he was using blood and live buffaloes as offerings, which in effect meant that the 'Fire God', who is the patron deity of the sacred fire of the fire sacrifice as well as a representative of the holy fire element, was actually being defiled and insulted, instead of being worshipped and honoured, an act which itself was very sinful and unpardonable, and therefore punishable. Hence, there was nothing wrong in stopping this evil and sinful form of fire sacrifice.

³And why did the Kapis praise Meghanad? They appreciated his determination and resilience; they appreciated that inspite of the ruckus created by them Meghanad continued to remain calm; he continued to meditate and remain focused on his objective, something which is rare and difficult to practice under the situation prevailing at that time.]

तदपि न उठइ धरेन्हि कच जाई । लातन्हि हति हति चले पराई ॥ ३ ॥
लै त्रिसूल धावा कपि भागे । आए जहँ रामानुज आगे ॥ ४ ॥

tadapi na uṭha'i dharēnhi kaca jā'ī. lātanhi hati hati calē parā'ī. 3.
lai trisūla dhāvā kapi bhāgē. ā'ē jahaṁ rāmānuja āgē. 4.

When Meghanad did not rise up from his seat inspite of this grave provocation, the Kapis went to him, caught hold of his hairs and pulled them hard, after which they kicked him viciously and ran away. [Obviously, this was too much an insult for Meghanad to bear, so at last he lost is cool.] (3)

He (Meghanad) grabbed his fierce Trident and rushed wrathfully at the Kapis, who ran as fast as they could to come out of the cave, where Laxman was waiting for them¹. (4)

[Note—¹Had the great Kapis, such as Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela and Mayand wanted, they could have trashed Meghanad to death inside the cave itself; they wouldn't have allowed him to grab his Trident. But that would have undermined Laxman's glory and honour; it would be tantamount to subordination Lord Ram's brother and dent his reputation, because history will recall that Laxman could never defeat Meghanad in a direct battle, for during the first encounter he had fell down unconscious when attacked by Meghanad, and on the second occasion he had preferred to stand outside the cave and send the Kapis to slay his adversary inside it, perhaps because he was scared to face Meghanad directly.

So therefore, the Kapis chose not to kill Meghanad themselves, but force him to pursue them and come to the place where Laxman was waiting for them, outside the mouth of the cave. This would give Laxman an opportunity to avenge his earlier defeat at the hands of Meghanad by killing him now.]

आवा परम क्रोध कर मारा । गर्ज घोर रव बारहिं बारा ॥ ५ ॥
कोपि मरुतसुत अंगद धाए । हति त्रिसूल उर धरनि गिराए ॥ ६ ॥

āvā parama krōdha kara mārā. garja ghōra rava bārahiṃ bārā. 5.
kōpi marutasuta aṅgada dhā'ē. hati trisūla ura dharani girā'ē. 6.

He (Meghanad) was overwhelmed with excess of anger, and rushed forward roaring repeatedly and terrifyingly like the sound of thunder with which the doomsday clouds roar in the sky. (5)

When Hanuman (the son of the wind god—"marutasuta") and Angad saw him pursuing them, they turned back and rushed to intercept him. But Meghanad struck the two warriors so ferociously with his formidable Trident that they fell down on the ground, unable to cope with the force of the strike. (6)

प्रभु कहँ छाँड़ैसि सूल प्रचंडा । सर हति कृत अनंत जुग खंडा ॥ ७ ॥
उठि बहोरि मारुति जुबराजा । हतहिं कोपि तेहि घाउ न बाजा ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu kahaṁ chāṁṛēsī sūla pracandā. sara hati kṛta ananta juga khaṇḍā. 7.
uṭhi bahōri māruṭi jubarājā. hatahiṃ kōpi tēhi ghā'u na bājā. 8.

Then he (Meghanad) threw his formidable Trident with great force at the Lord (Laxman), but Lord Anant (i.e. Laxman, because he is a manifestation of 'Anant', the celestial Serpent known as Seshnath who is believed to be eternal) shot his arrow and broke that Trident into two midway¹. (7)

Meanwhile, Maruti (Hanuman) and Jubraj (the prince of the monkeys, i.e. Angad) recovered from their shock, and furiously began their retaliatory attack on Meghanad, but mysteriously he was not injured, at least not gravely and in a visible manner². (8)

[Note—¹Imagine the speed with which Laxman reacted. Everything was over in a span of a few milliseconds as Meghanad's Trident fell down like a broken tree branch.

²Meghanad was made of an exceptionally stern stuff; he was a war-veteran, had a colossal, robust and muscular body, and he was the fiercest of all the demon warriors, inheriting the genes of his great warrior father Ravana.

Remember: Meghanad had held the Trident in his hand as he struck Hanuman and Angad violently in quick succession, after which he threw it with all his might at Laxman. The blow was so hard that it had made Hanuman and Angad fall down on the ground, which in itself was no mean achievement as they were equally valiant and strong as Meghanad. Nevertheless, the two victims of Meghanad's wrath had suffered immensely by the fierceness of the blow of the Trident, which had sapped their energy and made them swoon and lose their balance. So, though they recovered from the blow to some extent and stood up to challenge their enemy, yet this recovery was only partial as they could not fully muster the strength to strike back at their enemy sufficiently hard and with the same ferocity with which they had hit him during the disruption of his fire sacrifice, for it was not practical that they could collect the extent of the energy and dynamism which they initially possessed at the beginning of the duel, at such short notice, after being pummeled by Meghanad.

The result was that their strike had no visible effect on Meghanad; the thick-skinned, strong and powerful demon prince simply felt like an elephant who has been hit by a stick; he simply neglected it.]

फिरे बीर रिपु मरइ न मारा । तब धावा करि घोर चिकारा ॥ ९ ॥
 आवत देखि क्रुद्ध जनु काला । लछिमन छाड़े बिसिख कराला ॥ १० ॥
 देखेसि आवत पबि सम बाना । तुरत भयउ खल अंतरधाना ॥ ११ ॥
 बिबिध बेष धरि करइ लराई । कबहुँक प्रगट कबहुँ दुरि जाई ॥ १२ ॥

phirē bīra ripu mara'i na mārā. taba dhāvā kari ghōra cikārā. 9.
 āvata dēkhi krud'dha janu kālā. lachimana chārē bisikha karālā. 10.
 dēkhēsi āvata pabi sama bānā. turata bhaya'u khala antaradhānā. 11.
 bibidha bēṣa dhari kara'i larā'ī. kabahuṁka pragaṭa kabahuṁ duri jā'ī. 12.

When the two warriors (Hanuman and Angad) realized that their enemy could not be subdued by any means they employed, they (wisely) decided to turn back (and join Laxman). But as soon as Meghanad saw them returning, he thought that they were retreating out of fear; so he lunged forward vehemently, with renewed vigour, and yelling ferociously. (9)

At that time, Meghanad appeared to be like a personified form of an angry 'Kaal', the god of death and destruction, who seemed bent on wreaking vengeance upon his enemy.

When Laxman observed that Meghanad was coming towards him with such an excessive ferocity, he himself became exceedingly angry (as he remembered the earlier episode when he was gravely wounded by Meghanad during their first encounter). Hence, Laxman wasted no time in shooting powerful arrows at Meghanad. (10)

That wicked fellow (i.e. Meghanad) vanished from sight as soon as he saw the fierce arrows, which were glowing like a raging fire, coming to strike him down. (11)

He started playing his usual tricks that caused delusions, by assuming various illusionary forms and striking at the enemy in different ways, appearing near for one moment and then disappearing and reappearing at a distance at the next moment, creating utter confusion and consternation amongst the monkeys and bears, and trying his best to frustrate Laxman. (12)

देखि अजय रिपु डरपे कीसा । परम क्रुद्ध तब भयउ अहीसा ॥ १३ ॥
 लछिमन मन अस मंत्र दृढ़ावा । एहि पापिहि मैं बहुत खेलावा ॥ १४ ॥
 सुमिरि कोसलाधीस प्रतापा । सर संधान कीन्ह करि दापा ॥ १५ ॥
 छाड़ा बान माझ उर लागा । मरती बार कपटु सब त्यागा ॥ १६ ॥

dēkhi ajaya ripu ḍarapē kīsā. parama krud'dha taba bhaya'u ahīsā. 13.
 lachimana mana asa mantra dṛṛhāvā. ēhi pāpihi mair̥m bahuta khēlāvā. 14.
 sumiri kōsalādhīsa pratāpā. sarā sandhāna kīnha kari dāpā. 15.
 chārā bāna mājha ura lāgā. maratī bāra kapaṭu saba tyāgā. 16.

Observing that the enemy (Meghanad) appeared to be invincible, Laxman, a manifestation of the celestial Serpent (ahīsā), became wrathful and ferocious like his primary form¹. (13)

Laxman decided in his mind that he has had enough of this sinful creature, and so it was high time to bring this drama to an end. (14)

[So, what did Laxman do in the final act?] Laxman remembered the glory and majesty of Lord Ram (i.e. he invoked the divinity of the Lord and sought his blessings and permission for what he was about to do), and then, full of vengeance, he mounted his arrow on his bow, and took a careful aim at the enemy. (15)

Finally, Laxman shot that formidable arrow straight at Meghanad, and it slammed into the latter's chest, piercing it in the middle. At the time of his death, he (Meghanad) abandoned all deceits, falsehoods and pretensions².

[To wit, the whole array of illusionary but fearful forms, as well as the many magical tricks that Meghanad had been employing while alive, immediately vanished as soon as he died.] (16)

[Note—¹It means that Laxman began hissing with clenched teeth and breathing fire through his nostrils like an angry mythological dragon that spews fire and brimstone upon the world to destroy it when it gets annoyed.

Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent who has a thousand hoods, and holds the world aloft on them like it were merely a speck of sand—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 126; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83 which explicitly endorse these two points.

²Meghanad knew very well, like his own father Ravana and his uncle Kumbhakaran did, that both Lord Ram and Laxman were no ordinary human princes but manifestations of Lord Vishnu and Lord Seshnath respectively. So why then did he fight them as if they were his mortal enemies? It was because he was merely obeying his father Ravana's orders, and he was doing it as an obedient son and a faithful member of the demon race was expected to do, for it was his moral duty to remain loyal and faithful and committed to his own family and race.

Lord Ram is an impartial and compassionate Lord of the world; he has no enemy or friend; he simply wishes to uphold the law of Dharma, the law that espouses the cause of auspiciousness, righteousness, propriety, probity, good and right conduct, and ethics and morality. The demons had violated this law; they were tormenting and wreaking havoc upon the creatures of the Lord's own creation, which was an unjustified and unpardonable act which needed to be stopped, and the perpetrator brought to justice. That is why Lord Vishnu was compelled to come down as Lord Ram and get rid of these demons; he had no personal grudge against them.

So, though it looked that these demons were killed in the war and must have surely gone to hell because of the horrendous sins they had been committing, but the

fact is that all of them found deliverance for their souls—this is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 114; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45; and (iii) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20-a.

How do we know that Meghanad had attained deliverance at the time of his death? The answer is found in the Doha that follows herein below.]

दो०. रामानुज कहँ रामु कहँ अस कहि छाँड़ैसि प्रान ।

धन्य धन्य तव जननी कह अंगद हनुमान ॥ ७६ ॥

dōhā.

rāmānuja kahañ rāmu kahañ asa kahi chāñṛēsī prāna.
dhan'ya dhan'ya tava janani kaha aṅgada hanumāna. 76.

At the time of death, Meghanad had the names of the Laxman (rāmānuja) and Lord Ram on his lips as he asked, ‘Where is the younger brother of Ram? Where is Lord Ram himself?’

When Angad and Hanuman heard these utterances, they felt glad in their hearts and praised Meghanad, saying, ‘Indeed, your mother is very fortunate and blessed (to have a son like you)!’ (Doha no. 76)

[Note—¹Why did Angad and Hanuman praise Meghanad’s mother (Mandodari)? They were astonished that Meghanad would remember Lord Ram and utter his holy and divine name twice, once by remembering Laxman as the younger brother of ‘Ram’ (rāmā + nuja), and then by remembering ‘Lord Ram’ himself directly (rāmu). This ensured that Meghanad would surely find deliverance for his soul, and attain emancipation and salvation for himself.

Everyone believed him to be a sinful and evil demon, but if that truly had been the case then Meghanad wouldn’t have uttered the Lord’s name “Ram” which is holy and divine, and is a provider of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, as well as eternal bliss and beatitude to the soul of a creature. Any creature who remembers the Lord and invokes his holy name at the time of death is rest assured to attain deliverance and eternal peace for his soul.

So this is why Angad and Hanuman praised Meghanad’s mother for having given birth to a son who attained an exalted destiny for his soul at the time of his death, who died such a glorious death by fighting like a valiant warrior on the one hand, and on the other hand attaining an exalted destiny for his soul by invoking the holy name of Lord Ram. This was a rare honour for Meghanad that he was so much praised by Lord Ram’s two trusted aides who were also great devotees of the Lord.

We will note in this context that Marich had died in a similar way—he first uttered the name of Laxman and then Lord Ram, and as a result attained instant deliverance—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-17 that precede Doha no. 27.

There is another interesting point here: Angad and Hanuman had praised the ‘mother’ of Meghanad, instead of his father. It is because his mother, Mandodari, was a pious lady who had herself tried to persuade her husband, Ravana, repeatedly to abandon his hostility with Lord Ram, telling him that the Lord was not an ordinary

human being but the Supreme Being himself in his form—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; (iii) Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37.]

चौ०. बिनु प्रयास हनुमान उठायो । लंका द्वार राखि पुनि आयो ॥ १ ॥
 तासु मरन सुनि सुर गंधर्बा । चढ़ि बिमान आए नभ सर्बा ॥ २ ॥
 बरषि सुमन दुंदुभीं बजावहिं । श्रीरघुनाथ बिमल जसु गावहिं ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

binu prayāsa hanumāna uṭhāyō. laṅkā dvāra rākhi puni āyō. 1.
 tāsu marana suni sura gandharbā. caḍhi bimāna ā'ē nabha sarbā. 2.
 baraṣi sumana dundubhīm bajāvahiṁ. śrīraghunātha bimala jasu gāvahiṁ. 3.

Hanuman lifted Meghanad's body effortlessly, went to the main gate of the fort of Lanka and placed it there¹, and then returned (to where Laxman waited). (1)

When the Gods and the Gandharvas (junior gods; said to be musicians and skilled decorators in heaven) heard of Meghanad's demise, all of them mounted their aerial vehicles and assembled in the sky². (2)

They celebrated the occasion by showering flowers from the sky, sounding their kettle-drums, and singing the stellar glories of Lord Ram. (3)

[Note—¹We will not fail to observe that amongst all the monkeys and bears in the army of Lord Ram, it was Hanuman who had a singularly powerful body that was exceptionally strong, muscular and well-built. It was Hanuman who had lifted Laxman when he was wounded by Meghanad during their first encounter and lay unconscious on the ground, and brought him to Lord Ram*, and it was also Hanuman who had lifted the entire mountain when he could not find the correct herb needed to revive Laxman, and carried it aloft in his hands as he cruised through the sky at tremendous speed from the northern Himalayas right up to Lanka#.

{* Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55.

#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58.}

Lifting Meghanad is the third instance of the proof of his exceptional bodily strength. Remember: There were other warriors present there—viz. Angad, Nala, Neela and Mayand for example, but no one could lift this mighty weight and carry it all the way to the gates of Lanka. Remember also that it was not simply the matter of carrying a heavy weight from one point to another, for it was a battle-field and a ferocious war was underway; the enemy, the demons, had become excessively aggressive and vehement and smitten by this setback, and so therefore taking Meghanad's dead body from the ground where the battle raged to the gates of Lanka through the thick wall of ferocious and blood-thirst demon warriors was like walking through a mine field. This fact would also highlight Hanuman's valiance, courage, self-confidence, and daring.

Hanuman had some personal grudge against Meghanad and a score to settle with him and his father Ravana. We have read earlier that it was Meghanad who had captured Hanuman and brought him tied as a prisoner to the court of Ravana during the episode where Hanuman had gone to Lanka in search of Sita, and after meeting her he had been eating fruits and ruining the garden there, at which Ravana had sent his son Akshaya Kumar to tackle this unexpected marauder, but Hanuman killed him, after which Meghanad was dispatched by Ravana to bring Hanuman to the court. Meghanad had shot Hanuman down by a powerful weapon, tied him up, paraded him through the streets of Lanka like a trophy of war, and finally brought him as a conquered warrior to Ravana's court. This was a grave insult for Hanuman who had never ever been subjected to such humiliation in his life. So he was waiting for an opportunity to square up the account; now he got it, and decided to dump his insulter's dead body at the gate of Lanka to tell Ravana "take this gift from me!"

²Where were these gods and gandharvas earlier? They had hidden somewhere when the battle between Laxman and Meghanad was raging, for they had a mortal fear of Meghanad because the latter had the ability to change forms and fight even from the sky—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-2 that precede Doha no. 76; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 51; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52; Doha no. 72.

Long ago when Indra had captured Ravana, it was Meghanad who went to attack heaven where he defeated the gods after which he not only got his father freed but had also brought Indra as a captive to Lanka; at that time Brahma, the creator, had intervened and somehow managed to get Indra released from captivity. So the gods feared Meghanad more than anyone else. {Refer: Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 77-81; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 50-54.}

Hence, when the gods saw Meghanad's furious form while battling Laxman, they became scared out of their wits, and ran away.]

जय अनंत जय जगदाधारा । तुम्ह प्रभु सब देवन्हि निस्तारा ॥ ४ ॥

अस्तुति करि सुर सिद्ध सिधाए । लछिमन कृपासिंधु पहिं आए ॥ ५ ॥

jaya ananta jaya jagadādhārā. tumha prabhu saba dēvanhi nistārā. 4.
astuti kari sura sid'dha sidhā'ē. lachimana kṛpāsindhu pahim ā'ē. 5.

The Gods and the Gandharvas praised Laxman and applauded his victory over Meghanad by saying in unison: 'Glory to Lord Anant; Glory to the Lord who is a support of the universe¹. Oh Lord, you have provided succour and relief to all the gods, and have settled the cause of great fear (of Meghanad) that had been tormenting them for so long.' (4)

After paying their homage to Laxman, the assembled Gods and the Siddhas (mystics; holy spirits)² went their way, and then he, Laxman, came to Lord Ram who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpāsindhu)³. (5)

[Note—¹An exactly similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 54, and Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 regarding Laxman. He was a

manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial thousand-hooded Serpent who holds the world on his hoods.

²In verse no. 2 herein above we have read that “gods and gandharvas” had come, and now in addition to them we have the “siddhas”.

³It seems incongruous to call Lord Ram ‘merciful, compassionate and kind’ especially when he was engaged in a war where countless demons were being killed every day. But the truth is that every one of these demons had been granted deliverance of their souls; they were all provided liberation, emancipation and salvation by Lord Ram. There are ample proofs in Ram Charit Manas about this assertion—viz. Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114; and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45.]

सुत बध सुना दसानन जबहीं । मुरुछित भयउ परेउ महि तबहीं ॥ ६ ॥

मंदोदरी रुदन कर भारी । उर ताड़न बहु भाँति पुकारी ॥ ७ ॥

नगर लोग सब व्याकुल सोचा । सकल कहहिं दसकंधर पोचा ॥ ८ ॥

suta badha sunā dasānana jabahīm. muruchita bhaya'u parē'u mahi tabahīm.

6.

mandōdarī rudana kara bhārī. ura tāṛana bahu bhāṁti pukārī. 7.

nagara lōga saba byākula sōcā. sakala kahahīm dasakandhara pōcā. 8.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard of his son's death, he fell down unconscious on the ground at that instant. (6)

Mandodar (Meghanad's mother) cried uncontrollably, feeling excess of grief, and loudly lamented for her dear son by beating her chest. (7)

The citizens of Lanka mourned for Meghanad; they were all agitated and worried, and put the blame squarely on Ravana, unanimously saying that he was very mean, dumb-witted, evil and wicked (pōcā)¹. (8)

[Note—¹What did the citizens of Lanka mean, and why were they so angry with Ravana? They accused Ravana of cowardice and meanness and lack of wisdom, for he had first sent his brother Kumbhakaran and then his son Meghanad to face the wrath of the enemy and die instead of leading his army himself from the front like a true warrior king is expected to do; then he had not listened to his wife Mandodari and his brother Vibhishan as well as the aged demon named Malyawan and his trusted spy named Suka when they had all tried to persuade him to abandon hostility with Lord Ram and make peace with him by returning Sita. He had seen the death of his other son Akshay Kumar when he was killed by Hanuman earlier, but still he was so haughty and mad with arrogance and ego that he did not read the writing on the wall. The demon citizens of Lanka felt that certainly Ravana would lead to the complete destruction of the demon race.]

दो०. तब दसकंठ बिबिधि बिधि समुझाई सब नारि ।

नस्वर रूप जगत सब देखहु हृदयँ बिचारि ॥ ७७ ॥

dōhā.

taba dasakaṇṭha bibidhi bidhi samujhā'īm saba nāri.
nasvara rūpa jagata saba dēkhahu hṛdayaṁ bicāri. 77.

When he recovered his senses, the ten-necked Ravana assumed the role of a philosopher and consoled the grieving ladies of the household, saying to them, 'Have courage and peace in your heart and mind with the thought that this world is mortal, and all who are born here must die one day. [To wit, though it is a sorrowful day for all of us as we have lost our dear son Meghanad, but remember everyone must die one day, so have heart and take courage. It is a part of life and the law of Nature; death is inevitable for every living being. So therefore, do not grieve.]^{1*}' (Doha no. 77)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 150 where we read that Sumantra, king Dasrath's chief minister, has tried to pacify an agitated Dasrath who was gravely lamenting for Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita after they had left Ayodhya for the forest. Ravana's words and philosophical teaching is exactly the same as Sumantra's.

*This marked the end of the 5th day of the Great War.]

चौ०. तिन्हहि ग्यान उपदेसा रावन । आपुन मंद कथा सुभ पावन ॥ १ ॥
पर उपदेस कुसल बहुतेरे । जे आचरहिं ते नर न घनेरे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tinahi gyāna upadēsā rāvana. āpuna manda kathā subha pāvana. 1.
para upadēsa kusala bahutērē. jē ācarahim tē nara na ghanērē. 2.

Ironically, Ravana was teaching spiritual philosophy and citing pious thoughts to preach others but remained deaf to them himself. (1)

Indeed there are many in this world who would preach great and holy things to others, but they themselves practice none of what they espouse! (2)

[Note—Meghanad had fought for two consecutive days. On the first day of his battle, which was the 4th day from the commencement of the actual war, he fought a pitched battle with Lord Ram and managed to tie the Lord in a magical snare consisting of serpents, but he fell down unconscious when Jamvant, the old bear chief, retaliated viciously and knocked him down. When Meghanad regained his senses however after some time, he performed a fire sacrifice during the night which would have granted him victory in the war if completed successfully, but unfortunately for him it was disrupted due to the intervention of Laxman. In the ferocious battle of the following day, which was the 5th day of the war, he was killed while battling Laxman.

A thick pall of gloom and hopelessness descended on Lanka. Ravana felt completely heartbroken and utterly despondent; the ladies of his royal household wailed and grieved inconsolably. The demon citizens cursed their king Ravana vehemently and angrily accused him for the calamity and the ruin that had suddenly

befallen on the otherwise prosperous kingdom of Lanka just because of Ravana's senseless actions, his recklessness, his stubborn, egoist and arrogant nature.

But by this time little choice was left for anyone—with his son Meghanad and Akshay Kumar as well as his brother Kumbhakaran dead, Ravana had become very desperate and excessively revengeful; he had lost all restraint by now and was determined to take this war to its final conclusion; victory and defeat mattered not to him any longer, for now he was burning with a raging urge to take revenge.

Hence, by this time it had become clear to all the demons that they can't escape from being sucked into, voluntarily or involuntarily, and devoured by this whirlpool of self-destruction. Any reluctance to join Ravana in the war meant certain death at his hands, and participating in the war also meant certain death: so there was no choice before anyone. So the demon warriors made a community decision to die a noble death like a brave warrior fighting the enemy in the battle-field instead of hiding and inviting a lifelong ignominy of committing treachery, treason and disloyalty to their king, of being a traitor, a coward and a turn-coat. Such a life would be a dark blot on their present family, as well as on the generations that would come in the future. So therefore it is better to die a noble death as a brave and valiant warrior, rather than live a life of ignominy and shame.]

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Section 17.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 53-68; Canto 9, verse nos. 1-58.

Now we shall take a brief pause here, and before progressing further with our narrative we shall quickly recapitulate Meghanad's episode as it is described in sage Veda Vyas's classic 'Adhyatma Ramayan'. This way we create a fusion of different classics that adds colour and diversity to this extraordinary "Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka", a tool that we have been employing throughout our narration in this Book.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Meghanad's episode is narrated in Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 53-68; Canto 9, verse nos. 1-58.

So here we go:

भ्रातरं निहतं शुत्वा कुम्भकर्णं महाबलम् ।
 रावणः शोकसन्तप्तो रामेणाविलष्टकर्मणा ॥ ५३॥
 मूर्च्छितः पतितो भ्रूमावुत्थाय विललाप ह ।
 पितृव्यं निहतं शुत्वा पितरं चातिविह्वलम् ॥ ५४॥
 इन्द्रजित्प्राह शोकार्तं त्यज शोकं महामते ।
 मयि जीवति राजेन्द्र मेघनादे महाबले ।। ५५ ।।
 दुःखस्यावसरः कुत्र देवान्तक महामते ।
 व्येतु ते दुःखमखिलं स्वस्थो भव महीपते ॥ ५६॥

bhrātaraṃ nihataṃ śrutvā kumbhakarṇaṃ mahābalaṃ ।
 rāvaṇaḥ śokasantapto rāmeṇākliṣṭakarmanā ॥ 53॥
 mūrccitaḥ patito bhūmāvutthāya vilālāpa ha ।
 pitṛvyaṃ nihataṃ śrutvā pitaraṃ cātivihvalaṃ ॥ 54॥
 indrajitprāha śokārtaṃ tyaja śokaṃ mahāmate ।
 mayi jīvati rājendra meghanāde mahābale. 55.
 duḥkhasvāvasaraḥ kutra devāntaka mahāmate.
 vyetu te duḥkhamakhilaṃ svastho bhava mahīpate ॥ 56॥

53-56. Hearing that his brother, the most valiant and brave Kumbhakarn, had died at the hands of Lord Sri Ram who does (or is capable of doing) the most daunting and difficult of tasks, Ravana became exasperated and overwhelmed with grief and sorrows (53).

He was so shocked that he fainted and fell on the ground. When eventually he regained his consciousness, he wailed and mournfully lamented (for his brother). Hearing that his uncle was killed and his father was overcome by grief (54), Indrajeet (i.e. Meghnad, Ravana's son) said to his grieving and mourning father, 'Oh my great father (mahāmate)! Give up regretting and lamenting in this way! Oh king of kings (rājendra)! When I, the most valiant and valorous Meghnad, is still alive (55), where is the cause for such profound expression of regret, hopelessness, lamentation, worry, sorrow, distress, despair and dejection as seems to have overcome you?

Your majesty (mahāmate) is famed as being the 'terminator of gods' (devāntaka)! You are the 'lord of the earth and a great king' (mahīpate). Give up this dejected look and stop lamenting and feeling helpless because it does not behoove of you to behave in this way (56).

सर्वं समीकरिष्यामि हनिष्यामि च वै रिपून् ।
 गत्वा निकुम्भिलां सद्यस्तर्पयित्वा हुताशनम् ॥ ५७॥
 लब्ध्वा रथादिकं तस्मादजेयोऽहं भवाम्यरेः ।
 इत्युक्त्वा त्वरितं गत्वा निर्दिष्टं हवनस्थलम् ॥ ५८॥

sarvaṃ samīkariṣyāmi haniṣyāmi ca vai ripūn ।
 gatvā nikumbhilāṃ sadyastarpayitvā hutāśanam ॥ 57॥
 labdhvā rathādikaṃ tasmādaejo'haṃ bhavāmyareḥ ।
 ityuktvā tvaritaṃ gatvā nirdiṣṭaṃ havanasthalaṃ ॥ 58॥

57-58. I shall soon set everything in order; I shall surely kill the enemy. Presently, I am going to a cave called Nikumbhila. There I shall perform a fire sacrifice to please the fire-God (57) and obtain a chariot and other war paraphernalia. This will make me invincible for the enemy'. Saying this, Meghnad went to the designated place for doing the fire sacrifice¹ (58).

[Note—¹We can easily see the difference in the versions of Ram Charit Manas and Adhyatma Ramayan. In Ram Charit Manas we have read that Meghnad performed the fire sacrifice after his battle with Lord Ram when he was gravely wounded by

Jamvant, the chief of the bear warriors in the Lord's army (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 74—to Chaupai line no. 2 that follow this Doha). But here we read that he went to do the fire sacrifice to empower himself prior to stepping on the battle-field.

No mention is made in Adhyatma Ramayan of Meghanad fighting Lord Ram. We shall read herein below that he fought directly with Laxman who killed him.]

रक्तमाल्याम्बरधरो रक्तगन्धानुलेपनः ।
निकुम्भिलास्थले मौनी हवनायोपचक्रमे ॥ ५९॥
विभीषणोऽथ तच्छ्रुत्वा मेघनादस्य चेष्टितम् ।
प्राह रामाय सकलं होमारम्भं दुरात्मनः ॥ ६०॥

raktamālyāambaradharo raktagandhānulepanaḥ ।
nikumbhilāsthale maunī havanāyopacakrame ॥ 59॥
vibhīṣaṇo'tha tacchrutvā meghanādasya ceṣṭitam ।
prāha rāmāya sakalam homārambham durātmanah ॥ 60॥

59-60. At the designated place where the goddess called Nikumbhila¹ was to be worshipped, Meghanad put on a blood-coloured red cloth, wore a similar red-coloured garland, and smeared his body with a paste of sandalwood that was kneaded with blood. Then he started to perform the fire sacrifice to appease her (i.e. the goddess Nikumbhila) (59).

When Vibhishan came to know about all this (through his spies), he informed Lord Sri Ram about the start of the fire sacrifice by the rascal and evil fellow (Meghanad) (60).

[Note—¹This goddess was the patron deity of Ravana's family and a goddess of war. She is believed to be one of the many forms of goddess Kaali, the goddess that rules over death and destruction. She was worshipped with the express objective of gaining victory in the battle-field.]

समाप्यते चेद्धोमोऽयं मेघनादस्य दुर्मतेः ।
तदाजेयो भवेद्राम मेघनादः सुरासुरैः ॥ ६१॥
अतः शीघ्रं लक्ष्मणेन घातयिष्यामि रावणिम् ।
आज्ञापय मया सार्धं लक्ष्मणं बलिनां वरम् ।
हनिष्यति न सन्देहो मेघनादं तवानुजः ॥ ६२॥

samāpyate ceddhomo'yaṁ meghanādasya durmateḥ ।
tadājeyo bhavedrāma meghanādaḥ surāsuraiḥ ॥ 61॥
ataḥ śīghraṁ lakṣmaṇena ghātayiṣyāmi rāvaṇim ।
ājñāpaya mayā sārḍham lakṣmaṇaṁ balināṁ varam ।
haniṣyati na sandeho meghanādaṁ tavānujaḥ ॥ 62॥

61-62. Vibhishan said to Lord Ram, 'If the fire sacrifice of this wicked, evil and pervert fellow (*durmateḥ*--i.e. Meghanad) is completed successfully, without any hindrance in its completion, then he cannot be conquered by anyone, neither by the Gods nor by the non-Gods; there is no doubt about it' (61).

Hence, it has become imperative for me to get this son of Ravana (*rāvaṇim*) killed by Laxman as soon as it is possible. Oh Lord; please order Laxman, who is the best among the warriors renowned for their bravery and valour (*lakṣmaṇaṃ balināṃ varam*) to accompany me (to the site of the fire sacrifice). There is no doubt that your younger brother (Laxman) shall surely kill Meghnad.' (62).

[Note—¹Remember: Vibhishan was the younger brother of Ravana, and therefore he knew all the secrets of the family. No one else was better placed to know the secret rituals that Ravana and his family performed to retain their supremacy over the demon race as well as the world in general. Vibhishan was also privy to the secret paths that led to such hidden sites where Ravana would go to perform his rituals that would grant him the boon of invincibility and victory over his enemy prior to waging the numerous wars that always turned in his favour, whether such campaigns were against the gods of heaven or the great kings of earth.

The ingredients used in these rituals, the components of such fire sacrifices, had an evil dimension as is obvious by liberal use of blood, or the red colour symbolizing blood. Such sacrifices were called 'Tamsic'—meaning they were evil and sinful both in their implementation as well as in their intention.]

श्रीरामचन्द्र उवाच ।

अहमेवागमिष्यामि हन्तुमिन्द्रजितं रिपुम् ।

आग्नेयेन महास्त्रेण सर्वराक्षसघातिना ॥ ६३॥

विभीषणोऽपि तं प्राह नासावन्यैर्निहन्यते ।

यस्तु द्वादश वर्षाणि निद्राहारविवर्जितः ॥ ६४॥

तेनैव मृत्युर्निर्दिष्टो ब्रह्मणास्य दुरात्मनः ।

लक्ष्मणस्तु अयोध्याया निर्गम्यायात्वया सह ॥ ६५॥

तदादि निद्राहारादीन्न जानाति रघूत्तम ।

सेवार्थं तव राजेन्द्र ज्ञातं सर्वमिदं मया ॥ ६६॥

śrīrāmacandra uvāca ।

ahamevāgamiṣyāmi hantumindrajitaṃ ripum ।

āgneyena mahāstreṇa sarvarākṣasaghātina ॥ 63॥

vibhiṣaṇo'pi taṃ prāha nāsāvanyairnihanyate ।

yastu dvādaśa varṣāṇi nidrāhāravivarjitaḥ ॥ 64॥

tenaiva mr̥tyurnirdiṣṭo brahmaṇāsyā durātmanaḥ ।

lakṣmaṇastu ayodhyāyā nirgamyāyāttvayā saha ॥ 65॥

tadādi nidrāhārādīnna jānāti raghūttama ।

sevārthaṃ tava rājendra jñātaṃ sarvamidaṃ mayā ॥ 66॥

63-66. Lord Sri Ram replied, 'I shall go myself to kill the enemy with the formidable weapon called 'Agneyen' (the "fire weapon")' (63).

Vibhishan objected, saying, 'This demon cannot be killed by anyone else (except Laxman)—for it has been prophesized that only a person who has forsaken any food and sleep for a continuous period of 12 years¹ (64) would be able to kill him. Such a death has been fixed (destined) for this wicked fellow by Brahma, the creator, himself. Ever since he (Laxman) had left Ayodhya to accompany you, he has been so devoted and focused in serving you in a most diligent way² that he has virtually forgotten about eating and sleeping properly himself. [To wit, Laxman had remained so preoccupied in serving you and Sita that he had not bothered about his own comfort at all.]

Your majesty, who is the King of kings (rājendra)! I know all these things (65-66).

[Note—¹Laxman had spent 14 years in forest exile with Lord Ram and Sita, but here only 12 years are mentioned. Why so? The difference of 2 years is meant to account for the sum total of hours that Laxman had spent in taking a few winks of sleep and eating some frugal meal daily to survive during the long time of 14 years.

Let us calculate the total number of hours that Laxman may have spent in taking a few winks of sleep and eating a few morsels of food to survive.

The calculation is as follows: 2 years x 365 days each year x 24 hours each day = a total of 17,520 hours, which was sufficient for his survival.

Great sages, mystics, ascetics and hermits who engaged in spiritual practices such as doing meditation, contemplation, penances and austerities, called doing Yoga, Dhyan and Tapa, were accustomed to spending long durations of time without food and drink and sleep.

²We read in Ram Charit Manas that when Laxman had gone to his mother Sumitra to seek her permission to go to the forest with Lord Ram and Sita, she had advised her son to be very diligent and faithful in his service to the Lord who was like his father, and Sita who was like his mother. Laxman proved himself a worthy son and a worthy devotee of Lord Ram as he had stood firm in his resolve to carry out the advice of his mother by being most diligent in serving Lord Ram and Sita throughout their forest sojourn of 14 years. {Ref: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 74—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142.}]

तदाज्ञापय देवेश लक्ष्मणं त्वरया मया ।

हनिष्यति न सन्देहः शेषः साक्षाद्गणधरः ॥ ६७॥

त्वमेव साक्षाज्जगतामधीशो नारायणो लक्ष्मण एव शेषः ।

युवां धराभारनिवारणार्थं जातौ जगन्नाटकसूत्रधारौ ॥ ६८॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे अष्टमः

सर्गः ॥ ८॥

tadājñāpaya deveśa lakṣmaṇaṁ tvarayā mayā ।

haniṣyati na sandehaḥ śeṣaḥ sāksāddharādharah ॥ 67॥

tvameva sāksāj jagatāmadhīśo nārāyaṇo lakṣmaṇa eva śeṣaḥ ।

yuvāṃ dharābhāranivāraṇārtham jātau jagannāṭakasūtradhārau ॥ 68॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmarāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde yuddhakāṇḍe aṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 8॥

67-68. Hence, oh the Lord of Gods (deveśa)! Instruct Laxman to come along with me immediately. He is a personified form of the legendary Sheshnath, the bearer of the earth. There is no doubt that he will kill him (Meghnad) (67).

Indeed in all sooth and without gainsay, you (Lord Ram) are a personification of Lord Narayan, the Lord of the world, and Laxman is the legendary Sheshnath himself personified¹. Both of you are the so-called ‘masters of the ring’, the controller of this world, the puppeteer of the magnificent show that is known as this visible world. Forsooth, you have taken birth to remove the burden of this world by eliminating the cruel and evil demons). (I know all this!) (68).

[Note—¹It is remarkable that all the chief demons who came in contact with Lord Sri Ram were aware of his true identity. Whatever they did was done willingly as means of attaining emancipation and salvation. Perhaps Meghnad is the only exception; perhaps also it is the reason why Lord Sri Ram had sent Laxman to slay him instead of killing him himself.]

Thus ends Canto 8 of Yuddha Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and Uma, his divine consort.

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 1-58:-

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

विभीषणवचः श्रुत्वा रामो वाक्यमथाब्रवीत् ।

जानामि तस्य रौद्रस्य मायां कृत्स्नां विभीषण ॥ १॥

स हि ब्रह्मास्त्रविच्छूरो मायावी च महाबलः ।

जानामि लक्ष्मणस्यापि स्वरूपं मम सेवनम् ॥ २॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

vibhīṣaṇavacaḥ śrutvā rāmo vākyamathābravīt ।

jānāmi tasya raudrasya māyāṃ kṛtsnāṃ vibhīṣaṇa ॥ 1॥

sa hi brahmāstravicchūro māyāvi ca mahābalaḥ ।

jānāmi lakṣmaṇasyāpi svarūpaṃ mama sevanam ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Hearing these words of Vibhishan, Lord Sri Ram said, 'Oh Vibhishan! I know all about this great and horrifying demon (Meghnad), and about the many cunning tricks and evil deeds that this wretched fellow can engage in (1).

He knows about the use of Brahmastra (a special weapon given by Brahma, the creator, and it is considered infallible and invincible); he is very illusive and full of deceit and tricks; he is very valiant, brave, strong and powerful. I am also aware of how Laxman serves me (i.e. I am conscious of the fact that Laxman has been

surviving without food and sleep and has been very diligent and serious in serving me; I acknowledge it) (2).

ज्ञात्वैवासमहं तूष्णीं भविष्यत्कार्यगौरवात् ।
इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणं प्राह रामो ज्ञानवतां वरः ॥ ३॥
गच्छ लक्ष्मण सैन्येन महता जहि रावणिम् ।
हनूमत्प्रमुखैः सर्वैर्युथपैः सह लक्ष्मण ॥ ४॥

jñātvaivāsamahaṁ tūṣṇīm bhaviṣyatkāryagauravāt ।
ityuktvā lakṣmaṇaṁ prāha rāmo jñānavatāṁ varaḥ ॥ 3॥
gaccha lakṣmaṇa sainyena mahatā jahi rāvaṇim ।
hanūmatpramukhaiḥ sarvairyūthapaiḥ saha lakṣmaṇa ॥ 4॥

3-4. Though I know everything yet I had not disclosed them considering the difficulty of the task at hand¹.

After this, Lord Sri Ram—who is very wise, sagacious and prudent—turned to Laxman and said (3), 'Go Laxman! Take along with you the army of monkeys led by Hanuman and other chief (commanders of the various battalions of the army). Go and get rid of the son of Ravana (Meghnad) (4).

[Note—¹It was imperative to keep secret the true identities of Lord Ram and Laxman because if the demons came to know who they actually were they would have fled and hid themselves somewhere, frustrating Lord Ram's efforts to eliminate this scourge from the world, the primary reason why Lord Vishnu had come down to earth in the form of the Lord to honour his promise to the gods and mother earth who had prayed to him to save them from the terror of the demons—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 6-28.]

जाम्बवानृक्षराजोऽयं सह सैन्येन संवृतः ।
विभीषणश्च सचिवैः सह त्वामभियास्यति ॥ ५॥
अभिज्ञस्तस्य देशस्य जानाति विवराणि सः ।
रामस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा लक्ष्मणः सविभीषणः ॥ ६॥
जग्राह कार्मुकं श्रेष्ठमन्यद्दीमपराक्रमः ।
रामपादाम्बुजं स्पृष्ट्वा हृष्टः सौमित्रिरब्रवीत् ॥ ७॥

jāmbavānṛkṣarājo'yaṁ saha sainyena saṁvṛtaḥ ।
vibhīṣaṇaśca sacivaiḥ saha tvāmabhiyāsyati ॥ 5॥
abhijñāstasya deśasya jānāti vivarāṇi saḥ ।
rāmasya vacanaṁ śrutvā lakṣmaṇaḥ savibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 6॥
jagrāha karmukam śreṣṭhamanyadbhīmaparākramaḥ ।
rāmapādāmbujam sprṣṭvā hrṣṭaḥ saumitrirabravīt ॥ 7॥

5-7. Jamvant, the chief of the bears, will accompany you with his army of bears, and Vibhishan with his group of ministers (advisors) will also go along (5).

(I am sending Vibhishan because—) Vibhishan is well acquainted with him (Meghnad) (hence, he will help you to identify him) and he knows all the places where he can possibly hide—he has all the required information'.

Hearing the words (commands) of Lord Sri Ram, Laxman—who is the most valiant, valorous, gallant and famous warrior amongst his peers—lifted his magnificent and mighty bow that had excellent qualities unmatched by any other bow. Then he touched the lotus-like feet of Lord Sri Ram to pay his respects to him as well as to seek formal permission and blessings of the Lord before departure.

Then the son of Sumitra (Laxman—“saumitri”) cheerfully said (6-7)—

अद्य मत्कार्मुकान्मुक्ताः शरा निर्भिद्य रावणिम् ।
गमिष्यन्ति हि पातालं स्नातुं भोगवतीजले ॥ ८॥
एवमुक्त्वा स सौमित्रः परिक्रम्य पूजयाम्य तम् ।
इन्द्रजिनिधनाकाङ्क्षी ययौ त्वरितविक्रमः ॥ ९॥

adya matkārmukānmuktāḥ śarā nirbhidyā rāvaṇim ।
gamiṣyanti hi pātālaṁ snātum bhogavatījale ॥ 8॥
evamuktvā sa saumitriḥ parikramya praṇamya tam ।
indrajinnidhanākāṅkṣī yayau tvaritavikramaḥ ॥ 9॥

8-9. Laxman declared: 'Today, the arrows shot from my bow shall pierce through the body of the son of Ravana, and then they shall go to the subterranean world to take a bath (i.e. dip themselves) in the waters of the river Bhogwati¹ (8)

Saying this, the son of Sumitra (Laxman) circumambulated and bowed before him (Lord Sri Ram), and then swiftly, and with a firmness of resolve, departed to accomplish his mission of eliminating Indrajeet (Meghnad) (9).

[Note—¹“Bhogwati” is a subterranean river that is equivalent to river Ganges that flows on the surface of the earth. Laxman means that the force of his arrow would be so great that after passing through the body of Meghanad they will drill themselves deep into the earth to reach some subterranean source of water to clean themselves.]

वानरैर्बहुसाहसैर्हनूमान् पृष्ठतोऽन्वगात् ।
विभीषणश्च सहितो मन्त्रिभिस्त्वरितं ययौ ॥ १०॥
जाम्बवत्प्रमुखा ऋक्षाः सौमित्रं त्वरयान्वयुः ।
गत्वा निकुम्भिलादेशं लक्ष्मणो वानरैः सह ॥ ११॥
अपश्यद्धलसङ्घातं दूराद्राक्षससङ्कुलम् ।
धनुरायम्य सौमित्रिर्यतोऽभूद्भूरिविक्रमः ॥ १२॥

vānarairbahusāhasairhanūmān prṣṭhato'nvagāt ।
vibhīṣaṇaśca sahito mantribhistvaritaṁ yayau ॥ 10॥
jāmbavatpramukhā ṛkṣāḥ saumitriṁ tvarayānvayuh ।

gatvā nikumbhilādeśaṃ lakṣmaṇo vānaraiḥ saha ॥ 11॥
 apaśyadbalaśaṅghātaṃ dūrādrākṣasasaṅkulam ।
 dhanurāyamyā saumitriyatto'bhūdbhūrivikramaḥ ॥ 12॥

10-12. Behind him followed Hanuman with thousands of monkeys, and Vibhishan with his ministers (10).

Besides them, Jamvant and other bears also accompanied the son of Sumitra (Laxman) for the mission.

At the moment when Laxman reached the place of goddess Nikumbhi along with the monkeys (11), he saw from a distance a huge army of demons collected there (to protect Meghnad's fire sacrifice). Then the most valorous and powerful son of Sumitra (Laxman) strung and readied his bow (12).

अङ्गदेन च वीरेण जाम्बवान् राक्षसाधिपः ।
 तदा विभीषणः प्राह सौमित्रिं पश्य राक्षसान् ॥ १३॥
 यदेतद्राक्षसानीकं मेघश्यामं विलोक्यते ।
 अस्यानीकस्य महतो भेदने यत्नवान् भव ॥ १४॥
 राक्षसेन्द्रसुतोऽप्यस्मिन् भिन्ने दृश्यो भविष्यति ।
 अभिद्रवाशु यावद्वै नैतत्कर्म समाप्यते ॥ १५॥

aṅgadena ca vīreṇa jāmbavān rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
 tadā vibhīṣaṇaḥ prāha saumitriṃ paśya rākṣasān ॥ 13॥
 yadetadrākṣasānīkaṃ meghaśyāmaṃ vilokyate ।
 asyānīkasya mahato bhedane yatnavān bhava ॥ 14॥
 rākṣasendrasuto'pyasmin bhinne drśyo bhaviṣyati ।
 abhidravāśu yāvadvai naitatkarma samāpyate ॥ 15॥

13-15. Along with Laxman, Angad and the brave Jamvant too became alert. Then the prince of demons, i.e. Vibhishan, said to the son of Sumitra (Laxman) (13), 'Look at these demons. The huge demon army that you see in front indeed appears to be like a bank of dark clouds looming low over the sky. You must first remove this obstacle from our path (14).

Only when this thick wall of demon army is removed can we see (find) the son of the king of demons, i.e. Meghnad. Once we locate him, you must immediately attack him to prevent him from completing his religious rituals (because otherwise, if he is able to successfully complete his sacrifice, he will automatically become invincible, and our mission will fail) (15).

जही वीर दुरात्मानं हिंसापरमधार्मिकम् ।
 विभीषणवचः श्रुत्वा लक्ष्मणः शुभलक्ष्मणः ॥ १६॥
 ववर्ष शरवर्षाणि राक्षसेन्द्रसुतं पूति ।
 पाषाणैः पर्वतान्गैश्च वृक्षैश्च हरियूथपाः ॥ १७॥
 निर्जघ्नुः सर्वतो दैत्यांस्तेऽपि वानरयूथपान् ।
 परश्वधैः शितैर्बाणैरसिभिर्यष्टितोमरैः ॥ १८॥

निर्जघ्नुर्वानरानीकं तदा शब्दो महानभूत् ।
स सम्प्रहारस्तुमुलः सञ्जज्ञे हरिरक्षसाम् ॥ १९॥

jahī vīra durātmānaṃ hiṃsāparamadhārmikam ।
vibhīṣaṇavacaḥ śrutvā lakṣmaṇaḥ śubhalakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 16॥
vavarṣa śaravarṣāṇi rākṣasendrasutaṃ prati ।
pāṣāṇaiḥ parvatāgraiśca vrkṣaiśca hariyūthapāḥ ॥ 17॥
nirjaghnuḥ sarvato daityāṃste'pi vānarayūthapān ।
paraśvadhāiḥ śitairbāṇairasibhīryaṣṭitomaraiḥ ॥ 18॥
nirjaghnurvānarānīkaṃ tadā śabdo mahānabhūt ।
sa samprahārastumulaḥ sañjajñe harirakṣasām ॥ 19॥

16-19. Oh the brave one (“vīra”—i.e. Laxman)! Kill this sinner; quickly eliminate this violent and cruel killer who is a wicked and evil creature'.

Hearing these words of Vibhishan, Laxman, who possessed auspicious qualities and good character (16), began raining a hail of powerful arrows aimed at the son of the king of demons (Meghnad). Meanwhile, all other monkey commanders and their troops began pelting stones, boulders and trees (17) at the demon army (protecting Meghanad and his fire sacrifice) from all directions.

The demon warriors retaliated with full force, attacking the monkey army with battle-axes, sharp arrows, swords, batons, branches of trees, and ‘Tomars’¹ (18).

There was a horrific tumult at the site of the confrontation; a hand-to-hand and fiercely fought pitched battle broke out between the monkeys and the demons (19).

[Note—¹A “Tomar” is an ancient fighting tool shaped like a dumb-bell or a heavy metal ball attached to one end of a long iron rod. It is swung violently to break the heads of the enemy soldiers in close combat. In some instances however, a Tomar may be modified to appear like a spear or a lancet that can be first swung around to gather momentum, and then thrown viciously at the enemy from a distance so that whomsoever it strikes falls dead with the impact of the blow.]

इन्द्रजित्स्वबलं सर्वमर्दमानं विलोक्य सः ।
निकुम्भिलां च होमं च त्यक्त्वा शीघ्रं विनिर्गतः ॥ २०॥
रथमारुह्य सधनुः क्रोधेन महतागमत् ।
समाह्वयन् स सौमित्रिं युद्धाय रणमूर्धनि ॥ २१॥

indrajitsvabalaṃ sarvamardyamānaṃ vilokya saḥ ।
nikumbhilāṃ ca homaṃ ca tyaktvā śīghraṃ vinirgataḥ ॥ 20॥
rathamāruhya sadhanuḥ krodhena mahatāgamat ।
samāhvayan sa saumitriṃ yuddhāya raṇamūrdhani ॥ 21॥

20-21. Seeing that his army was being mercilessly beaten and crushed (i.e. vanquished, decimated and smashed), the brave Indrajeet¹ could not restrain himself any longer; he left the cave of Nikumbhila and the fire sacrifice incomplete, and came out immediately (20).

He quickly mounted his chariot with his bow in hand, and rushed to the battle-field with full haste; seething with anger and vehement with wrath, he came forward to face Laxman. He challenged the son of Sumitra (Laxman) for a duel (21).

[Note—Meghanad is known as “Indrajeet” because he had once conquered Indra, the king of the gods, to free his father Ravana who was captured and imprisoned by Indra when he had attacked heaven to vanquish the gods.]

सौमित्रे मेघनादोऽहं मया जीवन्न मोक्ष्यसे ।
तत्र दृष्ट्वा पितृव्यं स प्रह निष्ठुरभाषणम् ॥ २२॥
इहैव जातः संवृद्धः साक्षाद् भ्राता पितुर्मम ।
यस्त्वं स्वजनमुत्सृज्य परभृत्यत्वमागतः ॥ २३॥

saumitre meghanādo'haṃ mayā jīvanna mokṣyase ।
tatra dr̥ṣṭvā pitṛvyam sa prāha niṣṭhurabhāṣaṇam ॥ 22॥
ihaiva jātaḥ samvṛddhaḥ sāksād bhrātā piturmama ।
yastvaṃ svajanamutsrjya parabhr̥tyatvamāgataḥ ॥ 23॥

22-23. Meghanad said, 'Oh Saumitre (Laxman, the son of Sumitra)! I am Meghanad. Now you cannot escape alive from me'. Then he saw his uncle Vibhishan there (standing by the side of Laxman), and the sight filled him with great disgust, provoking anger in him.

Meghanad addressed Vibhishan using very stern, scornful, contemptible and harsh words (22), 'You were born here (in Lanka) amongst us (i.e. as a member of the demon race), you were brought up here, you are a blood-related brother of my father, but unfortunately now you have left and betrayed us, you have turned your back at us, you have forsaken us as if we were your mortal enemy, as if we were dead. Why, you have betrayed your own family and race, you have forsaken your royal heritage and the rightful claim to prince-hood of the mighty demon race, and instead, unfortunately, you have accepted serfdom and subservience of others (who are no match for our majestic race). [Woe to you; let the worst of curses befall you!] (23).

कथं द्रुह्यसि पुत्राय पापीयानसि दुर्मतिः ।
इत्युक्त्वा लक्ष्मणं दृष्ट्वा हनूमत्पृष्ठतः स्थितम् ॥ २४॥
उद्यदायुधनिस्त्रिंशे रथे महति संस्थितः ।
महाप्रमाणमुद्यम्य घोरं विस्फारयन् धनुः ॥ २५॥

kathaṃ druhyasi putrāya pāpīyānasi durmatih ।
ityuktvā lakṣmaṇaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā hanūmatpr̥ṣṭhataḥ sthitam ॥ 24॥
udyadāyudhanistṛiṃśe rathe mahati saṁsthitah ।
mahāpramāṇamudyamya ghoram visphārayan dhanuḥ ॥ 25॥

24-25. I am like your son (being your nephew); I do not know how and why you have developed such animosity and ill-will with me (and our family, which had always shown respect to you). Surely it must be because you are very sinful, pervert and

wicked in your heart (as well as a very selfish person who would have no qualms in joining the enemy for the greed of the throne of Lanka)'.¹

Saying this, Meghanad looked at Laxman who was riding on the back (shoulders) of Hanuman¹ (24).

Sitting in a war chariot which was well armed and provided with all sorts of weapons that were exceptionally powerful and effective, the great demon warrior (Meghanad) took hold of a very large bow and made a terrible twang with it (25).

[Note—¹Take note—“Laxman was riding on the back of Hanuman”. From the reading of Ram Charit Manas we get the impression that Laxman stood on the ground through the battle with Meghanad, and it seems to be the natural, normal and the logical thing for him to do. But in Adhyatma Ramayan we learn that not only here but previously also it is said that at the time of Lord Ram's departure from Kishkindha with the army of monkeys and bears to launch the campaign of Lanka, he had ridden all the way from Kishkindha to the shore of the southern ocean on the shoulders of Hanuman, and Laxman rode on the back of Angad—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 31.

Perhaps Laxman and Hanuman mutually agreed to this mechanism for the purpose of safety of Laxman, and to give him agility and maneuverability in the battle-field that was needed during combat with Meghanad as he was very tricky, agile and clever at creating illusions that needed quick responses to be neutralized. Besides that, Meghanad had a colossus body, and standing on the ground in front of him Laxman would have been dwarfed by his gigantic size. So it was necessary to lift Laxman to a level where he could see Meghanad in the face.]

अद्य वो मामका बाणाः पूरणान् पास्यन्ति वानराः ।

ततः शरं दाशरथिः सन्धायामित्रकर्षणः ॥ २६॥

ससर्ज राक्षसेन्द्राय क्रुद्धः सर्प इव श्वसन् ।

इन्द्रजिद्रक्तनयनो लक्ष्मणं समुदैक्षत ॥ २७॥

adya vo māmakā bāṇāḥ prāṇān pāsyanti vānarāḥ ।

tataḥ śaraṁ dāśarathiḥ sandhāyāmitrakarṣaṇaḥ ॥ 26॥

sasarja rākṣasendrāya kruddhaḥ sarpa iva śvasan ।

indrajidraktanayano lakṣmaṇaṁ samudaikṣata ॥ 27॥

26-27. Turning towards the monkey soldiers, Meghanad said, 'Oh monkeys! Today my arrows will quench their thirst by drinking your blood. [To wit, I shall kill all of you and bathe my arrows in your warm blood.]'

Then the son of Dasrath (i.e. Laxman) aimed an arrow that was specially meant to vanquish and crush the enemy (26).

Laxman hissed like an angry serpent and furiously shot this arrow at the demon prince. At the same time, Indrajeet (Meghnad) too glared at Laxman with eyes that glowed red with anger (27).

शक्राशनिसमस्पर्शैर्लक्ष्मणेनाहतः शरैः ।

मुहूर्तमभवन्मूढः पुनः प्रत्याहतेन्द्रियः ॥ २८॥

ददर्शवस्थितं वीरं वीरो दशरथात्मजम् ।
सोऽभिवक्त्राम सौमित्रिं क्रोधसंरक्तलोचनः ॥ २९॥

śakrāśānisamasparśairlakṣmaṇenāhataḥ śaraiḥ ।
muhūrtamabhavanmūḍhaḥ punaḥ pratyāhrtendriyaḥ ॥ 28॥
dadarśāvasthitaṁ vīraṁ vīro daśarathātmajam ।
so'bhicakrāma saumitriṁ krodhasaṁraktalocanaḥ ॥ 29॥

28-29. After being hit by the powerful arrow shot by Laxman, which was as formidable and tough as the Vajra of Indra, he (Meghnad) fainted for one Muhurt¹. When he regained consciousness (28), he saw the most brave and valorous son of Dasrath (“vīro daśarathātmajam”--Laxman) standing in front of him. Seeing the son of Sumitra (“saumitriṁ”--Laxman), that demon dashed towards him, his eyes red with anger and his countenance full of wrath (29).

[Note—¹One Muhurta is roughly 48 minutes; but here it means ‘for a short while’.]

शरान् धनुषि सन्धाय लक्ष्मणं वेदमब्रवीत् ।
यदि ते प्रथमे युद्धे न दृष्टो मे पराक्रमः ॥ ३०॥
अद्य त्वां दर्शयिष्यामि तिष्ठेदानीं व्यवस्थितः ।
इत्युक्त्वा सप्तभिर्बाणैरभिविव्याध लक्ष्मणम् ॥ ३१॥
दशभिश्च हनूमन्तं तीक्ष्णधारैः शरोत्तमैः ।
ततः शरशतेनैव सम्प्रयुक्तेन वीर्यवान् ॥ ३२॥
क्रोधद्विगुणसंरब्धो निर्बिभेद विभीषणम् ।
लक्ष्मणोऽपि तथा शत्रुं शरवर्षैरवाकिरत् ॥ ३३॥

śarān dhanuṣi sandhāya lakṣmaṇam cedamabravīt ।
yadi te prathame yuddhe na dr̥ṣṭo me parākramaḥ ॥ 30॥
adya tvāṁ darśayiṣyāmi tiṣṭhedānīm vyavasthitaḥ ।
ityuktvā saptabhirbāṇairabhivivyaḍha lakṣmaṇam ॥ 31॥
daśabhiśca hanūmantam tīkṣṇadhāraiḥ śarottamaiḥ ।
tataḥ śaraśatenaiva samprayuktena vīryavān ॥ 32॥
krodhadviguṇasaṁrabdho nirbibheda vibhīṣaṇam ।
lakṣmaṇo'pi tathā śatruṁ śaravarṣairavākirat ॥ 33॥

30-33. Meghanad mounted an arrow on his bow and glowered at Laxman, 'If you have not seen my valour, my courage, my power, my might and my strength in the war earlier (30), then stand right there; I shall show it to you right now.'

Saying this, he pierced and gravely wounded Laxman with a volley of seven arrows (31), Hanuman with ten arrows that had sharp tips and were one of the best he had in his arsenal, and Vibhishan with a hundred arrows that were wrathfully shot at him with precision so that they don't miss their target.

Here, Laxman also started showering arrows at the enemy (32-33).

तस्य बाणैः सुसंविद्धं कवचं काञ्चनपूभम् ।
 व्यशीर्यत रथोपस्थे तिलशः पतितं भुवि ॥ ३४॥
 ततः शरसहस्रेण सङ्कुद्धो रावणात्मजः ।
 बिभेद समरे वीरं लक्ष्मणं भीमविक्रमम् ॥ ३५॥

tasya bāṇaiḥ susaṁviddhaṁ kavacaṁ kāñcanaprabham ।
 vyaśīryata rathopasthe tilaśaḥ patitaṁ bhuvi ॥ 34॥
 tataḥ śarasahasreṇa saṅkruddho rāvaṇātmajaḥ ।
 bibheda samare vīraṁ lakṣmaṇaṁ bhīmavikramam ॥ 35॥

34-35. Peppered and perforated by his (Laxman's) arrows, the body-armour of Meghanad, which had the radiance of gold, broke up into splinters, first falling at the rear of the chariot and then sliding down to the ground (34).

Then the son of Ravana (Meghnad) became very furious and wrathful, and he wounded the most valiant and valorous Laxman by shooting thousands of arrows at him in retaliation (35).

व्यशीर्यतापतदिव्यं कवचं लक्ष्मणस्य च ।
 कृतप्रतिकृतान्योन्यं बभूवतुरभिद्रुतौ ॥ ३६॥
 अभीक्ष्णं निःश्वसन्तौ तौ युध्येतां तुमुलं पुनः ।
 शरसंवृतसर्वाङ्गौ सर्वतो रुधिरोक्षितौ ॥ ३७॥

vyaśīryatāpataddivyaṁ kavacaṁ lakṣmaṇasya ca ।
 kṛtapratikṛtānyonyaṁ babhūvaturabhidrutau ॥ 36॥
 abhīkṣṇaṁ niḥśvasantau tau yudhyetāṁ tumulaṁ punaḥ ।
 śarasamvṛtasarvāṅgau sarvato rudhirokṣitau ॥ 37॥

36-37. As a result of this, even Laxman's magnificent armour fell down shattered. In this manner, the two brave warriors mutually fought each other with great courage and ferocity, countering the aggressive steps taken by his opponent by dexterity of movement, skilled maneuvering, and precision of their counter attacks (36).

Both of them breathed heavily and deeply every now and then even as they fought each other valiantly and ferociously. All the parts of their bodies were peppered by arrows, and were drenched in blood (37).

सुदीर्घकालं तौ वीरावन्योन्यं निशितैः शरैः ।
 अयुध्येतां महासत्त्वौ जयाजयविवर्जितौ ॥ ३८॥
 एतस्मिन्नन्तरे वीरो लक्ष्मणः पञ्चभिः शरैः ।
 रावणेः सारथिं साश्वं रथं च समचूर्णयत् ॥ ३९॥

sudīrghakālaṁ tau vīrāvanyonyaṁ niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ ।
 ayudhyetāṁ mahāsattvau jayājayavivarjitau ॥ 38॥

etasminnantare vīro lakṣmaṇaḥ pañcabhiḥ śaraiḥ ।
rāvaṇeḥ sārathim sāśvaṃ rathaṃ ca samacūrṇayat ॥ 39॥

38-39. For a very long time those two valiant and brave warriors fought each other with sharp and effective arrows. None of them could be victorious or be defeated by his opponent (38).

Suddenly, the brave Laxman shot five potent and vigorous arrows at Meghanad, the son of Ravana (rāvaṇeḥ), that not only smashed his war chariot and reduced it to splinters but also killed his charioteer as well as the horses (39).

विच्छेद कार्मुकं तस्य दर्शयन् हस्तलाघवम् ।
सोऽन्यत् कार्मुकं भद्रं सज्यं चक्रे त्वरान्वितः ॥ ४०॥
तत्त्वापमपि विच्छेद लक्ष्मणस्त्रिभिराशुनैः ।
तमेव छिन्नधन्वानं विव्याधानेकसायकैः ॥ ४१॥

ciccheda karmukam tasya darśayan hastalāghavam ।
so'nyattu karmukam bhadram sajyam cakre tvarānvitaḥ ॥ 40॥
taccāpamapi ciccheda lakṣmaṇastribhirāśugaiḥ ।
tameva chinnadhanvānaṃ vivyādhānekaśāyakaiḥ ॥ 41॥

40-41. Showing deftness and skill of his hands at archery, he (Laxman) cut-off his (Meghnad's) bow immediately. That gentleman (“bhadram”—Meghanad) took up another excellent bow and raised it (40).

Laxman cut it too with three arrows, and then perforated the demon, who by now had no bow in his hand (i.e. he had been disarmed), with another quick volley of arrows (41).

पुनरन्यत्समादाय कार्मुकं भीमविक्रमः ।
इन्द्रजित्त्विक्रमणं बाणैः शितैरादित्यसन्निभैः ॥ ४२॥
बिभेद वानरान् सर्वान् बाणैरापूरयन् दिशः ।
तत ऐन्द्रं समादाय लक्ष्मणो यवणिं प्रति ॥ ४३॥
सन्धायाकृष्य कर्णान्तं कार्मुकं दृढनिष्ठुरम् ।
उवाच लक्ष्मणो वीरः स्मरन् रामपदाम्बुजम् ॥ ४४॥

punaranyatsamādāya karmukam bhīmavikramaḥ ।
indrajitlakṣmaṇaṃ bāṇaiḥ śitairādityasannibhaiḥ ॥ 42॥
bibheda vānarān sarvān bāṇairāpūrayan diśaḥ ।
tata aindraṃ samādāya lakṣmaṇo rāvaṇim prati ॥ 43॥
sandhāyākṛṣya karṇāntaṃ karmukam dṛḍhaniṣṭhuraṃ ।
uvāca lakṣmaṇo vīraḥ smaran rāmapadāmbujam ॥ 44॥

42-44. Then the most valiant and valorous Indrajeet picked up another bow (the 3rd one), and covering all the directions by a hail of sharp arrows that were as

splendorous and dazzling as the sun, he gravely wounded Laxman and all other monkeys when these arrows rained down upon them from the sky.

Then Laxman took out the specially empowered arrow called ‘Aendra’¹, and aiming it at the son of Ravana, he mounted it on his bow. He pulled the string of the uncompromisingly strong, sturdy and tough bow right up to his ear, and remembering (invoking the blessings of) the lotus-like feet of Lord Sri Ram in his heart, the brave Laxman said solemnly (42-44)—

[Note—¹This “Aendra” arrow was used by invoking Indra, the king of gods. It was the one that Meghanad feared the most because it was exceptionally powerful and backed by the combined might of all the gods of heaven.]

धर्मात्मा सत्यसन्धश्च रामो दाशरथिर्यदि ।
त्रिलोक्यामपूतिद्वन्द्वस्तदेनं जहि रावणिम् ॥ ४५॥
इत्युक्त्वा बाणमाकर्णाद्विकृष्य तमजिमहगम् ।
लक्ष्मणः समरे वीरः ससर्जेन्द्रजितं पूति ॥ ४६॥

dharmātmā satyasandhaśca rāmo dāśarathiryadi ।
trilokyāmapratidvandvastadenam jahi rāvaṇim ॥ 45॥
ityuktvā bāṇamākarnādvikṛṣya tamajimhagam ।
lakṣmaṇaḥ samare vīraḥ sasarjendrajitaṁ prati ॥ 46॥

45-46. 'If the son of Dasrath (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) is most upright and most righteous upholder of Dharma¹, if he is steadfast in keeping the vows of truthfulness and is an upholder of the sanctity of the virtue of Truth, if he is truly the Lord of the three divisions of the world² and has no match anywhere in any regard—then, oh my arrow, I invoke the Lord's glory and majesty and request you to kill this son of Ravana in order to honour the Lord.' (45).

Saying this, the brave Laxman pulled that arrow up to his ears and shot it straight at Indrajeet (Meghnad) (46).

[Note—¹“Dharma” refers to the stellar qualities of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, and good conduct and thought.

²The three divisions of the world or universe are the following: heaven, earth and nether world.]

स शरः सशिरस्तूणं श्रीमज्ज्वलितकुण्डलम् ।
प्रमथ्येन्द्रजितः कायात्पातयामास भूतले ॥ ४७॥
ततः प्रमुदिता देवाः कीर्तयन्तो रघूत्तमम् ।
ववर्षुः पुष्पवर्षाणि स्तुवन्तश्च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ ४८॥

sa śaraḥ saśirastrāṇaṁ śrīmajjvalitakuṇḍalam ।
pramathyendrajitaḥ kāyātpātayāmāsa bhūtale ॥ 47॥
tataḥ pramuditā devāḥ kīrtayanto raghūttamam ।

vavarṣuḥ puṣpavarṣāṇi stuvantaśca muhurmuḥuḥ ॥ 48॥

47-48. That arrow severed the head of Indrajeet (Meghnad)—which was protected by a helmet and looked glorious and radiant with large ear-rings—from his body, and it fell on the ground (47).

In this manner, when Meghnad was killed, the Gods became exhilarant and extremely ecstatic with joy. They celebrated the development by repeatedly applauding Laxman, who was exalted member of the race of king Raghu, singing his glories enthusiastically, and showering flowers on him from the sky (48).

जहर्ष शक्रे भगवान् सह देवैर्महर्षिभिः ।
आकाशेऽपि च देवानां शुश्रुवे दुन्दुभिस्वनः ॥ ४९॥
विमतं गगनं चासीत्स्थिराभूद्दिश्वधारिणी ।
निहतं रावणिं दृष्ट्वा जयजल्पसमन्वितः ॥ ५०॥

jaharṣa śakro bhagavān saha devairmaharṣibhiḥ ।
ākāśe'pi ca devānāṃ śuśruve dundubhisvanaḥ ॥ 49॥
vimalaṃ gaganam cāsītsthirābhūdviśvadhārīṇī ।
nihataṃ rāvaṇiṃ drṣṭvā jayajalpasamanvitaḥ ॥ 50॥

49-50. Lord Indra, along with all the gods and the great sages, felt very happy and contented. At that time, the sound of the kettle-drums and trumpets played by the gods reverberated in the sky (49).

Seeing that the son of Ravana (Meghnad) has been killed, there was a chorus of acclaim and thunderous applause everywhere. The sky became clear and the earth, which is the mother and the bearer of life in this world, also became happy and stable. [To wit, gloom in the world was dispelled as symbolized by a 'clear sky'; 'mother earth' felt calm and peaceful because all her creatures had now become fearless and happy.] (50).

गतश्रमः स सौमित्रिः शङ्खमापूरयद्रणे ।
सिंहनादं ततः कृत्वा ज्याशब्दमकरोद्विभुः ॥ ५१॥
तेन नादेन संहृष्टा वानराश्च गतश्रमाः ।
वानरेन्द्रैश्च सहितः स्तुवद्भिर्हृष्टमानसैः ॥ ५२॥
लक्ष्मणः परितुष्टात्मा ददर्शाभ्येत्य राघवम् ।
हनूमद्राक्षसाभ्यां च सहितो विनयान्वितः ॥ ५३॥
ववन्दे भ्रातरं रामं ज्येष्ठं नारायणं विभुम् ।
त्वत्पूसादाद्रघुश्रेष्ठ हतो रावणिराहवे ॥ ५४॥

gataśramaḥ sa saumitriḥ śaṅkhamāpūrayadraṇe ।
siṃhanādaṃ tataḥ kṛtvā jyāśabdamakarodvibhuḥ ॥ 51॥
tena nādēna saṃhrṣṭā vānarāśca gataśramāḥ ।
vānarendraiśca sahitaḥ stuvadbhirhrṣṭamānasaiḥ ॥ 52॥

lakṣmaṇaḥ parituṣṭātmā dadarśābhyetya rāghavam ।
 hanūmadrākṣasābhyāṃ ca sahito vinayānvitaḥ ॥ 53॥
 vavande bhrātaraṃ rāmaṃ jyeṣṭhaṃ nārāyaṇaṃ vibhum ।
 tvatprasādādraghuśreṣṭha hato rāvaṇirāhave ॥ 54॥

51-54. When the victorious son of Sumitra (Laxman) felt a bit relaxed after a while, he blew his conch, the sound of which resonated throughout the battle-field. Then (in jubilation and to celebrate the occasion) he twanged his bow so enthusiastically that it made a sound that seemed like the roar of a lion (51).

The terrible cacophony that resulted by the sound of the blowing of the conch shell as well as the twanging of the bow thundered and reverberated everywhere. It made all the monkeys ecstatic with joy, and they became free from all fatigue and weariness arising of the exhausting battle.

Then, along with the jubilant and celebrating brave monkeys, and being praised by them for his epic victory over Meghanad (52), Laxman came to Raghav (Lord Sri Ram). He was very cheerful and satisfied (because he had successfully completed the task assigned to him) as he met his elder brother and paid his respects to him. He was accompanied by Hanuman and the demon king (Vibhishan) (53) who too, along with Laxman, bowed their heads before Lord Ram who actually was none but Lord Narayan himself, the Supreme Lord who is honoured by the term “Vibhu”, meaning one who is omnipresent, omnipotent and the eternal Lord of the world.

Laxman said—‘Oh the most exalted of the Raghus (Lord Sri Ram)! By your kind grace and blessings, the son of Ravana has been killed in the battle today.’ (54).

श्रुत्वा तल्लक्ष्मणाद्भवत्या तमालिङ्ग्य रघूत्तमः ।
 मूर्धन्यवघ्राय मुदितः सस्नेहमिदमब्रवीत् ॥ ५५॥
 साधु लक्ष्मण तुष्टोऽस्मि कर्म ते दुष्करं कृतम् ।
 मेघनादस्य निधने जितं सर्वमरिन्दम ॥ ५६॥
 अहोरात्रैस्त्रिभिर्वीरः कथञ्चिद्विनिपातितः ।
 निःसपत्नः कृतोऽस्म्यद्य निर्यास्यति हि रावणः ॥ ५७॥
 पुत्रशोकान्मया योद्धुं तं हनिष्यामि रावणम् ॥ ५८॥

śrutvā tallakṣmaṇādbhaktyā tamāliṅgya raghūttamaḥ ।
 mūrdhnyavaghrāya muditaḥ sasnehamidamabravīt ॥ 55॥
 sādhu lakṣmaṇa tuṣṭo'smi karma te duṣkaraṃ kṛtam ।
 meghanādasya nidhane jitaṃ sarvamarindama ॥ 56॥
 ahorātraistribhīrvīraḥ kathañcidvinipātitaḥ ।
 niḥsapatnaḥ kṛto'smyadya niryāsyati hi rāvaṇaḥ ॥ 57॥
 putraśokānmayā yoddhum taṃ haniṣyāmi rāvaṇam ॥ 58॥

55-58. Hearing these most devoted, humble and submissive words of Laxman (words which did not have the slightest trace of pride, ego, haughtiness or boast), the most exalted of the Raghus (Lord Sri Ram—“raghūttamaḥ”) became very pleased and happy; he embraced Laxman affectionately.

As a mark of his gratitude and a sign of immense satisfaction with Laxman, the Lord smelt his head and said (55), 'Oh Laxman! You are truly great and saintly (sādhū lakṣmaṇa)! I am very satisfied with your deeds. Today you have succeeded in accomplishing a very difficult task. Oh the vanquisher of all enemies (sarvamarindama)! With the death of Meghanad, we have apparently won everything in the war (i.e. we have virtually won the war itself)¹ (56).

You have fought bravely and courageously for three days and three nights², and somehow slayed that great warrior (Meghanad). By doing this you have made me free of enemies, for in all practical purposes, Ravana has now become defenseless without his son to support him (57).

Since Ravana is already overcome with grief at the death of his son, it has become all the more easy for me to vanquish him when he comes face-to-face in the battle-field to confront me.' (58).

[Note—¹Lord Ram means that the death of Meghanad, and Kumbhakarn earlier, has dealt a death knell for Ravana because the two were the most formidable warriors amongst the entire demon race, only matching Ravana in ferocity, prowess, abilities and invincibility, and like him they too were protected by various boons.

With Meghanad out of the way, three fourths of the war had literally been won. Ravana's morale and spirits would dip tremendously, and so will of the rest of his demon army. And an army with low morale and lost spirits that weakens it from the inside, making it lose hope, courage and confidence, stands little chance of winning a war. Such a demoralized army is sure to crumble when faced by a determined enemy that is confident of victory.

Meghanad and Kumbhakarn were the backbone of Ravana's defenses; they were the two strong pillars upon which the success or failure of his army depended. On numerous occasions when he found himself trapped, it was Meghanad who came to the rescue of his father. With the mighty Meghanad out of the way, the decks were now clear for Lord Sri Ram to easily conquer the lonely Ravana, all the more easily because the latter was suffering from great depression and grief at the loss of his dear son Meghanad as well as brother Kumbhakarn. That is what Lord Sri Ram means by saying 'everything has been won'—that is, 'the war is almost won'.

²Here it is specifically mentioned that the battle between Laxman and Meghanad lasted for "three consecutive days and nights".

It clearly means that Meghanad had attempted to do his fire sacrifice prior to this battle with Laxma, because when the confrontation actually commenced there was no let up or pause in the fighting in the battle-field; it was a continuous process, and it ended only when Meghanad fell down dead.

Another variation from Ram Charit Manas is that whereas it is said in it that Meghanad first fought with Lord Ram on the first day of his battle, and then with Laxman on the second day when he was killed in the battle-field after a ferocious duel, in Adhyatma Ramayan however it is narrated that Meghanad fought only with Laxman for three continuous days and nights.]

[Note—This marked the killing of Meghanad by Laxman in the Epic War of Lanka as described in Adhyatma Ramayan. It also was a milestone towards Lord Ram's ultimate victory in the War.]

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Chapter 18

The Final Phase of the War;

Battle between Lord Ram and Ravana, and the latter's Death

After his son Meghanad's death, Ravana lost all hopes. It would be too humiliating and degrading a prospect for him and his self-respect to yield to Lord Ram now, to stop the war midway and make peace with the Lord. It would be tantamount to accepting abject defeat without a fight, which no warrior worth his name and honour would ever agree to do. For a mighty warrior of the stature of Ravana—who had one day in the past made the heaven and the earth bow before him, who had conquered the almighty gods and subdued powerful sages having immense spiritual and mystical powers, who had ruled over the world as its conqueror—to abjectly surrender now, without a fight, in order to escape death, was an unimaginable prospect and an unacceptable option. It would be better for him to die fighting in the battle-field like a valiant and fearless warrior than live a humiliating life of shame and ignominy.

So therefore, he made a firm resolve—that no matter what, he will fight on till the end. And the 'end' was well nigh clear to him; he was prepared to die a noble and honourable death that would not only grant him great fame for having had the good luck to see Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, from so close quarters, engaging the Lord in a hand-to-hand duel and often forcing him on the back foot, a feat which would make him famous and unparalleled in the annals of history of warfare, and then die at the Lord's hands that would ensure liberation and deliverance of his soul, a prospect he actually longed for. He had planned it long ago, right in the beginning, at the time when he first decided to create animosity with Lord Ram. This is clearly written in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23.

Hence, Ravana girded himself; he gathered his courage and wits, and plunged head-on in the battle with Lord Ram as he saw it as a great 'self sacrifice' that would burn his evil body of a demon, and thereby grant deliverance to his soul that was trapped inside it! What more would a mortal creature wish?

Ravana had led a life of pleasure and conquest; he was unchallenged and invincible; he lived proudly and held his head high like a great Emperor; he had forced the almighty Supreme Being to leave heaven and come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram, and then walk all the way across thousands of miles in order to grant his soul deliverance, and at the end he did attain his objective because when he died his soul left his body and entered the holy body of the Lord as a dazzling shaft of light (apropos—Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103). Say honestly, what more would a mortal creature wish?

And not only this, Ravana also ensured that the rest of his demon warriors also attain emancipation and salvation alongside himself to prove that he was not selfish to seek this blessing only for his own self. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

Having said this, let us now proceed with our narration and see how the Great War progressed, culminating in the death of Ravana on the 8th day of the War. What we call ‘death’ was actually a great blessing for Ravana, for it is what he had wanted—to find a way for deliverance of his soul, to attain emancipation and salvation for himself. {Apropos: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 23; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61; Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 55-61.}

Presently, we shall pick up the thread from where we had left it a while ago when we’d read about Meghanad’s death. Ravana’s battle with Lord Ram and his ultimate ‘death’ has been described in detail Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 103:-

Now let us resume our reading of this fascinating Epic War in the following pages:-

Section 18.1: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 103:-

निसा सिरानि भयउ भिनुसारा । लगे भालु कपि चारिहुँ द्वारा ॥ ३ ॥
 सुभट बोलाइ दसानन बोला । रन सन्मुख जा कर मन डोला ॥ ४ ॥
 सो अबहीं बरु जाउ पराई । संजुग बिमुख भएँ न भलाई ॥ ५ ॥
 निज भुज बल मैं बयरु बढावा । देहउँ उतरु जो रिपु चढ़ि आवा ॥ ६ ॥

nisā sirāni bhaya'u bhinusārā. lagē bhālu kapi cārihuṁ dvārā. 3.
 subhaṭa bōlā'i dasānana bōlā. rana sanmukha jā kara mana ḍōlā. 4.
 sō abahīm baru jā'u parā'ī. sañjuga bimukha bha'ēṁ na bhalā'ī. 5.
 nija bhuja bala mairi bayaru barhāvā. dēha'uṁ utaru jō ripu caḍhi āvā. 6.

When the night ended and the day broke¹, the monkeys and bears surrounded all the four gates of the fort of Lanka. (3)

When the alarm bells were sounded inside the city, the ten-headed Ravana summoned all his great warriors and addressed the assembly, sternly warning them as follows: ‘Listen all of you. He who is afraid of the battle-field and may turn his face away from the enemy during the battle (4), well, I warn him that it would be better for him to run away right now, for it would not be good for him if he turns his back during the course of the battle (because then I will slay him, and don’t blame me then that I didn’t warn you) (5).

Verily, I have relied on the strength and powers of my own arms when I decided to create hostility and challenge the enemy for battle. So therefore, I will face him alone should the need arise, and I do not want any charity or beg for help from anyone. [Did you all hear it loud and clear? I don’t wish to be obliged to anyone to fight this war; I alone am capable to tackle the enemy. Be warned in advance; you are not going to

turn your back during the battle, and you are not going to betray me, for if you dare to do it then be prepared to die.]² (6)

[Note—¹This was the 6th day of the war.

²Why was Ravana so apprehensive that there were fair chances of his demons suddenly turning their backs and running away from the battle-field during the heat of battle? He had witnessed this actually happening during the early stages of the war when the whole demon army left the battle-field and escaped from it in total disarray when they were fiercely beaten back by the Lord's army. At that time Ravana was forced to threaten them with death if they showed their back to the enemy. He had scolded them and sternly warned that since they had been eating and fattening themselves on food provided by their king and his treasury, and when the time came for serving the same king and his kingdom they preferred to run away, so surely then they deserved no better fate than death for their betrayal, cowardice and ungratefulness. {Ref: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 42.}

अस कहि मरुत बेग रथ साजा । बाजे सकल जुझाऊ बाजा ॥ ७ ॥
चले बीर सब अतुलित बली । जनु कज्जल कै आँधी चली ॥ ८ ॥
असगुन अमित होहिं तेहि काला । गनइ न भुज बल गर्ब बिसाला ॥ ९ ॥

asa kahi maruta bēga ratha sājā. bājē sakala jujhā'ū bājā. 7.
calē bīra saba atulita balī. janu kajjala kai āṁdhī calī. 8.
asaguna amita hōhīm tēhi kālā. gana'i na bhuja bala garba bisālā. 9.

Saying this, he (Ravana) ordered that a war chariot, that had the quality to move as swiftly as the wind, must be immediately readied for him. Meanwhile, a clarion call for battle was given by the beating of kettle-drums; it was meant to urgently summon the entire demon army and get its rank and file ready for battle in great haste. (7)

All the demon warriors were unmatched in their strength, power, gallantry and valour; multitudes of such dare-devils started off for the battle-field enthusiastically in such huge numbers and with such great rapidity of movement that they appeared to be like a storm of very dark clouds rolling in over the battle-field from the direction of the city of Lanka. (8)

At that time many bad omens or signs made their appearances, but these demons paid no heed to them because they were very proud of themselves and their ability to defeat the enemy by the strength of their arms. (9)

छं०. अति गर्ब गनइ न सगुन असगुन स्रवहिं आयुध हाथ ते । १ ।
भट गिरत रथ ते बाजि गज चिक्करत भाजहिं साथ ते ॥ २ ॥
गोमाय गीध कराल खर रव स्वान बोलहिं अति घने । ३ ।
जनु कालदूत उलूक बोलहिं बचन परम भयावने ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ati garba gana'i na saguna asaguna sravahim āyudha hātha tē. 1.
 bhaṭa girata ratha tē bāji gaja cikkarata bhājahim sātha tē. 2.
 gōmāya gīdha karāla khara rava svāna bōlahim ati ghanē. 3.
 janu kāladūta ulūka bōlahim bacana parama bhayāvanē. 4.

So haughty and arrogant and proud he (Ravana) was that he did not pay any attention to any sign that pointed to his fate; whether such signs were auspicious or inauspicious mattered not to him.

[What were these signs or omens? They were the following:-]

The weapons fell down or slipped on their own (without any warning) from the hands of the demon warriors. (Chanda line no. 1.)

Warriors fell down from their chariots. Horses and elephants shrieked and broke away from their ranks, running amok and scattering hither-thither without any provocation. (Chanda line no. 2.)

Horrifying sound of wailing and howling jackals, rasping and grunting of vultures, crowing crows and braying donkeys were heard everywhere, and so were the howls and terrifying barking of so many dogs. (Chanda line no. 3.)

The owls hooted in such a fearsome way that they appeared to be messengers of the death-god himself. (Chanda line no. 4.)

दो०. ताहि कि संपति सगुन सुभ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।
 भूत द्रोह रत मोहबस राम बिमुख रति काम ॥ ७८ ॥

dōhā.

tāhi ki sampati saguna subha sapanēhuṁ mana biśrāma.
 bhūta drōha rata mōhabasa rāma bimukha rati kāma. 78.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, can there be any prosperity, auspiciousness as well as peace and happiness for someone even in his dreams if he is foolish enough, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, to harbour ill-will and animosity with all living beings, be opposed to Lord Ram (i.e. to the Lord God), and be indulgent in worldly passions and desires?¹ (Doha no. 78)

[Note—¹To wit, if any person has these negative traits in him, there is no way he can have welfare and happiness in this world. Since Ravana had these negative traits in him, there was no hope for him.]

चौ०. चलेउ निसाचर कटकु अपारा । चतुरंगिनी अनी बहु धारा ॥ १ ॥
 बिबिधि भाँति बाहन रथ जाना । बिपुल बरन पताक ध्वज नाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calē'u nisācara kaṭaku apārā. caturaṅginī anī bahu dhārā. 1.
bibidhi bhāṁti bāhana ratha jānā. bipula barana patāka dhvaja nānā. 2.

The demon army, which was so huge that no one could measure the length and width of its countless columns of demon warriors, marched to the battle-field. This formidable army was divided into four divisions, called “caturaṅginī”¹, and its ranks and files formed countless columns that flowed into the battle ground (like so many streams overflowing and surging forward during the rainy season). (1)

There was a wide variety of war chariots and other vehicles to carry the demon warriors and their commanders to the battle-field. Similarly, there were all sorts of colours used for banners, flags and war standards that marked out the different battalions and divisions of the huge mass of demon troops². (2)

[Note—¹The “caturaṅginī” or the four divisions of an army were the following: horses, elephants, chariots and foot soldiers.

²How great was the demon army? Well, we get an idea of its immensity in Valmiki's Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 94, verse no. 6; Canto 96, verse nos. 27-28. It says that there were 10 lakh chariots, 30 lakh elephants, 60 crore horses, and countless donkeys, camels and foot soldiers. {1 lakh = 100,000; 1 crore = 100 lakhs.}]

चले मत्त गज जूथ घनेरे । प्राबिट जलद मरुत जनु प्रेरे ॥ ३ ॥
बरन बरन बिरदैत निकाया । समर सूर जानहिं बहु माया ॥ ४ ॥

calē matta gaja jūtha ghanērē. prābiṭa jalada maruta janu prērē. 3.
barana barana biradaita nikāyā. samara sūra jānahim bahu māyā. 4.

Rows after endless rows of war-intoxicated elephants moved forward as if thick banks of rain-bearing clouds were rolling ahead in the sky when they were propelled forward by wind during the rainy season. (3)

Columns after thick columns of bold and valiant demon warriors, all renowned for their gallantry and bravery as well as for cunning and having knowledge of many tricks, marched ahead wearing colourful dresses and headgears (as if they were going in a ceremonial procession to celebrate some great event). (4)

अति बिचित्र बाहिनी बिराजी । बीर बसंत सेन जनु साजी ॥ ५ ॥
चलत कटक दिगसिंधुर डगहीं । छुभित पयोधि कुधर डगमगहीं ॥ ६ ॥

ati bicitra bāhinī birājī. bīra basanta sēna janu sājī. 5.
calata kaṭaka digasindhura ḍagahīm. chubhita payōdhi kudhara ḍagamagahīm. 6.

The strange army of demon warriors looked exceedingly magnificent and marvelous to behold with its variety and colour, as if the Spring season has himself assembled a wonderful and colourful army of his followers¹. (5)

As this huge army marched ahead it caused a mighty tumult on the earth in all its directions; the legendary Diggajs (elephants who are believed to hold the earth upon their backs in its eight corners¹) shook and shifted in their places; the ocean heaved and splashed; the mountains too trembled and shook as if an earthquake had caused the ground beneath them to vibrate and shake³. (6)

[Note—¹The ‘spring season’ is known for a wide variety of colourful flowers and leaves that cover the earth. This metaphor is used to give an idea of the wide variety in the rank and file of the demon army—its many breeds and colours of horses, its many types of war elephants, the different types of chariots and other vehicles, as well as the multitudes of colourful dresses and headgears that its soldiers wore.

²These eight Diggajs hold the earth from below in the following eight corners: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west and north-west.

³The idea is that the vibrations caused by the marching of such a huge army of demons had caused the earth to shake and tremble as if an earthquake had occurred with its epicenter in Lanka.]

उठी रेनु रबि गयउ छपाई । मरुत थकित बसुधा अकुलाई ॥ ७ ॥

पनव निसान घोर रव बाजहिं । प्रलय समय के घन जनु गाजहिं ॥ ८ ॥

uṭhī rēnu rabi gaya'u chapā'ī. maruta thakita basudhā akulā'ī. 7.
panava nisāna ghōra rava bājahim. pralaya samaya kē ghana janu gājahim.
8.

Such a huge amount of dust was kicked up in the sky that it formed a thick blanket of cloud that obscured the sun, the air became still (i.e. there was a stifling feeling that one gets before a gigantic dust storm strikes; the proverbial ‘lull before the storm’), and the earth became agitated (i.e. there were tremors that shook the bowls of the earth). (7)

War trumpets and kettle-drums were sounded with such a deafening din that it looked as if the clouds of doomsday were rumbling and thundering threateningly. (8)

भेरि नफीरि बाज सहनाई । मारू राग सुभट सुखदाई ॥ ९ ॥

केहरि नाद बीर सब करहीं । निज निज बल पौरुष उच्चरहीं ॥ १० ॥

bhēri naphīri bāja sahanā'ī. mārū rāga subhaṭa sukhadā'ī. 9.
kēhari nāda bīra saba karahīm. nija nija bala pauruṣa uccarahīm. 10.

Tabors, clarionets and trumpets were being played with martial tunes that pleased and infused zeal and enthusiasm amongst the warriors, inspiring them with the spirit of dare devilry, and to confidently face the enemy with the will to 'either kill them or die themselves'. (9)

All the demon warriors are extolling their own martial qualities with a loud voice even as they raise huge war cries as if hordes of lions were roaring angrily. (10)

कहइ दसानन सुनहु सुभट्टा । मर्दहु भालु कपिन्ह के ठट्टा ॥ ११ ॥
हौं मारिहउँ भूप द्वौ भाई । अस कहि सन्मुख फौज रेंगाई ॥ १२ ॥
यह सुधि सकल कपिन्ह जब पाई । धाए करि रघुबीर दोहाई ॥ १३ ॥

kaha'i dasānana sunahu subhaṭṭā. mardahu bhālu kapinha kē ṭhaṭṭā. 11.
haum māriha'uṃ bhūpa dvau bhā'ī. asa kahi sanmukha phauja rēngā'ī. 12.
yaha sudhi sakala kapinha jaba pā'ī. dhā'ē kari raghubīra dōhā'ī. 13.

[Ravana must have surely felt glad and encouraged when he saw the enthusiasm in his army. So therefore—] The ten-headed Ravana addressed his soldiers as follows: 'Listen all of you brave and valiant warriors. While you destroy the monkey hordes [11], I will endeavour to kill the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman).'

Giving his army this instruction, he ordered them to move ahead with the attack and launch the offensive [12]. (11-12)

As soon as the monkeys heard of this (that the demon army has launched its attack), they invoked the glory of Lord Ram and rushed forward to engage the enemy and retaliate viciously (with a determination to hit back and decimate the demon army). (13)

छं०. धाए बिसाल कराल मर्कट भालु काल समान ते । १ ।
मानहुँ सपच्छ उड़ाहिं भूधर बृंद नाना बान ते ॥ २ ॥
नख दसन सैल महाद्रुमायुध सबल संक न मानहीं । ३ ।
जय राम रावन मत्त गज मृगराज सुजसु बखानहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dhā'ē bisāla karāla markaṭa bhālu kāla samāna tē. 1.
mānahuṃ sapaccha urāhiṃ bhūdhara bṛnda nānā bāna tē. 2.
nakha dasana saila mahādrumāyudha sabala saṅka na mānahiṃ. 3.
jaya rāma rāvana matta gaja mṛgarāja sujasa bakhānahiṃ. 4.

Those huge-bodied and ferocious monkey and bear warriors (markaṭa bhālu), who personified the god of death himself, dashed forward as if huge winged mountains of various sizes and shapes were flying to their destination¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

Their large and pointed nails and teeth were their natural arms; besides this, they carried huge rocks that were as large as small mountains, as well as trees as additional weapons of attack. All of them were fearless and gallant warriors who feared none, no matter how mighty and powerful their opponent might be. (Chanda line no. 3)

They were extolling the glories of Lord Ram who was like a lion vis-à-vis a the wild elephant symbolized by Ravana². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹To wit, the monkey and bear warriors were moving swiftly; they had such colossus bodies that they looked like mountains on the move. And when they would clash with the oncoming demon warriors, who themselves were of equal size and ferocity, it would be like a duel between two giants or two huge mountains dashing against each other.

²To wit, just like a fearless lion can easily overcome a wild elephant, the monkey and bear warriors were praising the glories of Lord Ram who would easily vanquish Ravana who is compared here to a wild and rogue elephant.]

दो०. दुहु दिसि जय जयकार करि निज निज जोरी जानि ।

भिरे बीर इत रामहि उत रावनहि बखानि ॥ ७९ ॥

dōhā.

duhu disi jaya jayakāra kari nija nija jōrī jāni.
bhirē bīra ita rāmahi uta rāvanahi bakhāni. 79.

The final moment of the clash arrived when the two sides raised loud war cries glorifying their respective Lords; on this side the monkeys and bears were extolling the virtues of Lord Ram, and on the other side the demons were doing the same for Ravana, even as they met each other head-on and engaged themselves in a fierce close combat with their opponents, with each warrior clashing with his opposing partner very ferociously. (Doha no. 79)

चौ०. रावनु रथी बिरथ रघुबीरा । देखि बिभीषन भयउ अधीरा ॥ १ ॥

अधिक प्रीति मन भा संदेहा । बंदि चरन कह सहित सनेहा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāvanu rathī biratha raghubīrā. dēkhi bibhīṣana bhaya'u adhīrā. 1.
adhika prīti mana bhā sandēhā. bandi carana kaha sahita sanēhā. 2.

When Vibhishan observed that Ravana was on a mighty war chariot while Lord Ram had no such privilege, for the Lord was on foot, he became very worried and alarmed¹. (1)

Vibhishan had great affection for the Lord, and the alarming prospect of the Lord having to fight a ferocious do-or-die battle while walking on foot, whilst his enemy had the privilege of mounting a war chariot that was not only fully armed but also

gave him the added advantage of rapid maneuverability and protection, made Vibhishan feel very disconcerted; he developed doubts in his mind and became worried in his heart (about the chances of Lord Ram being successful against his enemy in the face of such great odds)².

So therefore, he bowed before the holy feet of the Lord and paid his obeisance to him, and then observed as follows—(2)

[Note—¹Vibhishan was very worried and felt disconcerted when he observed that Lord Ram was on foot while the great demon king Ravana was riding a strong and well-provisioned war chariot. It was an unequal combat which caused Vibhishan a lot of consternation and doubts about the Lord's success. He expressed his fears to the Lord, and the answer that Lord Ram gave him concerning the chariot that is needed to win a battle is very different than one thinks it to be. Here the Lord is alluding to the 'battle that a creature has to fight every single day of his life on earth', and the 'chariot' he describes are the stellar qualities and excellent virtues that a person ought to inculcate in himself in order to win the symbolic battle of life and ace all the life's hurdles, to become stronger and emerge victorious at the end of the day.

²It ought to be noted here that only Vibhishan got worried because Lord Ram had no war chariot at his disposal; none of the monkeys and bears were concerned at all. Why so? It is because the monkeys and bears had never seen Lord Ram or his brother Laxman mounting a chariot till; nearly half of the war was won, and it was done while both the brothers were on foot.

They had witnessed the ferocious battle between Lord Ram and Kumbhakaran while the Lord was on foot; similarly they had witnessed the no-holds barred battle between Laxman and Meghanad while the former was on foot. They had seen Lord Ram and Laxman arriving in Kishkindha on foot, and then leading the attack on the demon army from the front as their commander-in-chief while being on foot.

The monkeys and bears themselves fought and won the many great battles without the privilege of a chariot, arms and armaments, or any other paraphernalia of warfare such as horses, elephants etc. that an army is supposed to have, and which the demons did have. They were accustomed to fighting and winning wars using natural means at their disposal, such as teeth, nails, rocks, boulders, trees, and the might and punch of their own muscular bodies.

These monkeys and bears had witnessed how Lord Ram had shot one single arrow that dismantled the crown and the royal umbrella over the head of Ravana, along with breaking to pieces the ear-rings of Mandodar, his queen. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.}

They had also seen how the Lord had remained calm and poised on the battle-field while tackling Meghanad and overcoming his tricks with a pleasant smile; the Lord had shot one arrow that pierced through the veil of illusions that Meghanad had created, dispelling all fears of his army. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52.}

Kumbhakaran was Ravana's brother; he had the same sort of physical features like Ravana. He was colossal in size, was most vicious and ruthless, and had dark muscular body like that of a giant. When Kumbhakaran stood before Lord Ram he towered above him like a giant colossus, dwarfing the Lord like an ant standing

before an elephant. But the giant and fearsome form of the enemy did not scare the Lord any wee whit, for he bravely faced Kumbhakran and ultimately slayed him; Kumbhakaran's size and ferocity did not deter Lord Ram.

To wit, the monkeys and bears were not at all concerned that Lord Ram was on foot while Ravana was riding a formidable war chariot. They were confident that if the need arose then they would dump a heavy mountain on the chariot and crush it to a pulp, pulverizing Ravana along with it.

But Vibhishan was used to seeing wars being fought using the usual means and paraphernalia of war; so he was worried. Even when his brother Ravana had launched his many campaigns against the gods of heaven, the fighting was on equal terms because the gods too used arms, chariots etc. to battle Ravana and his troops.

Hence, from the viewpoint of Vibhishan, this was a very unconventional way that a war was being fought, with one king (Lord Ram) on foot and the other king (Ravana) mounting a chariot!]

नाथ न रथ नहिं तन पद त्राना । केहि बिधि जितब बीर बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥
सुनहु सखा कह कृपानिधाना । जेहिं जय होइ सो स्यंदन आना ॥ ४ ॥

nātha na ratha nahim tana pada trānā. kēhi bidhi jītaba bīra balavānā. 3.
sunahu sakhā kaha krpānidhānā. jēhim jaya hō'i sō syandana ānā. 4.

[Vibhishan said despondently to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord. You have neither a chariot, nor a protective shield or armour for your body, or anything to put on your feet. Say then oh Lord, how would you attain victory over this formidable enemy under this situation, with the limitations that you face?’ (3)

Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and grace, comforted Vibhishan with this reply: ‘Listen my friend (*sunahu sakhā*). The chariot that grants victory is a different one. [To wit, the chariot that leads a man to victory is different from the physical chariot you are talking about.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹What follows is Lord Ram's great Gospel given to Vibhishan on the battle-field of Lanka, highlighting the divine qualities and excellent characters that would entitle a person to gain victory over the obstacles that he may face in his daily day-to-day life in this world, and thereby attain good fame for himself. It points out the stellar qualities one ought to inculcate in himself in order to attain success in all his endeavours and fields of activity in life. These are noble virtues that make a man great and worthy; they hand-hold him and take him successfully across the rough sea of life; they help him attain stability of mind and confidence in himself while facing the many inconsistencies and contingencies of life.

This wonderful discourse can be called “The Chariot Of God—the Dharma Ratha” as it has a divine spiritual message for the whole world, a message that can transform the life of the people and the world as a whole, bringing heaven right at our doorsteps if taken seriously by everyone.

Vibhishan was talking about a war chariot, but Lord Ram used this opportunity to teach him about the principles of obtaining success in all spheres of life and come out victorious from the battle symbolized by the constant miseries and torments that a man faces in this world in his life. The Lord explained to him the

grand principles of morality, ethics, righteousness, propriety and probity—in essence, the laws of Dharma that protects a person like body-armour, can be used by him to vanquish all his negative and sinful tendencies as well as the thick layer of faults and blemishes that have accumulated around his Atma due to these sins and demeanours, because they act like a formidable enemy for a man. A physical enemy can at the most harm a person's body which is nevertheless mortal and perishable, but the lack of good virtues are like an internal enemy that kills the prospects of his Atma from finding peace, bliss, tranquility, happiness and liberty.

It is interesting to note that Lord Ram is honoured as being 'one who is an abode of mercy, kindness and grace' ('Kripaanidhaan'—'Kripaa' means mercy and kindness; 'Nidhaan' means an abode). This is to indicate that the Lord is gracious and kind enough to use this opportunity of removing the doubts of Vibhishan to preach to the world at large something of great value which would be of great help for the rest of the creatures to overcome formidable obstacles that all of them face in their lives in this world to a greater or lesser degree. The principles outlined by the Lord will act as a guide and moral reference manual for all of them to show them the path of victory in life and how to surmount all obstacles and hurdles easily so that victory is obtained by them against all odds.

Another point to note is that Lord Ram addresses Vibhishan as a 'friend'—implying that he is about to reveal some secrets of success in life to him because Vibhishan is his friend, and therefore a saintly person. Spiritual secrets should be told to a competent person only, for otherwise it is wasteful to tell unworthy people. And being the Lord's friend, Vibhishan must be assured that the Lord will undoubtedly win the war, and that he need not harbour unnecessary worries as these will have a negative impact on morale.

This discourse resonates with the one that Lord Krishna gave to Arjun on the battle-field of Kurushetra that came to be known as the famed 'Gita of Krishna'.

Meanwhile, we shall read by-and-by that the gods did send a divine chariot to Lord Ram during the final phases of the battle with Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 89.]

सौरज धीरज तेहि रथ चाका । सत्य सील दृढ़ ध्वजा पताका ॥ ५ ॥

sauraja dhīraja tēhi ratha cākā. satya sīla dṛṛha dhvajā patākā. 5.

[Lord Ram now describes the various parts that constitute the glorious 'Chariot of Dharma'.

These parts are metaphoric representations of the golden rules of conduct and grand qualities that a person must possess in order to be successful in life and overcome all obstacles that he faces during the course of his life in this tumultuous world. Riding a symbolic chariot that is made up of these auspicious virtues, any person is sure to obtain victory in the long battle against all odds in this life to emerge victorious and glorious.]

The two noble virtues of 'Sauraj' (valour; bravery) and 'Dhiraj' (courage; patience; resilience; fortitude; forbearance) are the two metaphoric or symbolic wheels of this Chariot (which takes a person to his moral victory and gives him glory and conquest against all odds in life).

The two flags or standards flying on this Chariot are the two virtues of ‘Satya’ (truthfulness and honesty) and ‘Sheel’ (good character and conduct; politeness, civility and courteousness; humility, good manners and etiquette). (5)

[Note—As we have by now read, Lord Ram is describing a symbolic ‘Chariot of Dharma’. Just like a warrior is able to obtain victory against a formidable enemy if he is provided with a strong war-chariot, any person who rides a Chariot of Dharma is able to conquer the world as well as vanquish all his enemies represented by all the various hurdles that he faces in life to emerge victorious and glorious.

Just like any ordinary chariot, the fabulous Chariot of Dharma also consists of various parts, and all of them are necessary to make the complete Chariot. In other words, a person must inculcate all of them in his life, give all of them equal importance and attention, for even if one fails to reach the required standard the Chariot of Dharma will be weakened to that extent. And then chances of total and comprehensive success in life will be reduced to the extent that any of these virtues are lacking in strength.

Even as any ordinary chariot needs two robust wheels to move, the Chariot of Dharma needs the two primary virtues of ‘Sauraj’ and ‘Dhiraj’ to enable the person to ride to his victory. Obviously it is true—for without courage and fortitude, without patience and resilience no one can expect any big and sustainable success in life.

In ancient times, chariots had only two wheels instead of four, whether they were war chariots or civilian chariots. This is endorsed in the first of the four Vedas, i.e. the most ancient one known as the Rik Veda, which describe such chariots—the war chariot is described in its Mandal 6, Sukta (hymn) no. 75, and the civilian chariot in its Mandal 10, Sukta no. 85.

The two virtues of ‘Satya’ and ‘Sheel’ make him honourable and respected in society; a person who has these two virtues is shown the highest adoration in this world. Any success that is obtained by pretensions and deceit is dishonorable and contemptible. Then, success should not make a man pride, haughty and arrogant—i.e. he should have ‘Sheel’ in him inspite of the glories he acquires. This goes on to fortify his conquest—for if he is truthful and trustworthy as well as polite and kind, he is lauded and remembered for generations to come after he is dead and gone. Otherwise he is loathed and despised by all, even by them who praise him out of fear of reprisals.

The flag mounted on the chariot of a king stands for his authority, glory and fame. It is seen from far away even though the chariot is yet not visible. Hence, if a man has Satya and Sheel in his character, then his name and glory spreads to even the world’s remotest corner inspite of his never setting foot there in his life. This is tantamount to the conquest of the world—a conquest in which not a single drop of blood is shed. For instance, Lord Buddha’s glory and name has spread over the world even though he did not move anywhere, and preached non-violence in deed and words.

During a war, if the standard or flag of the king falls it symbolizes his defeat; the army surrenders or flees as soon as the flag is felled. Similarly, if a man compromises with these two noble virtues of Satya and Sheel, than he is deemed to be as good as being defeated.]

बल बिबेक दम परहित घोरे । छमा कृपा समता रजु जोरे ॥ ६ ॥

bala bibēka dama parahita ghōrē. chamā kṛpā samatā raju jōrē. 6.

This Chariot of Dharma has four magnificent horses—they are the four noble virtues of ‘Bal’ (strength; power; authority; force; energy; dynamism), ‘Vivek’ (wisdom; discriminatory powers and abilities; intelligence; rationality; discretion), ‘Dam’ (self-restraint; self-control), and ‘Parhita’ (to do good to other; be diligent towards other’s welfare, happiness and well-being; benevolence, graciousness and magnanimity).

The reins or fasteners that tie them together and keep them in order are the three grand virtues of ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness), ‘Kripaa’ (mercy; grace; compassion), and ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity; equality; evenness of mind) (6)

[Note—Next important part of a chariot is the horse. The Chariot of Dharma is pulled by these four symbolic horses representing the four glorious virtues as listed above. In other words, one must carry on with his life and its duties energetically and without losing courage and patience (‘Bal’), taking all decisions wisely, intelligently and rationally (‘Vivek’), all the while exercising great self-control over the mind and the sense organs of the body and keeping them under tight leash to prevent them from falling prey to temptations and other traps laid out by the deluding world (‘Dam’), and be mindful about the welfare and well-being of the creature around him so that any of his actions or deeds or words may not harm them in true spirit of non-violence as well as the eclectic philosophy of non-duality whereby one is expected to see the same Supreme Being in each individual living being known as the Jiva (‘Parhita’).

If a man has these four virtues in him, his chariot of life is driven smoothly like a physical chariot in which the horses are well trained and tamed.

Then again, the reins that are used to control the horses are symbolized by the three virtues of forgiveness and tolerance (‘Kshamaa’), compassion, mercy and grace (‘Kripaa’), and equanimity and evenness of mind (‘Samtaa’). A charioteer knows the wisdom of maintaining his cool and poise when riding a chariot—he has to control the horses, keep an eye on the road, skirt dangers such as holes and obstacles on the path, and avoid hurting passers-by. Even if some of the horses act wildly, even if the people met in the way act rudely or make disparaging remarks, the charioteer should not lose his cool and mind, for if he gets angry and loses his composure at provocations he will not be properly able to focus on riding the chariot which would start rocking and ultimately lead to some sort of accident, minor or major.

Therefore, to ensure that the Chariot of Dharma reaches its destination comfortably, the wise person must inculcate these virtues along with other virtues also because any chariot can reach its destination only when it is pulled by horses, and these horses need to be tamed, and properly harnessed and bridled.

The first virtue listed in this line is ‘Bal’ which literally means strength, force, powers and authority that a person possesses. There are said to be seven kinds of Bals—viz. (i) ‘Vairagya Bal’—the stupendous moral and spiritual strength that comes with true renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any thing related to this mundane, deluding and mortal world of sense objects and their allurements; (ii) ‘Shaairak Bal’—or the strength, stamina, vigour, energy, dynamism, potent, valour and abilities of the physical body, such as the strength of one’s arm and that which comes with a muscular body; (iii) ‘Buddhi Bal’—or the strength of one’s intellect and wisdom; (iv) ‘Tapa Bal’—or the astounding mystical powers that one accesses by doing Tapa, which means austerity, penance and sufferance of hardship for some noble cause which hardens a man from the inside; (v) ‘Yoga Bal’—or the fabulous mystical powers that come to a person by the virtue of his doing Yoga,

which means doing meditation in a comprehensive manner as this bestows stupendous powers to its practitioner; (vi) ‘Sainya Bal’—or the power that comes with a strong army of a kingdom; and (vii) ‘Atma Bal’—or the inherent strength that the Atma possesses, which can be translated as self-confidence and grit.

The second virtue is ‘Vivek’ which literally means wisdom, intelligence, an analytical mind, and the ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong. It also incorporates the ability to have insight and foresight. If a man possesses these virtues then naturally he is able to smoothly overcome all problems of life because he analyses each development and selects the best course of action that will suit his objectives in life. Such a man never acts in haste and impulse; his actions are well-thought of and planned.

The third virtue is ‘Dam’ meaning self-restraint and self-control. This is a very important instrument in the hands of a person to by-pass many problems in life that are easily overcome or avoided by merely exercising restraint over one’s emotions and body. This virtue helps one to overcome temptations and entanglements with the world of material objects and their multifarious delusions and false charms. ‘Dam’ helps prevent greed and yearning; it helps get rid of such negativity as jealousy, envy and malice; it fosters peace and contentment of the mind; it prevents the mind to be wayward and instead helps it to be focused on the job at hand.

The fourth virtue is ‘Parhita’—or keeping in mind the good and well-being of others. This naturally fosters goodwill and brotherhood; a man who thinks good of others is invariably liked by everyone, and even his opponents fear annoying him as they know that the society will take his side. There is no better principle of Dharma as thinking and doing good of others, and to make others suffer is the worst sin one can commit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41 wherein Lord Ram has himself endorsed this virtue of ‘Parhita’ in a person as being the best one.

The next three virtues of ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness), ‘Kripaa’ (benevolence, grace, mercy and compassion) and ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity and forbearance; treating everyone and everything alike) go hand in hand. If a person has them, he is elevated to an exalted position in the world that would be no less than that of Lord Ram himself, because the Lord is famous as being an ocean of these three grand and eclectic moral and spiritual virtues.

Usually it is observed that when one becomes powerful and strong, when one acquires authority and fame by observance of the other virtues, then these three virtues become the first casualty. To possess them in addition to the other great virtues mentioned in this line ensures that a man is eligible for getting acclaim and honour that come with being truly successful in life.

An interesting point emerges by reading this verse. It mentions four horses but only three fasteners. The question arises how are the four horses controlled by mere three fasteners? Well, in war-chariots, two horses are bridled in the front row, and just behind them is the pair of the other two horses. The horses in the front row are tied together by two fasteners on either side, while those behind them in the second row need only one fastener as they follow their companions in the front. Another interpretation is that the horses are bridled on the right and the left by two strong fasteners, and a third is used to guide them in the straight direction. A charioteer has three reins in his hands with which he is able to manoeuvre the chariot in any direction he wishes—to the right, to the left and straight ahead. The implication is clear—the Chariot of Dharma must be controlled by observing the three cardinal

principles of Kshamaa, Kripaa and Samtaa. Otherwise it will be rocked and go out of control.

Another interesting observation is the placement of the four horses. The first pair of horses is represented by the first two virtues of 'Bal' and 'Vivek'; they are fastened by the first two fasteners of 'Kshamaa' and 'Kripaa'. Behind them are the two horses represented by the other two pair of virtues, viz. 'Dam' and 'Parhita', and they are fastened by 'Samtaa'. This sequence is deduced from the way these virtues are mentioned in the verse itself.]

ईस भजनु सारथी सुजाना । बिरति चर्म संतोष कृपाना ॥ ७ ॥

īsa bhajanu sārathī sujānā. birati carma santōṣa kṛpānā. 7.

[Now, after describing the chariot, Lord Ram describes who the charioteer is.]

Worshipping the Lord God and having devotion, affection and adoration for him is the symbolic the clever and expert charioteer of this divine Chariot.

The virtue of 'Virati' (Vairagya or renunciation, detachment and dispassion) is the strong shield, and the virtue of 'Santosh' (satisfaction; contentment) is like the sword. (7)

[Note—The charioteer is the person who is responsible for guiding the chariot and taking the warrior to his victory in the battle. So, if a person has devotion for Lord God, if he worships the Lord with faith and sincerity, then it is sure that the Lord God would protect him and guide his destiny to victory against all odds and tumult of life. One must offer his security and future in the trustworthy, strong, expert and caring hands of the Lord even as a warrior reposes his in the hands of an expert and wise charioteer.

The fact that when one leaves his destiny and welfare in the hands of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, the latter takes full responsibility for the former is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, 1/39/5 which essentially says that “none of the obstacles of life create any problem for a man on whom Lord Ram looks benevolently”. And the Lord looks mercifully and benevolently and graciously, with special care and attention, on those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord and have deep love, devotion, trust and faith in him, who worship the Lord as their only solace and succour—refer: Ram Charit Manas (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 36 when Lord Ram has preached Sabari; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 43 when Lord Ram preached Narad; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it, Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it, and then Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki has listed the places where Lord Ram should live.

Obviously, when the almighty Lord of creation favours a person and vows to take care of him, no other force will be able to disturb his peace of mind or harm his interests.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained and tamed horses, a strong rein, and an expert charioteer. What is now needed by the warrior is his personal armour and weapon. These are described next—the shield is represented by the virtue of 'Virati', and the sword by 'Santosh' as narrated in this verse. The shield is used to protect oneself against harm, and the sword is used to cut through the ranks of the attacking enemy.

If one has inculcated the eclectic virtue of detachment and dispassion, then he is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world, as well as the constantly annoying desire of the sense organs of his body seeking self gratification. The virtue of ‘Virati’ helps him to ward off all sorts of delusions and temptations, and the sword of ‘Santosh’ aids him in this endeavour to cut off any remaining residual effects of delusions that may be lurking and manage to sneak in unnoticed to corrupt his mind and sub-conscious.

It happens usually that one is able to turn away from temptations in the first instance, but later on his sub-conscious mind keeps nagging at him to yield ground. We can understand this phenomenon by a simple example. Suppose a man is advised by his doctor to avoid sweets. When a delicious sweetmeat is brought to him in platter full, he may resist the temptation of indulging in it right then and turns his head away, but his sub-conscious will not forget the dish so easily and would keep on nagging at him till the time he surreptitiously binges on the box of the sweet stored in the fridge in the kitchen. Otherwise he wouldn’t be able to sleep peacefully. This is what is meant in this verse. Even if a wise man is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world at the first sight by employing his grand virtue of ‘Virati’, he still needs the sword of ‘Santosh’ to overcome their long-term lingering effects.

A sword cuts on both sides; it is swung right, left and vertical. In other words, with practicing the virtue of Santosh, the spiritual aspirant is able to conquer the three main enemies of his, viz. ‘Kaam’ (passions and lust; desires and yearnings; greed and rapacity), ‘Krodha’ (anger that comes when Kaam is not fulfilled or requited), and ‘Moha’ (attractions, attachments and infatuations that Kaam generates). This observation is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as follows—(i) Greed dries up contentment; hence to use the latter to cut off the former before it attacks is important: refer—Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16; (ii) Without Santosh it is not possible to eliminate Kaam: refer—Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90; (iii) One’s anger, the desire to use strong language against one’s opponent and wreak vengeance upon him continues to increase if one is not satisfied fully and happy that his opponent has been sufficiently humiliated or defeated: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 274.]

दान परसु बुधि सक्ति प्रचंडा । बर बिग्यान कठिन कोदंडा ॥ ८ ॥

dāna parasu budhi sakti praçaṇḍā. bara bigyāna kaṭhina kōdaṇḍā. 8.

The virtue of being charitable, making donations and giving alms liberally, known as ‘Daan’, is the strong battle-axe.

The ‘Buddhi’ (sharp intellect and discriminatory powers; the analytical and rational mind) is like the most powerful and potent Shakti (energized arrow; a sharp spear).

And a highly developed ‘Vigyan’ (deep knowledge of anything; the ability to have insight into anything in order to understand that aspect of it which is subtle and hidden from view) is akin to a strong and robust bow. (8)

[Note—Here we have three powerful weapons—the battle-axe, the arrow or spear, and the bow. The bow is held in the hand; the arrow and the spear are thrown at the enemy; and the battle-axe is used both ways.

‘Daan’ is one of the four main forms of Dharma as described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 Kha which says—“Dharma has four limbs (‘Satya’ or truthfulness, ‘Dayaa’ or mercy, ‘Tapa’ or austerity, and ‘Daan’ or giving of alms and making charity), but in Kali-Yug (i.e. in the present era of the 4-era one cycle of creation and destruction) Daan is the main limb of Dharma. One should therefore make charities and give alms to the best of his ability.”

In this verse, ‘Daan’ is described as being equivalent to the battle-axe because it makes even one’s enemy as one’s friend. Charity and magnanimity makes a man endeared to all, even his opponent is subdued by his attitude. A charitable man is welcomed everywhere, and everyone comes forward to help him should he himself fall on bad times. This noble virtue in any man acts to protect him against all misfortunes that may befall him in life—hence it is likened to an axe. Again, since donations are made and charities are given by the man using his own hand, the simile is apt.

‘Buddhi’ is used by a wise man to deal with the current situation as well as plan for the future. It is used by a wise man to overcome sticky situations and avoid such eventualities from occurring in the future. Even the greatest of difficulties are overcome with intelligent handling of any situation, while foolishness lands a man in grave trouble unnecessarily. This is metaphorically depicted in the form of an arrow and a spear. The ‘arrow’ is thrown at the enemy, while the ‘spear’ is used either by throwing or holding in hand. The reach of the arrow is far longer as compared to the spear. So, ‘Buddhi’ helps a wise man to overcome difficulties of life in the short as well as the long run.

But Buddhi cannot work alone; it works together with ‘Vigyan’. This is the metaphoric ‘bow’. Even as one needs a bow to use the arrow, one needs Vigyan to use the Buddhi properly.

In other words, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, deep insight, analytical and discriminatory abilities, the ability to decide what is the correct and right path and what is not, to have insight and foresight, to be conscientious and sensitive, and such other grand virtues of the mind and sub-conscious—all must work in coordination to help a person to reach his goal in life.]

अमल अचल मन त्रोन समाना । सम जम नियम सिलीमुख नाना ॥ ९ ॥

amala acala mana trōna samānā. sama jama niyama silimukha nānā. 9.

The Mana (mind and heart) that is clean, pure, steady and stable is like the quiver.

The grand virtues of ‘Sham’ (control of the mind), ‘Yam’ (self-control and abstinence that leads to quietitude and peace of the mind), and ‘Niyam’ (observance of various religious duties, vows and sacraments) are like the many arrows (in the quiver that the warrior carries and uses). (9)

[Note—A clear and stable mind can think properly. If it is fickle and unsteady, it will make the man fidgety and restless. Steadiness of mind and purity of heart are the essential requirements to be successful in any enterprise, because this makes the entire endeavour righteous and auspicious. In the field of Yoga it is unequivocally stated that the purity of mind and heart are essential for success in it because they help the aspirant to fully concentrate his attention on the subject that he deals with, without wavering and jumping from one subject to another and landing nowhere.]

A warrior carries many types of arrows. Thus, a reference is made here to the various limbs of Yoga which work together to help the practitioner achieve his objective for which he had started doing Yoga in the first place—to find peace, to find spiritual enlightenment and freedom, and to establish oneness between his own ‘self’ known as the Atma and the cosmic ‘Self’ known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is equivalent to realisation of the Supreme Consciousness.

The Upanishads dealing with the concept of Yoga as well as Patanjali’s Yogsutra explain these different limbs of Yoga cited in the present verse. Now let us examine the virtues of Sham, Yam, Niyam etc. in brief.

There are said to be eight steps or branches or limbs or paths of Yoga as follows—Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranyam, Prayahar, Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi.

(1) Yam—broadly meaning self restraint and it covers such virtues as non-violence (Ahinsa), honesty and truthfulness (Stya), abhorring theft (Asteya), abstinence, celibacy and detachment from passions (Brahmacharya), and non-accumulation and non-possession (Aparigraha).

(ii) Niyam—or observance of principles or codes of conduct in a religious pursuit. Such as having good habits and contentment, observing austerities and doing penances, self-study of scriptures, following a righteous, virtuous and noble way of life, and etc.

According to Skanda Puran, the ‘Yam and Niyam’ mentioned above are ten, and they have been described in Skanda Puran in these words:-

The ten ‘Yams’ are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all).

The ten ‘Niyams’ are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21).

The 10 Yams and 10 Niyams—These have been described in (i) the Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos 11-14; and (ii) the Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, sections 1-2.

The Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 1 lists the ten Yams and section 2 lists the ten Niyams as follows—

“Canto 1, section 1 = The eight branches of Yoga are the following—Yam (self-control), Niyam (observation of spiritual laws or rules), Aasan (sitting postures), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (restraint of the mind), Dharna (belief), Dhyan (concentration of mind; remembrance) and Samadhi (trance-like state of permanence in Yoga).

Yam and Niyam are of ten types each, Aasans are of eight types, Pranayam has three phases, both Pratyahar and Dharna have five types each, Dhyan is of two types, while Samadhi is of only one type with no variations.

The ten types or aspects of Yam are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence, continence, celibacy), Daya (mercy), Saralta (simplicity, humility), Kshama (forgiveness), Dhairya (patience), Alpa-ahar (moderation in eating), and Pavitra (purity and cleanliness).

[Now, each of these terms are being defined—] ‘Ahinsa’ means not harming or causing pain to any creature, at any time, and by any means—not by one’s thoughts

or involvement of the mind in any way, not by speech or words, not by the body and its actions. [That is, non-violence should be holistic and comprehensive in nature—it is not limited to only avoiding physical cruelty or aggression but also includes mental and verbal aspects.]

‘Satya’ means to tell, honestly, truthfully and with the greatest sincerity one can have, whatever is for the good and true welfare of the other person, whether he likes it or not. This would involve the mind and its thoughts, the speech and the words used to tell the truth, and the body that implements this truth in the shape of deeds done by it and actions taken by it. [That is, Satya involves not telling things simply because they might appear pleasing to the hearer, or said out of some vested interest at stake, but to say things which are genuinely in the interest and long-term good of the other person. Such things might be unpleasant to hear in the beginning and might even cause rebuke or ill-will for the speaker of the truth, but they give the speaker or the advisor great mental and spiritual satisfaction for having spoken the truth without deceit or fear, besides helping to create positive vibrations around him, and ushering in an atmosphere of trust and brotherhood.]

‘Asteya’ broadly means non-stealing, and it includes the idea of keeping one’s self aloof from the wealth of others, of not being attracted towards such assets that do not rightly belong to one’s own self, of eyeing the wealth of others with envy and jealousy, of having a greed for them, yearning for them, and waiting for an opportunity to either harm them or deprive the other person of his possessions, or usurping and grabbing the assets rightfully belonging to others by any crooked or deceitful means one can think of. This neutrality and non-lusting must be genuine and sincere, and should involve one’s mind and its thoughts, one’s speech, as well as one’s body and the deeds done by it or actions taken by it. One should be sincere in not being tempted by the wealth of others, and of course this would involve the mind and the sub-conscious which must be duly trained and cultured. [That is, one must never be envious of other people’s prosperity and acquisitions; one must never allow the mind to ever contemplate of harming these assets or plan to grab them by force or conceit. Similarly, one must never allow the speech to ever utter a word of jealousy and say anything that might harm these assets simply because they belong to others, or create prejudice against the rightful possessor of such assets. One must not allow the body to do anything that would in anyway, directly or indirectly, cause harm to the assets that belong to others. Since the general meaning of the word ‘Asteya’ is ‘non-stealing’ it follows that even mental greed or yearning for something that belongs to others, and imagining how good it would have been if it belonged to me, is as good as the actual stealing of it. When the Upanishads talk about implementation of any principle, they imply a wholesome attitude and a holistic approach towards it, and not only physical aspect of it such as its literal implementation which is devoid of the spirit of the doctrine. Not physically able to steal anything but be mentally obsessive about it is as good as actually stealing it. In other words, the purity of mind, sub-conscious and intellect are as important as the physical act of abstaining from stealing.]

‘Brahmacharya’ is to abstain from all sexual activities or any kind of indulgences and unrestrained behaviour involving the mind, the speech as well as the physical body and its sense organs under all circumstances. [That is, mere observance of physical celibacy is not enough. One must observe total control over the mind and its faculties so that they are not allowed even to think of any lustful subject or indulge in any inauspicious, unrighteous, unethical, immoral and improper thoughts related to sense gratification or attractions of the material sense objects of the world. One must

never think or talk about sensual subjects that arouse passions and disturb the tranquility of the mind. One must never allow the gross organs of the body to be attracted towards objects of self gratification, or of sensual pleasures and comforts. In short, all sensual attractions, all forms of indulgences, all instances of temptations, all examples of self-gratification, and all sorts of unrestrained behaviour of the mind, the speech and the body are covered by the term Brahmacharya. It means total and comprehensive self-restraint or self-control in all spheres of life, and not just of the organs of sensual pleasures.]

‘Daya’ refers to having compassion and mercy towards all the creatures, to be graceful and kind towards all, from the lowly and the humblest to the highest and the exalted.

‘Aarjav’ or ‘Dhairya’ means to have exemplary tolerance, fortitude, courage, forbearance, resilience and patience of mind, to be immensely steady in one’s thoughts and behaviour, to restrict one’s speech and desist from speaking any wrong word against anyone or to anyone, and to keep the body under strict control and not react under any kind of provocation or situation, whether favourable or unfavourable. It implies that a person remains completely neutral and equanimous when faced by favourable and expected circumstances, or by unfavourable and untoward ones.

‘Kshama’ implies to be truly forgiving and un-affected by any offense caused by the other person, to bear with stoic calmness, equanimity, forbearance and a sense of neutrality all sorts of behaviour one has to face from others, whether done inadvertently or purposely, whether such behaviour is favourable or unfavourable, whether it is likable or not. One must be exemplarily calm, unruffled and be forgiving towards others, whether one is praised and honoured by them, or criticized and humiliated by them. One must be sincerely forgiving for any kind of mischief, any kind of misdeed, kind of transgression, any kind of provocative behaviour, any sort of insults, aspersions, asides or insinuations inflicted or cast upon him by other person, directly or indirectly, or by situations created by his adversary that lead to him being subjected to humiliation and insult. Kshama involves remaining unruffled and completely calm, both emotionally as well as sentimentally, under all prevailing situations and under all instigations. One must not harbour any animosity, ill-will, a sense of grievance, a feeling of hatred or a desire for revenge against anyone, or for any deed done by the latter, which has in any way harmed one’s own interest or even has been a cause of annoyance for him. [Therefore we see that Kshama, Daya and Dhairya go hand in hand; one must accompany the other to give meaning to what is being said in this great Upanishad. It has already been emphasized that a wholesome approach is needed when one reads the Upanishad and hopes to benefit from this eclectic and grand philosophy promoted by it.]

‘Dhriti’ is having equanimity, neutrality, fortitude, firmness and steadiness of mind under all circumstances, even when one is subjected to immense emotional turmoil, both of the positive kind such as having happiness and joys, as well as of the negative kind such as being subjected to immense anguish and pain. [That is, one must remain unruffled and maintain one’s poise and calm under opposing situations—such as the one when he suffers from some great financial loss or loses his dear and near ones on the one hand, or when he begets some great fortune or meets his beloved ones unexpectedly on the other hand.]

‘Alpa-ahar’ is to eat with moderation or restraint. It implies eating only so much as to keep one-fourth of the stomach empty. It also implies eating such things that are soothing for the system and non-irritating by nature, things that are invigorating and energizing for the body. Such eatables are foods that are soothing for

the digestive system, as well as sweet, pleasant and comforting for the body in general. Some of such eatables are clarified butter (Ghee) of the best quality, unadulterated milk, and other such things.

‘Shauch’ means to be clean and purified both externally as well as internally. While external cleanliness can be done by rubbing the body with clay and washing off the dirt with water, internal cleanliness and purity is achieved by keeping the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect free from all sorts of taints, corruptions and negativities, and instead concentrating their efforts towards auspicious and righteous endeavours such as on spiritualism and attainment of the Truth. [Both sorts of cleaning are necessary. One should keep the physical body clean because it is the residence of the Atma, the pure ‘self’, and if the residence is dirty and filthy it would create a negative environment for the Atma, causing the latter restlessness and having a negative impact on its nature. Further, the body is regarded as the temple of the Lord because this Atma is a miniature form of the cosmic Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being. Just like a man keeps his place of worship, the ‘shrine’, physically clean so as to maintain its sanctity, it is equally important to keep one’s body clean as it is the abode of the ‘personal deity’ known as the Atma. But this body is driven by the mind and its various faculties, and therefore to ensure that the personal shrine of the Atma in the form of the physical body is able to maintain its sanctity and credibility it is imperative to keep the internal apparatus clean and uncorrupt. If the mind and its components are not clean then no matter how clean the external body may be it is of no good to the spiritual aspirant, for sooner rather than latter the body would fall prey to the many temptations of the corrupt world and their attending delusions. Therefore, all efforts of the mind should be diverted away from the falsehoods of the material world of the sense objects and focused on the Atma and the universal truth of the conscious ‘self’.] (1).

“Canto 1, section 2 = 1. The term ‘Niyam’ (literally meaning certain rules and regulations that one is strictly expected to follow in order to be successful in one’s endeavour) applies to the following observances—Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance for some noble and auspicious cause), Santosh (contentedness), Astik (to be a believer), Daan (to give charity and make alms), Ishwar-poojan (worship of God), Siddhanta-srawan (listening to the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures being explained), Hri (shame, prudence, modesty and self-respect), Mati (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one’s duties and ethical behaviour), Japa (repetition of Mantras), and Vrat (religious fasting, observing austerity, keeping righteous vows and strict self-control or self-restraint).

[Now, each of these terms would be explained in a holistic way.] The term ‘Tapa’ in the context of Yoga (meditation) is to observe various religious sacraments such as the ‘Krischa Chandrayan¹’ which helps the body to become thin, energized, fit, reactivated and detoxified, as well as shed its unnecessary flab and burden of ailments.

‘Santosh’ means to be satisfied and contented with whatever is available by providence, and never to greed or yearn or wish for more.

‘Aastik’ (believing) implies that one should sincerely believe in what the Vedas have said about religion and other spiritual matters.

‘Daan’ is to give alms to the poor, make donations and charities to the deserving, with due respect to the dignity and self respect of the recipient or the beneficiary, without expecting anything in return. These charities and donations must

be made out of the wealth that has been obtained by rightful means, and which rightly belongs to the person who gives such alms, or makes donations or charities. [In other words, if charities are made to humiliate others, to demean their spirits and social standing, to show them that they are underprivileged, unfortunate and inferior to the donor, to create a situation when the other members of the society become lazy, indolent and unproductive in the expectation of getting largesse without making efforts to meet their requirements by doing deeds, or to show off one's wealth and majesty, or to reap some sort of worldly fame and name as a philanthropic person etc., or if such charities or alms are made out of assets acquired by unlawful and unethical means—then such alms, charities and donations are deemed to be null and void.]

'Ishwar-poojan' is to honour, to offer respectful worship and to pay sincere obeisance to the Supreme Being in his various manifestations, such as Lord Vishnu (the second of the Trinity Gods, the sustainer and protector of creation, and the Lord who had manifested as various incarnations on earth) and Lord Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods, the concluser of creation and the patron God of ascetics) amongst others. Such worship and honour should be done cheerfully, with great devotion and faith, and by following the proper sanctified method for this purpose as narrated in the scriptures.

'Siddhanta-srawan' is to attentively hear the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas and the Upanishads being explained by those who are well-versed in them, those who are highly erudite and extremely learned in the finer nuances and intricacies of these great scriptures.

'Hri' (shame, modesty, self-respect and dignity) is to feel ashamed at one's own self for doing something that goes against the eclectic doctrines of Dharma (ethics, morality, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and correct thought and action). Therefore, it also entails that one avoids doing anything that is regarded as unholy, lowly, demeaning, degrading and despicable by the Vedas as well as by traditional wisdom and universally accepted convention.

'Mati' (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindful of one's duties and ethical behaviour) is to sincerely wish and have an inborn inclination to follow the tenets of the Vedas. It would include proper training of the mind-intellect apparatus to think and contemplate rightly, correctly and with a positive attitude about the right things and in a right perspective. One should therefore turn away from those things that are demeaning and degrading for the soul, and which undermine the exalted stature of one's divine 'self'.

'Japa' is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one's Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible Japa, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent Japa. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly, and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras silently is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently without even opening the lips is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering the words, and it is multiple times more beneficial.

'Vrat' (observance of religious vows) is to diligently, steadfastly, honestly, consistently and regularly follow the different eclectic principles, the doctrines and the tenets of the Vedas and the Upanishads—to avoid things that are proscribed by them, and do things that are prescribed by them (1).

{¹The word ‘Chandrayan’ means ‘following the phase of the moon’, while ‘Krischa’ means to become thin and lean. Hence, the term Krischa Chandrayan means to make the body thin by strictly restricting the diet according to the established system of doing the Chandrayan Vrat. Hence it involves restricting one’s food intake by strictly following the phase of the moon—reducing it gradually during the waning phase of the moon, and increasing it in a step-by-step reverse order in which it was reduced during the waxing phase of the moon.

The Hindu scriptures have prescribed a number of methods of atonement for one’s misdeeds and expiations for sins. The Chandrayan is the universal penance for expiation of almost any kind of sin—especially where no specific remedy is prescribed.

It is so-called as during this exercise one follows the phase of the moon in his eating habits. Starting with fifteen morsels of food on the full-moon day it is gradually reduced by one morsel per day till the new-moon day when not a single morsel is eaten by the aspirant. Then from this day onwards, one morsel per day is increased till the full-moon day when once again he eats fifteen morsels. This is one cycle of the penance. It can be repeated as many times as desired according to the intensity of the sin to be atoned for. This penance is also called ‘Pipillikaamadhyā’ or ‘middle of an ant’ exercise because it starts and ends with full fifteen morsels of food with nil food in the middle.

There is a variation of the Chandrayan described above. In the modified version, the penance is started with one morsel on the full-moon day, gradually increased to fifteen morsels on the new-moon day and then progressively reduced by one morsel each day till the full-moon day when once again only one morsel is eaten. This is called ‘Yavamādhyā’ or ‘middle of the wheat grain’—as this grain is thickest at the center and tapers off at the two ends.

In the third variation, eight morsel of food is eaten each day for a month’s time. This is called ‘Yati-Chandrayan’—or the Chandrayan that is prescribed for wandering ascetics who beg for food for sustenance.

The size of the morsel of food is approximately that of a big myrobalan fruit. A person who undertakes the penance called Chandrayan should tonsure the head, do initial fasting as a preparatory step, offer libations of clarified butter (Ghee) and water to the Gods, consecrate the food before eating it, and worship the Moon God.”}]

कवच अभेद बिप्र गुर पूजा । एहि सम बिजय उपाय न दूजा ॥ १० ॥

kavaca abhēda bipra gura pūjā. ēhi sama bijaya upāya na dūjā. 10.

The impenetrable body-armour (the ‘Kavach’) is represented by worshipping and having devotion and faith in Vipras (Brahmins; elderly and learned men) and Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide).

Verily, there is no better way to obtain victory in this world; there is no efficacious way than this to attain the glory of conquest. (10)

[Note—The ‘Kavach’ is the closest and the safest thing to protect the warrior. It is usually made of iron either as a plain sheet or as a mesh made of plaited iron chains. It is very sturdy and regarded as the safest protection because it directly protects the body from up close.

Since worshipping Brahmins and paying obeisance to their holy feet is regarded as one of the major auspicious deeds of Dharma (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45), it is likened to a strong Kavach here because the worshipper gets their blessings and grace which protects him against any evil effects of sins and misdeeds.

Lord Ram has himself told the demon Kabandha—“Look, anyone who worships and serves Brahmins, who are like living gods on earth, by his mind, deed, as well as words and speech, without any deceit and pretensions, verily I say that all the Gods, along with the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, as well as myself, become subservient to such a person”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 33.

Once again this virtue is reiterated by Lord Ram to the citizens of Ayodhya when the Lord told them—“Gods and saints are gracious and benevolent upon a person who serves Brahmins without any deceit and pretensions”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 45.

We note here that two types of Kavachs are mentioned here—one is worshipping of the Brahmin, and the other is the Guru. It implies that both of them should be given equal importance in one’s life. Whereas Brahmins act as teachers and moral preceptors for the whole world in a general way, keeping themselves engaged in studying the scriptures so as to give advice to the world whenever needed, and carrying out religious duties and doing such deeds as needed for the general welfare of the society at large, the Guru is a personal guide and teacher who cares for the individual’s spiritual and temporal welfare. So while the Brahmin is a representative of the Supreme Being at the macro level of existence, the Guru represents the same Supreme Being at the micro level of the individual.

Another interpretation is that a wise warrior takes extra precaution by wearing a double-breasted suit of armour—so that even if the outer layer is damaged he still gets protection from the inner layer. In the present context this would mean that even if the Brahmins fail to protect him due to some reason, his Guru will always stand by him. The blessing of Brahmins forms the outer ring of protection, and that of the Guru as the inner ring.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained horses, an expert charioteer, powerful and potent weapons, and personal body armour. Surely then, all the paraphernalia for victory are there, and therefore there is no other better way to win a war and obtain conquest. What one now needs is one’s own personal resolve and training, one’s own strength, confidence and commitment. In other words, even if every imaginable instrument and mean for personal enlightenment and spiritual elevation are available to a person, even if he has read all the scriptures and is wise enough to understand them correctly and properly, yet if he does not commit himself whole-heartedly towards his spiritual path of obtaining liberation and deliverance, none of them will provide emancipation and salvation to him automatically. A wise man is he who uses all the available resources most judiciously and properly to reach his desired goal in life.]

सखा धर्ममय अस रथ जाकें । जीतन कहँ न कतहुँ रिपु ताकें ॥ ११ ॥

sakhā dharmamaya asa ratha jākēm. jītana kahañ na katahuñ ripu tākēm.
11.

My friend, anyone who has the kind of Chariot of Dharma which I've described to you above, becomes invincible in this world; no enemy can ever defeat and conquer him. (11)

[Note—The 'chariot' described by Lord Ram is not a physical one, but a metaphoric and symbolic one that stands for the glorious and auspicious virtues a person must inculcate in himself, grand virtues that he must seek and acquire for himself in order to be successful in life even against the most formidable of odds that might seem daunting on their face like a strong and powerful enemy, but they buckle when faced by a man who possesses these magnificent qualities like the enemy crumbling when it faces a stronger warrior.

Lord Ram has described a 'Chariot of Dharma'—that is, a vehicle that can help a spiritual aspirant attain his goals inspite of all the daunting and thorny problems of the world in which he lives. By following the principles of Dharma outlined above, he is rest assured of liberation and deliverance from all fetters and bondages that tie his Atma, his 'pure self', to this mundane world and makes it go round and round in an endless cycle of birth and death along with their accompanying horrors and miseries. Not only this, the journey through life becomes easy and smooth because the aspirant has the security and safety of the Chariot, and the protection of the umbrella of Dharma.

Lord Ram has listed the following twenty-one auspicious virtues that a man must possess if he wishes that the Lord extends him his protection, and if he wishes to become invincible against all the evil effects of this world. The sequential order of the virtues is as follows—Sauraj, Dhiraj, Satya, Sheel (line no. 5), Bal, Vivek, Dam, Parhit, Kshamaa, Kripaa, Samtaa (line no. 6), Bhajan (devotion for Lord God), Virati, Santosh (line no. 7), Daan, Buddhi, Vigyan (line no. 8), Amal (purity) and Achal (steady) Mana (mind), Sama, Yam, Niyam (line no. 9), and worship of Brahmins and Guru (line no. 10).

Now, it will be very pertinent and interesting to examine the presence of all these magnificent and divine virtues in Lord Ram himself as depicted at different places in different contexts spread through the text of epic Ram Charit Manas, which made the Lord invincible.

Virtue no. 1= 'Sauraj' (bravery and valour)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25 where Marich tells Ravana that it is very unwise to make Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman enemies because they are very brave, powerful and strong, and any opposition to them would be futile.

Virtue no. 2, 3 and 18 = 'Dhiraj' (patience, fortitude, courage and resilience), Satya and mind that is steady, firm and resolute respectively—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 where king Dasrath tells his minister to go behind Lord Ram, after he has been sent to forest exile, and try to purusade the Lord to come back. During this instruction, Dasrath says—"If the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, who are of a firm resolve and an unwavering mind, courageously refuse to come back because Lord Ram is extremely firm in his resolve and is true to his word (that he will go to the forest if it the father's will)---".

Virtue no. 3= ‘Satya’ (truthfulness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264 in which the assembly felt glad upon hearing Lord Ram make a firm resolve to honour Bharat’s wish—because the Lord is exemplarily truthful to his words, and once he says that he will honour the wish of Bharat he will do it no matter what comes. The context is Bharat’s plea to the Lord to return to the city of Ayodhya to ascend its throne, and the Lord agreeing to do what Bharat says because he knew that Bharat cannot tell him to do anything that goes against the tenets of Dharma.

Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 292, the Lord has been ascribed with the virtues of Satya, Dharma, and Sheel.

In Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 23 that precedes Doha no. 7 Lord Ram has himself proclaimed to Sugriv that “listen friend, my words do no go in vain; I do not lie”.

Virtue no. 4 = ‘Sheel’ (politeness, courteousness, civility, humility, good manners and etiquette)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 243 where Lord Ram has eagerly gone forward to welcome his guru sage Vasistha when the party of Bharat arrived at the Lord’s hermitage in Chitrakoot to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. Here Lord Ram has been described as being an ocean of Sheel. (ii) Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 29 Ka, it is said that “Tulsidas declares and asserts that there is no other Lord compared to Lord Ram in as far as the virtue of Sheel is concerned because Lord Ram is an abode, or a treasure-trove, of this grand virtue”. (iii) In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 6 it is asserted that Lord Ram is an abode of Sheel and other auspicious Gunas (virtues).

Virtue no. 5= ‘Bal’ (strength)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 2 wherein Jayant, the stupid son of Indra (the king of gods), has accepted that Lord Ram possesses unmatched strength, power, authority and potent about which he had not known earlier, for then he would not have had the temerity to hurt Sita. He regretted sincerely, and the merciful Lord forgave him and spared his life.

Virtue no. 6= ‘Vivek’ (wisdom)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 97 in which Sita says that Lord Ram is most merciful and full of wisdom. (ii) In Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254, sage Vashistha declares to the assembly “no one knows the essential principles and the tenets as well as the practical implementation of the grand virtues of Niti (laws of conduct and thought; laws of jurisprudence), Priti (love, affection, cordiality), Parmaarath (spiritual welfare; general good in the long run) and Swaarath (personal safety and interests) more than Lord Ram. (iii) Then again, in Lanka Kand, the 2nd half of Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 111, the creator has said while praying to Lord Ram that the Lord is free from anger and is always an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment.

Virtue no. 7 = ‘Dam’ (self restraint over one’s organs and urges)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 179 in which it is asserted that “Lord Ram is pure in mind and heart, that he is pious, and that he is disinterested in and dry (non-emotional) towards the sense objects of the world and their allurements or temptations”. (ii) Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32, king Dasrath declares to Kaikeyi (his wife) that “everyone says that Lord Ram is like a Sadhu (saintly and pious)”.

Virtue no. 8 = ‘Parhita’ (welfare of others)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 192 that says that Lord Vishnu took birth as a human being (in the form of Lord Ram) for the interest, welfare, well-being and good of Brahmins,

mother Earth, Gods and Saints. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 says “Lord Ram has taken birth for the general good, well-being and welfare of the world at large”.

Virtue no. 9 = ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285 wherein sage Parashuram has declared that Lord Ram and his brother Laxman are like a temple (abode) of the virtue of forgiveness. (2) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218 in which the creator Brahma has advised the Gods not to create mischief and put an obstacle in the path of Bharat’s attempt to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya because though “Lord Ram does not get angry at any harm or offence caused to him personally or directly”, but will not accept any mischief being created to annoy his devotees.

Virtue no. 10 = ‘Kripaa’ (compassion, grace, benevolence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259 that says Lord Ram is an ‘abode of Kripaa’; (ii) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 208 Kha which says that Lord Ram is an ‘ocean of Kripaa’; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 101 that also endorses this virtue of Lord Ram as being an ‘ocean of Kripaa’; (iv) Aranya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 2 that says ‘there is no one comparable to Lord in having in him the virtue of Kripaa’; (v) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 that says “Lord Ram has a very sweet temperament, is most merciful, compassionate and gracious, and shows his benevolence dispassionately, without any sort of interests involved”; (vi) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that say—“When Lord Ram was told that the heap of bones lying on the ground was of the sages and seers who have been devoured by the demons, his eyes were filled with tears. He raised his arms and took a firm vow that he will eliminate all the demons from the surface of the earth. After that, the Lord went to the hermitages of all the sages and seers independently to comfort them and give them happiness and pleasure.”

Virtue no. 11 = ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity, fortitude, evenness of mind, to treat all alike without distinction and discrimination)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7 in which Baali, the king of the monkey race and elder brother of Sugriv tells his wife Tara that “Lord Ram treats everyone alike and harbours no personal ill-will against anyone”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 227 in which Laxman has said “Oh Lord, you have equal love and compassion for all, and treat everyone like you would treat your own self”. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219 which asserts Lord Ram has equanimity and evenness of mind as he treats everyone alike without any distinction and discrimination, and therefore has no ill-will against anyone nor is infatuated with someone else”. (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 34 that precedes Doha no. 86 in which Lord Ram has himself declared that “all the creatures are dear to me equally as all of them are my off-springs, all have been created by me—i.e. I do not distinguish between them on any pretext”.

Virtue no. 12 = ‘Devotion for Lord God and worshipping him’ (Ish Bhajan)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) In Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2, till Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 it is narrated that Lord Ram had installed an image of Lord Shiva, known as a lingam, and then duly worshipped it. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 that says Lord Ram did his sacraments in the sanctioned way. (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 237 says that the Lord brought flowers so that sage Vishwamitra can offer his ritualistic worship of Gods. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai

line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 says that Lord Ram worshipped an image of Lord Shiva on the banks of the holy river Ganges on his way to the forest after taking a purification bath in the river.

Virtue no. 13 = 'Virati' (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, non-involvement with anything related to the world and its gross objects of the senses)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31 which says "Lord Ram had no greed for the kingdom of Ayodhya; he never yearned for it"; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 51 that says "Lord Ram's mind is like a free elephant, and the responsibilities of the kingdom is like the iron shackle that is put around this elephant's leg to tie it down; so as soon as the Lord learnt that he has been ordered to go to the forest he felt as this shackle has been broken and so he felt exceedingly glad and happy"; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 that says "Lord Ram discarded the royal ornaments and clothes as soon as he received the father's orders to proceed to the forest, and most cheerfully and willingly took up and wore clothes made of bark of the birch tree and leaves with complete dispassion, without having any sort of emotions either of happiness or of dismay in his heart".

The same idea is emphasized in Kavitawali of Tulsidas, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 2, line no. 4 which says "The lotus-eyed Lord Ram went to the forest after abandoning the kingdom of his father like a mendicant who has no attachment with anything at all, and who does not look back at the place which he leaves"

Virtue no. 14 = 'Santosh' (contentment; satisfaction at whatever is available)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 342 says "Lord Ram, who is always fulfilled and contented, became satisfied by the words of King Janak". (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 133 that says that Lord Ram's mind and heart felt fully contented when he saw the natural beauty of Chitrakoot.

Virtue no. 15 = 'Daan' (making charity)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 in which Lord Vishnu has told Manu and Satrupaa that they are free to ask for anything they want as the Lord is a great giver who gives liberally. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196 says that king Dasrath gave charity with an open hand at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers. Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 Kha says "the wealth that Lord Shiva had granted to the 10-headed Ravana when the latter offered his heads to him as sacrifice, the same wealth was granted hesitatingly by Lord Ram to Vibhishan (even without the latter making any sacrifice like Ravana)". The fact that Lord Ram was 'hesitant' in giving Vibhishan all this is that the Lord felt that it was not enough, and that he should have given Vibhishan much more than that. In other words, Lord Ram is a most magnanimous and benevolent giver; he always thinks that he has not done enough for his devotees and should have done more. (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12 says that when Lord Ram was crowned the king of Ayodhya after his return to the city, liberal donations were made to Brahmins. (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24 says that after becoming the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram used to make liberal charities to Brahmins in many ways.

Virtue no. 16 = 'Buddhi' (intelligence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56 that says "Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial serpent with a thousand hoods) is unable to recount the splendorous glories, the matchless strength and immensity of intelligence and wisdom (Buddhi) of Lord Ram even though he has a thousand mouths (hoods)".

Virtue no. 17 = 'Vigyan' (analytical abilities; deep insight and foresight; higher levels of intelligence; transcendental intelligence and wisdom)—refer: Ram

Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 that says “Lord Ram is such an expert that he knows how to act in different circumstances like an expert artist who can assume so many different postures according to the role he is assigned on the stage of the theatre”. No one can say that the person playing out a particular part on the stage is not the same person in practical life, so expertly does the artist plays out his role. This is because he knows the secrets of the trade, has a first-hand knowledge of the character that he plays on stage, and is so well-versed with the actual situation in the real life that his depiction of the character becomes extremely natural and convincing as if it is the real thing. Similarly, Lord Ram is so wise and expert that he knows the subtle secrets and even those aspects of a thing that are not apparent and known to all.

Virtue no. 18 = ‘Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) that is un-corrupt, holy, pious and steady’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 231 that say—“It is natural for the members of the Raghu dynasty (in which Lord Ram took birth, and therefore had this wonderful character in him) that they do not step on a path that is unrighteous, inauspicious, improper, immoral and unethical. I have a firm belief and faith in my (Lord Ram’s) Mana that it has never thought of coveting any woman to whom one is not related.” (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 that says “Lord Ram is as steady and unmoving as the mountain covered by snow (i.e. the Himalayas), and is as grave, dense and deep as the vast ocean”.

Virtue nos. 19 and 20 = ‘Sham’ and ‘Yam’ (self-restraint of the sense organs and their natural urges for gratification), ‘Niyam’ (following rules strictly, and obeying religious sacraments and observances)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, the 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 says “Lord Ram was true to the vows he had taken, and was steady on his chosen path”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29 says “Lord Ram lived like a true hermit, having completely renounced all his attachments for everything and being fully disinterested in any material thing of the world and its charms”—that is, the Lord practiced a high degree of self control; he shunned all desires for pleasure and comfort inspite of the fact that he was born a prince and would one day ascend the throne of Ayodhya which was regarded as the most prosperous kingdom of the time. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 says that “Lord Ram wore clothes made of the bark of the birch tree and leaves (like a renunciate hermit inspite of his being entitled to royal ornaments and attire befitting a king)”. (iv) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 211 says that—“Lord Ram wore the minimum of clothes, ate naturally grown wild fruits, and slept on the ground on a bed made of leaves and twigs. He lived under the shade of trees, and suffered from the vagaries of Nature by tolerating with equanimity and stoic neutrality the effects of snow, heat, rain and storm (during the phase of his life in the forest as a hermit, without complaining or having any grudge against anyone.”

And finally Virtue no. 21 = ‘Respect of Guru and Brahmins’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 9 which say that “when Lord Ram heard about the arrival of his Guru (sage Vashistha) at his palace, he came forward to receive him at the door, and bowed his head to the Guru. Then the Lord welcomed him (Guru) by worshipping him comprehensively in a ritualistic manner that consists of sixteen steps. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 79 says that “Lord Ram payed his respects to and worshipped the feet of Brahmins and his Guru (sage Vashishtha), and then went on his way to the forest”. (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90 where it is said that “Lord Ram (mentally) bowed his head before the lotus-like feet of Brahmins as he strode ahead

on the chariot (that was sent by the Gods, to face the enemy in the battle-field of Lanka)”.]

दो०. महा अजय संसार रिपु जीति सकइ सो बीर।

जाकें अस रथ होइ दृढ़ सुनहु सखा मतिधीर॥ ८० (क)॥

dōhā.

mahā ajaya sansāra ripu jīti saka'i sō bīra.

jākēm asa ratha hō'i dṛṛha sunahu sakhā matidhīra. 80 (a).

Listen oh friend (Vibhishan) who has a steady and resolute mind! A warrior (living being) who has a sturdy Chariot (magnificent virtues) as described above becomes invincible for any enemy in this world; he cannot be defeated even if the whole world becomes his enemy; his detractors cannot cause his downfall even if they join hands against him.' (Doha no. 80-a.)

[Note—In the beginning of this discourse by Lord Ram, Vibhishan was uneasy and full of doubts—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/80/1. He was wary of the prospects of fighting a strong enemy like Ravana without a war chariot and other paraphernalia of battle. It becomes virtually impossible to acquire maneuverability and swiftness of movement, so essential for victory on the battle-field, while fighting on foot. But when Lord Ram taught him the principles of Dharma, when he was enlightened about the subtle inner strength of the Atma that comes to a man by the possession of the divine virtues listed by Lord Ram herein above, Vibhishan became assured of the Lord's victory. This is because he knew that Ravana lacked all of them, and therefore stood no chance against Lord Ram who had all these glorious virtues in him that made the Lord spiritually and morally strong and invincible.

The Lord has said here that a person who possesses this Chariot cannot be defeated by the 'whole world', implying that Ravana, being an individual person, holds no chance when the whole world united against a person who possesses such a fabulous and glorious Chariot of Dharma cannot defeat him.

This teaching of Lord Ram herein above describes the glorious virtues that make a man victorious in all his struggles in this mundane world. These virtues are likened to a chariot on which a warrior rides to his victory in the battle-field. The analogy is obvious—the struggles of life in this mundane world are like the battle-field as they consist of innumerable pains and miseries as well as improbables over which one has no control. And just like a strong chariot helps the expert warrior to move swiftly from one corner of the battle-ground to another, issuing instructions to his army and out-manoeuvre the enemy, the grand virtues listed by Lord Ram helps a person overcome all obstacles in life and emerge victorious.

The context is the battle-field of Lanka. Ravana, the demon king, is astride a strong chariot, while Lord Ram is on foot. It becomes physically difficult to manoeuvre and move swiftly on foot and fight against a powerful enemy who is given the advantage of mobility and protection of a vehicle built especially for the battle, such as the war chariot. He can store his arms and ammunition in this chariot besides enjoying the advantage of the ability to have a commanding position from which to control the army spread across the battle-field by the virtue of his fast manoeuvrability and movement.

So, this deficiency made Vibhishan very worried and upset. Though he had immense affection and faith in the Lord, but for once he began to have doubts as how will the Lord conquer a strong enemy while fighting him standing himself on foot. It was then that Lord Ram preached these grand and glorious virtues to Vibhishan just like Lord Krishna had taught his friend Arjun in the battle-field of Kurushetra that became famous as Lord Krishna's "Geeta".]

सुनि प्रभु बचन बिभीषन हरषि गहे पद कंज ।
एहि मिस मोहि उपदेसेहु राम कृपा सुख पुंज ॥ ८० (ख) ॥

sunī prabhu bacana bibhīṣana haraṣi gahē pada kañja.
ēhi misa mōhi upadēsēhu rāma kṛpā sukha puñja. 80 (b).

When Vibhishan heard these wise words of Lord Ram, he felt exhilarated and contented. He fell down to clasp the holy feet of the Lord and exclaimed in gratitude: 'Oh Lord, you are a fountain of mercy and grace. How fortunate am I that you have given this great wisdom to me on the pretext of answering my concerns regarding the necessity of a chariot during this war.' (Doha no. 80-b)

उत पचार दसकंधर इत अंगद हनुमान ।
लरत निसाचर भालु कपि करि निज निज प्रभु आन ॥ ८० (ग) ॥

uta pacāra dasakandhara ita aṅgada hanumāna.
larata nisācara bhālu kapi kari nija nija prabhu āna. 80 (c).

[After describing this glorious Chariot, we resume our narrative of the Great War.]

On the other side it was Ravana who was challenging and thrashing the enemy warriors (i.e. the monkeys and bears) with all his might, and on this side it were Angad and Hanuman who retaliated with equal ferocity, challenging Ravana and his might, every step of the way.

Both the demons of the other side (i.e. of Ravana's side), and the bears and monkeys of this side (i.e. of Lord Ram's side) viciously clashed with each other using brutal force, all the while applauding their respective Lords and raising loud cries extolling their glories, and swearing in their names. (Doha no. 80-c)

चौ०. सुर ब्रह्मादि सिद्ध मुनि नाना । देखत रन नभ चढ़े बिमाना ॥ १ ॥
हमहू उमा रहे तेहिं संगी । देखत राम चरित रन रंगा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sura brahmādi sid'dha muni nānā. dēkhata rana nabha caṛhē bimānā. 1.
hamahū umā rahē tēhiṁ saṅgā. dēkhata rāma carita rana raṅgā. 2.

[Continuing with the narration of this fascinating Story of a War the like of which was never witnessed heretofore anywhere in the annals of history, and would neither be hereafter, Lord Shiva quoth to goddess Uma, his divine consort who was listening to it very attentively—]

‘All the Gods, including the creator Brahma, as well as many mystics and great sages (who had the mystical ability to assume an ethereal or a disembodied form when they so wished), were watching the proceedings on the battle-field and the progress of the Epic War from their aerial vehicles stationed in the sky. (1)

Oh Uma; I (Lord Shiva) was also accompanying them as we watched with awe the wondrous and strange deeds of Lord Ram done by him on the battle-field¹. (2)

[Note—¹What was so strange, mysterious and awe-inspiring about Lord Ram’s actions in the battle-field of Lanka that so dazed the gods? Well, the gods were aware of Lord Ram’s true identity, that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of the world, and the most powerful and almighty second god of the Trinity, the other two being the creator Brahma, and Lord Shiva who is the concluder of this creation. This being the case, it was so astonishing that Lord Ram should behave like any other ordinary human warrior, who is gallant, valiant, courageous and brave, would during a war, instead of employing any of his cosmic supernatural powers to easily win the enemy in a battle of this magnitude—for the almighty Lord Ram had allowed himself to be tied in a snare of serpents created by Meghanad^a, and had even permitted Laxman to be mortally wounded and almost on the verge of losing his life when Meghanad attacked him and made him unconscious, and further adding to the confusion of gods the Lord had gravely lamented and mournfully wailed for Laxman like an ordinary man would for his dear brother^b.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, ^aChaupai line nos. 11-13 that precede Doha no. 73; and ^bChaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54; Doha no. 61.}]

सुभट समर रस दुहु दिसि माते । कपि जयसील राम बल ताते ॥ ३ ॥

एक एक सन भिरहिं पचारहिं । एकन्ह एक मर्दि महि पारहिं ॥ ४ ॥

subhaṭa samara rasa duhu disi mātē. kapi jayasīla rāma bala tātē. 3.
ēka ēka sana bhirahiṁ pacārahiṁ. ēkanha ēka mardī mahi pārahiṁ. 4.

The veterans of both the sides were maddened with a burning passion for war and victory. Howbeit, the monkeys (and bears) had a clear upper hand in the battle-field, leading the fight and holding a sway over their enemies, by the grace and blessings of Lord Ram. (3)

There was a fierce hand-to-hand duel; the valiant warriors engaged their opponents in a ruthless face to face combat, thrashing the other mercilessly, and dashing their adversaries to the ground with such violent force that they were pulverized and reduced to a pulp¹. (4)

[Note—¹A similar battle of excess of gallantry and ferocity, where zealot warriors engaged in a fierce face-to-face duel with their opponents, was fought during the first battle with Meghanad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 53.

Besides this, it was also witnessed during the opening phases of the war when the demon and monkey armies clashed with each other—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 46.]

मारहिं काटहिं धरहिं पछारहिं । सीस तोरि सीसन्ह सन मारहिं ॥ ५ ॥
उदर बिदारहिं भुजा उपारहिं । गहि पद अवनि पटकि भट डारहिं ॥ ६ ॥

mārahim kāṭahim dharahim pachārahim. sīsa tōri sīsanha sana mārahim. 5.
udara bidārahim bhuajā upārahim. gahi pada avani paṭaki bhaṭa ḍārahim. 6.

The enemy was beaten mercilessly, slashed and cut violently, caught hold of and thrashed to the ground, and their heads were yanked off their bodies and then used as missiles to hit others with them. (5)

Abdomens were ripped open; arms were torn away from the torso; and gallant warriors were grabbed by their legs, swung around, and then dashed on the ground. (6)

निसिचर भट महि गाड़हिं भालू । ऊपर ढारि देहिं बहु बालू ॥ ७ ॥
बीर बलीमुख जुद्ध बिरुद्धे । देखिअत बिपुल काल जनु क्रुद्धे ॥ ८ ॥

nisicara bhaṭa mahi gāṛahim bhālū. ūpara ḍhāri dēhim bahu bālū. 7.
bīra balīmukha jud'dha birud'dhē. dēkhi'ata bipula kāla janu krud'dhē. 8.

Demon warriors were grabbed by mighty bears and buried in the earth over which a mound of sand was dumped¹. (7)

The valiant warriors who were filled with zeal and a firm determination to overcome their adversaries in the battle-field appeared to be like personified forms of Kaal, the god of death himself². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, two scenarios are possible here. One is that the monkeys first dashed the demon warriors to the ground, and when they died they were buried by the bears who dug a grave for them and covered it with sand.

In the other possibility, the bears grabbed demons and buried them alive in the ground, heaping sand over them so that they die of suffocation.

And of course obtaining 'sand' was no problem as there was an ocean all around Lanka, and sand is found in abundance near the ocean.

²Though it is not specifically mentioned here to whom this reference of 'being personified form of Kaal' is being made, whether it refers to the monkeys and bears or to the demon warriors, but taking into consideration the ground situation on the battle-

field where the monkeys and bears had an upper hand over the demons, it is clear that the allusion is to the Lord's warriors, the monkeys and the bears, instead of the demons who were bearing the brunt of their attack, and were on the defensive.

This deduction is supported by the following verses.]

छं०. क्रुद्धे कृतांत समान कपि तन स्रवत सोनित राजहीं । १ ।
मर्दहिं निसाचर कटक भट बलवंत घन जिमि गाजहीं ॥ २ ॥
मारहिं चपेटन्हि डाटि दातन्ह काटि लातन्ह मीजहीं । ३ ।
चिक्करहिं मर्कट भालु छल बल करहिं जेहिं खल छीजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

krud'dhē kṛtānta samāna kapi tana sravata sōnita rājahīm. 1.
mardahīm nisācara kaṭaka bhaṭa balavanta ghana jimi gājahīm. 2.
mārahīm capēṭanhi ḍāṭi dātanha kāṭi lātanha mījahīm. 3.
cikkarahīm markāṭa bhālu chala bala karahīm jēhīm khala chījahīm. 4.

The gallant and powerful monkeys, who were furious with anger as if Kaal himself has taken their forms, appeared glorious with blood oozing out of the wounds on their bodies. (Chanda line no. 1)

Those valiant warriors (i.e. the monkeys and bears) fought vigorously with powerful demon warriors and trounced them, all the while roaring like the thunder of the cloud. (Chanda line no. 2)

They (the monkeys and bears) slapped and severely reprimanded their opponents (the demon warriors), bit them viciously with their sharp teeth, and then trampled them underfoot, pulverizing and reducing them to a pulp. (Chanda line no. 3)

The monkeys and bears were letting out shrill war cries and adopting all possible strategies to make their enemy feel exasperated, to make him depressed and dejected, and ultimately decimated. (Chanda line no. 4)

धरि गाल फारहिं उर बिदारहिं गल अँतावरि मेलहीं । ५ ।
प्रह्लादपति जनु बिबिध तनु धरि समर अंगन खेलहीं ॥ ६ ॥
धरु मारु काटु पछारु घोर गिरा गगन महि भरि रही । ७ ।
जय राम जो तृन ते कुलिस कर कुलिस ते कर तृन सही ॥ ८ ॥

dhari gāla phārahīm ura bidārahīm gala aṁtāvari mēlahīm. 5.
prahlādapati janu bibidha tanu dhari samara aṅgana khēlahīm. 6.
dharu māru kātu pachāru ghōra girā gagana mahi bhari rahī. 7.
jaya rāma jō ṭṛṇa tē kulisa kara kulisa tē kara ṭṛṇa sahī. 8.

The vehemently angry (monkey and bear) warriors caught hold of their enemies (the demon warriors) with excess of wrath, tearing their cheeks, slicing their chests, and

hanging their intestines around their own necks after ripping up their abdomens. (Chanda line no. 5)

They give the impression that the Lord of Prahalad, i.e. Lord Narsingh¹, has assumed countless forms to enact the 'dance of death' by mercilessly unleashing his devastating anger on the evil demon hordes, and slaying them in great numbers. (Chanda line no. 6)

The sky and the earth reverberated in all the directions with horrifying and shrill cries of 'Grab, Kill, Cut them off, Thrash and Trample Under the Foot' that ranted everywhere. (Chanda line no. 7)

Simultaneously, there was a resounding applause for Lord Ram as the (enthusiastic and victorious) warriors invoked the glories of the Lord with great zeal, enthusiastically cheering 'Glory to the great Lord Ram, who indeed and without any gainsay has the mystical powers that can truly turn a humble twig into the mighty Vajra (the strongest, the sturdiest, the heaviest and an invincible weapon in the world, something that cannot be conquered or subdued), or make a Vajra become like a poor twig (that is easily crushed and trampled upon)². (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹The allusion here is to Lord Vishnu who had assumed a terrifying form of 'half-lion and half-man', known as 'Narsingh', to tear apart the body of the demon Hiranyakashipu, the father of Prahalad, because he was not allowing his son to worship the Lord, and after having failed in persuading Prahalad to desist from offering his obeisance to Lord Vishnu, the demon father finally decided to kill him. He drew his sword to cut off Prahalad's head, but when the poor little helpless boy prayed to Lord Vishnu to save him, the Lord assumed a ferocious form of 'Narsingh' and revealed himself immediately. The Lord was seething with excess of anger, and he grabbed Hiranyakashipu, laid him across his lap, and tore his abdomen viciously into two; then the angry Lord Narsingh yanked out the entrails of the cruel demon and hung them around his neck like blood-soaked garlands.

In a similar fashion, the ferocious monkey and bear warriors tore apart the bodies of the demons and pulled out their intestines which they hung around their necks like so many victory garlands; in this form and action they assumed the role of Lord Narsingh.

²To wit, Lord Ram, being the almighty, all-able and omnipotent Supreme Lord of the world, can do the impossible and the unimaginable if he so wishes. For instance, he can convert an ordinary-looking, weak and powerless creature into a formidable giant with supernatural powers, one who can conquer the whole world and defeat the most formidable and strongest of enemy with the greatest of ease, and should it please the Lord he can do the reverse with equal comfort, i.e. he can turn a mighty and most powerful man into an incompetent, inept, imbecile and impotent person.

The idea here is that though monkeys and bears were no match for the might and the ferocity so characteristic of the powerful demon race, yet now the same humble creatures were ruthlessly thrashing and vanquishing the same demon warriors who had been so powerful only some time ago that the mere mention of their name would send chill down the spine of the almighty gods of heaven. The mystery of the whole thing was that the demons were being beaten black and blue, and they were unable to retaliate and take revenge against the monkeys and bears.

Why and how this strange thing was made possible? The answer is this: It was made possible by the grace and the wish of Lord Ram alone, and for no other reason.]

दो०. निज दल बिचलत देखेसि बीस भुजाँ दस चाप ।
रथ चढ़ि चलेउ दसानन फिरहु फिरहु करि दाप ॥ ८१ ॥

dōhā.

nija dala bicalata dēkhēsi bīsa bhujaṁ dasa cāpa.
ratha caḍhi calē'u dasānana phirahu phirahu kari dāpa. 81.

When the ten-headed Ravana observed that his forces were in a dire strait, he strode upon his war chariot, held ten powerful bows in his twenty arms¹, and rode to the frontline of the battle, urging his troops to make a strategic retreat; he called out to his warriors: 'Retreat, retreat immediately'. (Doha no. 81)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana held ten bows in his ten arms, one in each, and naturally the other ten arms held arrows, shields, and other weapons. Till now he was standing behind to watch the developments on the ground, but when he discovered that his soldiers were being beaten back mercilessly and rapidly decimated, he could not hold back and rode ahead to the line of physical combat, ordering his warriors to fall behind and regroup.]

चौ०. धायउ परम क्रुद्ध दसकंधर । सन्मुख चले हूह दै बंदर ॥ १ ॥
गहि कर पादप उपल पहारा । डारेन्हि ता पर एकहिं बारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhāya'u parama krud'dha dasakandhara. sanmukha calē hūha dai bandara. 1.
gahi kara pādapa upala pahārā. ḍārēnhi tā para ēkahim bārā. 2.

The ten-shouldered (dasakandhara) Ravana was seething with excess of anger as he dashed forward with a vengeance. The monkeys meanwhile were very excited (because of their recent victory), and they hurried forward, chuckling gleefully, to confront the advancing Ravana midway. (1)

They dumped trees, boulders and rocks, small and large, on Ravana all at once. (2)

लागहिं सैल बज्र तन तासू । खंड खंड होइ फूटहिं आसू ॥ ३ ॥
चला न अचल रहा रथ रोपी । रन दुर्मद रावन अति कोपी ॥ ४ ॥

lāgahim saila bajra tana tāsū. khaṇḍa khaṇḍa hō'i phūṭahim āsū. 3.
calā na acala rahā ratha rōpī. rana durmada rāvana ati kōpī. 4.

The mountain-like huge rocks and boulders struck Ravana's body, which was as strong and robust as Vajra (the hardest substance in existence), only to break up into small pieces and fall down to the ground. (3)

Ravana, who was a mighty and valiant warrior renowned for his exceptional gallantry, bravery, valour, steadfastness and resilience during a combat, stood his ground firmly, with great ease and dogged determination, not moving from his position and yielding ground a wee whit. (4)

इत उत झपटि दपटि कपि जोधा । मदैँ लाग भयउ अति क्रोधा ॥ ५ ॥
चले पराड़ भालु कपि नाना । त्राहि त्राहि अंगद हनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥

ita uta jhapaṭi dapaṭi kapi jōdhā. mardai lāga bhaya'u ati krōdhā. 5.
calē parā'i bhālu kapi nānā. trāhi trāhi aṅgada hanumānā. 6.

Here and there and everywhere, to his left, right and front, Ravana challenged the monkey warriors vehemently, sternly remonstrating them, and dashing at them wrathfully in order to grab them (with the intention of ruthlessly doing them to death). (5)

It was now the turn of the monkeys and bears to flee the ground under the ferocious retaliatory attack by Ravana. They became panicky, shrieking for help and crying aloud: 'Oh Angad, oh Hanuman! Save us; come to our aid; help us immediately'¹. (6)

[Note—¹A similar situation was observed earlier during the first phase of the war when the demons, who had suffered defeat and rout initially, hit back viciously at the advancing army of monkeys and bears after Ravana became angry at them for their cowardice, and motivated them to fight with the enemy with courage and resilience. The counter attack of the demons made the monkeys and bears flee in terror, shouting for help from Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela and Dwivid. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 42—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43.}]

पाहि पाहि रघुबीर गोसाईं । यह खल खाड़ काल की नाई ॥ ७ ॥
तेहिं देखे कपि सकल पराने । दसहुँ चाप सायक संधाने ॥ ८ ॥

pāhi pāhi raghubīra gōsā'īm. yaha khala khā'i kāla kī nā'īm. 7.
tēhiṁ dēkhē kapi sakala parānē. dasahuṁ cāpa sāyaka sandhānē. 8.

[They also sought the intervention of Lord Ram, pleading to the Lord to show mercy upon them by invoking his holy name and seeking his graceful help to free them from their plight.]

They invoked Lord Ram and pleaded for help, praying: 'Oh Lord Raghubir; oh gracious and kind Lord (raghubīra gōsā'īm). We fall at your feet and plead with you to have mercy on us and relieve us from this plight (pāhi pāhi). This wicked fellow

(Ravana) is killing us all, as if Kaal, the god of death, has himself assumed his ferocious form to annihilate us.' (7)

When he (Ravana) observed that all the monkeys (and bears) have started fleeing from him, he strung all his ten bows and mounted arrows on them (to shoot down the terror-stricken, fleeing troops of his enemy). (8)

छं०. संधानि धनु सर निकर छाड़ेसि उरग जिमि उड़ि लागहीं । १ ।
 रहे पूरि सर धरनी गगन दिसि बिदिसि कहँ कपि भागहीं ॥ २ ॥
 भयो अति कोलाहल बिकल कपि दल भालु बोलहिं आतुरे । २ ।
 रघुबीर करुना सिंधु आरत बंधु जन रच्छक हरे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sandhāni dhanu sara nikara chārēsi uraga jimi uḍi lāgahīm. 1.
 rahē pūri sara dharanī gagana disi bidisi kahañ kapi bhāgahīm. 2.
 bhayō ati kōlāhala bikala kapi dala bhālu bōlahīm āturē. 3.
 raghubīra karunā sindhu ārata bandhu jana racchaka harē. 4.

He (Ravana) took aim and shot a rapid volley of sharp arrows that flew like countless serpents flying towards their prey with great speed. (Chanda line no. 1)

The arrows filled the sky and the earth in all the directions. Where would the monkeys (and bears) run away now to escape them?

[To wit, there was no place available where the fleeing monkeys and bears could go to hide themselves, and escape being hit by the arrows.] (Chanda line no. 2)

There was great alarm and a fearful tumult amongst the ranks of the monkey and bear warriors who were out of their wits and utterly terrified. They were all overcome with fear as they made an earnest plea to Lord Ram asking for his intervention to relieve them of this unexpected and sudden calamity that had befallen upon them all. (Chanda line no. 3)

They prayed in unison: 'Oh Lord Raghubir (raghubīra); oh Lord who is an ocean of mercy and compassion (karunā sindhu); oh Lord who is a dear friend of those who are in distress and need (ārata bandhu); oh Lord who ensures protection as well as welfare and well-being of his devotees (jana racchaka); oh Lord who dispels and removes the sorrows and miseries of all (harē)! (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. निज दल बिकल देखि कटि कसि निषंग धनु हाथ ।
 लछिमन चले क्रुद्ध होइ नाइ राम पद माथ ॥ ८२ ॥

dōhā.

nija dala bikala dēkhi kaṭi kasi niṣaṅga dhanu hātha.
 lachimana calē krud'dha hō'i nā'i rāma pada mātha. 82.

Seeing that his troops were in disarray and facing a dire situation, Laxman picked up his bow in his hand, strung it, bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ram, and then angrily marched to the battle-field¹. (Doha no. 82)

[Note—¹Two things are to be noted here: One, that Laxman has not been asked by Lord Ram to go the aid of the fleeing monkeys and bears, and two, that Laxman has departed angrily for the battle-field after bowing his head before Lord Ram.

The first point is answered by saying that since he was next in command in the army after Lord Ram himself, and a fierce war was raging in the battle-field, it was not deemed necessary by Laxman to seek permission from the Lord every time a quick action was to be taken, for it was assumed that such permission was automatically deemed to be granted.

The second point is however more significant. At the time of going out to fight Meghanad for the first time, Laxman had also left for the battle-field in an angry mood; the result was that he got wounded in the battle and fell down unconscious. He repeats this mistake once again now. And what happened? We shall soon read herein below that he was shot by Ravana and fell down unconscious once again.

This incident has a subtle message for all of us: that we must always remain calm and poised during adversities, leaving everything confidently on the Lord God with a firm conviction that he will definitely take care of us. We learn this fact from Laxman's incident—because when he went out to fight Meghanad for the second time he had not shown any anger at all, but remained calm. What was the result? He succeeded in slaying Meghanad.

Here too we shall read that after regaining his senses, Laxman went back to confront Ravana, but now he had not lost his cool, and hence succeeded in making Ravana faint—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 84 herein below.]

चौ०. रे खल का मारसि कपि भालू । मोहि बिलोकु तोर मैं कालू ॥ १ ॥

खोजत रहेउँ तोहि सुतघाती । आजु निपाति जुड़ावउँ छाती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rē khala kā māraṣi kapi bhālū. mōhi bilōku tōra mair̥m kālū. 1.
khōjata rahē'uṁ tōhi sutaghātī. āju nipāti jurāva'uṁ chātī. 2.

[When Laxman reached the spot where Ravana was, he challenged the demon king with these stern words:-]

Laxman said to Ravana, 'Oh you wicked fellow (rē khala). Why do you target these humble monkeys and bears? Look at me; I am your Kaal (death personified)¹.' (1)

[When Ravana saw Laxman, his anger burst out like a suppressed volcano. He immediately recalled that it was Laxman who had killed his dear son Meghanad. For Ravana, now it was the time to take revenge. So he said bitterly, with utter contempt in his voice:-]

Ravana shot back at Laxman vehemently with these contemptuous and scornful words, 'Oh you who are the one who killed my dear son (Meghanad). I was searching for you. Oh my good fortune; I have finally got hold of you, and now I will

cool my burning heart by slaying you with a vengeance (to avenge my son's death and give rest to his soul)².’ (2)

[Note—¹To wit, if you are indeed so eager for a fight and wish to prove your gallantry in the battle-field, you ought to choose someone who is your match. It's foolish and cowardly for you to vent your frustration and anger on these poor fellows, the humble monkeys and bears, who are no match for your might and the high stature of your royal majesty! Why do you wish to waste your energy, why do you demean yourself, why do you invite scorn and dishonour yourself by fighting with these poor creatures? It's a shameful thing to do for you. Well, do you wot naught that a valiant warrior worth his honour always fights with someone who is of an equal stature as himself? So, it is not a good and honourable thing for you, who are the great king of the mighty and proud demon race, to vent your fury on these simple creatures, the poor and humble monkeys and bears.

Come on then; meet me, for I am someone of an equal stature as you are, for you are the king of Lanka while we two brothers, myself and my elder brother Lord Ram, are the princes of a mighty kingdom of Ayodhya. I have come to greet you and invite you for an honourable duel. Accept my challenge like a gallant warrior, and let's prove ourselves before the world which is watching us closely. Come hither; let's see what we can do.

²Meghanad was killed by Laxman in a battle during of previous day—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-16 that precede Doha no. 76.

When Ravana saw Laxman standing before him, it was natural for him to lose his cool for he was meeting the killer of his son. His anger was provoked much like a smouldering fire in a hearth that leaps up fiercely in a burst of unrestrained flames when fresh air is pumped into it from the side.]

अस कहि छाड़ेसि बान प्रचंडा । लछिमन किए सकल सत खंडा ॥ ३ ॥
कोटिन्ह आयुध रावन डारे । तिल प्रवान करि काटि निवारे ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi chārēsi bāna pracaṇḍā. lachimana ki'ē sakala sata khaṇḍā. 3.
kōṭinha āyudha rāvana ḍārē. tila pravāna kari kāṭi nivārē. 4.

Saying this, Ravana shot a thick volley of sharp and powerful arrows; Laxman shot his own arrows to counter them, and successfully broke the incoming arrows into hundreds of pieces. (3)

Ravana shot countless (literally 'hundreds of thousands'—"kōṭinha") weapons of various denominations; Laxman swiftly demolished all of them, cutting them into splinters¹. (4)

[Note—¹All sorts of missiles, such as arrows, spears, lancets, dumb-bells, sharp-edged wheels, serrated rings and discuses that had razor-sharp edges, et al, were shot by Ravana in a rapid-fire action. Laxman showed alacrity and swiftness of reaction as he neutralized all the missiles as quickly as they came, demolishing them before they could hit their target, which obviously was Laxman himself.]

पुनि निज बानन्ह कीन्ह प्रहारा । स्यंदनु भंजि सारथी मारा ॥ ५ ॥
सत सत सर मारे दस भाला । गिरि संगन्ह जनु प्रबिसहिं ब्याला ॥ ६ ॥

puni nija bānanha kīnha prahārā. syandanu bhañji sārathī mārā. 5.
sata sata sara mārē dasa bhālā. giri sṛnganha janu prabisahim byālā. 6.

After neutralizing Ravana's weapons, Laxman fiercely retaliated by shooting his own arrows, which broke Ravana's war chariot and killed his charioteer. (5)

Then he (Laxman) shot another volley of arrows that pierced through Ravana's head, ten arrows in each of his ten heads¹; it looked as if so many flying serpents were entering inside caves located on the top of a huge mountain. (6)

[Note—¹Laxman had first shot 2 arrows that broke Ravana's chariot and killed the charioteer. Then he shot a total of 100 arrows as ten arrows had pierced through each of Ravana's ten heads: 10 heads x 10 arrows in each head = 100 arrows.

To wit, Laxman had shot a total of 2 + 100 = 102 arrows at Ravana.]

पुनि सत सर मारा उर माहीं । परेउ धरनि तल सुधि कछु नाही ॥ ७ ॥
उठा प्रबल पुनि मुरुछा जागी । छाड़िसि ब्रह्म दीन्हि जो साँगी ॥ ८ ॥

puni sata sara mārā ura māhīm. parē'u dharani tala sudhi kachu nāhīm. 7.
uṭhā prabala puni muruchā jāgī. chāḍisi brahma dīnhi jō sāṅgī. 8.

Then Laxman shot another volley of a hundred powerful arrows aimed at Ravana's chest; these arrows slammed in and pierced through his body, felling him down on the ground, gravely wounded and unconscious. (7)

Soon Ravana regained his senses and got up. Peeved and exasperated, the ferocious Ravana, who was now in full fury, took out a very powerful weapon given to him by the creator Brahma (known as Brahmastra)¹. (8)

[Note—¹This weapon was infallible and sure to have a serious and devastating effect on its target. It was employed only in cases of emergency when all other weapons failed. Burning with anger, Ravana invoked it and used it to hit Laxman back with it.

It could have been a special arrow, a spear, a lancet, or some other kind of missile that could be thrown at the target from a distance.]

छं०. सो ब्रह्म दत्त प्रचंड सक्ति अनंत उर लागी सही । १ ।
पर्यो बीर बिकल उठाव दसमुख अतुल बल महिमा रही ॥ २ ॥
ब्रह्मांड भवन बिराज जाकें एक सिर जिमि रज कनी । ३ ।
तेहि चह उठावन मूढ़ रावन जान नहिं त्रिभुवन धनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sō brahma datta pracaṇḍa sakti ananta ura lāgī sahī. 1.
 paryō bīra bikala uṭhāva dasamukha atula bala mahimā rahī. 2.
 brahmāṇḍa bhavana birāja jākēṁ ēka sira jimi raja kanī. 3.
 tēhi caha uṭhāvana mūrha rāvana jāna nahim tribhu'ana dhanī. 4.

That Brahma's infallible weapon, which had an inherent quality of striking hard and felling its target without fail, hit Laxman (who is also known as 'Anant') in his chest. (Chanda line no. 1)

The strike was so hard that it made the valiant and brave Laxman fall down to the ground unconscious by its sheer force. Then Ravana, who had phenomenal strength of arms and stupendous might at his command, came forward agitatedly and tried to lift Laxman (with the intention of taking him as hostage inside the fort of Lanka). But he failed in his endeavours, for he could not move Laxman.

Thus Laxman was able to maintain his dignity, and retain his honour and glory by making Ravana fail to lift him. (Chanda line no. 2)

[What was the reason why Ravana failed to lift Laxman? Here's the answer:-]

He (i.e. Lord Seshnath, the celestial Serpent who is the primary form of Laxman) on whose head the whole universe, including its different divisions, lie like a small speck of sand --- (Chanda line no. 3)

--- The stupid and dumb-witted Ravana tried to lift the same cosmic Being (who was presently in the form of Laxman) because he was not aware of the fact that he was the Lord of Tribhuvan (the three divisions of the world)¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial Serpent, who is believed to support the entire creation by holding it on his head—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 197; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17; (b) Ayodhya Kand—Doha no. 253 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

The 'Tribhuvan' refers to the three divisions of this world: viz. heaven, earth, and nether world.

This inability of Ravana to lift Laxman is easy to understand if we just apply common sense. Laxman, in his primary form as Seshnath, supports the world, which obviously includes this earth where Lanka was situated, on his head. How can anyone, no matter how strong he might be, lift the very piece of earth, the area of land or the ground on which he is standing?

Suppose a person is standing on a mat, and the mat is spread over floor of his room. How can he dig that floor and lift it on his shoulders or head while standing on the same part of the floor? It's like trying to lift one's own self; it's absolutely absurd and madness to even think of doing it. One can lift someone else, but not one's own self!

So therefore, trying to lift Laxman was logically and physically impossible for Ravana because he was standing on the very piece of ground which Laxman supported on his head in his primary form as Seshnath; it would be like lifting his own self along with the ground on which Ravana was standing, which is a ridiculous proposition, a senseless thought, and against all principles of science.]

दो०. देखि पवनसुत धायउ बोलत बचन कठोर ।
आवत कपिहि हन्यो तेहिं मुष्टि प्रहार प्रघोर ॥ ८३ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi pavanasuta dhāya'u bōlata bacana kaṭhōra.
āvata kapihi han'yō tēhiṁ muṣṭi prahāra praghōra. 83.

When the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) saw Ravana making attempts to lift Laxman, he dashed forward (to intervene and stop him from doing so), shouting at him and strongly admonishing Ravana by using harsh words against him.

Almost simultaneously, when Ravana observed that Hanuman is approaching him menacingly, he raised himself and hit the latter hard with his clenched fists as if a mighty Vajra (a very hard and strong weapon used by Indra, the king of gods) was used to strike Hanuman¹. (Doha no. 83)

[Note—¹A very interesting observation can be made here. Earlier on in the war, when Laxman was shot and made unconscious by Meghanad (Ravana's son), the latter too had tried to lift Laxman, but had failed. Then Meghanad left the wounded Laxman lying on the ground and went away. So by the time Hanuman came there to lift and take Laxman away to Lord Ram, there was no one to oppose him. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 54 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 55.}

But now in the case of Ravana we find that he did not go away, but continued to make efforts to lift Laxman till the time Hanuman came to intervene.]

चौ०. जानु टेकि कपि भूमि न गिरा । उठा सँभारि बहुत रिस भरा ॥ १ ॥
मुठिका एक ताहि कपि मारा । परेउ सैल जनु बज्र प्रहारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānu ṭēki kapi bhūmi na girā. uṭhā saṁbhāri bahuta risa bharā. 1.
muṭhikā ēka tāhi kapi mārā. parē'u saila janu bajra prahārā. 2.

Hanuman tottered a bit but overall succeeded in overcoming the force of the blow by kneeling down on his knees and supporting himself on the ground; this strategy prevented him from falling down flat on the ground.

He soon recovered himself and got up, full of excess of fury and seething with vehement wrath¹. (1)

Hanuman retaliated viciously by striking Ravana ferociously with his clenched fists; the blow was so hard that it struck Ravana as if the Vajra (the hard and strong weapon of Indra) itself had hit him with its full force. (2)

[Note—¹Why was Hanuman's anger so mightily provoked? First it was because he saw Ravana felling Laxman by hitting the latter with Brahm's weapon, then whatever little anger was yet left unprovoked inside Hanuman was stoked when Ravana hit him with his fists. That was intolerable for Hanuman, so he decided to teach this villain some bitter lesson by giving him his own medicine by way of a counter fist-attack.]

मुरुछा गै बहोरि सो जागा । कपि बल बिपुल सराहन लागा ॥ ३ ॥
 धिग धिग मम पौरुष धिग मोही । जौं तैं जिअत रहेसि सुरद्रोही ॥ ४ ॥

muruchā gai bahōri sō jāgā. kapi bala bipula sarāhana lāgā. 3.
 dhiga dhiga mama pauruṣa dhiga mōhī. jaum̐ taim̐ ji'ata rahēsi suradrōhī. 4.

[What was the effect of Hanuman's mighty strike?] Ravana fell down unconscious by the mighty force of the fist blow, but he soon recovered his senses and praised Hanuman's valour and courage¹. (3)

When Hanuman observed that Ravana had recovered himself, he vehemently cursed his own self and moaned: 'Shame to me; shame to my valour, honour and fame. I am terribly ashamed of myself that I left you, the enemy of gods, alive (instead of doing you to death immediately after you fainted when I struck you with my fist).'² (4)

[Note—¹This indeed was the way great and true warriors thought and behaved in ancient times. Instead of cursing and abusing Hanuman and calling him several filthy names in uncouth language, Ravana praised him for his gallantry and valour; he recognized and gave credit to Hanuman's astounding strength and stupendous powers that succeeded in felling Ravana, a feat that of course was not easy.

In today's world, we kill each other from hiding, using guns and rockets and remote controlled bombs raining down from the sky upon the helpless enemy on the ground, and then we claim victory over a much weaker adversary. How cowardly this is; what kind of 'victory' is it? A true soldier worth his honour and name is one who praises the valour and martial skills of the other soldier, even though the latter is his mortal enemy.

²Well, Hanuman could have done it now, he could have killed Ravana still yet, couldn't he? So why didn't Hanuman lunge at Ravana and caught hold of him and dash him to the ground to kill him if he was so regretful to have left him alive?

The reason is this: Laxman was lying unconscious on the ground, and a huge, angry and ferocious army of demons was teeming all around. There was grave danger to Laxman if any time was wasted in removing him from the battle-field to a safer place. Some heavy demon may trample upon him, or some mighty monkey or bear warrior might do it by mistake, because during the heat of war warriors become literally blind to whom they hit, or who is lying dead or still alive but wounded on the ground. This possibility was too risky to overlook in the eagerness to kill Ravana.

Hence, Hanuman decided to first take Laxman to a safer place, for Ravana could be tackled later on; it wasn't that urgent now.]

अस कहि लछिमन कहूँ कपि ल्यायो । देखि दसानन बिसमय पायो ॥ ५ ॥
 कह रघुबीर समुझु जियँ भ्राता । तुम्ह कृतांत भच्छक सुर त्राता ॥ ६ ॥

asa kahi lachimana kahum̐ kapi lyāyō. dēkhi dasānana bisamaya pāyō. 5.
kaha raghubīra samujhu jiyam̐ bhrātā. tumha kṛtānta bhacchaka sura trātā. 6.

After expressing extreme anger and exasperation at himself for not having killed Ravana at the spot itself (due to the exigency of the situation and the urgent call of duty requiring him to take Laxman to a safe place first, and keep everything else pending for a while), Hanuman lifted the prostrate Laxman, very swiftly and very easily, and brought him to where Lord Ram was¹.

When Ravana saw this (i.e. when he observed that Hanuman could easily lift Laxman when he himself hadn't been able to move the latter a wee bit despite trying his best and employing all the strength that he could muster for the job, strength which was truly phenomenal), he was greatly astounded and utterly awed at this strange development². (5)

Lord Ram looked at Laxman and explained: 'My dear brother. Think for yourself; recall your mighty glory and majesty. You are the one who can devour even the god of death, and you are the one who is the protector of gods!³' (6)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that Hanuman had easily lifted Laxman and brought him to Lord Ram when he was shot and made unconscious by Meghanad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55.

There we have read that Meghanad too had tried his best to lift Laxman but failed—apropos: Doha no. 54.

An elaborate note has been appended to these verses to explain how and why Hanuman was able to lift Laxman when all others had failed.

We will briefly site here a simple example of ordinary life to explain how it was made possible. Suppose a green leaf of a tree is plucked off its branch by some miscreant; the leaf would obviously fall on the ground below. It wouldn't move on its own, but suppose again that a strong wind starts blowing. What will happen? The wind would easily lift the leaf, bear it along or carry it aloft to a certain point, and then drop it there. Now, a sudden force in the wind is needed to actually lift the leaf from the ground; mild or soft breeze wouldn't lift it.

This example explains what might have happened on the battle-field of Lanka. Hanuman, as is well known and documented, was the 'son of the wind god'; he inherited the genes, and consequently the abilities and qualities of the 'wind god'. Added to this factor was another: since Lord Ram and his brother were fighting this war on behalf of the gods, and on their behest, it was obligatory for the gods to help them in the best way they could; they were morally duty-bound to do it. So therefore, when the time came to help Lord Ram by removing Laxman from the dangers of the battle-field, the 'wind god' decided to do his bit by aiding his son Hanuman in lifting Laxman and taking him out of harms way, which meant bringing him to Lord Ram.

So be it. But then, why couldn't Ravana not move Laxman even a fraction of a millimeter from the ground where he was lying in spite of the well-known fact that he had successfully lifted the mighty Kailash mountain, the abode of Lord Shiva, when he laid siege on it and decided to bring it to Lanka along with its Patron Lord, Shiva—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 29.

The answer is this: Ravana had an extremely gross nature; he was very sinful and evil and full of vices in his body, and so therefore he represented more closely the 'earth element', which is the grossest and the most heavy of the five elements of

creation, which incidentally are the sky, wind, fire, water and earth elements in ascending order of grossness. In sharp contrast with the nature of Ravana was Hanuman, for he stood for the ‘subtler and lighter forces of creation represented by the wind element’. So therefore, since Ravana himself was ‘gross and heavy as lead’, and consequently symbolized the nature of the ‘earth’ which itself is heavy and gross, he differed remarkably from the nature of Hanuman who symbolized the ‘subtle and lighter forces of creation represented by the wind element’.

To wit, Ravana was an image of the ‘heavy and gross earth element’, while Hanuman was an image of the ‘subtler and lighter wind element’.

Heavy things go down; lighter things move up. If we put a ball of lead in water, it will sink; but if we put a balloon filled with air on the same water, it will float on the surface; won’t it?

This observation answers our question on its own accord: Ravana, being gross and heavy as the earth element, could not lift Laxman because here Laxman’s own weight was added to the mighty weight of the earth which he carried on his head in his primary form as Lord Seshnath, the celestial Serpent—apropos: Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83 herein above.

On the other hand was Hanuman; he had the qualities of the wind element which is an invisible stupendous force of creation, strong enough to be able to easily uproot large trees, and make even the mighty ocean heave and rise in the form of gigantic waves, many meters high, that move forward in the form of a high wall that moves fast and furious with devastating force, when it is whipped up by the force of a fierce storm, so much so that it can topple huge ships and lay to ruin vast coastal areas where it makes landfall. What is a humble leaf lying on the ground before the might of this wind force? To wit, when Hanuman employed his inherent force of the power of the wind element, lifting Laxman was only like a child’s play; like a child lifting a leaf from the ground and taking it somewhere.

Come to think of it; anything that is gross like the earth element is visible also like the earth in its physical form as we know it, but anything that is subtle and light like the wind element remains invisible to us like our own breath or the air that surrounds us. So therefore, we can see or visualize Ravana flexing his muscles, biting his teeth, sweating and fretting and fuming and cursing and calling names as he physically applies all the might of his twenty strong arms in an attempt to lift Laxman, but we have no such account for Hanuman! It is because Ravana’s efforts were visible to us as he was a gross person, while Hanuman’s efforts remained invisible as his was a subtler and sublime presence, a persona that transcended the grossness of this physical world.

We must remember in this context that Hanuman was able to lift the mighty mountain containing the medicinal herbs needed to revive Laxman when he had fainted earlier, and held it aloft on his hands as he cruised all the way across the night sky for thousands of miles from the northern Himalayas to the battle-field of Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58. If he could do that, there is no wonder he could lift Laxman as well, because he had the technical skill and the acumen needed to perform this feat, something others didn’t have.

Besides this incident, Hanuman had also streaked across the sky over the ocean like an arrow while coming to and going back from Lanka when he had been sent to search for Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1.

²Ravana was confounded because he couldn't see deeper into the truth. It is because of the effects of 'Maya', the Supreme Lord's power to create delusions that overwhelmed him and clouded his wisdom. It was because his time was up; 'death' was coming closer to him, and its dark shadow had engulfed his intellect and discretion like the creeping shadow that precedes total lunar or solar eclipse.

³See note appended to verse no. 7 herein below.]

सुनत बचन उठि बैठ कृपाला । गई गगन सो सकति कराला ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि कोदंड बान गहि धाए । रिपु सन्मुख अति आतुर आए ॥ ८ ॥

sunata bacana uṭhi baiṭha krpālā. ga'ī gagana sō sakati karālā. 7.
puni kōdaṇḍa bāna gahi dhā'ē. ripu sanmukha ati ātura ā'ē. 8.

No sooner did the merciful Laxman heard Lord Ram's pleas, then he sat up, as if nothing at all had happened to him¹. Meanwhile, the deadly 'Shakti', i.e. the powerful energized weapon that Ravana had used to strike Laxman with, went back to the heavens². (7)

Thence, Laxman grabbed a formidable bow called 'Kodanda'³ and its compatible arrows, and rushed once again very eagerly to face the enemy in the battle-field. (8)

[Note—¹When Laxman was made unconscious the last time during his battle with Meghanad, we have read that he was revived with the help of certain medicinal herbs that grew on a mountain brought by Hanuman from the higher reaches of the Himalayas. Now, once the usefulness of these herbs was proved, it can be reasonably and logically assumed that Lord Ram and his wise ministers had kept the rest of the herbs safely for any future use, because they couldn't take any further risks while a bloody and deadly war was raging.

So this time around, these herbs came in handy to them; for as soon as Laxman was brought in, he was immediately administered the potion that had revived him earlier. Wonderful war strategy indeed it was; any commander of an army will instinctively do the same thing even today.

²And what about this 'Shakti' going to the heaven? Well, here heaven actually means the 'sky'. It implies that the shaft that had entered Laxman's body was pulled out by either Lord Ram himself or any one of his ministers, who immediately 'flung it off so violently that it appeared to fly away into the sky'. Meanwhile, the medicinal herb was applied to Laxman's wound, and its action was so rapid that he recovered very quickly. In ancient times when no modern medicines and healing technology were available, but the most ferocious of wars were fought nevertheless, surely some ancient method of healing the wounded soldiers were known to the commanders of great armies which helped them to get the wounded soldiers back on their feet fast.

To recall an example from classical literature, we read in 'Don Quixote' by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, in its chapter no. iii, book 2, that when the knight-errant named Don Quixote was once seriously injured in his ears during one of his many misadventures, wherein one of his ears was just short of being ripped off his body, and he managed to escape with just a deep gash which was bleeding and

paining extremely, the nomadic goatherds with whom had been discoursing on some subject and to whom he complained about his misery, came to his aid; they crushed some leaves of the rosemary plant, mixed some salt in the paste, and bandaged the injured part of the ear with this concoction. It had a rapid healing effect, and our brave knight-errant found immediate relief.

Well, let's come back to the story. We have read that this weapon was known as Brahma Shakti; so it went to its original owner, i.e. to the creator Brahma. This is why it is said here that it went to the 'heaven'.

³The Kodanda Bow is the special bow belonging to Lord Ram, and it was used sparingly during the war; it was the one which was used to slay Ravana. It was different from other bows, for it had some special virtues unique to it. It was crafted by with the specific purpose of eliminating the scourge of the evil forces of Nature symbolized by Ravana and his vile demon compatriots.]

छं०. आतुर बहोरि बिभंजि स्यंदन सूत हति व्याकुल कियो । १ ।
गिर्यो धरनि दसकंधर बिकलतर बान सत बेध्यो हियो ॥ २ ॥
सारथी दूसर घालि रथ तेहि तुरत लंका लै गयो । ३ ।
रघुबीर बंधु प्रताप पुंज बहोरि प्रभु चरनहि नयो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ātura bahōri bibhañji syandana sūta hati byākula kiyō. 1.
giryō dharani dasakandhara bikalatara bāna sata bēdhyō hiyō. 2.
sārathī dūsara ghāli ratha tēhi turata laṅkā lai gayō. 3.
raghubīra bandhu pratāpa puñja bahōri prabhu carananhi nayō. 4.

Laxman went back hastily, and with renewed fury, to face Ravana once again in the battle-field. He shot a volley of fierce arrows that broke Ravana's second chariot¹ into splinters, killed his charioteer, and made the demon warlord extremely exasperated. (Chanda line no. 1)

He (Laxman) pierced Ravana's chest with a hundred arrows shot simultaneously; they had a devastating effect on Ravana, making him totter and swoon, and fall down on the ground in great agitation. (Chanda line no. 2)

In the meantime, another charioteer, who was waiting with a spare chariot², immediately picked up the fallen Ravana and scampered away with great haste, taking him back to the fort of Lanka. (Chanda line no. 3)

After having chased back the enemy and avenging himself, Lord Ram's valorous brother (Laxman) came back to the Lord. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Laxman had broken Ravana's first chariot and killed its charioteer before he was shot and made unconscious by the demon king—apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83 herein above.

Meanwhile, during the intervening time, while Hanuman had taken Laxman to Lord Ram and then Laxman had come back to the battle-field to face Ravana once

again after regaining his senses, Ravana called in another chariot that was kept in reserve, as a stand-by. It was this new chariot, the 2nd one, that Laxman broke now.

²This was the '3rd chariot' used by Ravana that we come across. The demon king kept many war chariots in reserve during battles so that he can quickly switch from one to another should any emergency arise.]

दो०. उहाँ दसानन जागि करि करै लाग कछु जग्य ।

राम बिरोध बिजय चह सठ हठ बस अति अग्य ॥ ८४ ॥

dōhā.

uhāṁ dasānana jāgi kari karai lāga kachu jagya.
rāma birōdha bijaya caha saṭha haṭha basa ati agya. 84.

There, inside Lanka, when the ten-headed Ravana regained his consciousness after some time, he started doing some kind of fire sacrifice¹ that would enable (or empower) him to win the war against Lord Ram.

Indeed and in all sooth, he was truly an ignorant and dumb-witted fellow, whose mind was pervert and heart wicked, that he even imagined he would gain victory in a war by antagonizing Lord Ram, by standing as the Lord's enemy with the hope of defeating the Supreme Lord of the world². (Doha no. 84)

[Note—¹This is the second time we come across performance of a fire sacrifice by the demon clan during the course of the war. Earlier it was Meghanad who did it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 75.

In both these cases, i.e. in the case of Meghanad earlier and of Ravana now, the fire sacrifices were done during the night, at the end of the day's battle.

The light of the fire lit for the purpose of the sacrifice lighted up the night sky. It was a tell-tale sign that would warn Vibhishan that a fire sacrifice was being undertaken by Ravana in Lanka. We shall read in the following verse that Vibhishan came to know about the developments and went to warn Lord Ram about it.

²This marked the end of the 6th day of the war.]

चौ०. इहाँ बिभीषन सब सुधि पाई । सपदि जाइ रघुपतिहि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

नाथ करइ रावन एक जागा । सिद्ध भएँ नहिं मरिहि अभागा ॥ २ ॥

पठवहु नाथ बेगि भट बंदर । करहिं बिधंस आव दसकंधर ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ihāṁ bibhīṣana saba sudhi pāī. sapadi jā'i raghupatihi sunāī. 1.
nātha kara'i rāvana ēka jāgā. sid'dha bha'ēṁ nahim marihi abhāgā. 2.
paṭhavahu nātha bēgi bhaṭa bandara. karahim bidhansa āva dasakandhara. 3.

In the meantime, Vibhishan learnt everything about the developments in Lanka (i.e. he got to know that Ravana was engaged in doing a fire sacrifice to gain victory in the war)¹. So he immediately rushed and told all about it to Lord Ram². (1)

Vibhishan said: ‘Oh Lord; Ravana is doing a fire sacrifice. If that unfortunate fellow completes it successfully, then he would become invincible, and it will not be possible to kill him any longer. (2)

So therefore oh Lord, it has become imperative (for us) to send monkey and bear warriors to interrupt it. They must go forthwith and disrupt the sacrifice so that Ravana would be provoked and forced to come here (in the battle-field) before he manages to complete it successfully and gain invincibility.³’ (3)

[Note—¹How did Vibhishan come to know what Ravana was doing inside his fort? There are two possibilities: One, some spy had informed Vibhishan about it, who was also keeping him abreast of everything that was happening inside the fort. And two, as soon as the sacrificial fire was lit, its flames lighted the night firmament above, and it was a tell-tale sign which led Vibhishan to conclude that Ravana was performing a great fire sacrifice. We must remember that Vibhishan was Ravana’s brother, and so he was well acquainted with family practices and his elder brother’s habits, and the rituals he was likely to perform when faced with emergencies.

²Earlier too, when Meghanad had done a similar fire sacrifice, Vibhishan had rushed to tell Lord Ram about it, and warn him that if he succeeded in finishing it, then he would become invincible—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 75.

³Remarkable indeed! It ought to be noted that the initiative to disrupt the fire sacrifice was taken by Vibhishan, and not Lord Ram. Here it is clear that Vibhishan had expressly requested that troops be dispatched to prevent the completion of the sacrifice. This made it obligatory for Lord Ram to heed this advice, because Vibhishan was a trusted military advisor, a close confidential aide and the strategist of the Lord during this campaign, and failing to listen to him, and then if the war was lost, the entire blame would lie squarely on the Lord’s shoulders.

Besides this, the Lord was employing the ancient wisdom of paying back a wicked fellow with the sort of money with which he does his own business; or rather, to give him the taste of his own medicine. Demons were known to defile and destroy fire sacrifices of sages, and so now it was high time to repay them and giving them the same remedy by destroying their own sacrifices. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 181; and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 183.}

In sage Veda Vyas’ epic ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 4-16, it is clearly mentioned that Ravana was advised by his guru Sukracharya that he should do a particular kind of fire sacrifice in some secret place. His guru also told him the secret of how to do it and the Mantras to be employed. This ritual, if completed successfully, would provide him with certain war paraphernalia, such as a chariot, horses, bows, arrows, quiver etc., which would make him invincible in the war. So Ravana retired to his palace and got a deep underground cavern made for this purpose. But unfortunately for him, a huge plume of smoke emanating from the fire sacrifice rose and went up high in the sky; it also contained the aroma of the various

herbs that were used for the sacrifice. Vibhishan had spotted this smoke and also smelled the smell of herbs, most probably because the smoke wafted towards the camp of Lord Ram by the force of the breeze that was blowing in that direction.

So Vibhishan immediately became alert; he came to the conclusion that the only cause of this smoke and its aromatic smell was that Ravana was doing some sort of fire sacrifice, and there could be no other reason for him doing it in the middle of night other than gaining victory in the war.]

प्रात होत प्रभु सुभट पठाए । हनुमदादि अंगद सब धाए ॥ ४ ॥
 कौतुक कूदि चढ़े कपि लंका । पैठे रावन भवन असंका ॥ ५ ॥
 जग्य करत जबहीं सो देखा । सकल कपिन्ह भा क्रोध बिसेषा ॥ ६ ॥

prāta hōta prabhu subhaṭa paṭhā'ē. hanumadādi aṅgada saba dhā'ē. 4.
 kautuka kūdi caṛhē kapi laṅkā. paiṭhē rāvana bhavana asaṅkā. 5.
 jagya karata jabahīm sō dēkhā. sakala kapinha bhā krōdha bisēṣā. 6.

As soon as it was dawn, Lord Ram sent agile and valiant warriors such as Hanuman, Angad etc. to accomplish this task¹. All of them dashed forward to Lanka with great haste. (4)

The monkeys leapt over the walls of the fort of Lanka² very easily, and then fearlessly entered the palace of Ravana. (5)

When they found him doing the fire sacrifice, they lost their cool and became excessively furious and wild with anger. (6)

[Note—¹Throughout the war we will observe that it were Angad and Hanuman who had led the assault from the front. Other great warriors, such as Nala, Neela, Dwivid, Jamvant etc. had their own roles to play and had accompanied them, but the main pillars on which the success of the war rested were undoubtedly Angad and Hanuman. Lord Ram was acquainted with their exceptional abilities, stupendous valour and phenomenal strength, and so he would always summon them first and ask them to lead each phase of the assault.

A question arises in one's mind that was it good for Lord Ram to order the destruction of a fire sacrifice? Well, though apparently this ordering of destruction of a fire sacrifice was not a good act for Lord Ram to do, as he was an upholder of righteousness and supporter of good deeds, but we must remember that he was fighting a war with a cunning and vicious enemy who would go to any length to defeat his opponent; and times of wars have different set of rules as compared to peaceful times. Besides this, the Lord wished to give a message that a thorn has to be plucked out by another thorn or a needle if the whole body is to be prevented from developing gangrene; it was a literal tit-for-tat for the demons who had been relentlessly defiling fire sacrifices of sages.

If mercy was shown on the demons in this final stage when the objective of Lord Vishnu to come down to earth as Lord Ram was about to be fulfilled, then all efforts would be wasted. To wit, if Ravana was allowed to survive, which he surely would if he successfully completed the fire sacrifice, then the sufferings he had caused to the world and the horrors he had perpetrated, would continue unabated. He

would become all the more brazen and reckless; sins and evil deeds would multiply, and all things under the banner of 'Dharma', such as the virtues of goodness and righteousness, would become the casualty.

If this was allowed to happen then Lord Ram, who was the Supreme Being, would fail in his duty in upholding the tenets of Dharma and protecting the humble creatures of his own creation who were being mercilessly tormented and made to suffer interminably by the demons. So such niceties as avoiding the destruction of a fire sacrifice on the grounds of high moral and scrupulous were not the need of the hour, especially in the context of what was already happening and what would happen in the world if Ravana survived.

Lord Ram also wished to make Ravana and Meghnad, both of whose fire sacrifices were ordered to be destroyed, have a taste of their own medicine. They were used to defiling the fire sacrifices of sages, hermits and seers, so let them feel how bad they must have felt.

It also shows that when all means to avoid confrontation were exhausted, when the wicked, the pervert, the rascal and the unrighteous evil fellows who were embodiments of every imaginable forms of sin and evil, would not see reason and mend their ways, then for the larger good of the world, in the larger interest of restoring order and peace in this world, the Lord had no other alternative but to administer a bitter medicine to the demons to which they were so accustomed. Drastic situations need equally drastic remedies, for oftentimes it does become imperative to use harsh methods for the larger interest of the society and humanity. If the carrot doesn't work, the stick has to be oftentimes used.

If the Lord shows mercy and compassion—which is actually his habit and wont—then multitudes suffer due to the wickedness of a handful of persons. It is better to sacrifice them and salvage the boat of peaceful and harmonious existence rather than pretending to be righteous and let the humanity suffer. Being a King and Lord of the universe and a caretaker of its inhabitants, it was morally bound on Sri Ram to protect his suffering subjects from the cruelty and tyranny unleashed by Ravana and his kith and kin.

So the ordering of the destruction of Ravana's fire sacrifice should be seen in this context.

²All the gates of the fort of Lanka were closed. So it became necessary for Angad and Hanuman to take a giant leap and enter the city forthwith, as no time could be wasted in stopping Ravana from completing the sacrifice. In Adhyatma Ramayan, a similar thing is described in its Lanka Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 16-20.

Even if the gates were not closed, it would be a waste of crucial time and sapping of vital energy trying to engage with the demon army stationed to protect the fort. Angad and Hanuman were tasked with destroying the fire sacrifice, and not clashing with and decimating the enemy army.]

रन ते निलज भाजि गृह आवा । इहाँ आइ बक ध्यान लगावा ॥ ७ ॥
अस कहि अंगद मारा लाता । चितव न सठ स्वारथ मन राता ॥ ८ ॥

rana tē nilaja bhāji gr̥ha āvā. ihāṁ ā'i baka dhyāna lagāvā. 7.
asa kahi aṅgada mārā lātā. citava na saṭha svāratha mana rātā. 8.

They scornfully teased Ravana by saying, ‘Oh you shameless and cowardly fellow. You ran away from the battle-field, and came here to pretend to be doing meditation like a heron.¹ (7)

Saying this, Angad kicked him (Ravana) viciously. But the wicked fellow paid no attention to it as his mind was preoccupied with other things². (8)

[Note—¹This metaphor of the heron is used for a person who is very pretentious, deceitful, and full of falsehood, who pretends to be a harmless, nice and holy person to mislead other from his true intention, for he is the most wicked creature one may come across.

This bird stands in water on one leg and bent neck, appearing to be engaged in silent meditation. But its attention is fixed on any fish that may come within its range, for then it would swiftly pick it up from water with its long beak and gobble it up, only to resume its meditative, saintly and holy posture the next moment.

Here the monkeys mean that Ravana was a coward who ran away from battle, but now he pretends to be a holy man engaged in his religious pursuit. Is this his true character; is he really a holy man doing a fire sacrifice? Well, if it was so then they would never dare ruin his fire sacrifice, but the truth is that he is a crook who is assuming this posture with the evil intention of acquiring powers that would enable him to wreak havoc, to unleash the fire of hell on his enemy, the monkeys and bears as well as their Lord Ram and his close advisors. So this being the case, surely there is no harm in disrupting his fire sacrifice.

This observation makes it clear why the monkey troops were not accused of committing a sinful act by destroying the sacrifice of Ravana: for it was being done with evil intentions. Compared to this, the destruction of the fire sacrifices of sages by the demons was a sinful act as their sacrifices were a part of their religious duties and spiritual practices that had no evil component in it; they weren’t aimed against anybody.

²Credit must be given to Ravana at least for once in this regard, that when he was engaged in doing the fire sacrifice, all his attention was focused on it as it rightly ought to be. He was immune to everything else; external stimuli did not affect him at all, nor was he disturbed by them, for his inner-self was deeply immersed in meditating on the deity to whom he was offering this sacrifice and his physical body was as good as dead and numb.

Even if we do not accept this argument and say that Ravana was fully conscious of his surroundings, then at least one thing is sure: as soon as a noisy raucous was created by the invading monkeys, Ravana immediately realized why they had come, which was to disrupt his sacrifice. So he mentally geared himself up to defeat their design by not allowing himself to be disturbed and get provoked by anything they do.

Hence, when Angad kicked him violently, Ravana maintained his cool.]

छं०. नहिं चितव जब करि कोप कपि गहि दसन लातन्ह मारहीं । १ ।

धरि केस नारि निकारि बाहेर तेऽतिदीन पुकारहीं ॥ २ ॥

तब उठेउ क्रुद्ध कृतांत सम गहि चरन बानर डारई । ३ ।

एहि बीच कपिन्ह बिधंस कृत मख देखि मन महुँ हारई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nahim citava jaba kari kōpa kapi gahi dasana lātanha mārahim. 1.

dhari kēsa nāri nikāri bāhēra tē'tidīna pukārahim. 2.

taba uṭhē'u krud'dha kṛtānta sama gahi carana bānara ḍāra'i. 3.

ēhi bīca kapinha bidhansa kṛta makha dēkhi mana mahuṁ hāra'i. 4.

When he (Ravana) did not open his eyes (i.e. when he remained calm and continued with his fire sacrifice, neglecting all insinuating words and provocative actions of Angad who had kicked him and called him a coward and a pretentious crook), all the monkeys who had come to disrupt his sacrifice attacked him all at once; some biting him with their teeth and others kicking him violently. (Chanda line no. 1)

They went on the rampage; some entered his palace and dragged his women (i.e. the female members of Ravana's royal household) out into the open by pulling them by their hairs, as a result of which they wailed in terror and screamed in abject fear (of being dishonoured and seriously injured)¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

It was too much for Ravana to cope with (because never ever in his long life had he been subjected to this extreme low level of humiliation where his women would be dragged out of the palace by their hairs, wailing and crying helplessly, and subjected to such wild dishonour in his presence).

So finally he lost his poise and got up in a huff. Bursting in the seam in surging anger, with all his restraint cracked beyond repair, he was a personified Kaal (Death) raging mad with vehemence and wrath. He reacted most violently and vengefully by quickly catching whosoever monkey warrior he could lay his hands by their legs, and dealing with all of these unfortunate victims most viciously, by throwing them away violently, felling some unconscious to the ground while thrashing and dashing others most brutally, and flicking some into the raging fire of the sacrificial pit (where they would char to death and roasted alive). (Chanda line no. 3)

During this time (while he was engaged in venting his anger on those monkeys who had dragged out his women), the other monkey warriors destroyed his fire sacrifice². When Ravana finally took notice of it, he was extremely dismayed and completely devastated, for now he lost all hopes of winning this war². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The monkeys were representing Lord Ram. It therefore implies that what they did had an indirect approval or tacit support of the Lord, for the Lord had never scolded them for doing such nasty things as dragging out women from inside their private chambers by pulling at their hairs. What does it mean? The Lord wanted to tell Ravana, albeit silently, that it is his punishment for what he had done with the women folk of others—for it is documented in ancient histories related to him that when he attacked the gods and other great rulers, he would grab their women and bring them as mistresses of his household—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182-b.

One such instance of Ravana's pervert and lascivious nature is right before us—the abduction of Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, which, as we are well acquainted

with by now, was the reason why this epic war erupted—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25; and (ii) Doha no. 28.

²Once again, this was exactly what Ravana himself had ordered his demons to do—to destroy the fire sacrifices of sages and kill them, and was now being paid in his own coin—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 181 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 206; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 207; and (b) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

³Ravana had pinned his hopes of victory in the war on the successful completion of his fire sacrifice. With this sacrifice in ruins, all hopes were lost; he felt himself sinking and weak in his knees. Now he was sure that the end was near; that the game was up for him. As it is said that when a person becomes very desperate and loses all hopes of recovery from his misfortunes, he becomes a very frustrated and dangerous man, like an injured lion or tiger, and if this person is in command of anything with which he can vent his anger on him who he believes has been the cause of his fall and misfortunes, then all hell breaks loose. Knowing now that death was a forgone conclusion for him, Ravana pulled out all stops and went berserk in anger.

So we shall discover now when we read on with this most fascinating narration of this equally fascinating Story, that the last phase of the war was the most vicious and brutal of all; it was a terrifying war fought with the extreme viciousness and hair-raising horror imaginable; a war the like of which was never again fought on earth.

Imagine the mismatch between the two great warring armies: on one side were ferocious giants, the vicious demons, armed to the teeth with the best of weapons and war paraphernalia in vogue at that point of time in history, and on the other side were the humble creatures known as monkeys and bears, who are regarded as primitive creatures low down in the ladder of evolution, who had nothing worth the name to be called as proper weapons of war, except their own teeth and the strength of their muscular arms, or the access to primitive attack weapons provided by mother Nature herself, such as trees, rocks and boulders! With these primitive tools at their disposal, the monkeys and bears succeeded in conquering the mightiest empire on earth at that time—the Demon Empire ruled by Ravana, an empire that stretched its sway and tentacles from the high heavens where the almighty Gods lived, right up to the nether world where other powerful Spirits ruled, those who had no less importance and no less powers than the Gods of heaven, with the poor earth with its humble creatures, including the human race and the animals, lying somewhere in between!

All these things point to one obvious reason: it is that this victory of the monkeys and bears was made possible only by the grace and blessings of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being himself personified in the Lord's physical form, and there was no other reason.]

दो०. जग्य बिधंसि कुसल कपि आए रघुपति पास ।

चलेउ निसाचर क्रुद्ध होइ त्यागि जिवन कै आस ॥ ८५ ॥

dōhā.

jagya bidhansi kusala kapi ā'ē raghupati pāsa.
calē'u nisācara krud'dha hō'i tyāgi jivana kai āsa. 85.

After destroying Ravana's sacrifice successfully, the monkeys came back to Lord Ram. Meanwhile, the demon king (Ravana) lost all hopes of either attaining victory or surviving this war alive, and so he departed for the battle-field boiling over with rage and mad with vengefulness¹. (Doha no. 85)

[Note—¹Ravana now decided that there is no looking back for him, that there was no hope for him to retrieve his lost glory and fame. He had lived a proud life as an invincible conqueror who had vanquished even the mighty gods by the valour of his strong arms. Now faced with the horrifying prospect of defeat and its attendant ignominy and humiliation, which was by now magnified manifold times by his inability to protect the honour and dignity of his own women folk who were pulled out unceremoniously from their palace by the monkey troops and ridiculed publicly, coupled by the infamy attached to the earlier deaths of his mighty son Meghanad and equally mighty brother Kumbhakaran, Ravana by now had turned into a mad and fanatic killer, who wots no boundaries and transcends all limits in his determination to unleash his fiery fury, like an erupting volcano spewing out molten lava or a ferocious dragon out to annihilate the world by breathing fire and brimstone, upon those whom he thinks are the cause of his fall from grace and loss of fortunes.

In this mental state of excessive aggressiveness and frustration, where he lost all hopes of living, and was therefore turned into a ferocious messenger of death and destruction, Ravana left the fort of Lanka and plunged head-on into the battle. He was determined now onwards to fight like a mad bull that is gravely injured, resolved to obliterate anything that stood in his way in the battle-field.]

चौ०. चलत होहिं अति असुभ भयंकर । बैठहिं गीध उड़ाइ सिरन्ह पर ॥ १ ॥

भयउ कालबस काहु न माना । कहेसि बजावहु जुद्ध निसाना ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

calata hōhiṁ ati asubha bhayaṅkara. baiṭhahiṁ gīdha urā'i siranha para. 1.
bhaya'u kālabasa kāhu na mānā. kahēsi bajāvahu jud'dha nisānā. 2.

No sooner had Ravana left the fort for the battle-field, than all sorts of ill omens of the worst kind, portending calamities and horrors of destruction without forbearance, commenced to reveal themselves. For instance, vultures (that are harbingers of death as they feed on dead bodies and rotting corpses) came in droves to alight on his head and then fly away. (1)

But he was so tightly under the grip of Death and entangled firmly by its deadly tentacles that he won't listen to anything sane or to anybody whosoever he might be (as he had become excessively stubborn, exceptionally furious with anger, and filled with burning desire for revenge that engulfed his entire being).

He declared an all-out war with no holds barred, and asked war trumpets to be sounded with full vigour, in high decibel. (2)

[Note—¹Having decided that for aught he saw there was no other future left for him but death, Ravana cared no more for his own life, nor for what would befall upon anyone else.

So, without waiting or caring to weigh his options any longer, he ordered the war trumpets to be sounded with full vigour, screwed his face menacingly in a grisly sign of unleashing his nasty vengeance upon his enemy, he immediately sallied out of the fort of Lanka, mad and furious with anger and raging wrath.

He didn't even bother whether his demon warriors followed him or not, for let us remember he had declared earlier that he relied on no body but the valour and might of his own arms when he had first decided to pick up the cudgel of animosity with Lord Ram, and so he would prove it in this war once the enemy has come directly to challenge him for a duel—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 78.]

चली तमीचर अनी अपारा । बहु गज रथ पदाति असवारा ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु सन्मुख धाए खल कैसें । सलभ समूह अनल कहँ जैसें ॥ ४ ॥

calī tamīcara anī apārā. bahu gaja ratha padāti asavārā. 3.

prabhu sanmukha dhā'ē khala kaisēm. salabha samūha anala kahaṁ jaisēm.

4.

The huge and formidable army of the demon race sallied out of the fort and headed for the battle-field. It had countless war elephants, chariots, foot soldiers (infantry) as well as those mounted on horses (cavalry)¹. (3)

These wicked and dumb-witted fellows rushed towards Lord Ram (and his army) just like insects fly towards a flame to meet their death. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79 where it is said that the demon army had four wings—implying foot soldiers or infantry, horse-riding soldiers or the cavalry, those who rode war elephants or the warrior mahouts, and those who used war chariots, which in modern parlance we call the 'mechanized division'.]

इहाँ देवतन्ह अस्तुति कीन्ही । दारुन बिपति हमहि एहिं दीन्ही ॥ ५ ॥

अब जनि राम खेलावहु एही । अतिसय दुखित होति बैदेही ॥ ६ ॥

ihāṁ dēvatanha astuti kīnhī. dārūna bipati hamahi ēhiṁ dīnhī. 5.

aba jani rāma khēlāvahu ēhī. atisaya dukhita hōti baidēhī. 6.

Meanwhile, on this side (i.e. on the side of the battle-field where Lord Ram and his army were assembled) the gods (who had collected in the heaven to watch the proceedings on the ground) prayed fervently to Lord Ram, pleading with the Lord: 'Oh Lord. This fellow (Ravana) had inflicted uncountable horrors and miseries upon us. (5)

So therefore oh Lord, don't play hide and seek with him for long, and get rid of him soon, for Sita (also known as Vaidehi) is getting very upset and feeling highly miserable as she is tormented with the uncertainty of fate that prevails in the war with the passage of each day.¹ (6)

[Note—¹The gods were correct in this, for we shall soon read about it directly while narrating the conversation that Sita had with Trijata, the pious old demoness appointed by Ravana to guard her, and who had become very friendly and sympathetic to her during her captivity in Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 100.

Here we note two things—The first is that the gods are reminding Lord Ram the primary reason why Lord Vishnu had come down to earth from heaven in the Lord's form when the gods had prayed to him for deliverance from the terror unleashed by Ravana and his cruel demon race—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

And two, the gods are reminding the Lord about what Hanuman had said when he came back from Lanka with Sita's report, hearing which the Lord decided not to waste any more time but launch a campaign to free her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 34, which is very explicit on this subject.

So, when the gods observed that the war was dragging on and on without any end in sight, they were worried, and decided to remind Lord Ram to hurry up and bring it to an end.]

देव बचन सुनि प्रभु मुसुकाना । उठि रघुबीर सुधारे बाना ॥ ७ ॥

जटा जूट दृढ़ बाँधें माथे । सोहहिं सुमन बीच बिच गाथे ॥ ८ ॥

dēva bacana suni prabhu musukānā. uṭhi raghubīra sudhārē bānā. 7.
jaṭā jūṭa dṛṛha bāṁdhēṁ māthē. sōhahīṁ sumana bīca bīca gāthē. 8.

When Lord Ram heard the words of the gods, he smiled¹ and got up to get ready for the final phase of the war. He took up his arrows (as well as the bow) to put them in order, and make them ready for use. (7)

He also wound the long hairs on his head tightly into a coil, and looked so charming in this form as flowers were also tucked in between the layers of this coil to form a wreath on his head (as a symbolic token of victory)². (8)

[Note—¹Why did the Lord smile? There are several reasons. He smiled because the gods want him to do everything for them, but they do not even have the basic courtesy and common sense of extending some help to him on their part. Don't they know that the Lord is on foot while his enemy Ravana is riding a war chariot? Couldn't the gods arrange a chariot for the Lord; couldn't Indra, the king of gods, send his own chariot to help Lord Ram? Well, the Lord smiled at the selfishness of the gods: for they want the Lord to do everything for them, and they not considering any simple way of

helping him to help them. The Lord smiled in amusement, thinking to himself that he would fulfill his obligations irrespective of how the gods are.

He also smiled that the gods have started getting nervous; they have begun to doubt about the outcome of this war, inspite of being aware that once Lord Vishnu had promised them to eliminate the scourge of the demons he would not fail his words. But everything is done at the proper time, and that proper time regarding the hour of Ravana's physical death had not arrived as yet.

The Lord smiled as he was waiting for the gods to make another fervent plea for protection and deliverance from the fear of Ravana, lest they should forget the Lord's obligation upon them and say later on that Ravana died on his own accord when his lifespan had ended. Or, the God of Death, the 'Kaal', may boast that it was he who had killed Ravana, and Lord Ram had no role in it. Lord Ram was aware of the selfish nature of the gods. Were the gods really 'selfish'? Yes indeed they were, and it is clearly reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 295; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

Another reason for the Lord smiling is that these gods were so clever that they have cited Sita's miseries as the main reason for asking Lord Ram to hurry up in ending the war, instead of acknowledging that they themselves are dying of fear with the passage of each day.

²The flowers and leaves intertwined in the matted hairs of Lord Ram look odd in the background of the fierce war underway in the bloody fields of Lanka. But it indicates two things: One, that the Lord was complete at ease and confident, even finding time to groom himself properly in anticipation of certain victory. And two, the wreath on his head was a clear signal to the gods that they need not worry as the victory was now a certainty, for only a victorious warrior becomes entitled to wear the wreath symbolizing conquest on his head.]

अरुन नयन बारिद तनु स्यामा । अखिल लोक लोचनाभिरामा ॥ ९ ॥
कटितट परिकर कस्यो निषंगा । कर कोदंड कठिन सारंगा ॥ १० ॥

aruna nayana bārida tanu syāmā. akhila lōka lōcanābhirāmā. 9.
kaṭitaṭa parikara kasyō niṣaṅgā. kara kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina sārāṅgā. 10.

The Lord's reddened eyes (as they were angry; or it may also mean 'eyes that were like a lotus flower with a pink shade) and his dark complexion looked majestic and charming; they were so fascinating to behold that this sight gave unbound pleasure to everyone in this world who had the good fortune to observe it at that time (and to everyone else in this world who can close his eye and have this divine view revealed on the canvas of his mind). (9)

The Lord had the quiver tied firmly around his waist with the help of the waist-cloth that was girdled tightly around the middle part of his body. He also held the formidable bow called Kodanda¹ as well as powerful arrows in his two hands. (10)

[Note—¹This 'Kodanda' bow was used sparingly during the war, at only crucial points. This bow was the one which was used by Lord Ram to fulfil his promise made

to the gods and mother earth in his original form as Lord Vishnu that he would remove the cause of their fears and miseries by getting rid of the cruel demon race led by its king Ravana. Therefore, the Bow was called 'Sarang' when it was held by Lord Vishnu, and when held by Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu, it came to be known as 'Kodanda'.

A very remarkable thing has happened here, and it is worth pausing a bit here to understand its significance. The bow which Lord Ram picks up now to kill Ravana is called 'Kodanda'. Well, if we go back to the time when the Lord had married Sita by breaking the bow in Janakpur, that bow was also called 'Kodanda', and it belonged to Lord Shiva! This is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 261.

So what does this mean? How can Lord Ram use a bow, named Kodanda, that he had himself broken long ago? Well, come to think of it—herein lie the great mystery about Lord Ram, about what he did in this world, about his actions that have been invariably described by the scriptures as being beyond comprehension and logic. On the one hand he had broken the Kodanda bow, and on the other hand he picks up the same Kodanda bow to eliminate Ravana. It is obviously difficult to reconcile these two opposite and apparently contradictory situations unless and until we understand that everything the Lord did here in this world was a play of his cosmic Maya—the supreme power vested with the Supreme Being to create fantastic delusions, magical mysteries and unexplainable illusions like a Great Charmer or Master Magician.

To wit and in all sooth, he had neither broken Lord Shiva's bow named Kodanda, nor had he ever insulted Shiva by doing it. The breaking of that bow then was merely a magical trick done by Lord Ram like any other magician would do on stage. For let us understand one thing: that if the Kodanda bow was actually broken at that time, how then can it be used by Lord Ram now in the battle-field of Lanka?

Lord Ram had intended to use this Kodanda bow to slay Ravana later on, so he spread the spell of his magical charm called Maya much like a magician who would make his audience believe whatever he says, and literally have them eat out of his hands things that do not actually exist. So in effect, Lord Ram gave the impression that he had broken the Kodanda bow, but it is quite possible that it was given to him by King Janak as part of his marriage gift. Remember: Sita used to clean and pay homage to this bow when she was a child. So she loved it, and would not have parted with it after her marriage. Hence, she brought it with her to Ayodhya as part of her personal belongings.

At the time of going to the forest, Lord Ram carried it along, with his other bow called the Sarang. The world thought that since it was a 'broken bow', broken into two pieces, it was harmless. No one knew the reality—that it was merely made to appear like that, and would be the fatal bow that would one day do Ravana in one day.

This is evidently the reason why Lord Shiva had never felt offended when it was declared that Lord Ram had 'broken his bow'. Lord Shiva merely smiled and kept quiet to keep the secret, to prevent Ravana from being aware of the reality.

Such are indeed the mysterious and mystical ways of the Supreme Being; and how foolish would it be for ordinary human beings who have limited knowledge, and that too limited to this mortal world, try to comprehend the play of the Lord who is the Master Puppeteer of this Creation.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 91. The term 'Kodanda' is used to indicate how fierce the Lord would be for those who try to disrupt peace and order in the Lord's creation—because the term 'Kodanda' includes the word "Danda" which means punishment.]

छं०. सारंग कर सुंदर निषंग सिलीमुखाकर कटि कस्यो । १ ।
 भुजदंड पीन मनोहरायत उर धरासुर पद लस्यो ॥ २ ॥
 कह दास तुलसी जबहिं प्रभु सर चाप कर फेरन लगे । ३ ।
 ब्रह्मांड दिग्गज कमठ अहि महि सिंधु भूधर डगमगे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sāraṅga kara sundara niṣaṅga silīmukhākara kaṭi kasyō. 1.
 bhujaḍaṇḍa pīna manōharāyata ura dharāsura pada lasyō. 2.
 kaha dāsa tulasī jabahim prabhu sara cāpa kara phērana lagē. 3.
 brahmāṇḍa diggaja kamaṭha ahi mahi sindhu bhūdhara ḍagamagē. 4.

[In this verse, the beauteous and charming form of Lord Ram—who besides being the warrior fighting the demon race in a bloody war for the sake of the welfare and the well-being of humble creatures of this creation who were being subjected to endless merciless cruelty by the demons, was also at the same time the most merciful and compassionate Lord God of this creation who had no personal enemy and no personal grudge against anyone, for the Lord treated all the members of this creation equally—is being described.

A reference to the virtues of beauty and charm in the midst of chaos and bloodshed so typical of a battle-field is to remind the reader not to be distracted from the truth by the illusion of mayhem and blood-letting that is created on the ground of Lanka, for though it appears that Lord Ram is very angry and vengeful, out to crush his mortal enemy for the sake of his wife, but it is merely a smokescreen to hide the reality—which is that, one, Lord Ram is protecting the rest of the creation by disciplining a few wayward members of the same creation who had gone astray from the path of Dharma and have become a nuisance for all others, and two, the Lord decided to use this war as an excuse to grant deliverance to the souls of all the demons who would have otherwise perished in hell for their life spent in evil deeds.

To wit, though Lord Ram appears to be shooting arrows and ordering killing of the demons in a merciless war like the one of which the world had never witnessed, yet internally he was calm and poised and cheerful and happy as if nothing was happening, for otherwise his physical form would have surely betrayed his vehement nature and excess of cruelty and seething anger, but surely, if nothing else, it could never have been so peaceful, calm, charming and pleasant to behold; it would have been furious and fearful to look at, a form that is usually the norm with merciless conquerors who have no qualms in going berserk and killing, looting, burning and plundering wherever they set their foot.

Remember: Lord Ram embodied in his physical form the virtues of charm and beauty that are invariably associated with Mother Nature; he was actually a visible representation of these eternal qualities of cosmic Nature which manifested themselves in all their finery and glory in the Lord's form.]

There was a beautiful bow called Sarang¹ in the Lord's hand; and at his waist was tied a quiver that had the mystical ability to supply an endless numbers of powerful arrows without exhausting its reserve. (Chanda line no. 1)

The Lord's arms were well-formed, robust and muscular; and on his broad chest was marked the footprints of sage Bhrigu, the Brahmin². (Chanda line no. 2)

Tulsidas (the primary author of this wonderful story of Ram Charit Manas) says that when Lord Ram was preparing himself for the battle-field (and the duel with Ravana that was to be fought there) by stringing and testing his bow and examining his arrows by holding them in his hands --- (Chanda line no. 3),

--- There was a tremor throughout the world. The whole universe, including all the elephants that support it in different directions (i.e. the Diggajas)³, the legendary Tortoise (said to support the earth and its mountains on its back), Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial Serpent also believed to hold the earth on his gigantic hood), the earth with all its mountains and oceans—all began to shake and tremble⁴. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹As has been noted earlier, the 'Sarang Bow' is the one that belongs to Lord Vishnu. By citing it here, especially immediately after citing the 'Kodanda Bow' in the previous verse, it is being hinted that Lord Ram was no one else but Lord Vishnu, and now Lord Ram is assuming his original form of Lord Vishnu to fulfill his promise made to the gods and mother earth—that he would come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demon race.

²The story of the mark of footprints of sage Bhrigu on the chest of Lord Vishnu is briefly as follows. This particular sign is being alluded to here to reiterate that Lord Ram is Lord Vishnu himself, for this sign cannot be present on anybody else except Lord Vishnu.

Sage Bhrigu once tested the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and determined that Lord Vishnu is the best amongst them and alone deserves worship. This story in brief is as follows—

Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluser, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself. Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhrigu great respect and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhrigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhrigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.

³The Diggajas: There are said to be eight 'Diggaj' who support the earth from eight directions or corners. These Diggajs are believed to be strong and muscular 'elephants' stationed at eight strategic points in eight directions of the earth to support it from rolling or toppling over. The word 'Diggaj' itself means anyone who is very strong and muscular.

According to the Purans, these eight directions and their respective Diggajs are the following—(i) in the north, the Diggaj (elephant) is known as 'Saarvabhoum'; (ii) in the north-east, the Diggaj is known as 'Suprateek or Saptateek'; (iii) in the east, the Diggaj is known as 'Airaawat'; (iv) in the south-east, the Diggaj is known as 'Pundareek'; (v) in the south, the Diggaj is known as 'Vaaman'; (vi) in the south-west, the Diggaj is known as 'Kumud'; (vii) in the west, the Diggaj is known as 'Anjan'; and (viii) in the north-west, the Diggaj is known as 'Pushpa-danta'.

However, according to Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 14, 18, 20 and 22, when king Sagar's sons went to dig the earth in search of the horse of the sacrifice that had gone missing, they saw only four Diggajs as follows—(i) in the east they saw the Diggaj named 'Virupaaksha', (ii) in the south, the Diggaj named 'Maha-padma', (iii) in the west, the Diggaj named 'Saumnas' (pronounced as Saw+um+nus), and (iv) in the north, the Diggaj named 'Bhadra'.

These Diggajs are referred to in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 254 as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 260 in the context of Lord Ram breaking the bow. In the first instance, when Laxman became angry, these Diggajs shifted from the place out of fear, and in the second instance Laxman alerted them to be careful and hold the earth properly so that it does not topple over when Lord Ram prepared to lift and break Lord Shiva's bow in order to marry Sita.

⁴The same thing had happened when Lord Ram had broken the bow to marry Sita in Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 261.]

दो०. सोभा देखि हरषि सुर बरषहिं सुमन अपार।

जय जय जय करुनानिधि छबि बल गुन आगार ॥ ८६ ॥

dōhā.

sōbhā dēkhi haraṣi sura baraṣahim sumana apāra.
jaya jaya jaya karunānidhi chabi bala guna āgāra. 86.

Observing the exceptional charm and the bewitching beauteous form of Lord Ram, the gods were exhilarant; they showered countless flowers upon the Lord from the heaven.

Overjoyed, they exclaimed repeatedly in unison: ‘Glory to the Lord who is an ocean of abounding compassion, mercy, kindness and grace, as well as a repository of immense charm and beauty’. (Doha no. 86)

चौ०. एहीं बीच निसाचर अनी । कसमसात आई अति घनी ॥ १ ॥

देखि चले सन्मुख कपि भट्टा । प्रलयकाल के जनु घन घट्टा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhīm bīca nisācara anī. kasamasāta āī ati ghanī. 1.

dēkhi calē sanmukha kapi bhaṭṭā. pralayakāla kē janu ghana ghaṭṭā. 2.

[After the brief lull in the storm, or we can say after the calm before the storm actually unfolds its full fury before finally dissipating itself, as marked by the brief pause herein above where we read about the gods appreciating the beautiful form of Lord Ram and showering flowers upon him from the sky, and Lord Ram smiling and calmly preparing to step out into the battle-field, we once again plunge into the heat and fire of the battle that rages on in Lanka.]

In the meantime, while Lord Ram was preparing himself for the battle and the gods had been appreciating his charming form and showering flowers upon him, the huge demon army that was packed from end to end with ferocious soldiers, came grinding in. (1)

As soon as the valorous monkey (and bear) warriors saw them arrive, they started off at once in huge numbers to face them. The army of these monkeys (and bears) looked like a bank of thick dark clouds that rise from the horizon to sweep across the sky during the calamitous events of the doomsday. (2)

बहु कृपान तरवारि चमंकहिं । जनु दहँ दिसि दामिनीं दमंकहिं ॥ ३ ॥

गज रथ तुरग चिकार कठोरा । गर्जहिं मनहुँ बलाहक घोरा ॥ ४ ॥

bahu kṛpāna taravāri camaṅkahim. janu dahaṁ disi dāminīṁ damaṅkahim. 3.

gaja ratha turaga cikāra kaṭhōrā. garjahim manahuṁ balāhaka ghōrā. 4.

Numerous polished swords and sharp scimitars were glistening and dazzling in the rays of the sun as if streaks of lightening tore relentlessly through the body of the doomsday cloud. (3)

The clamour and the noise produced by trumpeting of elephants, the rattling caused by the movement of giant chariots, and the furious neighing of war horses, seemed to be like the deafening roar of thunder accompanying the advancing cloud¹. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, as the two giant armies came nearer, the din and the raucous created by excited warriors of both the sides, to which was added the defeating shrieks of intoxicated elephants, excited horses who were jumping furiously when whipped and spurred on viciously by their mounts, and the loud rattling sound produced by the

rumbling of the heavy chariots across the uneven ground, together with the flashing swords and other war paraphernalia—all gave the horrifying general impression of two thick banks of clouds arising simultaneously from opposite directions and heading towards each other for a violent meeting at the time of the end of the world.]

कपि लंगूर बिपुल नभ छाए । मनहुँ इंद्रधनु उए सुहाए ॥ ५ ॥
उठइ धूरि मानहुँ जलधारा । बान बुंद भै बृष्टि अपारा ॥ ६ ॥

kapi laṅgūra bipula nabha chā'ē. manahuṁ indradhanu u'ē suhā'ē. 5.
uṭha'i dhūri mānahuṁ jaladhārā. bāna bunda bhai bṛṣṭi apārā. 6.

The giant monkeys, who had different shades of colour of their skin, waved their long tails in the sky, giving the impression of the appearance of so many magnificent rainbows simultaneously in the sky. (5)

A huge dust storm arose, covering the whole place, and giving the impression of a heavy rainfall; the shower of arrows raining down from the sky looked like drops of rain¹. (6)

[Note—¹When there is heavy rainfall, one is not able to see anything beyond a limited area. So likewise, the dust that was kicked up by the movement of these two armies covered the battle-field so thickly that view became extremely limited.

If one stands out in a fierce storm that is lashing violently, the rain does not appear soothing and comforting; it rather becomes annoying, and one begins to feel that the rain drops are striking his body like so many tiny pebbles hitting him with some force.

In this metaphor, the rain drops are the arrows, and the heavily falling rain is the thick cloud of dust that was kicked up and obscured all view.]

दुहुँ दिसि पर्वत करहिं प्रहारा । बज्रपात जनु बारहिं बारा ॥ ७ ॥
रघुपति कोपि बान झरि लाई । घायल भै निसिचर समुदाई ॥ ८ ॥

duhuṁ disi parbata karahim prahārā. bajrapāta janu bārahim bārā. 7.
raghupati kōpi bāna jhari lā'ī. ghāyala bhai nisicara samudā'ī. 8.

Huge rocks and boulders as large as mountains were being used on both the sides to attack and pulverize the enemy; these were dumped on the adversary thick and fast, and with great violence, giving the impression that Vajra (the heavy and sturdy weapon of Indra, the king of gods) is striking the warring factions repeatedly. (7)

Seeing that his troops are under stress, Lord Ram let out a thick volley of arrows that rained upon the demon army and wounded a lot many of its warriors. (8)

लागत बान बीर चिक्करहीं । घुमि घुमि जहँ तहँ महि परहीं ॥ ९ ॥

स्रवहिं सैल जनु निर्झर भारी । सोनित सरि कादर भयकारी ॥ १० ॥

lāgata bāna bīra cikkarahīm. ghurmi ghurmi jahaṁ tahaṁ mahi parahīm. 9.
sravahīm saila janu nirjhara bhārī. sōnita sari kādara bhayakārī. 10.

When the brave demon warriors were hit by the arrows, they shrieked furiously, swooned and fell down, rolling over on the ground. (9)

When they fell down and rolled over the ground with blood streaming out of their gigantic bodies, it appeared that streams of water were rolling down from high mountains, or like many waterfalls cascading down the side of lofty mountains¹. (10)

[Note—¹The comparison with the mountain is made because the demons were huge giants, with a huge body. The blood streaming out of their wounds resembled streams and rivulets that emerge from crevices and holes on the sides of mountains to fall down as waterfalls on the ground below. Here, the wounds are the crevices and holes in the mountains, and the blood flowing out of them is like the streams and rivulets coming out from the mountain and cascading down along its craggy sides.]

छं०. कादर भयंकर रुधिर सरिता चली परम अपावनी । १ ।
दोड कूल दल रथ रेत चक्र अबर्त बहति भयावनी ॥ २ ॥
जलजंतु गज पदचर तुरग खर बिबिध बाहन को गने । ३ ।
सर सक्ति तोमर सर्प चाप तरंग चर्म कमठ घने ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kādara bhayaṅkara rudhira saritā calī parama apāvanī. 1.
dō'u kūla dala ratha rēta cakra abarta bahati bhayāvanī. 2.
jalajantu gaja padacara turaga khara bibidha bāhana kō ganē. 3.
sara sakti tōmara sarpa cāpa taraṅga carma kamaṭha ghanē. 4.

[The metaphor of a River, albeit of flowing blood and not of water, is employed in this verse to give the reader an idea of the horrors of the War of Lanka.]

An inauspicious and horrifying river of blood—the sight of which created terror for those who were coward in their hearts, fickle in their minds, and weak in their resolve to fight and defeat their enemy—began flowing over the ground of the battle-field. (Chanda line no. 1)

The ‘two warring armies’ were like the two opposite banks of this river. The ‘chariots’ were like sand that was sprinkled along these banks, and their ‘wheels’ were the rapidly whirling whirlpools of this fearsome river. Forsooth, this river indeed looked scary and blood-curdling as it flowed through the battle-ground (sometimes slowly and at other times rapidly, depending on the volume of blood that poured into it in an endless stream). (Chanda line no. 2)

The multitudes of war ‘elephants, foot soldiers, horses and mules’ that filled the battle-field symbolized the countless creatures of various denominations that lived in this river. (Chanda line no. 3)

‘Arrows, spears and lancers’ were like the countless water-serpents flowing up and down this strange river, both against and along its current; the ‘bows’ were like the many currents themselves (ebbing and flowing, and changing course every now and then, and often clashing or rubbing against one another as this metaphoric river rapidly flowed down the ground); and the ‘shields of the warriors’ were like the hard shells of the many tortoises that floated on the surface of this river (bobbing up and down as they fought with one another to gain some space in the flow of current). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—In this excellent imagery, the learned poet draws our attention to the immensity of blood-shed and horrors that were enacted on the ground in the battle-field during the epic War of Lanka. Whosoever came near this river would fall in its swiftly flowing currents, either on their own or when pushed in by those standing at the back; those who still managed to remain on its banks would get sucked in when the current swelled and overflowed the bank of this metaphoric river with an inflow of fresh supply of blood as more and more warriors died on its banks and discharged more blood into it. Those who fell in this river got immediately sucked in and taken away by its rapidly turning whirlpools and swift currents.

The shields held by the warriors, both alive and dead, looked like so many tortoises bobbing up and down on the surface of this scary river as they flowed down its current. The bows were like the ever changing currents as they quickly changed their contours when their strings were pulled and released in rapid succession, or when they were moved and pointed in different directions by the warriors who held them.

The war chariots were so many in their numbers, and so thickly packed, moving and changing their locations quickly that they were like sand particles strewn on the banks of a river. The sand is not fixed at one place on the ground, and it is easily moved aside when some heavy object passes over it, or is easily blown away when a strong gust of wind flows. So therefore, sand is likened to the fast moving chariots, ever changing their locations, and thickly packed in the field. Their wheels turned rapidly like the whirlpools in a churning river, either pushing away some object or sucking in others with the twin forces of nature known as centrifugal and centripetal respectively.

And of course, to complete the picture we have the many creatures who have their natural habitat in the river—like the water-serpent and tortoise and many others who represented the elephants, horses, mules and soldiers that also were the natural components of an army.]

दो०. बीर परहिं जनु तीर तरु मज्जा बहु बह फेन ।

कादर देखि डरहिं तहँ सुभटन्ह के मन चेन ॥ ८७ ॥

dōhā.

bīra parahim janu tīra taru majjā bahu baha phēna.
kādara dēkhi ḍarahim tahaṃ subhaṭanha kē mana cēna. 87.

Warriors were falling on the ground along the banks of this frightful river just like trees along the banks of a swiftly flowing river topple over and fall to the ground (when the soil under them is undercut and loosened because of the river's swift currents).

The abundant bone marrow that flowed on the surface of this river looked like the scum that the river normally scoops up during the course of its flow.

It was such a horrifying sight that those who were cowards and timid, those who were weak in mind and heart, shuddered at it and felt terrified, while those who were brave veterans of war, gallant in their hearts and firm in their minds, found delight in it (as they were accustomed to such scenes, and were aroused and got excited when they saw it). (Doha no. 87)

चौ०. मज्जहिं भूत पिसाच बेताला । प्रमथ महा झोटिंग कराला ॥ १ ॥
काक कंक लै भुजा उड़ाहीं । एक ते छीनि एक लै खाहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

majjahim bhūta pisāca bētālā. pramatha mahā jhōtiṅga karālā. 1.
kāka kaṅka lai bhuja uḍāhīm. ēka tē chīni ēka lai khāhīm. 2.

Horrifying fiends and evil spirits that frequent battle-fields, such as ghosts, ghouls, phantoms and goblins, as well as Pramaths (attendants of Lord Shiva; those who roam around corpses and cremation grounds) who had long disheveled hairs, jumped into this river of blood to take a bath in it. (1)

Crows and kites dived into this river to pick up and fly away with severed limbs of dead warriors, fighting with each other to snatch and eat their share of flesh. (2)

एक कहहिं ऐसिउ सौंघाई । सठहु तुम्हार दरिद्र न जाई ॥ ३ ॥
कहँरत भट घायल तट गिरे । जहँ तहँ मनहुँ अर्धजल परे ॥ ४ ॥

ēka kahahim aisi'u sauṅghā'ī. saṭhahu tumhāra daridra na jā'ī. 3.
kahaṃrata bhaṭa ghāyala taṭa girē. jahaṃ tahaṃ manahuṃ ardhajala parē. 4.

After snatching meat from others, these birds of prey chided them, saying: 'Oh you most greedy and rapacious fellows. Even when there is an abundant supply of our natural food, of which there is no dearth at present, it is so shameful a thing that you do not desist from exhibiting your habit of being greedy and rapacious to the extreme (like a miserly person who will not give away anything to others in charity inspite of having an oversupply of something that he does not need any more).¹' (3)

Wounded and seriously injured warriors, who had fallen on the ground on the bank of this river (of blood), groaned and sighed and moaned grievously in pain as half of their bodies lay on the ground and the other half was dangling inside the river.

It was like a scene witnessed on the banks of a holy river where infirm and desolate persons, those who are destitute and have no one to take care of them, lie half on the ground and half submerged in the water in the hope that when they die the sacred water of the river would wash away their mortal remains automatically and grant deliverance to their souls because they have nobody to do their last rites. (4)

[Note—¹A description of the physical appearance of these ghouls and spirits that frequent battle-fields is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 95.]

खैंचहिं गीध आँत तट भए । जनु बंसी खेलत चित दए ॥ ५ ॥
बहु भट बहहिं चढ़े खग जाहीं । जनु नावरि खेलहिं सरि माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

khaimcahiṁ gīdha ānta taṭa bha'e. janu bansī khēlata cita da'e. 5.
bahu bhaṭa bahahiṁ caṛhē khaga jāhīṁ. janu nāvāri khēlahiṁ sari māhīṁ. 6.

Vultures were tearing out the intestines of these unfortunate warriors (who were lying half dead on the banks of this river, with their bodies half submerged and half on the ground) giving the impression that fishermen, who are sitting on the banks of a river attentively watching their fishing lines, would pull out the string with a jerk as soon as the fish caught the bait dangling at the end of the line. (5)

Many dead bodies of warriors were floating on the surface of this river, and different kinds of birds were alighting on these corpses and flying away in merriment as if they all enjoyed this free boat ride without any fear of being harmed or shooed away. (6)

जोगिनि भरि भरि खप्पर संचहिं । भूत पिसाच बधू नभ नंचहिं ॥ ७ ॥
भट कपाल करताल बजावहिं । चामुंडा नाना बिधि गावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

jōgini bhari bhari khappara sañcahiṁ. bhūta pisāca badhū nabha nañcahiṁ.
7.
bhaṭa kapāla karatāla bajāvahiṁ. cāmuṇḍā nānā bidhi gāvahiṁ. 8.

Female fiends of the battle-field, called Joginis, were collecting blood in cups made of hollow skulls. Other female ghosts, ghouls and phantoms were dancing in the sky in merriment. (7)

Another type of female fiend known as Chamunda, the patron spirit of the battle-field, was so overjoyed that she sang war songs to the accompaniment of sound of clanging or crushing produced by striking two empty skulls, extracted from dead warriors, with each other like so many pairs of cymbals. (8)

जंबुक निकर कटक्कट कट्टहिं । खाहिं हुआहिं अघाहिं दपट्टहिं ॥ ९ ॥

कोटिन्ह रुंड मुंड बिनु डोल्लहिं । सीस परे महि जय जय बोल्लहिं ॥ १० ॥

jambuka nikara kaṭakkaṭa kaṭṭahim. khāhim hu'āhim aghāhim dapaṭṭahim. 9.
kōṭinha ruṇḍa muṇḍa binu ḍōllahim. sīsa parē mahi jaya jaya bōllahim. 10.

Hordes of jackals grinded their teeth and snapped at each other as they tore apart corpses, ate them, snarling and growling menacingly at each other as was their wont, even though they had sufficient to satisfy their own hunger. (9)

So intoxicated and excited were the warriors, and so feverish was their enthusiasm for battle that was stoked by the invigorating environment of the battle-field which was so much in consonance with their inherent nature, that even after their heads were severed from their bodies yet their headless torsos roamed around aimlessly in the battle-field.

Nay, even the heads of these warriors that had fallen on the ground were active, for even while lying there they continued to yell and shriek war cries, repeatedly applauding their own sides and glorifying their compatriots, cheering them on and declaring their victory. (10)

छं०. बोल्लहिं जो जय जय मुंड रुंड प्रचंड सिर बिनु धावहीं । १ ।

खप्परिन्ह खगग अलुज्झि जुज्झहिं सुभट भटन्ह ढहावहीं ॥ २ ॥

बानर निसाचर निकर मर्दहिं राम बल दर्पित भए । ३ ।

संग्राम अंगन सुभट सोवहिं राम सर निकरन्हि हए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bōllahim jō jaya jaya muṇḍa ruṇḍa pracaṇḍa sira binu dhāvahim. 1.
khapparinha khagga alujjhi jujjahim subhaṭa bhaṭanha ḍhahāvahim. 2.
bānara nisācara nikara mardahim rāma bala darpita bha'ē. 3.
saṅgrāma aṅgana subhaṭa sōvahim rāma sara nikaranhi ha'ē. 4.

Severed heads yelled war cries of 'Victory, victory'; torsos sans heads ran helter-skelter wildly all over the ground. (Chanda line no. 1)

Birds, singly and in flocks, alighted on skulls and got entangled within its hollows as they vied with each other to scoop up whatever flesh and marrow that still remained sticking to the sides, and in the ensuing tussle the stronger birds pushed away and trampled those who were weak. (Chanda line no. 2)

The valiant and brave monkey warriors, invigorated and energized by the grace and blessings of Lord Ram, were thrashing and decimating the demon warriors relentlessly. (Chanda line no. 3)

Countless multitudes of gallant warriors (of the demon army) were killed by the hail of arrows showered by Lord Ram, and they lay down on the ground in an eternal sleep. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Really indeed, the imagery of the ferocious war, and the enormity of the bloodshed and mayhem and horrors that attended it, is gut churning, and evokes revulsion. One can well imagine the horrifying sight of how the otherwise sandy soil of Lanka would have turned into a slushy ground resembling a thick swamp of blood and flesh that was stinking with rotting corpses and shredded bodies from which intestines and other organs were being pulled out by birds and animals of prey. To add to this eerie, blood chilling scene was the chilling cries and painful groans of those who were not already dead but suffering intensely; or of those who were maddened with passion for blood and vengeance.]

दो०. रावन हृदयँ बिचारा भा निसिचर संघार ।
मैं अकेल कपि भालु बहु माया करौं अपार ॥ ८८ ॥
dōhā.

rāvana hr̥dayaṁ bicārā bhā nisicara saṅghāra.
maiṁ akēla kapi bhālu bahu māyā karaum apāra. 88.

When Ravana observed this large-scale decimation of his demon army, he was utterly dismayed and excessively exasperated. Thus finding himself alone to face a huge enemy army of monkeys and bears, he bethought to himself: ‘I am left alone to confront so many ferocious monkeys and bears baying for my blood. So it would be wise and prudent for me to employ Maya (which are the powers to create delusions and illusions to mislead the enemy) extensively at this crucial juncture.’ (Doha no. 88)

चौ०. देवन्ह प्रभुहि पयादें देखा । उपजा उर अति छोभ बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥
सुरपति निज रथ तुरत पठावा । हरष सहित मातलि लै आवा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

dēvanha prabhuhi payādēṁ dēkhā. upajā ura ati chōbha bisēṣā. 1.
surapati nija ratha turata paṭhāvā. haraṣa sahita mātali lai āvā. 2.

The gods, who were watching the proceedings of the battle-field from their stations in the sky, felt very sorry in their hearts when they saw that Lord Ram was suffering so much for them by fighting this ferocious war on foot, without the basic aid of a war chariot, while their mortal enemy, the demon king Ravana, whom the Lord fought at the behest of these gods, had this privilege. (1)

[This realization made the gods feel very guilt and shameful, so they collectively decided to help the Lord by sending the chariot that belonged to their king Indra. So therefore—] The king of gods immediately sent his own heavenly chariot, and his charioteer named Matali brought this chariot to the ground for Lord Ram’s use. (2)

तेज पुंज रथ दिव्य अनूपा । हरषि चढ़े कोसलपुर भूपा ॥ ३ ॥
चंचल तुरग मनोहर चारी । अजर अमर मन सम गतिकारी ॥ ४ ॥

tēja puñja ratha dibya anūpā. haraṣi caṛhē kōsalapura bhūpā. 3.
cañcala turaga manōhara cārī. ajara amara mana sama gatikārī. 4.

This heavenly chariot was glorious, splendid, radiant and divine; it was one of its own kind. The Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram) immediately boarded it and moved forward in the battle-field¹. (3)

The chariot had four gifted horses that were agile and well-trained. These four horses were of an excellent breed, most charming to behold, and possessed exceptional and unique qualities that made them imperishable and invincible. They were very swift; in fact, they were as swift as the mind². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram immediately recognized Matali and the chariot. Remember: He was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of heaven; so there is no wonder that he could recognize the chariot at once, as being the one that belonged to the gods. He also knew Matali, the charioteer, personally.

Lord Ram knew that this chariot and its charioteer cannot be duplicated by anyone, so therefore he was sure that it was not a creation of Ravana's 'Maya' to trap him. Of course the Lord was in need of a chariot, so when he found that it had come to him without asking, he accepted it to oblige the gods; for if the Lord had not accepted this gift from the gods it would be tantamount to his insulting them. Lord Ram was well aware of the nature and temperament of these gods: that they took quick offence.

Lord Ram did not wish to create an unpleasant and unsavoury scene, while a fierce war was underway, by telling Matali to take the chariot back to the gods for he was competent to fight and win this war without their help or the gift of a chariot. Being the Supreme Lord, and therefore the Lord of the gods themselves, it was incumbent upon him to show restraint and modesty, and not act rashly by teasing the gods with the question: 'were they sleeping till now; why couldn't they send the chariot earlier'. Doing anything that may be construed as an insult by the gods might be counter-productive at this dangerous point of time, for who knows what not the gods might do if they feel offended, for they were very selfish by nature.

Remember: Vibhishan had felt this shortcoming of the absence of a chariot during a war when he had expressed his reservations to Lord Ram in this regard—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 80. Should the gods not have sent it then; shouldn't they have done what they could to help Lord Ram who was fighting this war for them? But Lord Ram was so magnanimous and broad-minded that he did not mind this neglect by the gods at all, for a great King has often to overlook many minor faults and missteps of his junior ministers and subjects, like the gods were in the Lord's case.

It is quite possible that the conversation between Lord Ram and Vibhishan was conducted in a low tone, almost in a whisper as if they were discussing some war strategy, so that the gods stationed high above in the heaven could not make out what they were talking about, and so they weren't even aware that the point of discussion was the need of a chariot, for it is incredulous to believe that had they been aware of it, even slightly, that Vibhishan was worried about the necessity of a chariot for Lord Ram, then the gods would have hastened to supply it immediately. They were so occupied with and in an absolute awe of what they saw happening all around them in the battle-field down below that they were almost dumbfounded and astonished and

out of their wits, as they hadn't seen such a horrifying war earlier, and therefore their mind could not register the need of a war chariot for Lord Ram.

But the astonishing thing is not this that a chariot was suddenly made available to Lord Ram by the gods, but the fact that Ravana did not take any note of it. What might have been the reason for it? Well, Ravana was so alarmed with the situation on the ground, as well as so preoccupied in his mind with his own problems that were mounting with the passage of every moment, and was so overworked in devising strategies for the war, that he could not see the difference between how Lord Ram stood on the ground a few while ago and how he was astride a war chariot the other moment.

²The 'Mana', the mind, is said to be extremely agile and swift because a person can think of one thing at a given point of time, and within a fraction of a second his mind starts thinking of a completely different and unrelated thing a moment later. He may be thinking of something happening here, and the next moment his thoughts take him to something that happened long ago somewhere else.

The horses of this chariot were exceptionally swift, and to give an idea of the rapidity of their movement this simile of the Mana is cited.]

रथारूढ रघुनाथहि देखी । धाए कपि बलु पाइ बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
सही न जाइ कपिन्ह कै मारी । तब रावन माया बिस्तारी ॥ ६ ॥

rathārūṛha raghunāthahi dēkhī. dhā'ē kapi balu pā'i bisēṣī. 5.
sahī na jā'i kapinha kai mārī. taba rāvana māyā bistārī. 6.

When the monkeys (and bears) saw Lord Ram riding a chariot, they were exhilarant and greatly enthused. They rushed forward (to attack the enemy) with renewed energy, vigour and dynamism. (3)

When Ravana could not bear the ferocity of the attack and beating by the monkeys and bears, he expanded his Maya (spread the veil of delusions and its attendant illusions) to mislead and ward off his attackers. (4)

सो माया रघुबीरहि बाँची । लछिमन कपिन्ह सो मानी साँची ॥ ७ ॥
देखी कपिन्ह निसाचर अनी । अनुज सहित बहु कोसलधनी ॥ ८ ॥

sō māyā raghubīrahi bāñcī. lachimana kapinha sō mānī sāñcī. 7.
dēkhī kapinha nisācara anī. anuja sahita bahu kōsaladhanī. 8.

This Maya (delusion; illusion) was so powerful and surreal that except Lord Ram all else, including Laxman as well as all the monkeys, took what they saw to be a reality. (7)

[And, what did they see?] They saw that the battle-field was covered with an army of Lord Ram ("kōsaladhanī"; the Lord of Kaushal, or Ayodhya) which had countless

forms of the Lord himself and that of his younger brother Laxman leading the warriors¹. (8)

[Note—¹What was the effect of this illusion? The rushing monkey and bear warriors suddenly stopped in their tracks, for while a moment ago they saw their enemy, the demons and their king Ravana whom they were eager to hit, now all of a sudden they saw Lord Ram's army, i.e. an image of their own selves. This astonishing change of scene utterly baffled the monkeys and bears, leaving them confounded and puzzled.

The result was what Ravana had expected. Suddenly the attack ceased; suddenly calm prevailed in the battle-field. To wit, it was like the calm that precedes a fierce storm; it was a lull before the strike of the storm. But nonetheless, it gave Ravana some breathing space and time to recover his wits.]

छं०. बहु राम लछिमन देखि मर्कट भालु मन अति अपडरे । १ ।
 जनु चित्र लिखित समेत लछिमन जहँ सो तहँ चितवहिं खरे ॥ २ ॥
 निज सेन चकित बिलोकि हँसि सर चाप सजि कोसल धनी । ३ ।
 माया हरी हरि निमिष महुँ हरषी सकल मर्कट अनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bahu rāma lachimana dēkhi markāṭa bhālu mana ati apaḍarē. 1.
 janu citra likhita samēta lachimana jahaṁ sō tahaṁ citavahiṁ kharē. 2.
 nija sēna cakita bilōki haṁsi sara cāpa saji kōsala dhanī. 3.
 māyā harī hari nimīṣa mahuṁ haraṣī sakala markāṭa anī. 4.

When the monkey and bear warriors saw countless images of Lord Ram and Laxman that were created by Ravana spreading his Maya (magical powers to produce illusions) over the battle-field, they were taken aback, being utterly confounded and totally perplexed at this unexpected sight that stunned and greatly scared them out of their wits. (Chanda line no. 1)

So therefore, all of them, along with Laxman, were so dazed and confounded that they stood motionless on their tracks as if paralyzed, giving the impression that they weren't living beings but portraits painted on a canvas. (Chanda line no. 2)

When Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (kōsala dhanī), observed that his army was dazed and utterly shocked by Ravana's tricks (i.e. by his Maya), the Lord smiled in amusement¹, and mounted his arrow on the bow. (Chanda line no. 3)

Lord Hari (for this is another name of Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram) shot the arrow which in an instant cut through the veil of delusions or Maya spread by Ravana, that had created the illusion which had so much confounded his army². As soon as this Maya was removed, the army of monkeys and bears was overjoyed; everyone felt relieved and greatly excited. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram knew that what was seen on the ground was actually a mirage, an illusion created by Ravana to confuse the army of the Lord. It must be remembered here that Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, is the Lord of all Maya; he is like the Master

Magician. So, Lord Ram stepped in to neutralize the effects of Ravana's Maya just like this Master Magician who initially feels amused when a junior magician spreads his illusions to completely daze his audience, but soon finds out, at some point of time, that this junior fellow is behaving mischievously and transcending limits of discipline by deriving sadistic pleasure at the cost of the terrified audience, then the Master intervenes, and by his superior abilities neutralizes the spell of the mischievous fellow to relieve the tension and fear that had gripped the helpless audience.

Lord Ram smiled both in amusement, as he appreciated Ravana's abilities, as well as in annoyance, because Ravana was crossing limits of tolerance.

²So the Lord shot an arrow that ruptured this veil of delusions, and restored the original situation on the battle-field.]

दो०. बहुरि राम सब तन चितइ बोले बचन गँभीर ।
द्वंदजुद्ध देखहु सकल श्रमित भए अति बीर ॥ ८९ ॥

dōhā.

bahuri rāma saba tana cita'i bōlē bacana gaṁbhīra.
dvandajud'dha dēkhahu sakala śramita bha'ē ati bīra. 89.

Then, Lord Ram addressed every one of his troops in a serious tone, instructing them; 'All of you are tired by now. So take a break; draw back a bit and move aside to clear the front line. From the sidelines, quietly watch a close hand duel that would now unfold directly between me and Ravana¹.' (Doha no. 89)

[Note—¹Both the chief commanders of their respective armies, Lord Ram of the army of monkeys and bears on this side, and Ravana commanding the army of demons on the other side, were now on equal footing, as both were astride magnificent war chariots that were fully armed and well equipped. So, this was the first time in the war that a duel between two powerful Lords and valiant warriors would take place on equal terms. On earlier occasions the fight was a mismatch as Lord Ram or Laxman were on foot while their adversaries were better placed as they rode chariots, as we find in the case of Meghanad as well as with Ravana.

However, Kumbhakaran's case was different as he had come to the battle-field on foot, trampling and crushing large numbers of monkeys and bears as he rampaged in the battle-field, furious with mad anger. So Lord Ram had faced him directly, because both were engaged in this duel on equal terms, with both of them standing on the ground, and not that one had the privilege of riding a war chariot and the other being disadvantaged by not having one.

Another question is this: The tide of the battle, at this point of time, was in favour of Lord Ram and his army, for the enemy army was virtually decimated and its commander-in-chief, the demon king Ravana, was besieged from all sides and left alone to fend for himself. This is the precise reason why Ravana decided to use his Maya to deflect the ferocious attack of the monkey and bear warriors who were trashing him wildly from all the sides, and he was unable to cope with this drubbing—apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 89 herein above. This being the case, Lord Ram could have allowed his army to continue pounding and pulverizing

Ravana, for then, sooner or later, the demon king would have automatically succumbed under this ferocious thrashing, sparing the Lord any more trouble. But why then did Lord Ram order his soldiers to hold back and stop their advance, and watch as he engages the demon king directly in a duel?

Well, when we ponder over this question to find an answer, the following points come to our mind:

The first is this: These monkeys and bears were no ordinary creatures; they were born carrying the genes of various gods—this undeniable fact is explicitly mentioned in (a) *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it; and (b) *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-32. These gods were fed up by Ravana's belligerence and had vowed to get rid of him anyhow, and with the support of the almighty Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram, their wishes were finally coming to be true.

Therefore, when the monkeys and bears were fighting Ravana, they had their personal scores to settle with him, and when given an opportunity they would not have waited for Lord Ram, who himself was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, to carry out his words, that 'he would come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the cruel demon race'—apropos: (a) *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187; and (b) *Adhyatma Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 22-28.

To wit, the gods were so eager for settling scores with Ravana that they wouldn't have had the decency and the courtesy to wait and let their own Lord, i.e. Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram, to do the job for them to help him keep his word and maintain his honour, which would be possible only if Ravana was eliminated by Lord Ram. It is quite possible that the gods would have wished to take the credit of killing their arch enemy Ravana themselves rather than letting Lord Vishnu do so, and later on making them feel obliged to him by reminding them that he had suffered so much for their sake, and that if he had not helped them then Ravana would have continued to torment them endlessly. Yes indeed, this is true and quite feasible because we must remember that the gods 'were all very selfish by their inherent nature'—apropos: *Ram Charit Manas*, (i) *Ayodhya Kand*, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 295; (ii) *Lanka Kand*, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110.

This is one primary reason why Lord Ram stepped in and ordered the monkeys and bears to hold back and let him do what he was expected to do.

The second plausible reason is this: It would have been very unbecoming of a noble commander-in-chief of the stature of Lord Ram to subject his opponent Ravana, who was of equal stature as him because he too was a mighty king of an equally mighty race, to such abject humiliation that he would be left to be thrashed and killed by junior soldiers of the Lord's army, while he was alone, without giving him an opportunity to prove himself in a direct conflict with the chief Lord. History would have recorded that 'Ravana was finally subdued and beaten to death by the monkeys and bears, and did not die fighting Lord Ram'. It would have been a great matter of shame and concern for the noble line of kings of Ayodhya if Lord Ram was accused by history on this account; it would have been an ignominy that would have lowered his head for all times to come.

Lord Ram was careful that he must fight and win this war by conforming to the laws of Dharma applied alongside the laws of Warfare. The laws of Dharma mandated that an enemy must be treated fairly and in a transparent manner, giving him an equal opportunity to fight his opponent, and not done to death when he is

helpless and feels trapped. That is not the noble law of knight-hood. The laws of Warfare also mandated that Ravana must be given an equal opportunity to prove his valour and gallantry in the battle-field, and not battered to death when he was finding himself cornered and all alone, for allowing that to happen would be demeaning for Lord Ram's own glory and fame.

In effect, here we find that Ravana was virtually marooned and left all alone to fend for himself against a vastly superior army of extremely ferocious warriors, the monkeys and bears, who were battering and bludgeoning him mercilessly from all sides. On the other hand, Lord Ram did not face this dire state; there was no direct threat to his life or body; nobody was attacking him physically. So therefore, to allow this situation to continue, where a lonely warrior, in this case Ravana, was being pummeled mercilessly from all the sides while his equally strong and able opponent, in this case Lord Ram, stood watching merrily and enjoying his sufferings, would have been tantamount to a battle that was unfair and fought on unequal terms. That was not acceptable either under the law of Dharma or of Warfare.

And suppose Ravana had died due to some reason during this confrontation with the monkeys and bears, what face would Lord Ram have to show the world as well as the gods—especially when they have provided him with a war chariot now, and he therefore had no excuse to offer—when confronted by the taunt that he had dared not face the mighty demon king face-to-face, that the real credit of killing Ravana should go the monkeys and bears and not to Lord Ram. Would it not have been a dark blot on the Lord's glory; would history excuse him for letting Ravana die a humiliating death at the hands of monkeys and bears when he was cornered and found himself alone, instead of like a valiant and brave warrior falling to the ground during a duel with an equally valiant and brave warrior?

Lord Ram did not wish to create a scandal; he had to ensure that Ravana's soul gets its due right of attaining deliverance, emancipation and salvation, which could only happen if he was killed by the Lord himself, and not by the monkeys. To be sure, this is what exactly happened—that when Ravana finally died, a brilliant shaft of light representing his Atma, his pure consciousness, emerged from his body and entered the divine body of Lord Ram, to clearly show the world that Lord Ram had accepted Ravana's soul within his own divine Self, which was pure cosmic Consciousness itself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

चौ०. अस कहि रथ रघुनाथ चलावा । बिप्र चरन पंकज सिरु नावा ॥ १ ॥

तब लंकेस क्रोध उर छावा । गर्जत तर्जत सन्मुख धावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi ratha raghunātha calāvā. bipra carana paṅkaja siru nāvā. 1.

taba laṅkēsa krōdha ura chāvā. garjata tarjata sanmukha dhāvā. 2.

Saying this (i.e. after instructing his warriors to fall back from the front lines and watch the hand-on-hand combat between himself and Ravana), Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram) mentally bowed his head before the revered (literally “lotus-like”) feet of Brahmins (to pay his obeisance to elders and seek their blessings), and then moved his chariot to the front of the line. (1)

No sooner did the Lord appear in the front of the battle line than Ravana's heart burnt with excess of anger as he became exceedingly furious; he raged and ranted and yelled and thundered as he dashed forward madly to meet the Lord head-on¹. (2)

[Note—¹When Ravana saw that his arch rival, who had killed his brother Kumbhakaran and his son Meghanad, had come boldly before him, there is no wonder he lost control over himself as all his pent-up feelings of revenge and retribution suddenly erupted like a suppressed volcano spewing hot lava of anger and indignation.

In Lord Ram the demon king Ravana saw the cause of all his misfortunes and troubles; and he was all the more infuriated when he saw the Lord calm and confident as if nothing was disturbing or bothering him. Ravana took exception to this display of nonchalance by Lord Ram as an open affront to his authority and majesty as he was accustomed to being treated with fear and awe, because even the mighty gods would ordinarily run away as soon as they heard his name, with no one in this creation ever daring to even to stand before him, what to talk of confronting or challenging him for an open duel. It was too much for Ravana's self-esteem and ego to cope with; so he burst out cursing and swearing vehemently, without any let and pause.

In the following verses we shall read how he vented his indignation and fury at Lord Ram.]

जीतेहु जे भट संजुग माहीं । सुनु तापस मैं तिन्ह सम नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

रावन नाम जगत जस जाना । लोकप जाकें बंदीखाना ॥ ४ ॥

jītehu jē bhaṭa sañjuga māhīm. sunu tāpasa mair̥m tinha sama nāhīm. 3.
rāvana nāma jagata jasa jānā. lōkapa jākēm bandīkhānā. 4.

Ravana vented his anger and indignation at Lord Ram by shouting at him haughtily with these acerbic remarks with an underlying tone of boastfulness: 'Listen you hermit (tāpasa)¹! I am not like the many warriors you claim to have vanquished in battles till now.

[So therefore, don't befool thyself. I am no ordinary demon warrior as thou might be thinking. Don't live in a fool's paradise; don't hallucinate! Be warned that fighting with me and subduing me is a completely different proposition; it's a completely different cup that thee will find very bitter to put to thine lips, and even bitter to gulp down. Don't weigh me with the same scale as thou have been weighing others. Thou think that thou wilt easily drub me; well let's see who drubs whom.] (3)

My name is Ravana (don't thou wot that?). This name is famous the world over; it belongs to the One in whose prisons even the great Lokpals (the many gods who are deemed to be the custodians of the world) languish.

[Well, well; do thou imagine it would be an easy job and a joke for anyone to capture and enslave these mighty Lokpals who themselves are very powerful and resourceful? I have done exactly this, aren't thou aware of it? So it's merely thine figment of imagination that thou wilt trounce me like the way thou had done others; there's aught naught further from the truth. So be ware, I warn thee.] (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was dressed like a hermit during his sojourn in the forest, as this was one of the conditions imposed on him at the time he had left Ayodhya to spend 14 years in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.]

खर दूषन बिराध तुम्ह मारा । बधेहु ब्याध इव बालि बिचारा ॥ ५ ॥
 निसिचर निकर सुभट संघारेहु । कुंभकरन घननादहि मारेहु ॥ ६ ॥
 आजु बयरु सबु लेउँ निबाही । जौं रन भूप भाजि नहिं जाही ॥ ७ ॥
 आजु करउँ खलु काल हवाले । परेहु कठिन रावन केपाले ॥ ८ ॥

khara dūṣana birādha tumha mārā. badhēhu byādha iva bāli bicārā. 5.
 nisicara nikara subhaṭa saṅghārēhu. kumbhakarana ghananādahi mārēhu. 6.
 āju bayaru sabu lē'uṁ nibāhī. jauṁ rana bhūpa bhāji nahim jāhī. 7.
 āju kara'uṁ khalu kāla havālē. parēhu kaṭhina rāvana kē pālē. 8.

You have slayed Khar, Dushan¹ and Viradh², and you have killed the unfortunate poor fellow Baali³. (5)

You have killed great demon warriors who were most valiant and renowned for their gallantry⁴; and of course you have slayed Kumbhakaran (my brother)⁵ and Meghanad (my son)⁶. (6)

Oh King (bhūpa)! If you do not run away from the battle-field (out of terror, or when you are battered and bludgeoned by me), then come, today is the time for me to settle old scores with you by avenging all these deaths. Forsooth, the time has come for me to exact my retribution from you with a vengeance. (7)

In all sooth and without gainsay, I shall cast you to the jaws of Kaal (death) today, for remember you are up against me who is famed for his ruthlessness and stern and uncompromising nature⁷. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 7.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8—Doha no. 10.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede Doha no. 62.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 67—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 76 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-16 that precede it.

⁷The word “Ravana” means someone who makes others weep and wail. So here Ravana alludes to this interpretation of his name to threaten Lord Ram that today he will lash out so viciously and violently at the Lord that he will remember the battering for generations to come.]

सुनि दुर्बचन कालबस जाना । बिहँसि बचन कह कृपानिधाना ॥ ९ ॥
सत्य सत्य सब तव प्रभुताई । जल्पसि जनि देखाउ मनुसाई ॥ १० ॥

sunī durbacana kālabasa jānā. bihaṁsi bacana kaha kṛpānidhānā. 9.
satya satya saba tava prabhutā'ī. jalpasi jani dēkhā'u manusā'ī. 10.

Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of the virtues of mercy, grace, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhānā), heard the angry outburst of Ravana gracefully. He smiled and answered: (9)

‘Verily indeed; all that you have said about your majesty and powers are true¹ (and I don’t doubt it a wee whit). But come on; prove yourself and show your valour and gallantry in practical terms (to help us verify that all the things you have said about yourself are really true, and not merely loud bluster and empty talk). (10)

[Note—¹It is a noble and gentlemanly gesture for Lord Ram to publicly acknowledge Ravana’s greatness and majesty, though the latter was his enemy. But this acknowledgement is tinged with underlying taunt and scorn, for the Lord immediately teases him to prove himself worthy of what he claims to be.]

छं०. जनि जल्पना करि सुजसु नासहि नीति सुनहि करहि छमा । १ ।
संसार महँ पूरुष त्रिबिध पाटल रसाल पनस समा ॥ २ ॥
एक सुमनप्रद एक सुमन फल एक फलइ केवल लागहीं । ३ ।
एक कहहिं कहहिं करहिं अपर एक करहिं कहत न बागहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jani jalpanā kari sujasu nāsahi nīti sunahi karahi chamā. 1.
sansāra maham̐ pūruṣa tribidha pātala rasāla panasa samā. 2.
ēka sumanaprada ēka sumana phala ēka phala'i kēvala lāgahīm. 3.
ēka kahahīm kahahīm karahīm apara ēka karahīm kahata na bāgahīm. 4.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘Don’t waste your breath by boasting so much about yourself as it would undermine your own fame (because those who are hollow from within try to hide their shortcoming by resorting to making a lot of noise about their achievements).

Excuse me, but there are some established norms and principles in this regard. Listen to them; I’ll tell you. (Chanda line no. 1)

Verily, there are three types of people in this world, and they are likened to these three plants—viz. the rose, the mango, and the jackfruit. (Chanda line no. 2)

[Now, pay attention to the difference between these three.] The first, i.e. the ‘rose’, gives flowers; the second, i.e. the ‘mango’, produces both flowers and fruits; while the third, i.e. the ‘jackfruit’, bears only fruits. (Chanda line no. 3)

Thus, the first sort of people are those who only talk and do nothing (like the rose plant that only bears flowers which gives visual pleasure to the world but gives it nothing worth more than that).

The second types of people are those who talk and do what they talk about (like the mango plant which has flowers as well as fruits).

And then lastly, there is the third category of people who actually do things but do not go about beating their own drum about their achievement (like the jackfruit plant that bears only fruits which the world eats, and no flowers to boast about in the world)¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram meant to say that he would prefer not to list his achievements and boast about himself like Ravana has done just a while ago; for the Lord believes in actions rather than loud talk. He teases Ravana and chides him for talking too much, instead of carrying out his threats on the ground.

These remarks of the Lord, said calmly with a sarcastic smile, were sure to engage Ravana further and stoke his anger, as the demon king had expected that Lord Ram would also shout back at him to counter his threats with equal vigour as Angad had done during their meeting some time ago, when they, i.e. Angad and Ravana, had engaged in a heated oral spat using all sorts of bitter insults and acerbic comments about each other. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Lord Ram’s composure and patience unnerved Ravana, and though he was taken aback and felt jolted, yet he gathered his wits and haughtily rebuked the Lord in the following Doha.]

दो०. राम बचन सुनि बिहँसा मोहि सिखावत ग्यान ।

बयरु करत नहिं तब डरे अब लागे प्रिय प्रान ॥ ९० ॥

dōhā.

rāma bacana suni bihañsā mōhi sikhāvata gyāna.

bayaru karata nahim taba ḍarē aba lāgē priya prāna. 90.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram, the exasperated Ravana laughed aloud boisterously, shooting back at the Lord in a haughty and sarcastic manner: ‘Ah, you are preaching me wisdom. At the time when you decided to develop hostility with me you had no fear, but now it seems you hold your life dear when you face me and feel that it is in danger.

[To wit, you act like a wise person calmly giving some solemn advice, of course in this case it is to someone who isn’t interested in it, to give an impression that you aren’t in affright of him and that nothing bothers you, whereas the fact is you

might be shuddering inside at the prospect of complete rout and abject defeat, and are looking desperately for a window for an honourable means of escape).’ (Doha no. 90)

[Note—Ravana retorts to Lord Ram’s cool response by saying that the latter is trying to hide his mortal fear of the former by behaving as if nothing serious faces him, as if the presence of the dreaded demon king is of no matter worth paying attention to because the Lord thinks that he would easily trounce Ravana.

Lord Ram had started his statement with the use of a courteous phrase “excuse me” (refer: Chanda line no. 1 herein above), and Ravana thought that it was a sign of weakness and fear, for he concluded that his opponent is trying to appease him by being courteous and polite, instead of being belligerent as is the usual case with warriors facing each other in a duel unto death, when such niceties are thrown to the wind, and replaced with provocative words and phrases to denounce the adversary.

Ravana thundered: “Hey, Look here ye all. Here is a hermit preaching me how a valorous and gallant knight ought to act. Well, come to think of it: why then does this King-turned-Hermit not practice himself what he professes. Oh King, come on now. Instead of employing the muscles of thy tongue in giving futile lectures, it would be fit for the occasion if thou employed the powers of the muscles of thine arms, and spare the trouble to the tongue. Hence, I strongly object to thy expostulating on how or how not I ought to behave, and I prithee instead to come forward to settle the question of who is greater and wiser by letting the Duel decide the matter for good.

I loathe being lectured. If thou wert as brave and valiant as thou claim to be, then why do thee hesitate and procrastinate in the matter of charging at me with full tilt and vigour like noble and gallant warrior-in-arm is expected to do? Say why have thee developed cold feet when face-to-face with someone whom thee treats as thine mortal enemy? It’s surely not behooving of a great warrior to hold back his reins when challenged by his opponent to prove his valour and mettle in open battle-field, and on equal terms. So welcome, charge; I am waiting for thee.”]

चौ०. कहि दुर्बचन क्रुद्ध दसकंधर । कुलिस समान लाग छाँड़े सर ॥ १ ॥

नानाकार सिलीमुख धाए । दिसि अरु बिदिसि गगन महि छाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahi durbacana krud'dha dasakandhara. kulisa samāna lāga chāṁṛai sara. 1.
nānākāra silīmukha dhā'ē. disi aru bidisi gagana mahi chā'ē. 2.

Having said these taunting words to Lord Ram, the ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) began shooting a hail of arrows that were as powerful as the strike of thunder. [To wit, anyone who was hit by an arrow, fell to the ground immediately.] (1)

There was a rush of arrows that covered the sky and the earth from all sides. [The whole battle-field was blanketed by arrows that rained down from the sky in all directions.] (2)

पावक सर छाँड़ेउ रघुबीरा । छन महँ जरे निसाचर तीरा ॥ ३ ॥

छाड़िसि तीब्र सक्ति खिसिआई । बान संग प्रभु फेरि चलाई ॥ ४ ॥

pāvaka sara chāmṛē'u raghubīrā. chana mahum̐ jarē nisācara tīrā. 3.
chāḍisi tībra sakti khisi'ā'ī. bāna saṅga prabhu phēri calā'ī. 4.

Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) responded by shooting fiery arrows that immediately dashed forward and not only intercepted the incoming arrows shot by Ravana but also burnt them to ashes¹. (3)

Feeling peeved and ashamed at his failure, Ravana shot a powerful weapon called Shakti (which probably was a special missile more powerful than ordinary arrows shot by him).

Lord Ram intercepted it by shooting a precisely aimed arrow which hit the incoming Shakti at its tip with such a mighty force that it turned around and retraced its path (to return to Ravana and fall down before him in a crumbled mass of the burnt-out shaft)². (4)

[Note—¹It was like the case of modern-day missile interception system. The incoming missiles launched by Ravana in the form of his arrows fired in rapid succession were intercepted and destroyed mid-air by the missiles shot by Lord Ram in the form of his arrows.

²The defensive arrow shot by Lord Ram intercepted Ravana's Shakti mid-air which with such a great force that surely there must have been a mighty flash and explosion as the two darts met each other head-on. This resulted in the Shakti's power keg exploding in a fiery display of light and thunder, after which the diffused shaft of the missile was flung back to the place from where it was launched.]

कोटिन्ह चक्र त्रिसूल पबारै । बिनु प्रयास प्रभु काटि निवारै ॥ ५ ॥
निफल होहिं रावन सर कैसें । खल के सकल मनोरथ जैसें ॥ ६ ॥

kōṭinha cakra trisūla pabārai. binu prayāsa prabhu kāṭi nivārai. 5.
niphala hōhim rāvana sara kaisēm. khala kē sakala manōratha jaisēm. 6.

Ravana was not to be so easily outwitted. He (grounded his teeth in anger and) launched a fresh salvo of weapons such as discs with sharp razor-like edges, and lancets that were shaped like tridents. But Lord Ram neutralized them as well, by cutting and breaking them all (with the help of his powerful arrows). (5)

All the arrows and other missiles shot by Ravana failed in the same way as all crooked intentions and evil plans of a wicked person are destined to failure¹. (6)

[Note—¹The idea here is that no matter how intelligent and great a crooked person thinks himself to be, no matter how carefully he may have designed his evil plans, but wickedness never pays in the long run, and such a person cannot finally prevail over those who are good and righteous.]

तब सत बान सारथी मारेसि । परेउ भूमि जय राम पुकारेसि ॥ ७ ॥
राम कृपा करि सूत उठावा । तब प्रभु परम क्रोध कहूँ पावा ॥ ८ ॥

taba sata bāna sārathī mārēsi. parē'u bhūmi jaya rāma pukārēsi. 7.
rāma kṛpā kari sūta uṭhāvā. taba prabhu parama krōdha kahūñ pāvā. 8.

Then he (i.e. Ravana) shot a hundred arrows at the charioteer of Lord Ram, who gave a loud cry hailing the glory of the Lord and calling for his victory as he fell down unconscious to the ground, gravely wounded by the strike. (7)

Lord Ram invoked his mystical powers and showed his compassionate nature by lifting the charioteer back on his feet (i.e. reviving him)¹.

This action of Ravana highly infuriated the Lord², and he became exceedingly wrathful³. (8)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that when Laxman was made unconscious for the second time by Meghanad, Lord Ram had easily revived him in a similar manner—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 84.

²Lord Ram indeed had this mystical ability to revive any person who was on the verge of death. We have a fine example of it when the Lord had asked Jatayu, the old vulture king who was mortally wounded by Ravana while the latter was taking Sita away to Lanka aboard his chariot and Jatayu had tried to save her. When Lord Ram met Jatayu, he had asked him that if he so wished then the Lord can bless him with the boon of life, but Jatayu refused, saying that he would rather attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation than live now, because not again would he ever get this opportunity to die while the Supreme Being was himself there right before him. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 31.

Another clear example is found in the case of Baali, the brother of Sugriv, whom also the Lord had given the option to live a long and stable life if he so wished, but he too preferred to die in the Lord's presence just like Jatayu had wished. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 10.

The idea is that though Lord Ram had desisted from performing any super-human deeds in order to conceal his true identity as being Lord Vishnu himself, but often times he let it known to those on whom he had shown his grace who he actually was, to make them feel blessed and spiritually blissful.

We shall soon read that Ravana would shoot down all the four horses of the Lord's chariot, but once again the Lord would immediately get them on their feet—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 92 herein after.

³Why was Lord Ram so infuriated when his charioteer, named Matali, was wounded? It is because the charioteer was innocent; he had not caused any harm to any of the demons like other monkeys and bears had been doing during the course of the war. So therefore, by showing anger the Lord gave a message to one and all that if an innocent person, who is quietly doing his duty, is harmed in any manner, then the Lord would not tolerate it.]

छं०. भए क्रुद्ध जुद्ध बिरुद्ध रघुपति त्रोन सायककसमसे । १ ।
 कोदंड धुनि अति चंड सुनि मनुजाद सब मारुत ग्रसे ॥ २ ॥
 मंदोदरी उर कंप कंपति कमठ भू भूधर त्रसे । ३ ।
 चिक्करहिं दिग्गज दसन गहि महि देखि कौतुक सुर हँसे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bha'ē krud'dha jud'dha birud'dha raghupati trōna sāyaka kasamasē. 1.
 kōdaṇḍa dhuni ati caṇḍa suni manujāda saba māruta grasē. 2.
 mandōdarī ura kampa kampati kamaṭha bhū bhūdhara trasē. 3.
 cikkarahim diggaja dasana gahi mahi dēkhi kautuka sura haṁsē. 4.

When the Lord of the Raghus (“raghupati”; Lord Ram) became angry in the battle-field and wished to punish the opponent (Ravana, who had offended the Lord by injuring his innocent charioteer), the arrows in his quiver became agitated, eager to become active and shoot forth. (Chanda line no. 1)

The thunderous twang made by the Lord’s bow created such a fierce sound that the sound-waves produced by it hit the man-eating demon with a mighty force so hard that they were stunned, tottering and trembling wherever they stood. (Chanda line no. 2)

[Ravan’s wife] Mandodari’s heart fluttered too. The ocean, the legendary Tortoise, the earth with its mountains, et al, all felt terrified, and all began to tremble¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

The Diggajas (the legendary Elephants who support the earth in the eight corners) shrieked wildly as they caught the earth in their teeth (to prevent it from getting dislodged from its position).

It was such an awe-inspiring and strange sight that the gods wondered at it, but at the same time they felt happy at the development². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹A similar thing had occurred when Lord Ram had broken the bow in Janakpur to marry Sita—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 261.

Once again, such a development is recorded when Lord Ram and his vast army departed from Kishkindha for Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 35.

²There was a great upheaval, as if a mighty quake is shaking up this world. All this commotion was caused by one thing—Lord Ram’s bow twanging. This was a thing that filled the gods with awe and wonder. But since it was the sound of Lord Ram’s bow, the Lord who was their well-wisher and protector, and in this particular instant he twanged his bow to show his annoyance at his charioteer’s injury, the gods felt happy. It was not something to worry, but rather an occasion to celebrate, as now it became all the more certain for the gods that Lord Ram would definitely slay Ravana without showing any mercy on him.

Earlier the gods may have had some hidden fear that it may perhaps be that Ravana decides to surrender before the Lord, and if this happens the merciful Lord Ram would find it difficult to refuse his plea for mercy. If that came to pass, then their tormentor Ravana would escape unharmed, and then everything would come to a naught. But now that Lord Ram had become angry at Ravana, the gods felt rested as their fear was unfounded, for now it was certain that Lord Ram would show no mercy on Ravana as the latter had offended the Lord by injuring his innocent charioteer.]

दो०. तानेउ चाप श्रवन लागि छाँडे बिसिख कराल ।

राम मारगन गन चले लहलहात जनु ब्याल ॥ ९१ ॥

dōhā.

tānē'u cāpa śravana lagi chāṁṛē bisikha karāla.

rāma māragana gana calē lahalahāta janu byāla. 91.

Lord Ram pulled the string of his bow right back up to his ears (i.e. pulled the string tight), and then shot fierce arrows. These arrows of the Lord dashed forward like so many ferocious dragons or serpents flying in the air (with their heads aiming straight in the direction of Ravana, and their tails waving behind them in a slow motion to the right and the left). (Doha no. 91)

चौ०. चले बान सपच्छ जनु उरगा । प्रथमहिं हतेउ सारथी तुरगा ॥ १ ॥

रथ बिभंजि हति केतु पताका । गर्जा अति अंतर बल थाका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calē bāna sapaccha janu uragā. prathamahim hatē'u sārathī turagā. 1.

ratha bibhañji hati kētu patākā. garjā ati antara bala thākā. 2.

The Lord's arrows moved ahead towards their target (Ravana) as if so many winged serpents were flying speedily in that direction. They first slammed down the charioteer and the horses of Ravana's chariot, killing them. (1)

Then they slammed at the chariot itself, breaking it down into splinters, and at the same time tore through the royal flag and the war standard of the demon race, as well as the banner atop his chariot, reducing them into tatters. (2)

तुरत आन रथ चढ़ि खिसिआना । अज सज छाँडेसि बिधि नाना ॥ ३ ॥

बिफल होहिं सब उद्यम ताके । जिमि परद्रोह निरत मनसा के ॥ ४ ॥

turata āna ratha caḍhi khisi'ānā. astra sastra chāṁṛēsi bidhi nānā. 3.

biphala hōhim saba udyama tākē. jimi paradrōha nirata manasā kē. 4.

Feeling extremely embarrassed and ashamed at this humiliation¹, Ravana wasted no time in climbing onto a second chariot (which he had kept as a standby)², and angrily

shot many varieties of weapons and missiles of different denominations at his adversary (Lord Ram). (3)

All his efforts proved futile in the same way as an evil person's intentions to cause ill to others would fail in the long run³. (4)

[Note—¹Ravana felt exasperated because when he had shot his own arrow or missile aimed at Lord Ram's chariot, it had only felled the charioteer whom the Lord immediately revived; but Ravana's arrow could not do more harm other than this small diversion.

On the other hand, when Lord Ram shot his arrow in retaliation, it completely demolished Ravana's chariot, killing its horses and the charioteer, and tearing apart his flag and banner, proving at once that the Lord was superior to Ravana in the art and skill of warfare and use of weapons. This realization not only peeved and embarrassed Ravana greatly but also sent a chill down his spine, as now he was gaping at the alarming prospect of trying to outwit an enemy who was far more superior and capable and skilled and empowered than what he had earlier envisioned him to be.

²We have noticed earlier too that Ravana had always kept an extra chariot, fully armed and well equipped, as a standby in the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84.

Another remarkable point to be noted here is this: Lord Ram was able to revive his charioteer when he was struck down by the missile shot by Ravana, but it is obvious that Ravana did not possess the knowledge of how to do it. This was another reason of his getting extremely alarmed. He wondered at how his enemy was able to revive those who fell down mortally wounded and unconscious on the ground. Earlier it was Laxman who was revived, and now it was the charioteer.

Well, come to think of it: How actually was Lord Ram able to achieve this miraculous feat besides the factor of his being the Supreme Being who is all-able, all-knowing and all-powerful, the Lord who can do the impossible should he wish to do it?

The plausible answer is this: When Laxman was revived by the concoction prepared from the medical herbs brought by Hanuman on the advice of the doctor named Sushen, Lord Ram realized its wonderful properties, and surely he had kept aside the rest of the remedy after a part of the preparation successfully revived Laxman, to be used in emergencies during the war. Lord Ram had used it first to revive Laxman when he fell for the second time upon being hit by Ravana's powerful Shakti (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84), and now again when he revived his charioteer who was also struck down by Ravana (refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 91). The Lord would also revive his four horses when they would be struck dead by Ravana soon—apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 herein below.

Ravana was dumb-struck; he could not understand the mystery of how Lord Ram managed to perform this magical trick of fully reviving someone who was almost dead. What does it indicate? Well, it means that Sushen, Ravana's own doctor, was privately annoyed at his own Lord, at his high-handedness and arrogant nature; the doctor was very sad and angry when the pious Vibhishan was ill-treated by the demon king. So he mentally resolved not to help him any further. This is also the reason that Sushen told the correct herb to Lord Ram in order to revive Laxman, for if

the doctor had so wished he could have administered a wrong medicine to Laxman that would have done him to death, instead of reviving him with all his original vigour. This was Sushen's way of punishing his cruel Lord Ravana for the way the latter had been behaving throughout his life.

But this point did not strike Ravana; he had never thought in his wildest of dreams that Sushen, the royal doctor of the demon race, would also betray him by not disclosing the secret medicine by which the almost-dead could be revived back to life. But some blame goes to Ravana as well—for he had never, in his arrogance and haughtiness, sought Sushen's advice on this matter, thinking he did not need it, as no one in this creation would ever be able to trounce him and create a situation where he would need someone's help to revive those who were on the verge of death. Ravana thought: "I have conquered the God of Death himself; so what's the worry."

The point to remark here is that if a king, or any ruler for that matter, fails to keep his subjects in good humour and favourably inclined towards himself, then one or the other day these same subjects of his would vent their suppressed anger at him by turning hostile, and pulling the rug from under his feet at a time when he least expects. In the case of the poor and unfortunate demon king Ravana, many of his trusted aides had turned their backs on him when the tides of time and fortune themselves turned against him.

³A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 91.]

तब रावन दस सूल चलावा । बाजि चारि महि मारि गिरावा ॥ ५ ॥
तुरग उठाइ कोपि रघुनायक । खैंचि सरासन छाँड़े सायक ॥ ६ ॥

taba rāvana dasa sūla calāvā. bāji cāri mahi māri girāvā. 5.
turaga uṭhā'i kōpi raghunāyaka. khaiñci sarāsana chāṁṛē sāyaka. 6.

Then Ravana shot ten fierce tridents or lancets, which struck and fell the four horses of Lord Ram's chariot almost as dead. (5)

Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) immediately lifted the fallen horses (i.e. he revived the horses back to life and put them on their feet once again in the same way as he had lifted his charioteer a while ago).

The enraged Lord Ram pulled his bow and furiously shot a powerful volley of arrows in retaliation. (6)

रावन सिर सरोज बनचारी । चलि रघुबीर सिलीमुख धारी ॥ ७ ॥
दस दस बान भाल दस मारे । निसरि गए चले रुधिर पनारे ॥ ८ ॥

rāvana sira sarōja banacārī. cali raghubīra silīmukha dhārī. 7.
dasa dasa bāna bhāla dasa mārē. nisari ga'e calē rudhira panārē. 8.

The group of arrows of Lord Ram went towards the heads of Ravana like hordes of bees were moving towards a cluster of lotus flowers, as is their natural wont or habit¹. (7)

Lord Ram shot a volley of arrows in such a way that a cluster of ten of them struck the forehead of each of Ravana's ten heads, pierced through them, and emerged on the other side². This resulted in producing large gaping holes in his heads, from which gushed out streams of blood like water flowing from water spouts or drains from which rain water flows out from rooftops during heavy rainfall². (8)

[Note—¹The bees have a natural habit of moving in large numbers towards a dense cluster of lotus flowers where they hover for a while before alighting on the flowers to suck out their nectar. In this metaphor, the large numbers of Lord Ram's arrows are likened to the bees, and the heads of Ravana to the lotus flowers. Just like the bees aim straight at the lotus flower and alight directly on it without being attracted by any other flower, the arrows aimed straight at Ravana's head without going off track. Once they strike the heads these arrows would suck the life out of them just as the bees suck out the nectar from the lotus flowers after alighting on them.

²A total of 100 arrows were shot by Lord Ram. There were 10 arrows aimed at each of Ravana's 10 heads—i.e. 10 x 10 = 100.

Remember: Ravana's heads were huge as mountains; so therefore his foreheads were also broad like the sides of these mountains.

Ravana had shot ten tridents (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 herein above), so Lord Ram answered by shooting an equal number of arrows aimed at each of his heads.]

स्रवत रुधिर धायउ बलवाना । प्रभु पुनि कृत धनु सर संधाना ॥ ९ ॥
तीस तीर रघुबीर पबारे । भुजन्हि समेत सीस महि पारे ॥ १० ॥

sravata rudhira dhāya'u balavānā. prabhu puni kṛta dhanu sara sandhānā. 9.
tīsa tīra raghubīra pabārē. bhujanhi samēta sīsa mahi pārē. 10.

Ravana, who was exceptionally strong and valorous, dashed forward even while blood flowed out in a steady stream from his foreheads. Lord Ram once again mounted his arrows on his bow, and took aim. (9)

The brave Lord of the Raghus ("raghubīra"; Lord Ram) this time shot thirty arrows at one go. These arrows sliced away Ravana's twenty arms and ten heads which fell to the ground. (10)

काटतहीं पुनि भए नबीने । राम बहोरि भुजा सिर छीने ॥ ११ ॥
प्रभु बहु बार बाहु सिर हए । कटत झटिति पुनि नूतन भए ॥ १२ ॥

kāṭatahīm puni bha'e nabīnē. rāma bahōri bhujā sira chīnē. 11.
prabhu bahu bāra bāhu sira ha'ē. kaṭata jhaṭiti puni nūtana bha'ē. 12.

No sooner had Lord Ram severed Ravana's heads and arms than they grew back once again, immediately.

Not to be daunted, the Lord cut off his heads and arms once again. (11)

But the same thing was repeated: for as soon as these were severed from Ravana's body, new ones (10 heads and 20 arms) took their place instantly¹. (12)

[Note—¹It is like the case of a Hydra. We learn in basic zoology that when any part of this primary organism is cut, it is able to regenerate the severed part on its own. This phenomenon of Ravana regenerating his heads and arms applies especially to the Hydra whose heads regenerate automatically if cut off.]

पुनि पुनि प्रभु काटत भुज सीसा । अति कौतुकी कोसलाधीसा ॥ १३ ॥
रहे छाड़ नभ सिर अरु बाहू । मानहुँ अमित केतु अरु राहू ॥ १४ ॥

puni puni prabhu kātata bhuja sīsā. ati kautukī kōsalādhīsā. 13.
rahē chā'i nabha sira aru bāhū. mānahuṁ amita kētu aru rāhū. 14.

[Now it was the turn of Lord Ram to be amazed and left wondering. Why? Because—]

Lord Ram repeatedly severed the heads and arms of Ravana, but each time they grew back on his body. The Lord of Kaushal ("kōsalādhīsā"; Lord Ram) was playing this strange game with Ravana to amuse himself (kautuka)¹. (13)

The severed heads and arms of Ravana filled the sky as if so many comets and falling stars, represented by Rahu and Ketu in mythology², were dashing hither-thither through the firmament. (14)

[Note—¹This verse can have another interpretation: "This strange phenomenon of Ravana growing his heads and arms every time Lord Ram cut them filled him with awe and amazement."

²In this analogy, the heads of Ravana are like the many 'Rahus', and his arms are like the 'Ketus'. The 'Rahu' is the severed head of a demon of this name; the Rahu is said to devour the disc of the moon and the sun to produce the lunar and solar eclipses respectively according to mythology.

The 'Ketu' is the torso of the same demon Rahu, and after his head was cut off the rest of the body moved around in the universe. The 'comet' that we witness in the sky is said to be the Ketu of mythology.

Since Ravana's heads were round, they are compared to Rahu; and his arms, being muscular and tubular, are likened to the Ketu which is like a long and broad ribbon.]

छं०. जनु राहु केतु अनेक नभ पथ स्रवत सोनित धावहीं । १ ।
रघुबीर तीर प्रचंड लागहिं भूमि गिरन न पावहीं ॥ २ ॥
एक एक सर सिर निकर छेदे नभ उड़त इमि सोहहीं । ३ ।

जनु कोपि दिनकर कर निकर जहँ तहँ बिधुंतुद पोहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

janu rāhu kētu anēka nabha patha sravata sōnita dhāvahīm. 1.
raghubīra tīra pracaṇḍa lāgahīm bhūmi girana na pāvahīm. 2.
ēka ēka sara sira nikara chēdē nabha uṛata imi sōhahīm. 3.
janu kōpi dinakara kara nikara jaham̐ taham̐ bidhuntuda pōhahīm. 4.

It appeared that countless Rahus and Ketus were streaking through the sky while blood flowed from them and formed a trail behind their path. (Chanda line no. 1)

These heads and arms of Ravana continued to fly across the sky as they couldn't fall down to the ground, because they were flung off so violently when Lord Ram's arrows cut them off from the demon king's body that they were put in a trajectory that neutralized the effect of gravity and kept them air-borne for a long time (much like the kite flies). (Chanda line no. 2)

The heads of Ravana flew through the sky, with each of them being pierced by Lord Ram's arrows that passed through them, to create an impression that the countless rays of the angry sun were picking up the Rahus one by one and impaling them by their energized darts¹. (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹The Sun became angry at Rahu; so it decided to shoot its rays in the form of energized darts that impaled Rahu, and forced it to go round and round around the blazing disc of the Sun to get roasted alive.

In this analogy, the arrows of Lord Ram are like the darts of Sun's rays shot to impale Rahu, and the severed heads of Ravana are like Rahu himself.]

दो०. जिमि जिमि प्रभु हर तासु सिर तिमि तिमि होहिं अपार ।
सेवत बिषय बिबर्ध जिमि नित नित नूतन मार ॥ ९२ ॥

dōhā.

jimi jimi prabhu hara tāsū sira timi timi hōhīm apāra.
sēvata biṣaya bibardha jimi nita nita nūtana māra. 92.

Ravana's heads grew back soon as Lord Ram cut them off in the same way as longing for the world and its material objects, as well as the yearning for the pleasures of the senses continue to increase in direct proportion to one's involvement in them. (Doha no. 92)

[Note—To wit, the more a person allows himself to get involved with the material world, and derive pleasure and comfort from its sense objects, the more his desire for them increases. So likewise, the more heads of Ravana were cut off by Lord Ram, the more heads grew back.

The idea is this: After a certain point of time, Lord Ram realized that it was a waste of time and energy trying to kill Ravana by cutting off his heads. Some other means had to be devised now.]

चौ०. दसमुख देखि सिरन्ह कै बाढ़ी । बिसरा मरन भई रिस गाढ़ी ॥ १ ॥

गर्जेउ मूढ़ महा अभिमानी । धायउ दसहु सरासन तानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dasamukha dēkhi siranha kai bāṛhī. bisarā marana bhaī risa gāṛhī. 1.
garjē'u mūrha mahā abhimānī. dhāya'u dasahu sarāsana tānī. 2.

When the ten-mouthed (dasamukha)¹ demon Ravana observed that his heads were multiplying endlessly, he forgot about the danger of death that had been looming over his head a while ago (because now he was sure that he wouldn't die, for it is next to impossible for a living being to survive once its head is cut off from its body, but this principle didn't seem to apply to Ravana).

With that fear out of the way, with the peril of imminent death no more occupying his mind, Ravana was now seized with severe pangs of revenge as flames of burning wrath and desire for vengeance swept through his entire being. (1)

That extremely haughty and arrogant fool of a monster (mūrha mahā abhimānī) thundered boisterously (garjē'u) even as he dashed forward with all his ten bows² drawn and strung tight, ready to shoot (arrows). (2)

[Note—¹Ravana had ten heads, and therefore 'ten mouths'.

²He had 'twenty arms', which means 'ten pairs of arms'. So he held ten bows in each of his ten arms on one side of his gigantic body, while the other ten arms were ready to mount arrows on the bows of the corresponding side in order to shoot them.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 81 where this arrangement of bows and arrows is clearly marked.]

समर भूमि दसकंधर कोप्यो । बरषि बान रघुपति रथ तोप्यो ॥ ३ ॥

दंड एक रथ देखि न परेऊ । जनु निहार महुँ दिनकर दुरेऊ ॥ ४ ॥

samara bhūmi dasakandhara kōpyō. baraṣi bāna raghupati ratha tōpyō. 3.
daṇḍa ēka ratha dēkhi na parē'ū. janu nihāra mahuṁ dinakara durē'ū. 4.

The ten-shouldered (dasakandhara)¹ Ravana became wrathful and vengeful in the battle-field; he rained down a dense volley of arrows that covered the chariot of Lord Ram (also known as "Raghupati", the Lord of the Raghu-race of great kings of Ayodhya). (3)

The chariot of Lord Ram was so covered by this thick veil of arrows that for about an hour (daṇḍa ēka) it remained out of sight like an object that becomes invisible for some time during thick fog or mist². (4)

[Note—¹Ravana had 'ten shoulders' upon which were his ten necks and ten heads like a Hydra of ancient Greek mythology.

²Even as an object remains unharmed, though it is not visible, when it is covered by a thick cover of fog or mist, which however is short-lived by its very nature, and as soon as the fog or mist dissipates the object comes to view once again, so was the case with Lord Ram's chariot. To wit, for some time the Lord's chariot became invisible because Ravana's arrows had covered it from all sides, but when the hail of arrows cleared, the chariot was once again seen in all its splendour and magnificence.]

हाहाकार सुरन्ह जब कीन्हा । तब प्रभु कोपि कारमुक लीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
सर निवारि रिपु के सिर काटे । ते दिसि बिदिसि गगन महि पाटे ॥ ६ ॥

hāhākāra suranha jaba kīnhā. taba prabhu kōpi kāramuka līnhā. 5.
sara nivāri ripu kē sira kātē. tē disi bidisi gagana mahi pātē. 6.

But during this time when Lord Ram's chariot became invisible, the gods panicked and became extremely alarmed; they raised a pitiful cry of woe and fear.

When the Lord observed the piteous condition of the terrified gods, he angrily lifted his formidable bow which was like the mouth of Death (kāramuka). (5)

Letting out a fierce volley of arrows from it, the Lord severed the heads of the enemy once again. These severed heads covered the firmament, the landscape of the sky, from one end to another¹. (6)

[Note—¹Imagine the confoundedness of the terrified gods: The sky was already thickly covered with countless heads and arms of Ravana flying randomly in all directions like so many Rahun and Ketus (apropos: Chaupai line no. 14 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 92 herein above); then Ravana's arrows flew thickly to conceal Lord Ram's chariot (apropos: Chaupai line no. 3 herein above); and now whatever space was left was filled with a fresh supply of Ravana's heads that the Lord now cut.

There was a thick carpet of heads, arms and arrows spread in the space of the sky between where the gods were stationed in the heaven and the ground below where the war was being fought. In this smokescreen the gods were literally blinded as they could perceive nothing of what was happening on the battle-field.

To wit, this cover of heads, arms and arrows which obscured the view of the battle-field from the gods was actually Lord Ram's way of spreading his Maya upon these gods: the Lord had performed certain mystical deeds and magical tricks which perhaps he wished to keep to himself and concealed from the gods; and so he employed this ruse to keep the gods in oblivion of what was actually happening in the battle-field.]

काटे सिर नभ मारग धावहिं । जय जय धुनि करि भय उपजावहिं ॥ ७ ॥
कहँ लछिमन सुग्रीव कपीसा । कहँ रघुबीर कोसलाधीसा ॥ ८ ॥

kāṭē sira nabha māraga dhāvahiṃ. jaya jaya dhuni kari bhaya upajāvahiṃ. 7.
kahaṃ lachimana sugrīva kapīsā. kahaṃ raghubīra kōsalādhīsā. 8.

The severed heads of Ravana dart hither and thither through the path of the sky, letting out shrieks of ‘victory-victory; hail-hail’ that create terrible fear in all those who listen to these ghostly voices¹. (7)

Even as these heads streak through the sky they kept on howling gravely: ‘Where is Laxman; where is Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. Where is Raghubir, the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram)?’ (8)

[Note—¹The ghostly sound produced by severed heads of Ravana terrified the gods in heaven, as well as the army of monkeys and bears on the ground.]

छं०. कहँ रामु कहि सिर निकर धाए देखि मर्कट भजि चले । १ ।
संधानि धनु रघुबंसमनि हँसि सरन्हि सिर बेधे भले ॥ २ ॥
सिर मालिका कर कालिका गहि बूंद बूंदन्हि बहु मिलीं । ३ ।
करि रुधिर सारि मज्जनु मनहुँ संग्राम बट पूजन चलीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kahaṃ rāmu kahi sira nikara dhā'ē dēkhi markāṭa bhaji calē. 1.
sandhāni dhanu raghubansamani haṃsi saranhi sira bēdhē bhalē. 2.
sira mālikā kara kālīkā gahi bṛnda bṛndanhi bahu milīṃ. 3.
kari rudhira sari majjanu manahuṃ saṅgrāma baṭa pūjana calīṃ. 4.

‘Where is Ram’—saying these words, clusters of severed heads whistled through the sky in every direction, and this sight so much terrified the monkeys and bears on the battle-ground that they ran helter-skelter out of fear. (Chanda line no. 1)

Lord Ram, who was like a gem in the race of kings belonging to Raghu’s race (raghubansamani), smiled in amusement even as he lifted his bow and shot arrows that pierced these flying heads properly in such a way that they stopped creating any more howling sound¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, on the battle-field itself there were hordes of Kalikas (female forms of the god of death known as ‘Kaal’) roaming around in groups while holding garlands of skulls in their hands. (Chanda line no. 3)

It created an impression that these patron goddesses of the battle-field had first taken a bath in a river of blood and were now proceeding to offer their worship of a Vat Tree (a banyan tree) symbolized by the war². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The next set of arrows shot by Lord Ram punctured bigger holes in the heads of Ravana that were making so much noise as they flew in the sky so as to completely silence them. Perhaps the holes made previously were very small, say like those in a flute or any other wind-based musical instrument, and when these heads flew through the sky with great speed they produced a whistling sound when air passed through

these apertures. So, Lord Ram shot a second volley of arrows that drilled bigger holes into these heads, which helped to stop the ghostly sound that they made.

²The Kalikas were carrying garlands of skulls just like women folk carry garlands of flowers when they go to offer worship to a holy tree, which is the banyan tree in this case. Here this ‘banyan tree’ is represented by the raging ‘war’, and like the banyan tree that has many roots and branches of different shapes spreading over a large area, the war too had different phases and different aspects, with its ups and downs and changing contours, where the tide of fortune would change sides swiftly, once favouring the demon army and at another moment favouring the army of monkeys and bears.]

दो०. पुनि दसकंठ क्रुद्ध होइ छाँड़ी सक्ति प्रचंड ।
चली बिभीषन सन्मुख मनहुँ काल कर दंड ॥ ९३ ॥

dōhā.

puni dasakaṇṭha krud'dha hō'i chāṁṛī sakti pracaṇḍa.
calī bibhīṣana sanmukha manahuṁ kāla kara daṇḍa. 93.

Once again, Ravana shot another powerful weapon called ‘Shakti’ (a lancet or a trident that possessed exceptional ability to strike down the target at which it was aimed)¹. It was aimed at Vibhishan, and so it headed straight to him as if the fearful baton of Kaal (i.e. the weapon of the god of death) was thrown at Vibhishan (with the intention to kill him). (Doha no. 93)

[Note—¹The term “Shakti” applied to a powerful and strong weapon that had a lot of energy and punch incorporated into it; it had the potential to create extensive damage to the target it was aimed at. It was invincible and infallible as it rarely failed to attain its objective.

Ravana had many such exclusive weapons in reserve, and he used them when other weapons failed to satisfy him. He had used a Shakti earlier to hit Laxman with the result that the latter fell down on the ground unconscious by its impact—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 83.

Presently, when Ravana saw Vibhishan, his estranged brother, his indignation and anger knew no bounds. He flew into a rage when he sighted Vibhishan because he treated the latter as a traitor and one who had betrayed his own family and race. Ravana’s anger leapt up into a flame when he saw Vibhishan in the same manner as when he had become furious upon seeing Laxman, because the sight of Laxman reminded Ravana that it was he who had killed his dear son Meghanad. Now once again, the sight of Vibhishan revived the memory of the bitter moment when he had kicked him out of Lanka for advocating the cause of Lord Ram.

To wit, Ravana became incensed by the sight of Vibhishan so much that he decided to get done with him; so he shot the powerful Shakti to kill his brother and get him out of his way for good.]

चौ०. आवत देखि सक्ति अति घोरा । प्रनतारति भंजन पन मोरा ॥ १ ॥

तुरत बिभीषन पाछें मेला । सन्मुख राम सहेउ सोइ सेला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āvata dēkhi sakti ati ghōrā. pranatārati bhañjana pana mōrā. 1.

turata bibhīṣana pāchēm mēlā. sanmukha rāma sahē'u sō'i sēlā. 2.

When Lord Ram saw this formidable Shakti approaching to target Vibhishan, he bethought to himself: ‘It is my declared vow that I would eliminate all fears of those who have surrendered themselves to me and have sought my protection. [Therefore, it is obligatory upon me to protect Vibhishan and get him out of harms way, even if it means that I have to suffer as a consequence.]’¹ (1)

Deciding thus, the Lord immediately pushed Vibhishan behind and stood in the front to bear the brunt of the attack of the incoming Shakti, thereby effectively shielding Vibhishan from the horrifying deadly effects of the missile². (2)

[Note—¹This determination of Lord Ram, that he would not flinch or demur, nor procrastinate even for a while, when it comes to extending his protection to those who have come to him in the time of distress to surrender themselves before him and seek his protection, is explicitly stressed by the Lord himself earlier too with reference to Vibhishan himself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 44.

Lord Ram had made this declaration publicly, and so it was now incumbent upon him to show everyone that he keeps his words like a true and gallant knight.

²Another very significant point to note at this juncture is this: Lord Ram was riding a chariot at this point of time, and so was Ravana. How then did Vibhishan come into the picture?

Well, there are three possibilities here; let us consider them one by one as follows—

(i) The first possibility is that Vibhishan was also on the chariot alongside Lord Ram in order to assist him, being his constant companion and special advisor during the war, as he was hand-picked by the Lord himself because Vibhishan was fully aware about the secrets of Lanka and its army like no one else in the Lord’s army.

(ii) The second probability is that after the Lord’s charioteer Matali was wounded when he was hit by Ravana’s arrows (apropos: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91), he was replaced by Vibhishan who took the reins of the chariot himself in order to give Matali some rest.

(iii) The third likelihood is that after the charioteer Matali was revived by Lord Ram, the Lord decided to give him some rest, and so he left the chariot and stood on the ground near it, where his chief commanders such as Vibhishan and others were already present. When Ravana saw his estranged brother standing close to his arch enemy Lord Ram, his anger knew no bounds; he flared up with vengeance when he recalled how his own brother had betrayed him. So Ravana shot a deadly dart at Vibhishan to kill him.

All these three possibilities can be true, though nothing is clearly mentioned regarding how Lord Ram could ‘push Vibhishan behind him’ when he saw the Shakti coming. It is surely not practically possible to happen if the Lord was on a chariot and Vibhishan was standing on the ground with other commanders who were directed

earlier by the Lord to stand by and watch the duel between himself and Ravana—apropos: Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Now therefore, if we take into consideration the first option, that ‘Vibhishan was on the chariot sitting or standing alongside Lord Ram’, then it is easy to visualize Ravana spotting him and shooting his Shakti at his brother to vent his suppressed anger and indignation at him; it is also easy then for Lord Ram to push Vibhishan behind the seat and take the hit himself.

The second option—that ‘Vibhishan had replaced Matali as the charioteer of Lord Ram for some time’—also works well with the narration and to explain what may actually have happened during those crucial moments. During such duels it was a common-place thing to immobilize one’s adversary by falling his charioteer and horses—both Lord Ram and Ravana had done it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91 (Ravana felling Lord Ram’s charioteer); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 92 (Lord Ram retaliating in the same way by felling Ravana’s charioteer and horses).}

When Ravana’s sight fell on Vibhishan taking charge of Lord Ram’s chariot, obviously the former lost his cool and flew into a raging fit of anger—because the very sight of his estranged brother filled Ravana with loathing, for he was overcome with extreme disgust and burning indignation. When he aimed his Shakti at Vibhishan, Lord Ram immediately pushed the latter aside and stepped in his place to bear the brunt of the attack.

Likewise, the third option—that ‘Lord Ram had left the chariot for a while and stood on the ground while Vibhishan and others came close to him, and then Ravana shot his Shakti at Vibhishan’—also seems plausible, because then it would be natural for Lord Ram to push Vibhishan behind him and take the hit himself.

In any case, what happened to Vibhishan? Well, we shall read in the following verses that he took up his fighting mace and rushed at Ravana. It clearly means that if we take into consideration either of the first two options then the chariot of Lord Ram had stopped on its track, and Vibhishan had jumped off it and ran on foot to confront his brother.

On the other hand, if we regard the third possibility as what actually might have transpired during those moments, then also everything fits in well with the description of what happened during those moments.

Vibhishan dashing forward to challenge and engage Ravana after Lord Ram fell down unconscious was a natural and spontaneous reaction on his part, for he was greatly obliged to the Lord for giving him unconditional shelter and promising him his full support and protection at a time when his own brother Ravana would have certainly killed him if he had remained a little longer in Lanka.

To wit, in the absence of any clear description of what might have actually happened during those crucial moments, the above three possibilities are the only ones that come to mind to explain the development; there is no practical way of what might have happened then other than this.]

लागि सक्ति मुरुछा कछु भई । प्रभु कृत खेल सुरन्ह बिकलई ॥ ३ ॥

देखि बिभीषन प्रभु श्रम पायो । गहि कर गदा क्रुद्ध होइ धायो ॥ ४ ॥

lāgi sakti muruchā kachu bha'ī. prabhu kṛta khēla suranha bikala'ī. 3.
dēkhi bibhīṣana prabhu śrama pāyō. gahi kara gadā krud'dha hō'i dhāyō. 4.

When the Shakti slammed into Lord Ram, he fell unconscious for some time. This play of the Lord confounded the gods who felt sore affright, alarmed and agitated¹. (3)

No sooner did Vibhishan see Lord Ram falling exhausted after being hit by the powerful Shakti, than he picked up his war mace and rushed angrily at Ravana². (4)

[Note—¹The reader might have recognized by now how impatient and nervous and fragile the gods were. Every time they found Lord Ram on the back-foot, they panicked; they didn't realize that it was a war, and in a war it is impossible that the tide of fortune would always and exclusively favour one combatant. They forgot that Lord Ram was actually 'Lord Vishnu', and therefore there was no question of his losing the war against the demon king Ravana. But everything takes its time.

Lord Ram, meanwhile, being the Supreme Lord of the world, wished to play an even game; the Lord wished that Ravana ought to be given his due share of fame and glory by allowing to prove himself as a mighty warrior; the Lord wished that history would give due credit to Ravana and honour him for his unrivalled gallantry, valour and qualities as a great and powerful warrior.

At the same time the Lord had to honour and recognize the mystical powers that the many weapons that were used at different times during the war inherently possessed. Remember: The Supreme Being had created every conceivable component in this creation; the demons too were obviously a part of the same creation, and so were the myriad weapons they used. The Lord had to take action on these demons because they were crossing the limits of tolerance, but that did not mean that they weren't a part of the creation created by the Supreme Being.

The demons represented the 'Tama Guna', or the third quality out of the three qualities created by the Lord at the time of creation—the other two being 'Sata Guna' and the 'Raja Guna'. These three qualities were like the tripod on which the character and nature of all creatures was based; and in an ideal situation there ought to be a balance between the three so that the tripod would stand stable and straight. Unfortunately this was not to be so and the balance failed over time so that the worst of the three, the 'Tama Guna', became dominant, pushing aside the other two and upsetting the delicate balance designed by the Supreme Lord. Now when this happened, it became obligatory for the Lord to reset things and bring normalcy in his creation. This in brief was why Lord Ram was fighting the 'demons'; it was just to bring the ancient balance back to the normal.

Therefore, the Lord played things patiently and with a cool head, though externally he had to act like an expert actor who shows so many emotions and sentiments on the stage in accordance to the role he is playing, but once off the stage he remains unconcerned and calm, becoming his earlier self.

²See note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein above. The missile sapped Lord Ram's energy for a while as it hit him hard, as a result of which the Lord sank to his feet, exhausted and tired like a person who loses his senses for some time when suddenly hit hard by a blow.]

रे कुभाग्य सठ मंद कुबुद्धे । तैं सुर नर मुनि नाग बिरुद्धे ॥ ५ ॥
सादर सिव कहूँ सीस चढ़ाए । एक एक के कोटिन्ह पाए ॥ ६ ॥

rē kubhāgya saṭha manda kubud'dhē. tair̥m sura nara muni nāga birud'dhē. 5.
sādara siva kahuṃ sīsa caṛhā'ē. ēka ēka kē kōṭinha pā'ē. 6.

Vibhishan sternly rebuked Ravana, saying: 'Oh you unfortunate, wicked and dumb-witted fellow whose mind has become pervert. You have become hostile to all living beings; you have not spared anyone, neither the gods, the human beings, the pious sages and hermits, nor the serpents (representing the reptiles who aren't even able to stand up and walk).

[To wit, thou hast oppressed and created animosity with every imaginable creature in the Lord's universe; thou hast spared neither the high and the mighty, nor the weak and the humble. Thy mind is so excessively pervert that it has eclipsed thine wisdom and senses so much that thee hast been blinded of everything. Forsooth, thee thinks that thou art the Lord of the world, but in thine haughty recklessness thou hast forgotten that everything has a limit, that one wouldst be well-advised to live within one's limits, and never overdo things in arrogant overconfidence. I had tried to show thee the correct path, but in thy arrogance thee didst naught pay any heed to it. So now, reap what thou hast sowed.] (5)

You had offered your heads to Lord Shiva as offerings at the time you had worshipped him, as a result of which you had been blessed by the boon that you will never be short of heads, as for each head you had offered to Shiva, you were granted countless heads in return¹.

[Lord Shiva was so pleased by thy self-sacrifice of thine heads that he granted thee access to countless heads, so that if by an unhappy chance thou wouldst lose thine head, then thee wouldst be compensated by another head immediately. That is why Lord Ram has failed to get rid of thee by cutting thine heads. Woe to thee, thou wicked fellow, for thy time has come!] (6)

[Note—¹This incident is hinted at in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 38-39; and verse no. 53.

Ravana has himself boasted of it while arguing with Angad in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

तेहि कारन खल अब लगि बाँच्यो । अब तव कालु सीस पर नाच्यो ॥ ७ ॥
राम बिमुख सठ चहसि संपदा । अस कहि हनेसि माझ उर गदा ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi kārana khala aba lagi bāñcyō. aba tava kālu sīsa para nācyō. 7.
rāma bimukha saṭha cahasi sampadā. asa kahi hanēsi mājha ura gadā. 8.

That is the reason why you have survived for so long (inspite of Lord Ram severing your heads so many times). But now your death seems to be dancing over your head. (7)

How stupid you are to expect prosperity and welfare by being opposed to Lord Ram!'

Saying this, Vibhishan swung his battle mace and slammed it hard on Ravana's chest. (8)

छं०. उर माझ गदा प्रहार घोर कठोर लागत महि परचो । १ ।
 दस बदन सोनित स्रवत पुनि संभारि धायो रिस भर्यो ॥ २ ॥
 द्वौ भिरे अतिबल मल्लजुद्ध बिरुद्ध एकु एकहि हनै । ३ ।
 रघुबीर बल दर्पित बिभीषनु घालि नहिं ता कहूँ गनै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ura mājha gadā prahāra ghōra kaṭhōra lāgata mahi paryō. 1.
 dasa badana sōnita sraṇata puni sambhāri dhāyō risa bharyō. 2.
 dvau bhirē atibala mallajud'dha birud'dha ēku ēkahi hanai. 3.
 raghubīra bala darpita bibhīṣanu ghāli nahim tā kahūṁ ganai. 4.

No sooner did the mighty battle mace struck Ravana in his chest with a deadly blow, than he fell down on the ground. (Chanda line no. 1)

Blood flowed from all his ten mouths. But not to be so easily outwitted, the valorous Ravana soon recovered himself and rushed forward, with renewed vengeance, towards Vibhishan. (Chanda line no. 2)

The two equally strong, valiant and gallant champions clashed with each other vigourously, slamming each other with all their might, and raining deadly blows. (Chanda line no. 3)

Vibhishan was encouraged to take on his formidable adversary Ravana with renewed vigour and confidence as he had the latent support and blessing of Lord Ram so much so that the former gave no credence to how mighty or valorous the latter may have been for anyone else.

[To wit, since Vibhishan had full support of Lord Ram, and he was fighting on the Lord's behalf, he had no fear from Ravana at all. Otherwise, left to himself, Vibhishan was no match against his mighty brother who was so powerful and strong that even his name would send the gods of heaven running for cover¹.] (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-13 that precede it; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 25; Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 28.]

दो०. उमा बिभीषनु रावनहि सन्मुख चितव कि काउ ।
 सो अब भिरत काल ज्यों श्रीरघुबीर प्रभाउ ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

umā bibhīṣanu rāvanahi sanmukha citava ki kā'u.
sō aba bhirata kāla jyōm śrīraghubīra prabhā'u. 94.

[Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this magnificent Story, said to his consort Uma who was listening to it.] 'Listen Uma. Could Vibhishan ever gather the courage to see eye to eye with Ravana? [No; never.]

That same Vibhishan now clashed fearlessly with Ravana as if he was a personified form of Kaal (god of death). Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, this was made possible only due to the grace and glory of Lord Ram¹. (Doha no. 94)

[Note—¹To wit, the very fact that Vibhishan could even as much as dare to face Ravana and hit him so hard that the mighty Lord of the demons would fall down, bleeding from his mouths, shows the secret power inherent to the grace of Lord Ram. Since Vibhishan had Lord Ram's blessings, he was very well empowered and protected so much so that he not only had no fear from his ferocious demon brother, but he also succeeded in bringing him down to earth by his blow. Ravana's powers and strength of arm were no secret from Vibhishan, and under any other situation he would have run away instead of confronting Ravana and getting squashed to death by him.]

चौ०. देखा श्रमित बिभीषनु भारी । धायउ हनूमान गिरि धारी ॥ १ ॥

रथ तुरंग सारथी निपाता । हृदय माझ तेहि मारेसि लाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhā śramita bibhīṣanu bhārī. dhāya'u hanūmāna giri dhārī. 1.
ratha turaṅga sārathī nipātā. hṛdaya mājha tēhi mārēsi lātā. 2.

Hanuman, who was watching the proceedings from the sidelines, observed that Vibhishan was getting exhausted. So he decided to come to Vibhishan's aid, and holding a huge boulder that resembled a mountain, he leapt forward with a mighty dash. (1)

He (Hanuman) dumped this mountain-like boulder with a great force on Ravana's chariot, crushing it to smithereens, and killing the horses as well as the charioteer. Thence he kicked Ravana viciously in the chest¹. (2)

[Note—¹This is not the first time that Hanuman had intervened during one-to-one duels, for he had reacted with the same swiftness and agility earlier also during the confrontation between Ravana and Laxman when the latter was shot down and felled unconscious by a powerful Shakti shot by Ravana, whereat Hanuman had dashed forward to intervene, giving a violent fist-blow to Ravana that made him swoon and fall down. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84.}

At other times too when Hanuman found that his companions were in dire danger, he was the first to come to their aid; there are several instances of it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 43; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.}

ठाढ़ रहा अति कंषित गाता । गयउ बिभीषनु जहँ जनत्राता ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि रावन कपि हतेउ पचारी । चलेउ गगन कपि पूँछ पसारी ॥ ४ ॥

ṭhārha rahā ati kampita gātā. gaya'u bibhīṣanu jahaṁ janatrātā. 3.
puni rāvana kapi hatē'u pacārī. calē'u gagana kapi pūṁcha pasārī. 4.

Ravana stood stunned and shaken by the blow, with his body trembling for a while (like the leaves that shake on a tree when a gust of wind passes through).

Meanwhile, Vibhishan went back to the place where Lord Ram, the protector of devotees, was. (3)

Recovering himself, Ravana challenged Hanuman and hit him hard; but Hanuman lengthened his tail and went up in the sky¹. (4)

[Note—¹Hanuman's blow left Ravana shuddering for a moment, but he did not fall down. Gathering his wits together, Ravana struck back at his assailant, thrusting a clenched fist at him. But Hanuman was prepared for it, and so before the fist-cuff could actually land on him he cleverly escaped unharmed by using his long tail as a lever to spring himself into the sky. Why did Hanuman employ this strategy? It is explained below.]

गहिसि पूँछ कपि सहित उड़ाना । पुनि फिरि भिरेउ प्रबल हनुमाना ॥ ५ ॥
लरत अकास जुगल सम जोधा । एकहि एकु हनत करि क्रोधा ॥ ६ ॥

gahisi pūṁcha kapi sahita urānā. puni phiri bhirē'u prabala hanumānā. 5.
larata akāsa jugala sama jōdhā. ēkahi ēku hanata kari krōdhā. 6.

Ravana caught hold of Hanuman's tail and flew alongside him into the sky. After some time (i.e. after a brief pause when both the champions were at a distance from the place where Ravana had first fought with Lord Ram, and later with Vibhishan), the mighty Hanuman turned back and clashed violently with Ravana¹. (5)

The two valiant and courageous warriors, who were equal in gallantry and bravado, fought each other in the sky, bravely and fiercely, with gusto and dare-devilry. They punched and boxed each other vehemently, both highly enraged and seething with anger. (6)

[Note—¹Hanuman wished to take Ravana away from the sight of where Lord Ram was. Remember: the Lord was struck and made unconscious by Ravana's Shakti, so Hanuman thought it was wise to take Ravana away from the sight and engage him in a duel so as to deflect his attention from Lord Ram, for which purpose he went some distance away into the sky, with Ravana in hot pursuit. When Hanuman felt that they were at a safe distance from Lord Ram, he turned back to clash with Ravana in a fierce duel.]

सोहहिं नभ छल बल बहु करहीं । कज्जल गिरि सुमेरु जनु लरहीं ॥ ७ ॥
बुधि बल निसिचर परइ न पाख्यो । तब मारुत सुत प्रभु संभाख्यो ॥ ८ ॥

sōhahim nabha chala bala bahu karahīm. kajjala giri sumēru janu larahīm. 7.
budhi bala nisicara para'i na pāryō. taba māruta suta prabhu sambhāryō. 8.

The two mighty warriors were engaged in a close combat that was fought most fiercely and valiantly in the sky, with both using myriads of tricks and maneuverings. The sight was akin to Mt. Kajjal clashing with Mt. Sumeru¹. (7)

After having failed to subdue the demon king (“nisicara”; Ravana) inspite of using all his wits and skills as well as his might, the son of the wind god (“māruta suta”; Hanuman) remembered Lord Ram (i.e. prayed to the Lord for help)². (8)

[Note—¹Here, Hanuman is compared to Mt. Sumeru, and Ravana to Mt. Kajjal. The reason is that Ravana had a dark body like Mt. Kajjal, which means a mountain of black soot. On the other hand, Hanuman’s complexion was fair, resembling the mountain with a golden hue, i.e. Mt. Sumeru.

Ravana has been likened to Mt. Kajjal earlier also, when Angad saw him for the first time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 19.

Similarly, Hanuman was likened to Mt. Sumeru in the invocation at the beginning of Sundar Kand—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Sanskrit verse line no. 9 that precedes the Chaupais before Doha no. 1.

²No matter how hard Hanuman tried, yet he failed to vanquish Ravana. So at last he invoked the glory and blessings of Lord Ram, praying for help.]

छं०. संभारि श्रीरघुबीर धीर पचारि कपि रावनु हन्यो । १ ।
महि परत पुनि उठि लरत देवन्ह जुगल कहूँ जय जय भन्यो ॥ २ ॥
हनुमंत संकट देखि मर्कट भालु क्रोधातुर चले । ३ ।
रन मत्त रावन सकल सुभट प्रचंड भुज बल दलमले ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sambhāri śrīraghubīra dhīra pacāri kapi rāvanu han'yō. 1.
mahi parata puni uṭhi larata dēvanha jugala kahuṁ jaya jaya bhan'yō. 2.
hanumanta saṅkaṭa dēkhi markaṭa bhālu krōdhātura calē. 3.
rana matta rāvana sakala subhaṭa pracaṇḍa bhuja bala dalamalē. 4.

Remembrance of Lord Ram injected fresh courage and enthusiasm in Hanuman, who fought with renewed vigour and gallantry. He stood up and challenged Ravana once again, giving him a mighty blow that brought the demon king down. (Chanda line no. 1)

As has been said already, it was an equal fight, with both the champion warriors dashing and felling each other repeatedly, with no one emerging a clear winner. The gods were amused at this sight, and they applauded them both for their strength, might, vigour and gallantry, calling out 'hail and glory to you both'. (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, when the rest of the army of monkeys and bears saw that Hanuman was cornered and feeling weary, they immediately rushed forward angrily in order to help him. (Chanda line no. 3)

Ravana, who was intoxicated with passion for war, grabbed hold of and squashed all the brave warriors with his strong arms¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹We will recall that Kumbhakaran had done the same thing with the monkeys and bears when he stepped out into the battle-field—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 67.

This is because both Ravana and Kumbhakaran, being brothers, had similar gigantic forms of their bodies and were similar in strength.]

दो०. तब रघुबीर पचारे धाए कीस प्रचंड ।

कपि बल प्रबल देखि तेहिं कीन्ह प्रगट पाषंड ॥ ९५ ॥

dōhā.

taba raghubīra pacārē dhā'ē kīsa pracaṇḍa.

kapi bala prabala dēkhi tēhiṁ kīnha pragata pāṣaṇḍa. 95.

Then, cheered on by Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram)¹, the fierce monkeys and bears dashed forward (to help Hanuman).

When Ravana observed that the Kapis (monkeys; bears), who were charging at him, had formidable strength and force, he spread his Maya (i.e. his power to create illusions) so as to deflect the attack by diverting the attention of the attackers². (Doha no. 95)

[Note—¹We have read herein above that when Hanuman was cornered by Ravana and felt exhausted, he had prayed to Lord Ram to help him—apropos: Chanda line no. 1 that precedes this Doha no. 95.

So this was Lord Ram's response. The Lord urged his army to go and intervene on his behalf, and help Hanuman out of harm's way.

²Whenever Ravana himself felt cornered and outnumbered, he had spread his Maya, i.e. his magical powers to create illusions, to deflect the attack by the monkeys and bears—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 88.]

चौ०. अंतरधान भयउ छन एका । पुनि प्रगटे खल रूप अनेका ॥ १ ॥

रघुपति कटक भालु कपि जेते । जहँ तहँ प्रगट दसानन तेते ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

antaradhāna bhaya'u chana ēkā. puni pragaṭē khala rūpa anēkā. 1.
raghupati kaṭaka bhālu kapi jētē. jahaṁ tahaṁ pragaṭa dasānana tētē. 2.

The cunning fellow vanished from sight for some moments, and then reappeared by assuming many forms. (1)

The imposter assumed as many forms as they were monkeys and bears in Lord Ram's army. [To wit, Ravana assumed so many forms that there was one Ravana facing each member of Lord Ram's army.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹This sudden development mightily astonished the monkeys and bears out of their wits. Earlier there was one Ravana whom they fought, but now there were countless Ravana. Each monkey and bear warrior would now have to fight and defeat a Ravana all by himself, which was, in itself, an extremely difficult and daunting prospect as compared to the earlier situation when they could use their combined might against one single enemy. Naturally therefore, the entire army was in a panicky state, and all its warriors lost all hopes of victory. Not only the monkeys and bears, but even the gods were confounded and taken aback, fearing now that vanquishing Ravana seemed a lost dream. We shall read about it in the verses that follow herein below.

Ravana is an 'imposter and a cunning fellow' because he uses fowls means, tricks and delusions to overcome his opponent and fight a war deceitfully instead of using fair and transparent means as would behoove of a gallant knight and famed warrior worth his name and honour.

But Ravana can be excused for it, for this was a 'war', it was a question of life and death for him, and during such dangerous and testing times, means fair or foul matter not, as long as the objective is achieved.]

देखे कपिन्ह अमित दससीसा । जहँ तहँ भजे भालु अरु कीसा ॥ ३ ॥
भागे बानर धरहिं न धीरा । त्राहि त्राहि लछिमन रघुबीरा ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhē kapinha amita dasasīsā. jahaṁ tahaṁ bhajē bhālu aru kīsā. 3.
bhāgē bānara dharahim na dhīrā. trāhi trāhi lachimana raghubīrā. 4.

When the monkeys and bears saw that there were countless ten-headed Ravana (roaring and gesturing menacingly at them), they felt sore affright and panicky; they ran helter-skelter and scattered in all directions (to escape being caught and thrashed). (3)

The monkeys (and bears) scampered away in terror, unable to gather courage to hold their ground and retaliate. Even as they fled, they cried out aloud: 'have mercy upon us, Lord Ram and Laxman; save us from being slaughtered'¹. (4)

[Note—¹The sudden appearance of so many Ravana's was literally like a bomb that exploded within the rank and file of the Lord's army. Each monkey and bear saw that a Ravana was glaring at him with red eyes, stretched arms and loud yell, ready to grab him and squash him to pulp. The monkeys and bears therefore flew away like dry leaves that are scattered during a violent storm.]

दहँ दिसि धावहिं कोटिन्ह रावन । गर्जहिं घोर कठोर भयावन ॥ ५ ॥
 डरे सकल सुर चले पराई । जय कै आस तजहु अब भाई ॥ ६ ॥
 सब सुर जिते एक दसकंधर । अब बहु भए तकहु गिरि कंदर ॥ ७ ॥
 रहे बिरंचि संभु मुनि ग्यानी । जिन्ह जिन्ह प्रभु महिमा कछु जानी ॥ ८ ॥

dahaṁ disi dhāvahiṁ kōṭinha rāvana. garjahiṁ ghōra kaṭhōra bhayāvana. 5.
 ḍarē sakala sura calē parā'ī. jaya kai āsa tajahu aba bhā'ī. 6.
 saba sura jitē ēka dasakandhara. aba bahu bha'ē takahu giri kandara. 7.
 rahē birañci sambhu muni gyānī. jinha jinha prabhu mahimā kachu jānī. 8.

Countless Ravana could be seen in all the ten directions¹, running, roaring, looking frightening and fierce, gesticulating menacingly, and generally threatening the life out of one and all. (5)

[Not only was the army of monkeys and bears in terror, but even the gods panicked.] The gods were so sore affright and alarmed that they too fled away in terror, lamenting thus: 'Brothers, abandon all hopes of victory now. (6)

One ten-shouldered Ravana (dasakandhara) was able to conquer all the gods², but look now, there are countless numbers of him. It will be better for us to seek refuge in deep mountain caves to hide ourselves and escape him. (7)

All but the creator Brahma, the concluder Lord Shiva, and illustrious sages and seers who were learned and enlightened about the glory and potentials of Lord Ram (i.e. those who knew the truth of Lord Ram as being the almighty Lord of the world)³, were able to maintain calm and remain where they were in their stations in the sky even as all other gods fled from the sight. (8)

[Note—¹The ten directions are north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir. The idea is that wherever one could see, he would perceive Ravana in that direction.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it.

³These two wise and learned senior gods, Brahma and Shiva, as well as sages and seers knew that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, and therefore that it is impossible for Ravana to prevail over Lord Ram in the final game, and that all this was a drama that the Lord wishes to play to give Ravana an ample opportunity to prove his mettle and test his abilities so that later on he would not regret that he did not try this or that trick, that he was not given an even playing field to defend his honour and title to fame.

Lord Ram wished that the war should be fought like a war ought to be, where both sides win some and lose some, and not a one-sided game like the case when one combatant is overwhelmingly superior and domineering over the other, for in the latter case Ravana would claim that he was trounced and killed just because he was

fighting an uneven war with the almighty Lord God of creation against whom there was no question of winning, but for that he was invincible and unconquerable.

Remember: Ravana had extracted a promise from this same creator Brahma that no one but a human being or monkeys would be able to kill him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177. So it was obligatory for Lord Ram not to create a situation where it would appear that Ravana was killed by anyone but a human being, or that his demon warriors were defeated by anyone other than monkeys and bears.

Hence, the Lord had to fight this war like wars are normally fought on earth. Had the Lord's hands not been tied and subjected to such injunctions, he could have eliminated the entire demon army in a single day of war.]

छं०. जाना प्रताप ते रहे निर्भय कपिन्ह रिपु माने फुरे । १ ।
चले बिचलि मर्कट भालु सकल कृपाल पाहि भयातुरे ॥ २ ॥
हनुमंत अंगद नील नल अतिबल लरत रन बाँकुरे । ३ ।
मर्दहिं दसानन कोटि कोटिन्ह कपट भू भट अंकुरे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jānā pratāpa tē rahē nirbhaya kapinha ripu mānē phurē. 1.
calē bicali markṭa bhālu sakala kṛpāla pāhi bhayāturē. 2.
hanumanta aṅgada nīla nala atibala larata rana bāṁkurē. 3.
mardahiṁ dasānana kōṭi kōṭinha kapaṭa bhū bhaṭa aṅkurē. 4.

To wit, those who were enlightened about the Truth and the Reality about Lord Ram and his glory, might and majesty (jānā pratāpa tē), remained fearlessly where there were (while others fled).

The Kapis (monkeys), however, were overwhelmed by the delusory effects of Ravana's powerful Maya so much so that they thought that the illusionary Ravanases that were seen all around them were real¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

All the monkeys and bears scampered away in fear, running helter-skelter in terror, crying out to Lord Ram for help and protection: 'Oh merciful Lord, kindly protect us.'² (Chanda line no. 2)

Meanwhile, gallant warriors such as Hanuman, Angad, Neela and Nala, who were singularly valiant and exemplarily brave in the battle-field (rana bāṁkurē), held their ground and continued to fight with undaunted courage and resilience.

[To wit, while the general mass of the troops ran away in fear, the above-named warriors, who were steadfast in the battle-field, held their ground and continued to engage Ravana without any fear.] (Chanda line no. 3)

Though they continued to thrash and vanquish countless numbers of Ravanases relentlessly, yet all the while new forms of illusionary ten-headed monster continued to emerge from no where as if by magic (just like mushrooms sprout or flies spiral up from the wet ground during the rainy season)³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana's magic had its charming effect on the monkey and bear warriors, for they thought that the countless images of Ravana which they saw on the battle-field all around them were real Ravana, and not fake ones, not illusions. Come to think of it, even the gods, who are supposed to be more intelligent and better informed about anything as compared to other creatures in this world, also had fled in terror (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 herein above), so there is no wonder if the poor Kapis could not see through the trick of Ravana, and believed it to be true.

Now, who were those that remained there fearlessly, and not run away? The first were the wise gods and enlightened sages who were watching the war from the sky (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 herein above), and the others were Lord Ram's close companions on the battle-field, such as Vibhishan, Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman etc.

²We have already read in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 herein above that Ravana had assumed as many forms as there were monkey and bear warriors in the battle-field, facing each one of them individually, challenging and threatening each one of them, dashing at everyone menacingly from up close, gesturing at them wildly as if he would wring the life out of every single warrior. The Lord's troops were taken in by complete surprise; they were dazed and shocked beyond measure. Facing one single Ravana with the combined might of the entire monkey and bear army arrayed against him was a different proposition as compared to the horrifying prospect of a one-on-one challenge between individual monkey and bear warrior who was pitted against the formidable might of the mighty Ravana.

³There seemed to be no end to the numbers of Ravana on the battle-field. Remember: Ravana had employed this trick after he found that most of his troops have either been killed or have run away—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 88.

Finding himself thus alone and surrounded by a mounting wave of ferocious monkeys and bears, he created a magical charm that produced countless Ravana. He employed this trick to wear out his enemy, for sooner or later the opponent would be tired and exhausted fighting an illusive monster where he does not actually exist. Then, when Lord Ram's troops would be fatigued out, Ravana planned to hit them hard and crush all of them with ease.]

दो०. सुर बानर देखे बिकल हँस्यो कोसलाधीस ।
सजि सारंग एक सर हते सकल दससीस ॥ ९६ ॥

dōhā.

sura bānara dēkhē bikala haṁsyō kōsalādhīsa.
saji sārāṅga ēka sara hatē sakala dasasīsa. 96.

The Lord of Kaushal ("kōsalādhīsa"; Lord Ram, the Lord of Ayodhya) laughed in amusement when he saw that the monkeys as well as the gods were agitated and nervous¹.

He prepared his Sarang bow and shot one arrow which cut through the illusion created by the ten-headed Ravana, as a result of which all his fake images vanished from sight instantly. (Doha no. 96)

[Note—¹What made Lord Ram laugh? Well, the Lord felt amused and thought to himself: “These gods are said to be powerful and all-knowing; but now look at them—they are running away in fear like ordinary mortals. Don’t they know that all these countless Ravanaas are false? And look at these monkeys and bears; they also are supposed to be born out of genes of these gods, because the creator Brahma had advised them to come down to earth as monkey and bears to help me (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188). Imagine, what help would they render me when they are now pleading with me to help them!”

In the advanced stages of the epic war, Ravana unleashed his famed potentials of spreading terror and mayhem in his opponents, and uncorked the genie of his dreaded wrath upon them all, the monkey army on the ground as well as the gods who were witnessing the war and cheering the army of Lord Ram from their station in the sky. A fearful atmosphere of dread and horror spread in all the directions; Ravana employed his ability to create horrifying illusions to strike terror in the rank and file of his enemy by making it appear that there was not one but countless Ravanaas who were full of wrath and vengeance running everywhere in the battle-field, all over the place, pouncing on the monkeys and bears on the ground, and chasing the gods in the sky, all simultaneously. This caused a massive stampede.

When Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal, observed this alarming situation—that the monkeys on the ground and the gods in the sky were very agitated and panicky because of Ravana’s excessive aggressiveness and his use of tricks that created fearful illusions of countless Ravanaas attacking them simultaneously from all the sides, spreading utter dread and terror in all directions—the Lord readied his Sarang bow and shot one arrow which at once cut-off the illusion of there being so many Ravanaas attacking the monkeys and gods, providing instant relief to them all.

To wit, Lord Ram invoked his cosmic form of Lord Vishnu and used his Sarang bow to shoot an arrow that removed this illusion (of numerous Ravanaas attacking everyone from all sides instantaneously) with a snap. This dispelled the fear of everyone in an instant, as suddenly only one Ravana, the original demon king, was left on the battle-field, while all the illusionary Ravanaas vanished from sight. This sudden change in the situation for good led both the monkey and bear warriors on the battle-field and the gods in heaven rejoice and celebrate.]

चौ०. प्रभु छन महुँ माया सब काटी । जिमि रबि उएँ जाहिं तम फाटी ॥ १ ॥

रावनु एकु देखि सुर हरषे । फिरे सुमन बहु प्रभु पर बरषे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu chana mahuṁ māyā saba kāṭī. jimi rabi u'ēṁ jāhiṁ tama phāṭī. 1.
rāvanu ēku dēkhi sura haraṣē. phirē sumana bahu prabhu para baraṣē. 2.

The Lord (Sri Ram) cut through the illusions created by Ravana in an instant, just like the case when the darkness of the night is immediately got rid of as soon as the sun rises. (1)

Seeing that there was one Ravana once again, all the gods felt exhilarated, and returning back (from their flight) they again showered flowers in abundance upon the Lord¹. (2)

[Note—¹In the context of the battle with Ravana, the gods had showered flowers upon Lord Ram in the beginning of the combat when the Lord had stepped out to engage the demon king. At that time however, it was a gesture to appreciate the Lord's charming form as he finally stepped out to eliminate Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 86.

And in the context of actually attaining some miraculous success in battle against a formidable demon, the occasion when the gods had showered flowers upon Lord Ram was the slaying of Kumbhakaran, the brother of Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chauapi line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 71.]

भुज उठाइ रघुपति कपि फेरे । फिरे एक एकन्ह तब टेरे ॥ ३ ॥
प्रभु बलु पाइ भालु कपि धाए । तरल तमकि संजुग महि आए ॥ ४ ॥

bhuja uṭhā'i raghupati kapi phērē. phirē ēka ēkanha taba ṭērē. 3.
prabhu balu pā'i bhālu kapi dhā'ē. tarala tamaki sañjuga mahi ā'ē. 4.

Once the cause of fear was removed, i.e. after all illusionary forms of Ravana were eliminated and normalcy was restored on the ground, Lord Ram raised his arms and harked at all the monkeys and bears who had taken flight earlier, calling out to them to come back. Whoever first heard the Lord's call to return not only came back himself but called out to all others around him to follow suit, and in this way the good message was passed on from one to another down the rank and file of the fleeing warriors, and by-and-by everyone returned to where the Lord stood (waiting for their return). (3)

Encouraged by Lord Ram and feeling blessed by his grace, the monkey and bear warriors were infused with renewed vigour and zeal; they once again dashed to the battle-field enthusiastically, jumping with excitement and anger stoked with a desire for vengeance.

[To wit, these warriors lunged at Ravana wrathfully to exact retribution from him and punish him for causing them so much terror and misery.] (4)

अस्तुति करत देवतन्हि देखें । भयउँ एक मैं इन्ह के लेखें ॥ ५ ॥
सठहु सदा तुम्ह मोर मरायल । अस कहि कोपि गगन पर धायल ॥ ६ ॥

astuti karata dēvatanhi dēkhēm. bhaya'uṁ ēka mair̥ inha kē lēkhēm. 5.
saṭhahu sadā tumha mōra marāyala. asa kahi kōpi gagana para dhāyala. 6.

When Ravana observed that the gods were praying to Lord Ram (which he guessed they were surely doing while showering flowers upon Lord Ram, and there could be nothing else that they sought but to ask that the demon king be eliminated as soon as possible)¹, he became furious with anger and indignation.

He bethought to himself: 'These gods see (find) me all alone, and therefore they think that now it would be easy to vanquish me. [Woe to them, these cowardly

and selfish fellows. When they saw my countless forms, they had run like mad out of fear; but now when they find that I am all alone, they sheepishly returned to ask my enemy, Lord Ram, to do away with me as soon as possible. Look at their temerity; how durst they have the courage to shower flowers on my adversary right before my eyes? Wait ye all; now I shall teach the lot of you a good lesson that thou wilt never forget till doom overtakes the whole lot of you fellas.] (5)

[Filled thus with excess of contempt and resentment, Ravana shrieked and lunged wildly at the gods:-] Oh you wicked and dumb-witted fellows (saṭha). You all had always been thrashed by me since time immemorial, all along the long passage of time till now, and how then durst thou show such intolerable insolence by praying to my enemy against me? [Brace thyself now; I wilt show all of thee thine places in the larger scheme of things. Dost thee wot naught that I am the same Ravana who had sent the whole lot of thine race running helter-skelter for thine dear lives when I ran over heaven and ransacked it, not long ago? Hark ye cowards who art scared stiff to your bones by the mere sight of me; stand there whilst here comest the mighty and valorous Ravana to give thee thine due rewards. Dost thou wot what that reward wouldst be? Well, it shalt be one that none of thine race would ever forget till the time doom has the pleasure to overtake thee; and it shalt be the squeezing of thine necks and wringing the life out of thine crooked souls, ye wicked felas!]

Saying this, and with a countenance burning with furious vengeance, Ravana made a fierce dash for the gods who were standing in the sky (to wreak his wrathful might upon them). (6)

[Note—¹What made Ravana lose his cool and become so violent upon the gods, accusing them of praying to Lord Ram against him? Well, just a moment ago he had observed that they were showering flowers upon Lord Ram for eliminating the countless illusionary forms that Ravana had assumed, clearing the battle-field of all fictitious Ravana and restoring normalcy—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 herein above. Ravana's game-plan to instill terror in the rank and file of Lord Ram's army was thus check-mated, and this acted as a fuse that ignited his fury, which was further aggravated when he saw that his eternal enemies, the gods, were praising his adversary and honouring him by showering flowers.

Ravana's self-respect and honour were hurt when he found that the same gods whom he had vanquished and made to bow before himself recently are now become emboldened enough to openly insult him by showering flowers on his enemy in the battle-field. This was sufficient a provocation for Ravana, and he railed and raged wildly against the gods, determined to punish them for their audacity to praise Lord Ram.]

हाहाकार करत सुर भागे । खलहु जाहु कहँ मोरें आगे ॥ ७ ॥

देखि बिकल सुर अंगद धायो । कूदि चरन गहि भूमि गिरायो ॥ ८ ॥

hāhākāra karata sura bhāgē. khalahu jāhu kahaṁ mōrēm āgē. 7.

dēkhi bikala sura aṅgada dhāyō. kūdi carana gahi bhūmi girāyō. 8.

Finding Ravana coming to them, all the gods let out a terrified cry of pity and began to run from the place as fast as they could.

But Ravana chased them in hot pursuit, yelling and thundering behind them: ‘You rascals (khala); where do you think you will go away from me? How dare you insolent and irrelevant fellows run ahead of me?’ (7)

When Angad observed that the gods were terrified and running helter-skelter in the sky, he ran forward to intervene; he made a great leap and caught hold of Ravana with his legs, pulling him down to the ground. (8)

छं०. गहि भूमि पार्यो लात मार्यो बालिसुत प्रभु पहिं गयो । १ ।
संभारि उठि दसकंठ घोर कठोर रव गर्जत भयो ॥ २ ॥
करि दाप चाप चढ़ाइ दस संधानि सर बहु बरषई । २ ।
किए सकल भट घायल भयाकुल देखि निज बल हरषई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

gahi bhūmi pāryō lāta māryō bālisuta prabhu pahim gayō. 1.
sambhāri uṭhi dasakaṇṭha ghōra kaṭhōra rava garjata bhayō. 2.
kari dāpa cāpa caṛhā'i dasa sandhāni sara bahu baraṣa'ī. 3.
ki'ē sakala bhaṭa ghāyala bhayākula dēkhi nija bala haraṣa'ī. 4.

The son of Baali (“bālisuta”; Angad) pulled down Ravana to the ground, and then kicked him viciously; after that, he returned to Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 1)

Ravana, meanwhile, recovered himself and got up; then he roared and thundered violently (as his ego and self-respect were hurt, coupled by his frustration and indignation that were enhanced by his repeatedly suffering defeats and being pushed back on the back foot, something to which Ravana was not accustomed, for he had always been the victor and conqueror, and not someone who would be compelled to bite the dust and get kicked around like an impotent and imbecile creature). (Chanda line no. 2)

He (Ravana) angrily picked up and stringed all his ten bows (i.e. he raised his ten arms with one bow in each), and mounting fierce arrows on them he started raining a hail of sharp darts on the enemy forces (of Lord Ram). (Chanda line no. 3)

This fierce volley of arrows wounded and made affright countless warriors (monkeys and bears), and this sight gave a lot of satisfaction to Ravana who felt happy at the show of his might and a brilliant display of the strength of his arms and skills at archery. (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. तब रघुपति रावन के सीस भुजा सर चाप ।
काटे बहुत बड़े पुनि जिमि तीरथ कर पाप ॥ ९७ ॥

dōhā.

taba raghupati rāvana kē sīsa bhujā sara cāpa.
kāṭē bahuta baṛhē puni jimi tīratha kara pāpa. 97.

Then Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram) cut off Ravana's twenty arms along with the ten bows and countless arrows that they held¹.

But what a wonder it was that no sooner were the arms chopped off, newer ones immediately sprung up in their places², just like sins and evil deeds done in a holy place, such as a religious site, produce multiple negative effects that rebound and have a multiplying domino effect upon the doer of such deeds³. (Doha no. 97)

[Note—¹Ravana held ten bows in each of his ten arms of one side of his body, and in the other ten arms of the corresponding opposite side he held countless arrows which he mounted and shot from the bows in quick succession.

²We have read earlier too that the more Lord Ram cut off the heads and arms of Ravana, the more they grew on his body—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 92 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-14 that precede it.

³If a person commits some evil and sinful deed at a holy place then its negative result is manifold times more and greater than what it would have been at other places. One wrong deed pushes the doer of this deed in a vortex of sins, whereupon he continues to do more and more sinful deeds without realizing what he is doing, the gravity of his actions, and the mounting negative consequences of his mischief that keep on multiplying and adding weight to the bundle of punishments that would one day fall heavy upon his head with a deadly thud, crushing him underneath.

The idea here is that one should be extremely careful how he lives his life and what he does in a holy place, and be careful not to do any unrighteous thing which would defile the sanctity of the place and demean the purity of his own soul—because any reckless deed is unpardonable in a religious environment as it goes against the holiness and purity of the place.]

चौ०. सिर भुज बाढ़ि देखि रिपु केरी । भालु कपिन्ह रिस भई घनेरी ॥ १ ॥
मरत न मूढ़ कटेहुँ भुज सीसा । धाए कोपि भालु भट कीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sira bhuja bāḍhi dēkhi ripu kērī. bhālu kapinha risa bha'ī ghanērī. 1.
marata na mūrha kaṭēhuṁ bhuja sīsā. dhā'ē kōpi bhālu bhaṭa kīsā. 2.

When the monkeys and bears discovered that the more heads and arms of the enemy (Ravana) were being cut, the more they grew back with rapidity, all of them were furious with exasperation. (1)

‘This rascal will not die by merely getting his heads and arms cut¹’, saying this to each other, the angry monkey and bear warriors rushed with a vengeance towards Ravana. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 92—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

बालितनय मारुति नल नीला । बानरराज दुबिद बलसीला ॥ ३ ॥
बिटप महीधर करहिं प्रहारा । सोइ गिरि तरु गहि कपिन्ह सो मारा ॥ ३ ॥

bālitānaya māruti nala nīlā. bānararāja dubida balasīlā. 3.
biṭapa mahīdhara karahim prahārā. sō'i giri taru gahi kapinha sō mārā. 4.

The son of Baali (Angad), the son of the Wind God (Hanuman), Nala, Neela, the king of the monkeys (Sugriv), Dwivid—all of whom were very brave, courageous, valorous and gallant, --- (3)

--- began hitting Ravana with huge trees and mountain-like rocks and boulders. Ravana, meanwhile, grabbed these same trees and rocks, using them to strike back at his attackers with equal force. (4)

एक नखन्हि रिपु बपुष बिदारी । भागि चलहिं एक लातन्ह मारी ॥ ५ ॥
तब नल नील सिरन्हि चढ़ि गयऊ । नखन्हि लिलार बिदारत भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

ēka nakhanhi ripu bapuṣa bidārī. bhāgi calahim ēka lātanha mārī. 5.
taba nala nīla siranhi caḍhi gaya'ū. nakhanhi lilāra bidārata bhaya'ū. 6.

Some of the attacking warriors (i.e. the monkeys) cut deep gashes on Ravana's body with their sharp pointed nails, while others kicked him viciously before they ran away. (5)

Then Nala and Neela leapt over Ravana's heads and began tearing at his foreheads (with their nails and teeth). (6)

रुधिर देखि बिषाद उर भारी । तिन्हहि धरन कहूँ भुजा पसारी ॥ ७ ॥
गहे न जाहिं करन्हि पर फिरहीं । जनु जुग मधुप कमल बन चरहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rudhira dēkhi biṣāda ura bhārī. tinhahi dharana kahūṁ bhuajā pasārī. 7.
gahē na jāhim karanhi para phirahim. janu juga madhupa kamala bana carahim. 8.

When Ravana took notice that blood was flowing down his heads and body (as a result of deep wounds made by the monkey warriors), he was aghast and terribly furious. He extended his hands to catch hold of the miscreants. (7)

They (Nala and Neela) moved around on his huge arms as if two bees were moving around fearlessly amongst a cluster of lotus flowers, as a result of which Ravana could not catch any of them¹. (8)

[Note—¹Ravana stretched his hands towards his heads and parts of his body from which blood was flowing out, and which hurt him the most; but he could not find anyone where he was searching for them because the clever monkeys had by this time climbed on the back of his hands. Ravana grappled and groped here and there all over his body in order to catch hold of his tormentors, but to his utter dismay he could not lay his fingers on any of the attackers, because they weren't there where he searched for them, but were perched on his arms themselves, clinging to the hairs or the skin of his forearms where he least expected them to be.]

कोपि कूदि द्वौ धरेसि बहोरी । महि पटकत भजे भुजा मरोरी ॥ ९ ॥

पुनि सकोप दस धनु कर लीन्हे । सरन्हि मारि घायल कपि कीन्हे ॥ १० ॥

kōpi kūdi dvau dharēsi bahōrī. mahi paṭakata bhajā bhujā marōrī. 9.
puni sakōpa dasa dhanu kara līnhē. saranhi māri ghāyala kapi kīnhē. 10.

Meanwhile, the two monkeys (Nala and Neela) were jumping merrily on his arms, which made Ravana aware of their whereabouts; he grabbed them instantly, but even as he prepared to dash them on the ground they twisted and turned his arms in order to wriggle out and free themselves from his grip, and succeeding in it, they ran away. (9)

Highly enraged and utterly embarrassed, Ravana once again lifted all his ten bows in his arms and shot a fresh volley of sharp arrows at the monkeys¹, wounding them. (10)

[Note—¹This is the third time that Ravana has used all his ten bows at the same time to shower arrows at his enemy. The other two occasions were as follows: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 92; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

हनुमदादि मुरुछित करि बंदर । पाइ प्रदोष हरष दसकंधर ॥ ११ ॥

मुरुछित देखि सकल कपि बीरा । जामवंत धायउ रनधीरा ॥ १२ ॥

hanumadādi muruchita kari bandara. pā'i pradōṣa haraṣa dasakandhara. 11.
muruchita dēkhi sakala kapi bīrā. jāmavanta dhāya'u ranadhīrā. 12.

Having felled unconscious Hanuman and many other valiant monkeys, Ravana felt exhilarated and satisfied at his success, feeling relieved when he observed that it was the end of the day and eventide when the war was to be paused till the dawn of the next day¹. (11)

When Jamvant, the chief of the bear warriors who was very valiant and steady in the battle-field (ranadhīrā), observed that Hanuman and virtually all other brave monkey warriors lay wounded and unconscious on the ground, he decided that it was his time

to take an initiative and proactively participate in the ongoing battle; so therefore he dashed forward to intervene². (12)

[Note—¹Those were the days when strict rules and regulations were followed even during wars and engaging the enemy on the battle-field. One such rule was that as soon as the sun sets, all activity in the war must pause. The two sides withdrew to their respective camps, the wounded were taken back for healing as best could be arranged during such times, and all hostilities ceased till the sun appeared the next day. There are clear instances when this age-old tradition was observed in the War of Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 55; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72.

Therefore, when Ravana observed that it was eventide and the time for ending the day's actions, he felt mightily relieved for a variety of reasons. For one, he would now have time to recuperate from his own wounds, take stock of the situation, and devise his next strategy, and two, even if the unwounded monkey and bear warriors, who were standing as reserve troops, did wish to launch a fresh wave of attacks on him, they would be restraint from doing it as it was sunset and the battle for the day was to come to an end. Not even Lord Ram or Laxman would strike him during these hours as he was dead sure that the two brothers, renowned for their righteousness and probity, would never ever take any reckless action that would undermine their noble lineage and fame, for breaking established traditions and laws of warfare was sure to give them a very bad name, which they would not welcome.

To wit, the sight of evening coming on was a great respite for Ravana as he was already so battered and frustrated by the continuous hammering to which he was subjected by the mighty warriors of Lord Ram's army that he was looking for a window to manage an honourable escape from the battle-field, even for a short time.

He was happy that when he returns to the fort, at least he could boast that he had left all his enemies lying wounded and unconscious on the ground as a severe retribution on them for making him return unconscious on his chariot at the end of the last day's battle—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84.

Hence, today's victory was a saving grace for Ravana, and this thought made him feel glad and satisfied.

²Jamvant was old in age; he was a senior member of Lord Ram's advisory team. He had generally remained in the background like Vibhishan, the prince of Lanka and brother of Ravana who had joined Lord Ram, and Sugriv, the monkey king. Lord Ram had himself wished that these three chief commanders remain by his side and desist from active engagement in the war, as it was prudent and crucial to not only keep them out of harm's way but also to ensure that they would monitor the ground situation and give relevant orders to the troops. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 75.}

But when the occasion came, Jamvant proved himself and his mettle by actively participating in battle and trouncing his enemy; one such time was when the mighty Meghanad had trapped Lord Ram in a snare of serpents. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-9 that precede Doha no. 74.}

संग भालु भूधर तरु धारी । मारन लगे पचारि पचारी ॥ १३ ॥

भयउ क्रुद्ध रावन बलवाना । गहि पद महि पटकइ भट नाना ॥ १४ ॥
देखि भालुपति निज दल घाता । कोपि माझ उर मारेसि लाता ॥ १५ ॥

saṅga bhālu bhūdhara taru dhārī. mārana lagē pacāri pacārī. 13.
bhaya'u krud'dha rāvana balavānā. gahi pada mahi paṭaka'i bhaṭa nānā. 14.
dēkhi bhālupati nija dala ghātā. kōpi mājha ura mārēsi lātā. 15.

He (Jamvant) was accompanied by his valiant bear warriors who began pounding Ravana with trees and huge mountain-like rocks, repeatedly challenging him and dashing him viciously. (13)

Ravana was furious with rage; he began grabbing the bear warriors by their legs and smashing them violently to the ground. (14)

When the king of the bears (“bhālupati”; Jamvant) saw that his troops were being wounded and thrashed, he became wrathful, and furiously kicked Ravana in his chest¹. (15)

[Note—¹This was the rare occasion when only the bears were the attacking Ravana. At other times they had accompanied their monkey friends, but now since all of them were wounded, they led the assault themselves.]

छं०. उर लात घात प्रचंड लागत बिकल रथ ते महि परा । १ ।
गहि भालु बीसहुँ कर मनहुँ कमलन्हि बसे निसि मधुकरा ॥ २ ॥
मुरुछित बिलोकि बहोरि पद हति भालुपति प्रभु पहिँ गयो । ३ ।
निसि जानि स्यंदन घालि तेहि तब सूत जतनु करत भयो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ura lāta ghāta praçaṇḍa lāgata bikala ratha tē mahi parā. 1.
gahi bhālu bīsahuṁ kara manahuṁ kamalanhi basē nisi madhukarā. 2.
muruchita bilōki bahōri pada hati bhālupati prabhu pahim gayō. 3.
nisi jāni syandana ghāli tēhi taba sūta jatanu karata bhayō. 4.

No sooner did the powerful kick land on his chest with a mighty thrust, then Ravana swooned and fell down on the ground. (Chanda line no. 1)

With countless bears caught up in his twenty fists as he fell down, it appeared that numerous bees were caught within the petals of the lotus flower as night fell¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

When the bear chief saw that Ravana was unconscious, he gave the latter another fierce blow with his legs², after which he (Jamvant) went back to Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 3)

Observing that it was nightfall, Ravana’s charioteer put him back on the chariot, trying to revive him back to his senses. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, the bears are like the ‘bees’, and the clenched fists of Ravana are like the ‘closed petals of the lotus flowers’. The bees alight on the petals of the lotus flower during evening time, before the flower closes at nightfall, and then get caught inside it till the flower opens its petals again the next day with the advent of the sunlight.

Ravana grabbed as many bears as he could even as he fell down on the ground, clenching them in his closed fists.

²The trapped bears would be released when Ravana loses his senses completely upon being kicked violently by Jamvant once again as narrated in Chanda line no. 3 here, because the jerk would be so fierce that whatever traces of senses that still remained in Ravana after the first kick by Jamvant would finally give away, loosening his grip over the bears, and enabling them to wriggle out and scamper to safety.

Why did Jamvant kick Ravana twice? The answer is this: Jamvant observed that after Ravana fell down with his first kick, he had some senses still left in him as proved by the fact that he could maintain a firm grip on the bears he had already clenched in his fists. So in order to finish the task, to ensure that Ravana did not gain consciousness soon, and devise a device so the bear soldiers clenched in his fists could be freed, Jamvant decided to give Ravana another fierce blow which would completely knock out the demon king, which in turn would help to ease the grip on the bears who would then find it easy to somehow get out of his fingers and escape to safety.]

दो०. मुरुछा बिगत भालु कपि सब आए प्रभु पास ।
निसिचर सकल रावनहि घेरि रहे अति त्रास ॥ ९८ ॥

dōhā.

muruchā bigata bhālu kapi saba ā'ē prabhu pāsa.
niscara sakala rāvanahi ghēri rahē ati trāsa. 98.

When, by-and-by, the monkeys and bears finally recovered their senses once again, they came back to Lord Ram¹.

On the other side, meanwhile, when Ravana was brought back to Lanka by his charioteer, the demons surrounded him; they were all horrified and mortified with fear when they observed that the situation was extremely alarming (because Ravana was still unconscious)². (Doha no. 98)

[Note—¹This was the end of the 7th day of the war; both the armies withdrew to their respective camps for the day. On this side, Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and the Lord's chief advisors such as Vibhishan, Jamvant and Sugriv, surveyed their army to take stock of the situation and consult each other to devise the strategy for the next day's battle. The tide of the war was turning in their favour, for though they had suffered some sort of setback because Ravana had succeeded in thrashing and making unconscious some of their best warriors such as Hanuman, Angad, Dwivid, Nala and Neela, but they had not only regained their senses quickly but their enthusiasm was also on a high. Some injuries and casualties in a war of such magnitude were acceptable; and so the situation was not alarming.

On the whole, by this time, the morale and the spirit of the demon army had taken a severe beating; their enthusiasm and the will to fight were already at their lowest since the advent of the demon race, and whatever was still there was ebbing away rapidly. From all indications it appeared that the end of the demons, and their complete capitulation and decimation was not far away.

²On the other side in Lanka, the demons surrounded Ravana; all were in a grave and sombre mood, the reason being that their king was still unconscious when he was brought back by his charioteer, for we shall soon read that it was only around midnight that Ravana had regained his senses—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 100.

The prospects for the demon army, therefore, were gloomy and foreboding. Thus, a thick pall of dejection and depression prevailed over Lanka at the end of the 7th day of the war.]

चौ०. तेही निसि सीता पहिं जाई । त्रिजटा कहि सब कथा सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

सिर भुज बाढ़ि सुनत रिपु केरी । सीता उर भड़ त्रास घनेरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhī nisi sītā pahim jā'ī. trijaṭā kahi saba kathā sunā'ī. 1.

sira bhuja bāḍhi sunata ripu kērī. sītā ura bha'i trāsa ghanērī. 2.

That night (i.e. the intervening night of the 7th and the 8th day of the war, and also the last night before the war ended and Ravana was killed in battle) Trijata went to Sita and informed her about all the developments (till the previous evening)¹. (1)

When Sita heard how Ravana's heads and arms continued to grow endlessly in spite of Lord Ram repeatedly severing them, she was very distressed in her heart². (2)

[Note—¹Trijata was an old demoness appointed by Ravana to look after Sita in the garden where she was confined—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Ravana, though decried and derided as being a savage monster, was, truly speaking, not what he has been cruelly depicted to be, for he was very careful in selecting this aged demoness named Trijata to guard Sita because he was in the know that she, like his own brother Vibhishan, was a devotee of Lord Ram, the manifestation of the Supreme Lord of the world, and therefore she would also be sympathetic to Sita. By appointing her to take care of Sita, instead of any other demon or demoness to guard her, Ravana effectively ensured that Sita would be in good and favourable company of someone who would be her friend and comforter during the testing time she would have to spend in his captivity. Trijata's presence would also ensure that no member of the demon race would ever have the courage to torment Sita as there was always the fear of Trijata reporting the matter to Ravana, which, if happened, would surely bring death to the individual who causes this nuisance.

We read that in practice it so transpired that in due course of time Trijata became Sita's close friend and confidante; Sita used to confide with her about all her worries, miseries and pains, even treating Trijata as she would treat her own mother

(apropos: Chaupai line no. 4 herein below), and on her part Trijata always encouraged Sita to have patience and keep her hope of deliverance alive, because when the proper time comes all her miseries would come to an end, but for that good day to dawn when she would enjoy the light of freedom and happiness once again, it was necessary for her to keep herself and her hopes alive by having patience, as well as keep saying her prayers with faith and devotion, for it is rightly said that prayers that are said sincerely and from the deep recesses of the heart never go unheeded.

Trijata would keep Sita updated about the progress of the war. During this night, as usual, she told Sita about the developments of the previous day—that Lord Ram had cut-off Ravana's heads and arms multiple numbers of times, but yet the demon king survived. This filled Sita with gloom and distress, as she thought in despondency that it seems well nigh impossible that her tormentor Ravana would ever die during the war, and that she would ever be freed from her miseries. This dilemma of Sita is clear in the verses that follow herein below, as is the way how Trijata comforts her and encourages her to keep her hopes alive.

In the present verses we read the conversation between Trijata and Sita that took place during the night which proceeded the last day of the war when Ravana was finally killed.

²Sita was overcome with despondency and gloom at the prospect of Lord Ram not being able to eliminate her tormentor as was apparent by Ravana managing to survive even though his arms and heads were chopped off so many times. It was an unusual thing to happen, for under normal conditions if an individual's head is cut-off then he must surely die. Sita was confounded and perplexed; she could not visualize how, after all, Ravana would actually be killed when such conventional means have failed.]

मुख मलीन उपजी मन चिंता । त्रिजटा सन बोली तब सीता ॥ ३ ॥
होइहि कहा कहसि किन माता । केहि बिधि मरिहि बिस्व दुखदाता ॥ ४ ॥

mukha malīna upajī mana cintā. trijaṭā sana bōlī taba sītā. 3.
hō'ihi kahā kahasi kina mātā. kēhi bidhi marihi bisva dukhadātā. 4.

Sita's face became dark with gloom, and immense worries sprouted inside her heart. Filled with despondency and hopelessness, she said to Trijata, --- (3)

'Oh Mother (mātā)! Say, what shall happen now; how will this fellow, who is a tormentor of the world (bisva dukhadātā), die? (4)

रघुपति सर सिर कटेहुँ न मरई । बिधि बिपरीत चरित सब करई ॥ ५ ॥
मोर अभाग्य जिआवत ओही । जेहिं हौं हरि पद कमल बिछोही ॥ ६ ॥
जेहिं कृत कपट कनक मृग झूठा । अजहुँ सो दैव मोहि पर रूठा ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं बिधि मोहि दुख दुसह सहाए । लछिमन कहूँ कटु बचन कहाए ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati sara sira kaṭēhuṁ na marā'ī. bidhi biparīta carita saba kara'ī. 5.
mōra abhāgya ji'āvata ōhī. jēhim haurṁ hari pada kamala bichōhī. 6.

jēhiṁ kṛta kapaṭa kanaka mṛga jhūṭhā. ajahuṁ sō daiva mōhi para rūṭhā. 7.
jēhiṁ bidhi mōhi dukha dusaha sahā'ē. lachimana kahuṁ kaṭu bacana kahā'ē.
8.

He does not die even when Lord Raghupati (“raghupati”; the Lord of Raghus; the Lord of Ayodhya; Lord Ram) has chopped-off his heads several times! It's unbelievable and stunning. The Creator seems to be opposed to me for he is doing everything that is odd and goes against me and my interests. (5)

Verily it seems that my misfortune and doomed fate is responsible to keep him (Ravana) alive, so that the misery and grief that has been my lot after being separated from Lord Hari's (i.e. Lord Ram's) lotus-like feet would continue unabated, unhindered and unchecked. (6)

That misfortune of mine had joined hands with an antagonized Creator to devise a device whereby I was misled to be attracted by a fictitious deer with a golden hide that formed the background of my separation from Lord Ram, and the chain of miseries and pains that followed in its wake¹—verily indeed it looks that they are yet not satisfied by my sufferings, and they continue to frown at me maliciously. (7)

There is no doubt that it is the same malicious Creator who had made me use harsh words for Laxman², who now undertakes to make me suffer endlessly in pain and agony, with no end in sight. (8)

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 27; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 28; and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.]

रघुपति बिरह सबिष सर भारी । तकि तकि मार बार बहु मारी ॥ ९ ॥

ऐसेहुँ दुख जो राख मम प्राना । सोइ बिधि ताहि जिआव न आना ॥ १० ॥

raghupati biraha sabiṣa sara bhārī. taki taki māra bāra bahu mārī. 9.
aisēhuṁ dukha jō rākha mama prānā. sō'i bidhi tāhi ji'āva na ānā. 10.

The God of Love, known as Kaamdeo, has been deriving sadistic pleasure from my sufferings as he repeatedly aims and shoots his arrows at me, arrows that are tipped with the poison of grief and pain attending separation from Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram). (9)

In this miserable situation, surely it is the Creator, who is already opposed to me, that keeps me alive inspite of my horrifying grief, torment and misery, and definitely it is no one else¹. (10)

[Note—¹To wit, I am certain that it is this malicious Creator who is keeping me alive, and would not allow me to die inspite of the intolerable pains and miseries that I am

subjected to by being hit by the arrows of this cruel Kaamdeo. It is so obvious that one becomes helpless against the will of the Creator, and is forced to surrender before the will of the Creator even against one's own free will.]

बहु बिधि कर बिलाप जानकी । करि करि सुरति कृपानिधान की ॥ ११ ॥
 कह त्रिजटा सुनु राजकुमारी । उर सर लागत मरइ सुरारी ॥ १२ ॥
 प्रभु ताते उर हतइ न तेही । एहि के हृदयँ बसति बैदेही ॥ १३ ॥

bahu bidhi kara bilāpa jānakī. kari kari surati kṛpānidhāna kī. 11.
 kaha trijaṭā sunu rājakumārī. ura sara lāgata mara'i surārī. 12.
 prabhu tāṭē ura hata'i na tēhī. ēhi kē hṛdayaṁ basati baidēhī. 13.

In this way, Sita ("jānakī"; the daughter of king Janak) lamented and grieved in many ways as she remembered her dear Lord Ram who was an embodiment of grace, mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpānidhāna). [To wit, the more she remembered Lord Ram, the greater was her misery.] (11)

[Trijata comforted her by telling how Lord Ram would finally kill her tormentor Ravana and rescue her.]

Trijata said to Sita: 'Oh Princess (rājakumārī), listen! The tormentor of gods (i.e. Ravana) would die when an arrow would pierce his heart.

[To wit, there is no way he can be killed by cutting-off his heads or arms, because he has a boon granted to him by Brahma and Shiva that he would not be short of heads and arms, no matter how many of them are severed from his body. As a result he continues to survive, though Lord Ram has repeatedly chopped them off.] (12)

[Now, Trijata gives the reason why Lord Ram has not aimed an arrow directly straight at Ravana's heart to get rid of him.]

The Lord (Sri Ram) has not slayed him (Ravana) by striking directly at his heart because he knows that Vaidehi (Sita) lives inside his heart¹. (13)

[Note—¹This is a very interesting observation. On the surface we find that Sita wishes Ravana's death and holds him responsible for all her miseries as is clear from the foregoing verses, and Ravana too treats her with apparent contempt, even going to the extent of asking his guards to keep troubling her so that she surrenders to his wishes. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

But at the same time it must not be forgotten that he had kidnapped Sita with the intention of using this means to compel Lord Ram, about whom he was certain that he was not a human being as he appears to be, but the Supreme Being himself in his form, to visit Lanka and give freedom to the soul of all sinful demons by killing them, for otherwise their deliverance seemed impossible. {Apropos: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23; and (ii)

Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61; and Canto 6, verse nos. 30-32.}

To wit, Ravana was very clear in his mind that Lord Ram was no one else but the Supreme Being himself, and he had abducted Sita with a clear objective of attaining deliverance and emancipation for himself.

If he had any doubt in this regard, his queen Mandodari removed it when she pleaded with him to surrender before the Lord, telling him in clear terms that the Lord is a personified form of the Supreme Being. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.}

A question arises that if it was true that Ravana was aware that Lord Ram was the Supreme Lord God of the world, and that Sita was the Lord's cosmic Shakti, known as the Mother Goddess, then why did he still fight the bloody war and get himself as well as all other demons killed?

It is because he knew that the members of his demon race had become so sinful that the only way for their souls to find peace was to get rid of the demon body, and it was not an easy task at it appears to be—because even the god of death, known as Kaal, was so scared stiff of Ravana that he would not dare to touch any of the demons out of fear of incurring Ravana's wrath. And Ravana, out of ego and self-pride, as well as to save his face and reputation, would not afford to allow Kaal to carry out his normal duties of making the demons die in accordance to the laws of creation where all those who are born must die too, thereby creating a piquant situation that unless some other means could be found to make the demons die, they would continue to live perpetually, which in turn would mean that their individual souls would never find deliverance and peace ever.

So therefore, when Ravana decided that the chance for deliverance has finally arrived, he would not listen to any other thing and to no body; he wouldn't budge from his decision, though this made him look stubborn and haughty. To do justice to him, this surely goes to his credit that inspite of facing all sorts of ignominy, ridicule and scorn, he still held to his belief and succeeded in attaining liberation and deliverance not only for his own self but for the rest of his clan and the demon race.

And why is it said that "Sita lived in Ravana's heart"? It implies that he had enshrined her inside the sanctum of his heart-like temple as its revered deity, because he was certain that it was she who would prove to be the deliverer of his race, for it was for her that Lord Ram would be compelled to come to his very doorstep in Lanka to grant him and all his companions deliverance right where they lived, and they would be spared the trouble of going elsewhere in search of this spiritual bonanza. It ought to be noted that Ravana had kept Sita in the garden known as Ashok Van with due respect that one would give to one's mother, and he took proper care that she is treated and protected like a mother would be—this fact is expressly stated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65.

With this background and understanding, it is impossible to even think or imagine that Ravana had any real malefic or pervert intentions regarding Sita, though of course he pretended outwardly to behave that way, but that was only to conceal his true objective of bringing Sita to Lanka to force Lord Ram to come there and grant the whole of the demon race with the benefit of a liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation right at its doorstep, for otherwise Lord Ram would have found it very difficult to find an excuse to kill the sinful demons en-masse, and with this purported 'killing' the Lord would be actually freeing their souls from the cage symbolized by the sinful body of a demon, a body that was so hardened and thickened with layers

and layers of accumulated sins encasing it that the soul would have remained trapped inside forever, being unable to escape on its own.

Trijata perhaps had one other objective of telling Sita that “Lord Ram is not shooting an arrow at the heart of Ravana because the Lord knows that Sita resides there”. Well, what could it be? Trijata wished to subtly hint to Sita that she must know the secret about Ravana, that after all he is not as cruel towards her as she thinks him to be; and therefore she ought not to curse him so vehemently as she is inclined to do at present.

What could have been Sita’s reaction to this disclosure by Trijata? For one, she must have frowned, as she could not come to terms with the notion that someone who had caused her so much grief and pain would actually admire her. Secondly, she loved only Lord Ram, and this love sprouted from the first day she saw him in the garden at Janakpur, her father’s place[§]; on the other hand she had despised Ravana from the moment she first saw him and came to know who he was at the time when he had gone to abduct her[#]. With what Trijata said it may be true that Ravana loved Sita, but it does not necessarily mean that his views were endorsed and accepted by her, or that she ever condoned his overtures even a wee whit. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, [§]Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Doha no. 236; [#]Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 12-16 that precede Doha no. 28; and Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

Of course one can safely conclude that when Sita heard what Trijata had to tell her about what Ravana thought of her, she must have blushed and felt highly embarrassed. But that was all; she became very angry, and her annoyance was stoked further when she recollected the sort of ill treatment she was being subjected to by Ravana ever since he had brought her to Lanka, and the way he is trying his best to defeat her beloved husband Lord Ram in the war so that he could keep her forever against her wishes. This thought filled her heart with repugnance and hate for Ravana.]

छं०. एहि के हृदयँ बस जानकी जानकी उर मम बास है । १ ।
मम उदर भुअन अनेक लागत बान सब कर नास है ॥ २ ॥
सुनि बचन हरष बिषाद मन अति देखि पुनि त्रिजटाँ कहा । ३ ।
अब मरिहि रिपु एहि बिधि सुनहि सुंदरि तजहि संसय महा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ēhi kē hr̥dayaṁ basa jānakī jānakī ura mama bāsa hai. 1.
mama udara bhu'ana anēka lāgata bāna saba kara nāsa hai. 2.
suni bacana haraṣa biṣāda mana ati dēkhi puni trijaṭāṁ kahā. 3.
aba marihi ripu ēhi bidhi sunahi sundari tajahi sansaya mahā. 4.

Trijata told Sita: ‘The Lord (Sri Ram) realizes that Janki (Sita) resides in his (Ravana’s) heart, and also that the Lord himself lives in the heart of Janki.

[To wit, Lord Ram knows that Sita lives inside the heart of Ravana as he is always thinking of her, while the Lord himself lives in her heart as she is always thinking of him.] (Chanda line no. 1)

Lord Ram also knows that the whole universe, consisting of countless worlds, resides inside his own self (because the entire creation is said to exist within the cosmic body of Brahm, the Supreme Being; there is nothing beyond Brahm).

So therefore, if the Lord shoots an arrow at Ravana's heart, then the consequences would be disastrous for the whole creation—for then everything would be destroyed in a fraction of a moment¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Hearing these solemn words of Trijata, Sita was overcome with sadness and despondency (as she lost all hopes that any means could be devised for eliminating her tormentor).

When Trijata observed Sita's state of mind of abject despair and dejection, she comforted her by proposing a method which Lord Ram might employ to get rid of Ravana. So, Trijata said once again to assuage Sita's anxieties and discomfort: --- (Chanda line no. 3)

'Oh charming lady (sundari)! Don't be so sad, hopeless and despondent; stop doubting and becoming so much perplexed about how Ravana would be eliminated. Listen to me; I shall tell you now how Lord Ram would ultimately kill his enemy (aba marihi ripu ēhi bidhi sunahi). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Put simply it means that if Lord Ram shoots an arrow at Ravana's heart in order to kill him, then it would mean a catastrophic development for the whole creation; everything would be ruined. The arrow will make no distinction between the good and the bad; it would not spare whom to spare and whom to kill. It would first kill Sita, and then pierce deeper to kill Lord Ram, and the result would be the slaying of the entire creation that the Supreme Being cradles in his bosom, a creation that he had himself so lovingly created, nourished and protected. The whole purpose of the Supreme Being taking the trouble of coming down in the form of Lord Ram, which was to eliminate the cruelty perpetrated by the demons so as to afford freedom from fear and restoration of happiness for the rest of his creation, would be defeated—because the Lord's arrow would kill one and all without distinction; the demons would be eliminated alright, but along with them the rest of the creation would also be eliminated, which the Lord surely does not intend to do.]

दो०. काटत सिर होइहि बिकल छुटि जाइहि तव ध्यान ।

तब रावनहि हृदय महुँ मरिहहि रामु सुजान ॥ ९९ ॥

dōhā.

kāṭata sira hō'ihi bikala chuṭi jā'ihi tava dhyāna.

taba rāvanahi hr̥daya mahum̐ marihahim̐ rāmu sujāna. 99.

When Ravana would become extremely bewildered, confused and disoriented at the time when Lord Ram would swiftly go on severing his heads with great rapidity, one after another in quick succession, he (Ravana) would feel so distracted and disturbed that for certain moments he would forget about you (i.e. he would cease to remember you as he would be more concerned about his own safety)—it would be then, during those crucial moments of his mental confusion and disorientation, that Lord Ram would hit him in his heart with a powerful arrow (to kill him)¹. (Doha no. 99)

[Note—¹This was Trijata's prediction concerning Ravana's death in order to comfort Sita and somehow sooth her. Did it actually happen as she had foretold? No, not at least according to Ram Charit Manas—for we shall read shortly that Lord Ram had shot 31 arrows at Ravana during the last moments of the war, out of which 20 arrows cut-off Ravana's twenty arms, 10 arrows severed his ten heads, and the last arrow, the 31st, struck at Ravana's navel and dried up the nectar of life that was stored there. This killed the demon king. Not a single arrow was aimed by Lord Ram at Ravana's heart. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 102 along with Chaupai line no. 4 that follows it.}

Since Lord Ram had not shot even a single arrow at Ravana's heart, Trijata's words—that Lord Ram desists from shooting at Ravana's heart because Sita lives there, and she would be gravely injured if the arrow was aimed at Ravana's heart—is upheld to be true. But the real reason as to why Lord Ram did not aim his arrow at Ravana's heart is quite different. So, what is it?

The answer is that Ravana's pure conscious 'self', known as the 'soul' or the 'Atma' that is eternally pure, holy and divine, lived in his heart, and the arrow would have killed that soul. Lord Ram's intention was to free the soul, to grant it liberation from the trap of a sinful demon body, and not to harm or kill it. The merciful and kind Lord wished to give deliverance to Ravana's soul instead of condemning it to suffer in hell. Hence, the Lord would not aim his arrow at Ravana's heart where his soul lived, and he contrived an alternative method to get rid of Ravana's sinful demonic body that trapped his holy soul inside, so that two problems could be solved simultaneously: one was to get rid of the sinful and evil body of a demon, and the other was to liberate the holy soul unharmed from the trap of this evil body. Therefore, the Lord devised a method of accomplishing both the objectives at one go, and it was to first sever Ravana's heads and arms, and then hit him in his navel in order to kill the demonic body, but spare his heart in order to protect his soul from any injury.

But was Trijata completely wrong in saying that Lord Ram would finally shoot an arrow at Ravana's heart to bring about his end? The strange thing is this: Trijata was not entirely wrong, though of course she appears to be so if we focus our reading only to Ram Charit Manas; for in another version of this marvellously wondrous Story of the Ramayan, that of the illustrious sage Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan', we learn that Lord Ram had indeed shot an arrow at Ravana's heart on the advice of Matli, the charioteer of Lord Ram's chariot that was sent by the gods to help in the battle against Ravana—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 61-72.

So, how do we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory versions? Clearly it means that Lord Ram had shot arrows simultaneously at Ravana's 'navel' as well as his 'heart' to ensure his death. They were done almost at the same time, so fast, so swiftly and in quick succession, that the two chroniclers of this legendary history—one being Veda Vyas who documented the progress of the war in his classic Adhyatma Ramayan, and the other being Goswami Tulsidas who narrated the same story in his classic Ram Charit Manas—pointed out the way Ravana was killed according to where his attention was focussed at that instant when Ravana was actually killed. Obviously, Veda Vyas's eyes and mind were focused on Ravana's heart, so he attributed his death to Lord Ram's arrow rupturing his heart, while that of Tulsidas were focused on his navel, which made him document that Ravana was slayed because Lord Ram's arrow hit him in the navel.

We can therefore safely say that both these two classics, viz. Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, and Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, must be read together to get a comprehensive picture of what may have actually transpired at that period of time long-long ago, for we discover that there seems to be some sort of subtle form of synergy between the two narratives, inasmuch as they compliment each other to fill in the dotted lines.

We conclude that though these two versions may give an impression of contradiction—such as in the present instance, because whereas in Adhyatma Ramayan it is said that Ravana was killed when Lord Ram hit him in his heart (Lanka Kand, Canto 11, verse no. 71), while Ram Charit Manas says he was killed by an arrow shot at his navel (Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103)—but on close examination it seems that both the things may have happened simultaneously: to wit, Lord Ram must have shot arrows aimed at Ravana's heart as well as his navel to ensure that all precautions are taken to make sure that Ravana is certainly slayed, for the Lord did not want to take any further risk of playing games with him as time was running out, and already all other methods had miserably failed to the demon's life.]

चौ०. अस कहि बहुत भाँति समुझाई । पुनि त्रिजटा निज भवन सिधाई ॥ १ ॥
 राम सुभाउ सुमिरि बैदेही । उपजी बिरह बिथा अति तेही ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

asa kahi bahuta bhānti samujhāī. puni trijaṭā nija bhavana sidhāī. 1.
 rāma subhā'u sumiri baidēhī. upajī biraha bithā ati tēhī. 2.

Trijata used many such words (as narrated in the previous set of verses) to try her best to comfort Sita, encouraging her to have patience and faith; thereafter, she went home. (1)

Meanwhile, Sita's grief and the agony of separation from her beloved Lord Ram increased manifold times as she remembered the kind and gracious nature of the Lord¹. (2)

[Note—¹Trijata had just a while ago told Sita that she has a special place in the heart of Ravana, which put simply means that he adores her—apropos: Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 99. Sita knew that Lord Ram too adored her; so what then was the difference? Sita contemplated this aspect deep inside her own mind and heart, and came to the conclusion that Lord Ram was her true well-wisher and lover. There was a stark difference between Lord Ram and Ravana, though both of them enshrined Sita in their hearts. While Ravana had treated her roughly, given her nothing but pain and misery, and had forcibly taken her away from her husband, Lord Ram on the other hand had always taken care that Sita never found any cause for grief and feeling sad for any reason even during the troublesome time they had spent in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 141; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142.

The mutual sense of unbound love and profound affection between Lord Ram and Sita was deep-rooted and eternal, for it went back to long days ago when they first met in Janakpur, prior to their marriage; she had fervently prayed to gods and

goddesses so that she could marry the Lord^a, and at the time when Lord Ram was preparing to go to the forest she had voluntarily decided to accompany him, staking all her reputation, loyalty and devotion for it, as well as determinedly forgoing all concerns for her comfort and safety^b. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, ^aBaal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 228—to Sortha / Doha no. 236; (ii) Doha no. 248 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259; ^bAyodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 69.}

This was not at all the case with Ravana; Sita loathed him and cursed him as is evident on many occasions. First was at the time of her abduction by Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6, 24 that precede it.

The other such occasion was when Ravana tries to cajole Sita to surrender before his pervert wishes—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 9.

And Ravana had openly ordered the female demons who were appointed to guard her to torment her as much as they pleased—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 10 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede it.

To wit, it is obvious without doubt that Sita's pained heart longed ever so much for her beloved Lord Ram, and the more she remembered him the more her agony arising out of her separation from the Lord increased, and it further stoked the fire of her grief and misery.

During the long days of her captivity in Lanka, she had become very forlorn and reconciled to her doomed fate; her senses were dulled and rarely would she respond to anyone talking to her. But when Trijata came with the news of the battle, and how Lord Ram was so near yet so far from liberating her from captivity as all his efforts to kill Ravana, her tormentor, were failing, Sita sank in a pool of despair and despondency. She was once again reminded of Lord Ram, and this pleasant memory stoked her emotions afresh and made her extremely sentimental.

Even Ravana's own spy named Suk had acknowledged about Lord Ram's exceptionally gracious and kind nature when he had tried to persuade Ravana to end hostility with the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 57.

So, Sita was not alone to be overcome with emotions while remembering the most gracious and kind nature of Lord Ram, for besides Suk we read that even Vibhishan and Hanuman were also overwhelmed when they recalled the Lord's nature during their first meeting in Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

निसिहि ससिहि निंदति बहु भाँती । जुग सम भई सिराति न राती ॥ ३ ॥

करति बिलाप मनहिं मन भारी । राम बिरहँ जानकी दुखारी ॥ ४ ॥

nisihi sasihi nindati bahu bhāntī. juga sama bha'ī sirāti na rātī. 3.

karati bilāpa manahim mana bhārī. rāma biraham jānakī dukhārī. 4.

She reproached the night¹ and the moon² in various ways, lamenting that the night seems to get longer and longer without end¹. (3)

Janki (Sita) wailed and lamented internally, quietly weeping and grieving silently in many ways, for she was overwhelmed with an intolerable agony of separation from Lord Ram. (4)

[Note—¹Trijata had told Sita that the war for her liberation was in its final leg, and that if all goes well then Lord Ram would succeed in slaying Ravana by shooting him in his heart—apropos: Doha no. 99 herein above. This made Sita so anxious and worried that an hour of the night seemed as an age for her.

²The ‘moon’ is said to aggravate the agony of separation between two lovers; when they look up at the moon the lovers sigh and wail intolerably. Even Lord Ram had been emotional under the light of the full moon when he had remembered Sita after their first meeting in the garden of Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Meanwhile, the presence of the ‘moon’ indicates that it was a moonlight night, and not a dark night.]

जब अति भयउ बिरह उर दाहू । फरकेउ बाम नयन अरु बाहू ॥ ५ ॥
सगुन बिचारि धरी मन धीरा । अब मिलिहहिं कृपाल रघुबीरा ॥ ६ ॥

jaba ati bhaya'u biraha ura dāhū. pharakē'u bāma nayana aru bāhū. 5.
saguna bicāri dharī mana dhīrā. aba milihahim̐ kṛpāla raghubīrā. 6.

When the pain and agony of separation from her beloved husband Lord Ram became too much for her to bear, burning her heart and tormenting her much, at that moment the left side of her body began to flutter voluntarily (which is considered a good sign, an auspicious omen for a woman¹). (5)

Taking note of this auspicious sign, Sita felt comforted and pleased inside her heart, concluding that surely now all her miseries would come to an end soon, and she will be able to meet the merciful Lord Raghubir (“kṛpāla raghubīrā”; Lord Ram). (60)

[Note—¹When the left side of a woman’s body flutters, it is regarded as a good sign, but in a male it is regarded as a bad omen. The reverse is also true: if the right side of a woman’s body flutters it is bad for her, but for a man it is a good omen.]

इहाँ अर्धनिसि रावनु जागा । निज सारथि सन खीझन लागा ॥ ७ ॥
सठ रनभूमि छड़ाइसि मोही । धिग धिग अधम मंदमति तोही ॥ ८ ॥
तेहिं पद गहि बहु बिधि समुझावा । भोरु भएँ रथ चढ़ि पुनि धावा ॥ ९ ॥

ihāṁ ardhanisi rāvanu jāgā. nija sārathi sana khījhana lāgā. 7.
saṭha ranabhūmi charā'isi mōhī. dhiga dhiga adhama mandamati tōhī. 8.
tēhim̐ pada gahi bahu bidhi samujhāvā. bhōru bha'eṁ ratha caḍhi puni dhāvā.

9.

Here meanwhile, Ravana regained his senses around midnight¹. As soon as he realized what had happened, he began to reproach his charioteer. (7)

Ravana scolded him: ‘Oh you fool; why did you make me leave the battle-field. Woe betide you, oh you contemptible and dumb-witted fellow (for you have given me a bad name for having escaped from the battle-field like a coward, for having succumbed to my enemy like a weakling, for having fallen down in battle while my enemy remained standing on his legs).²’ (8)

The charioteer fell down at Ravana’s feet to beg forgiveness, and explained in different ways the reason why he had done what he did³.

As soon as the day dawned⁴, Ravana made all haste to mount the chariot and dash to the battle ground. (9)

[Note—¹We will recall that Ravana had become unconscious and fell down when Jamvant, the bear chief, had kicked him hard in his chest. Ravana’s charioteer had thought it fit and prudent to bring him back to Lanka, especially as it was getting dark and the battle for the day was to come to an end, and there was neither any sense nor was it safe to remain in the battle-field any longer. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 15 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 98 herein above.}]

²It is regarded as a great dishonour and ignominy for a valiant warrior to fall down in the battle-field during a duel, and being carried away to safety by someone else. He would rather die than do this; he would prefer to walk on his two legs back to his camp inspite of being wounded, than being carried away like a sac by someone else.

Never in his long career had Ravana experienced this objectionable situation. So therefore, as soon as he regained his senses and came to know what had happened, he got angry with his charioteer.

³The charioteer explained to Ravana the circumstances under which he was left with no other choice but to bring him back inside the fort of Lanka. He was gravely wounded and lying as if dead; night was fast approaching and the day’s battle was to end nevertheless; and in the dark of the night it was very dangerous to remain lying unconscious in the middle of the battle-field, surrounded by enemies, for the majority of the demons were killed, and the few remaining had fled in terror as soon as they saw Ravana falling down. Besides this, the charioteer explained, he was merely doing his duty to bring his lord back to safety in the prevailing circumstances.

Ravana felt satisfied with this explanation, and he excused the charioteer.

⁴This was the 8th day of the war; Ravana would be killed on this day.]

सुनि आगवनु दसानन केरा । कपिदल खरभर भयउ घनेरा ॥ १० ॥

जहँ तहँ भूधर बिटप उपारी । धाए कटकटाइ भट भारी ॥ ११ ॥

sunī āgavanu dasānana kērā. kapidala kharabhara bhaya'u ghanērā. 10.
jahaṁ tahaṁ bhūdhara biṭapa upārī. dhā'ē kaṭakaṭā'i bhaṭa bhārī. 11.

Hearing that Ravana had arrived on the battle-field, there was a great turmoil amongst the rank and file of the army of monkeys and bears¹. (10)

They immediately grabbed whatever huge rocks and trees they could lay their hands on, and gnashing and grinding their teeth, they dashed forward to meet (intercept) him. (11)

[Note—¹Why was there turmoil in the monkey army? The reason is this:

Last evening they had seen Ravana sinking down unconscious, as if dead, and then being carried away like a corpse by his charioteer. So they had deduced that either he was dead, and that would be the end of the war, or in case he survived then he was surely so gravely wounded that he will take some time to recover.

But they had least expected that Ravana would emerge so quickly on the battle-field so early in the morning that it seemed he had beaten the rays of the sun in the hurry to reach the ground; he was in his prime fighting mode, and looked most ferocious by his appearance, raging and ranting wildly with a determination for revenge. The monkeys and bears were therefore caught unawares; they scrambled for their weapons and dashed out to meet the challenge in order to intercept Ravana before he comes too close to their camp, as then it would be disastrous for all of them.]

छं०. धाए जो मर्कट बिकट भालु कराल कर भूधर धरा । १ ।
अति कोप करहिं प्रहार मारत भजि चले रजनीचरा ॥ २ ॥
बिचलाइ दल बलवंत कीसन्ह घेरि पुनि रावनु लियो । ३ ।
चहुं दिसि चपेटन्ह मारि नखन्ह बिदारि तनु व्याकुल कियो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dhā'ē jō markāṭa bikaṭa bhālu karāla kara bhūdhara dharā. 1.
ati kōpa karahiṁ prahāra mārata bhaji calē rajanīcarā. 2.
bicalā'i dala balavanta kīsanha ghēri puni rāvanu liyō. 3.
cahuṁ disi capēṭanhi māri nakhanhi bidāri tanu byākula kiyō. 4.

The monkeys and bears who had dashed forward to intercept Ravana and his demon army, were most formidable by their demeanours and fierce in their attack; they had grabbed huge mountain-like rocks and boulders as they rushed to intercept the enemy. (Chanda line no. 1)

They attacked the enemy with vehement anger, hitting it hard and with such great violence that the demon warriors could not face the ferocity of the assault, and fled from the field in terror. (Chanda line no. 2)

After successfully scattering the demon warriors who accompanied Ravana, leaving him all to himself and unprotected, the strong and valorous monkeys and bears then surrounded him from all the sides. (Chanda line no. 3)

The monkey and bear army attacked Ravana from all sides; biting him, kicking him, cuffing, slapping, thrashing and pounding him so violently all at once, and in all possible ways they could devise, that the poor demon king felt cornered and helpless; he became extremely agitated, feeling perplexed and exasperated, as he could not understand how to respond to this sudden burst of violence that completely dazed him. (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. देखि महा मर्कट प्रबल रावन कीन्ह बिचार ।

अंतरहित होइ निमिष महुँ कृत माया बिस्तार ॥ १०० ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi mahā markṭa prabala rāvana kīnha bicāra.

antarahita hō'i nimiṣa mahum̐ kṛta māyā bistāra. 100.

When Ravana found himself surrounded by a ferocious army of monkey and bears who were determined to tear him apart, he decided that the best course of action for him now was to use the magical tricks, known as 'Maya', he was expert in¹.

With that purpose in mind, he first quickly made himself invisible, and then he created an illusion of a vastly horrifying scene all over the battle-field which would scare off his attackers and completely confound them. (Doha no. 100)

[Note—¹This is the third time that Ravana has employed his Maya to deflect the ferocious attack of monkeys and bears. The other two occasions when Ravana had employed his magical tricks are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 88; Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89; and again in (ii) Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 97.

During the first occasion, Ravana's Maya created an illusion that made the monkey and bear warriors see the demon army as consisting of countless numbers of Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, instead of the demon warriors. To wit, all the demons appeared to be images of the two brothers, a sight which would obviously confuse the monkeys and bears.

On the second occasion however, there appeared to be countless Ravana in the battle-field. That also was intended to utterly bewilder the monkeys and bears.

In both the cases we find that Ravana had employed his skills at creating an illusion when he found himself alone and surrounded by ferocious monkeys and bears who were attacking him from all the sides.

This is the third such occasion where Ravana once again uses his skills at Maya when he found himself besieged. On this occasion, he created a terrible sight of ghosts, phantoms, ogres, fiends, spirits and hobgoblins rampaging through the battle ground, howling, roaring, screaming and dancing and stomping in a macabre and blood-curdling scenario of death and destruction, which was further magnified by appearance of fire everywhere. This hair-raising and horrific scene would naturally stun and terrify the army of Lord Ram, stopping it from attacking Ravana any further.]

छं०. जब कीन्ह तेहिं पाषंड । भए प्रगट जंतु प्रचंड ॥ १ ॥

बेताल भूत पिशाच । कर धरें धनु नाराच ॥ २ ॥
 जोगिनि गहें करबाल । एक हाथ मनुज कपाल ॥ ३ ॥
 करि सद्य सोनित पान । नाचहिं करहिं बहु गान ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaba kīṇha tēhiṁ pāṣaṇḍa. bha'e pragatā jantu pracanḍa. 1.
 bētāla bhūta pisāca. kara dharēm dhanu nārāca. 2.
 jōgini gahēm karabāla. ēka hātha manuja kapāla. 3.
 kari sadya sōnita pāna. nācahiṁ karahiṁ bahu gāna. 4.

When he (Ravana) spread his spell of delusions and deceit in the battle-field, a fantastic scene of illusions was created. Horrifying creatures with terrible countenances and demeanours were produced instantly. (Chanda line no. 1)

Phantoms, ghosts and hobgoblins of all sorts were created. They held bows and arrows in their hands, and danced the dance-of-death and destruction on the battle ground. (Chanda line no. 2)

Female ogres, holding a sword in one hand¹ and a hollowed out human skull in the other hand, danced and sang in merriment as they drank fresh warm blood collected in the upturned skulls². (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹The word “karabāla” in line no. 3 has two meanings: It may mean a ‘sword held in the hand’, and it may also mean ‘a child held in the hand’. The latter meaning would imply that these female ogres held their young-ones in one hand, while they held the hollow skull to collect blood in the other hand. Then, when blood was collected in this skull-like pot, they would let her child drink some of it, and drink the rest of it herself.

²It seemed that they had been cutting-off the heads of warriors with their swords from which blood dripped, and used the hollowed out skulls to collect the flowing blood which they drank. This made them so happy that they danced and sang in the battle-field, enjoying the feast and rejoicing at the prospect of an abundant supply of victuals in the form of fresh flesh to satisfy their hunger, and warm blood as drink to quench their thirst.

A similar abominable, abhorable, repulsive and macabre scene of rivers of blood and the horrible dance of death has been described earlier too in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

धरु मारु बोलहिं घोर । रहि पूरि धुनि चहुँ ओर ॥ ५ ॥
 मुख बाड़ धावहिं खान । तब लगे कीस परान ॥ ६ ॥
 जहँ जाहिं मर्कट भागि । तहँ बरत देखहिं आगि ॥ ७ ॥
 भए बिकल बानर भालु । पुनि लाग बरषै बालु ॥ ८ ॥

dharu māru bōlahiṃ ghōra. rahi pūri dhuni cahuṃ ōra. 5.
 mukha bā'i dhāvahiṃ khāna. taba lagē kīsa parāna. 6.
 jahaṃ jāhiṃ markāṭa bhāgi. tahaṃ barata dēkhahiṃ āgi. 7.
 bha'e bikala bānara bhālu. puni lāga baraṣai bālu. 8.

The abominable and fearful creatures that appeared all over the battle-field were shouting in a terrifying way, 'catch hold and kill'. Their howls and chilling cries resounded in all the directions¹. (Chanda line no. 5)

They opened their mouths wide and ran behind the monkeys and bears in order to grab and eat them alive, whereat the terrified fellows ran helter-skelter to save themselves². (Chanda line no. 6)

Wherever the monkeys and bears ran to escape and hide from the assault of the devilish fiends who rushed after them, they found themselves facing raging fire which blocked their way. (Chanda line no. 7)

The horrified monkeys and bears were agitated and utterly confounded. Their misery was compounded when sand suddenly began raining over them, thereby effectively blinding their sight³. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹The ugly ogres, phantoms, ghosts and goblins ran behind the terrified monkeys and bears in order to catch them and eat them up, either alive or dead. These fiends and devilish creatures had wide open mouths, were swinging swords from which blood dripped, had bows strung tight and arrows mounted on them, aiming at the fleeing warriors, and they were gesticulating wildly and shouting terribly as they lunged towards the mortified monkeys and bears.

Remember: It was an illusion created by Ravana, but it was so perfect in its form that everything seemed very real and true.

It is a replication of the scene described earlier in the war—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 53.

²When Kumbhakaran had entered the battle-field, a similar scene unfolded; he too had a most fearful body; he too had rushed forward madly with open mouth and hands extended to grab whoever he could lay his hands on, and then put the terrified victims in his cavernous mouth in order to devour them in hordes. The horrified monkeys and bears had scattered here and there as fast as they could run, trying to escape the colossus demon. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 67; and Doha no. 69.}

³Earlier too, when Meghanad had spread his Maya on the battle-field, he too had created this scenario of blood, flesh, bone-marrow, intestines and sand raining down from the sky to terrify, blind and totally confound the monkey and bear warriors on the ground. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 67.}

जहँ तहँ थकित करि कीस । गर्जेउ बहुरि दससीस ॥ ९ ॥
 लछिमन कपीस समेत । भए सकल बीर अचेत ॥ १० ॥

हा राम हा रघुनाथ । कहि सुभट मीजहिं हाथ ॥ ११ ॥
एहि बिधि सकल बल तोरि । तेहिं कीन्ह कपट बहोरि ॥ १२ ॥

jahaṁ tahaṁ thakita kari kīsa. garjē'u bahuri dasasīsa. 9.
lachimana kapīsa samēta. bha'e sakala bīra acēta. 10.
hā rāma hā raghunātha. kahi subhaṭa mījahim hātha. 11.
ēhi bidhi sakala bala tōri. tēhim kīnha kapaṭa bahōri. 12.

Stupefying and wearing out the monkeys and bears so much that they stood utterly transfixed and dazed at the very place they found themselves in, being unable to move and unable to decide what to and what not to do, the ten-headed monster Ravana thundered derisively. (Chanda line no. 9)

Even Sugriv (the chief of the monkeys) and Laxman (the younger brother of Lord Ram) too became confounded and lost their bearings, alongside the rest of the monkey warriors. (Chanda line no. 10)

Crying out 'Oh Lord Ram; Oh Lord Raghubir' (to seek the Lord's help), the valiant warriors wrung their hands in abject frustration and despair. (Chanda line no. 11)

In this way, having first crushed the valour and morale of the mighty warriors and nullifying their superior strength, he (Ravana) unleashed a fresh round of delusory tricks that would further aggravate the confoundedness of his enemy. [And what did he do? We shall read it in the next set of verses below.] (Chanda line no. 12)

प्रगटेसि बिपुल हनुमान । धाए गहे पाषान ॥ १३ ॥
तिन्ह रामु घेरे जाइ । चहुँ दिसि बरूथ बनाइ ॥ १४ ॥
मारहु धरहु जनि जाइ । कटकटहिं पूँछ उठाइ ॥ १५ ॥
दहँ दिसि लँगूर बिराज । तेहिं मध्य कोसलराज ॥ १६ ॥

pragaṭēsi bipula hanumāna. dhā'ē gahē pāṣāna. 13.
tinha rāmu ghērē jā'i. cahuṁ disi barūtha banā'i. 14.
mārahu dharahu jani jā'i. kaṭakaṭahim pūṁcha uṭhā'i. 15.
dahaṁ disi laṁgūra birāja. tēhim madhya kōsalarāja. 16.

He (Ravana) created an illusion of a large number of Hanumans who held huge mountain-like rocks and boulders in their hands. (Chanda line no. 13)

These false forms of Hanuman formed large groups and dashed towards Lord Ram to surround him from all sides. (Chanda line no. 14)

They raised their tails and swirled them in the air, gnashing their teeth and shrieking: 'Kill him (Lord Ram); go and catch hold of him so that he does not escape'. (Chanda line no. 15)

The effect of this illusion created by Ravana was that the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram) was surrounded on all the sides by these fictitious images of Hanuman waving their long tails, and seemingly baying for the Lord's blood¹. (Chanda line no. 16)

[Note—¹In a similar situation created by Meghanad earlier, Lord Ram had smiled and shot an arrow that ruptured this veil of delusions, clearing the ground of all fake forms—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 52.

In another scene reminiscent of what happened now, Ravana had created an illusion whereby numerous forms of his own self were mysteriously produced in the battle-field all of a sudden, and these fake Ravana's rushed angrily to catch and kill the monkeys and bears. At that time too, Lord Ram had shot an arrow to put an end to this deceit—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 96—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 97.

The only apparent difference between the instance cited above and the present scenario is that in the former case the false forms were of Ravana himself, and these fictitious Ravana's had lunged ferociously at the monkeys and bears to terrify them and make them flee, whilst in the present case the fictitious forms are that of Hanuman, Lord Ram's most trusted aide, and the worst is that Hanuman has begun attacking his own Lord.

Ravana was very clever in deciding to use 'Hanuman's fictitious form' to confuse Lord Ram. He knew how much the Lord trusted and loved Hanuman, and when he discovers that the same Hanuman is now attacking him from all sides, it is sure, so thought Ravana, that the Lord would be taken aback, being extremely shocked and stunned to see that even Hanuman had become his mortal enemy; and this would so much confound and perplex the Lord that for quite some time he would be rendered senseless and unable to decide what to do. The time Lord Ram remains indecisive and inactive because of this unexpected shocker would be a boon for Ravana as, for one, it would give the demon king the much needed breathing time during which he would collect his wits together and plan a new strategy for the attack, and two, it would demoralize and confuse the Lord's own army.

So, what will Lord Ram do now; how will he respond to this new threat created by Ravana? The answer is found herein below in Chanda line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 101.]

छं०. तेहिं मध्य कोसलराज सुंदर स्याम तन सोभा लही । १ ।
 जनु इंद्रधनुष अनेक की बर बारि तुंग तमालही ॥ २ ॥
 प्रभु देखि हरष बिषाद उर सुर बदत जय जय जय करी । ३ ।
 रघुबीर एकहिं तीर कोपि निमेष महुँ माया हरी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

tēhim madhya kōsalarāja sundara syāma tana sōbhā lahī. 1.
 janu indradhanuṣa anēka kī bara bāri tuṅga tamālahī. 2.
 prabhu dēkhi haraṣa biṣāda ura sura badata jaya jaya jaya karī. 3.
 raghubīra ēkahim tīra kōpi nimēṣa mahuṁ māyā harī. 4.

The handsome and beauteous form of the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. Lord Ram), as he stood surrounded by images of Hanuman waving their long tails over him, gave the impression of a colourful panorama where a tall and dark-coloured catechu tree (*tuṅga tamālahī*) stands majestically in the midst of many colourful rainbows that form a bower or a parasol over it¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

This bewitching sight of the Lord filled the gods with a mixture of joy and sorrow² as they applauded the Lord in unison, saying repeatedly: ‘Hail Lord Ram; Glory be to you; Victory to you.’ (Chanda line no. 3)

Meanwhile, the brave Lord of the Raghus (“*raghubīra*”; Lord Ram) angrily shot one single arrow by which all the illusions and deceits created by Ravana were eliminated³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹In this imagery, Lord Ram is likened to the catechu tree because of his dark complexion; the many Hanumans that surrounded the Lord appeared like the tall hedge erected around this tree to protect it, and his long waving tails that covered the Lord appeared like the many rainbows that are formed in the sky in such a way that they form a canopy over this tree.

²Why were the gods happy as well as sorrowful at the same time? They marveled at the beautiful sight that unfolded before them as described herein above; they were happy to see the beautiful form of Lord Ram, and they were sure that the Lord would soon remove this delusion as he had done on previous occasions. So therefore there was no cause of worry.

Even though they assured themselves that everything would be fine, yet they was an underlying cause of fear and uncertainty in their hearts, because of two primary reasons: one, it was a ‘war’, and in a war nothing could be predicted with certainty; and two, they knew the might of Ravana, that he was no ordinary adversary, and that he could do many unimaginable and nasty things about which no one can be certain about. Hence, this factor of uncertainty, coupled with Ravana’s formidable reputation, made the gods a bit restless and anxious. The gods were sorry that their beloved Lord Ram had had to suffer so much for their sake.

³Earlier too, whenever magical spells of illusions and deceits were employed in the battle-field by the demon warriors Meghanad and Ravana, Lord Ram had shot a single arrow to cut through these veils of delusions created by them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52 (in case of Meghanad); and (ii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 89; and Doha no. 96 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

माया बिगत कपि भालु हरषे बिटप गिरि गहि सब फिरे । ५ ।
 सर निकर छाड़े राम रावन बाहु सिर पुनि महि गिरे ॥ ६ ॥
 श्रीराम रावन समर चरित अनेक कल्प जो गावहीं । ७ ।
 सत सेष सारद निगम कबि तेउ तदपि पार न पावहीं ॥ ८ ॥

māyā bigata kapi bhālu haraṣē biṭapa giri gahi saba phirē. 5.
 sara nikara chārē rāma rāvana bāhu sira puni mahi girē. 6.
 śrīrāma rāvana samara carita anēka kalpa jō gāvahīm. 7.
 sata sēṣa sārada nigama kabi tē'u tadapi pāra na pāvahīm. 8.

No sooner than this Maya created by Ravana was eliminated, the monkeys and bears felt exhilarated and rejuvenated. They grabbed huge rocks and trees with renewed enthusiasm, and returned to the frontline of the battle-field (from where they had fled a little while ago). (Chanda line no. 5)

In the mean time, Lord Ram shot a fresh volley of arrows which cut-off Ravana's heads and arms all over again, making them fall on the ground. (Chanda line no. 6)

The war that was fought between Lord Ram and Ravana, and the unbelievable actions that were taken and deeds done during its course, were so astounding, fascinating and astonishing that they can't be sufficiently narrated or described even if thousands of Seshnaths (celestial serpents with their thousands of tongues), goddesses Sharada (the goddess of speech and knowledge), the Vedas (ancient scriptures reputed for their skills in narrating in fine details even the most subtle of things), and a legend of renowned bards and poets would gather together and pool their skills to do it; none would be able to, either on their own or in a concert with each other, would ever be able to fathom its depth or its expanse¹. (Chanda line nos. 7-8)

[Note—¹To wit, the Epic War of Lanka, fought betwixt Lord Ram and Ravana, has been described by so many countless poets, bards and chroniclers down the ages, but none had been able to claim that his narration is exhaustive and comprehensive. Each narrator had done his best, but still the narration was incomplete.

The idea is that the narrative that we read at present is one of the many versions by which this legendary story has been described. The war was of an epic proportion, and the like of which never occurred in this world, either aforetime or ever after.]

दो०. ताके गुन गन कछु कहे जड़मति तुलसीदास ।
 जिमि निज बल अनुरूप ते माछी उड़इ अकास ॥ १०१ (क) ॥
 काटे सिर भुज बार बहु मरत न भट लंकेस ।
 प्रभु क्रीड़त सुर सिद्ध मुनि व्याकुल देखि कलेस ॥ १०१ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

tākē guna gana kachu kahē jaṛamati tulasīdāsa.
 jimi nija bala anurūpa tē māchī uṛa'i akāsa. 101 (a).
 kāṭē sira bhuja bāra bahu marata na bhaṭa laṅkēsa.
 prabhu krīṛata sura sid'dha muni byākula dēkhi kalēsa. 101 (b).

That epic war has been narrated to some extent by Tulsidas (the poet who wrote this classic Book named 'Ram Charit Manas') according to his limited abilities, as he lacks the skills of a competent poet or narrator to do proper justice to this epic legendary Story.

Nevertheless, his attempt is just like a mosquito or an insect that tries to fly in the sky to reach a height according to its ability¹. (Doha no. 101-a)

Meanwhile, the valorous and invincible Lord of Lanka (“*bhaṭa laṅkāsa*”; Ravana) would not die even after his heads and arms were chopped-off repeatedly.

This was a play that Lord Ram was playing in the battle-field, but this play made the gods and mystics (who were watching the proceedings from their stations in the sky) worried and anxious². (Doha no. 101-b)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 91.

²The gods and the rest became worried and exasperated because it seemed that the war would drag endlessly on, without an end in sight. They were becoming anxious as Lord Ram had so far failed to kill their tormentor, the demon king Ravana. They were worried that in case the worst happens, that Ravana manages to evade death and Lord Ram too becomes weary of trying to kill him by-and-by, and he finally decides to end the war by making some kind of compromise, then all the planning and hopes of the gods of getting rid of Ravana would come shattering down like a house of cards.

They feared that in case Ravana somehow survived this war, he would not only become truly invincible, but would certainly also unleash his fiery revenge upon the gods and sages, with aggravated fury and viciousness, to punish them for teaming against him and asking Lord Vishnu to come down as Lord Ram to kill him.

This prospect sent shivers down their spines as they found that the war is dragging on endlessly, for they remembered how they were beaten and ill-treated by Ravana earlier, a precursor to a worse future to come.]

चौ०. काटत बढ़हिं सीस समुदाई । जिमि प्रति लाभ लोभ अधिकाई ॥ १ ॥

मरइ न रिपु श्रम भयउ बिसेषा । राम बिभीषन तन तब देखा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāṭata baṛhahiṁ sīsa samudāī. jimi prati lābha lōbha adhikāī. 1.

mara'i na ripu śrama bhaya'u bisēṣā. rāma bibhīṣana tana taba dēkhā. 2.

His (Ravana's) heads went on multiplying and replacing themselves rapidly the more they were cut-off (by Lord Ram) in the same way as greed and rapacity for gain and profit go on increasing exponentially with each success or each reward attained in one's endeavours towards fulfillment of his desires or objectives¹. (1)

The enemy couldn't be vanquished and got rid of in this conventional manner (of cutting of heads), and this prospect worried and confounded Lord Ram immensely, for by this time he was getting weary of repeatedly trying this method in vain².

Amazed and perplexed at this uncommon development, Lord Ram glanced at Vibhishan³. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the more a person gains something that he wants, the more his efforts bear fruits towards achieving his objectives, the more profits he makes by doing something, the more success he achieves in his enterprise, the more he would want to

have it; for the endless sky seems to be the end for desires, yearnings and needs, and there is verily no end to greed and rapacity for they are never ever contented.

The idea is that Ravana's heads went on increasing exponentially in numbers the more they were cut by Lord Ram. There seemed to be no end to re-growth of newer heads on his body; for no sooner was one set chopped off than a new crop of heads sprang up on his shoulders.

²Lord Ram was tired of shooting arrows and chopping heads and arms of Ravana, for this strategy proved in vain. He thought to himself, bemused and perplexed: "It's so wondrous that Ravana's heads grow like mushrooms in the rainy season, as the more I cut them the more they grow, and as rapidly as they are cut. Hence, I have to devise some other device to eliminate Ravana, for it is a waste of time and effort trying to kill him by cutting off his heads repeatedly. What am I to do now?"

Then the Lord glanced at Vibhishan who was standing by his side, in the hope of any hint, any help from him.

³Why did Lord Ram look at Vibhishan? The Lord was out of his wits in trying to eliminate Ravana by trying all conventional methods that one would normally think of by which someone can be killed, which was to cut off Ravana's head; but unfortunately and mysteriously all such attempts had failed. So the Lord glanced at Vibhishan to explore the possibility of his confiding some secret way to circumvent this hurdle in eliminating Ravana, because the Lord rightly guessed, as will be seen shortly, that Vibhishan must be privy to some secret formula to help rid Ravana as he was his sibling, his younger brother, and so it could be correctly guessed that he might know certain things which others didn't.

Here, Lord Ram also wished to test Vibhishan's vows of loyalty and submission to him, for now if Vibhishan helped the Lord to kill his own brother it would certainly prove his allegiance and fidelity towards his new Master; otherwise a huge question mark would be there regarding his real intentions in coming to join Lord Ram's camp against his brother Ravana, which would put all his proclamations and assertions regarding his submission before the Lord under a dark cloud of doubt.

Remember: Lord Ram was no ordinary prince; he was an incarnation or a manifestation of the Supreme Being himself. This being the case, it is not possible that things were hidden from him, as the Lord is "all-knowing and omniscient (*sarabagya*)", a virtue that Vibhishan himself would acknowledge in verse no. 4 herein below. But the Lord did not kill Ravana even though he knew the way he should be killed, but waited till Vibhishan would disclose this method to him. Why? Because the Lord wanted to test Vibhishan's honesty and sincerity regarding his loud proclamations and vows of loyalty, allegiance, devotion, faith and submission towards the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 45.

Why did Lord Ram have cause for doubt in Vibhishan? Well, the answer is this: The war had been going on for so many days; repeated attempts by Lord Ram to slay Ravana by cutting off his head and hands have failed, and yet Vibhishan kept silent. Why didn't Vibhishan disclose the method by which Ravana could be slayed? Did he actually not want him dead; was he playing some game with the Lord? Was his real and secret desire was to wear out Lord Ram so much that ultimately the Lord would wish to save his face by making a compromise deal of some sort with Ravana, which would ensure that Lord Ram got back his wife Sita, and the demon king too survived. Did Vibhishan not want his brother to be killed? In this scenario, what would be the fate of Vibhishan? He hoped that Lord Ram would stand by his words of

accepting him unconditionally[#], and so he would take him back to his own kingdom of Ayodhya. {[#]Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44; and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 48.}

So therefore, Lord Ram wished to give Vibhishan the chance to prove himself, to show that he was honest when he had pledged his loyalty and faith in the Lord.

There is another spin to this episode: Lord Ram wished to give credit—or rather a ‘discredit’—for the slaying of Ravana to Vibhishan, for he would go down in history as a betrayer of his own clan, an ignominious appendage to someone’s character and a dark taint in reputation that would stick to him as long as he would live. Lord Ram had a subtle message for the world: that simply being, or claiming to be the Lord’s devotee, as Vibhishan surely did, would not absolve a person of the wrongs he had done.

This deep scar of betraying one’s family and brother, the guilt of treason and disloyalty towards one’s own country and race, the bad quality of selfishness that would lead Vibhishan to disclose the secret by which his own elder brother would be killed, for only when Ravana was out of the way would he get the throne of Lanka, stuck to him so fast down the ages that no one names a child born in the family by his name, as ‘Vibhishan’—though Lord Ram’s other devotees such as Hanuman, Angad etc. who had helped him in this epic war did lend their names to new-born babies down the path of history.

उमा काल मर जाकीं ईछा । सो प्रभु जन कर प्रीति परीछा ॥ ३ ॥

सुनु सरबग्य चराचर नायक । प्रनतपाल सुर मुनि सुखदायक ॥ ४ ॥

umā kāla mara jākīṁ īchā. sō prabhu jana kara prīti parīchā. 3.

sunu sarabagya carācara nāyaka. pranatapāla sura muni sukhadāyaka. 4.

[Lord Shiva said to his consort goddess Uma, who was listening to this fascinating story in rapt attention:-]

‘Oh Uma! The Lord whose mere wish can cause the end of Death itself, was testing the affection and vows of loyalty and allegiance that Vibhishan had proclaimed in his favour (when he had met Hanuman earlier, as well as at the time of seeking the Lord’s protection when he was kicked out by Ravana)¹. (3)

Vibhishan understood Lord Ram’s intention, and so he submitted: ‘Oh Lord who is all-knowing and omniscient (sarabagya), who is the Lord of both the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of this creation (carācara nāyaka), who is the protector of those who have surrendered before you (pranatapāla), and who is a bestower of happiness and joy to the gods and sages (sura muni sukhadāyaka). (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (a) Hanuman’s meeting with Vibhishan: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 7; (b) Vibhishan being kicked out by Ravana: (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41; and (iii) Doha no. 45.

To wit, Lord Ram was testing whether or not Vibhishan was sincere and honest in his proclamations of allegiance and devotion to Lord Ram, or did he have some other secret agenda in his mind. It would be clear now. The Lord wanted to ascertain if Vibhishan was a pretender, or whether he was truthful.]

नाभिकुण्ड पियूष बस याकें । नाथ जिअत रावनु बल ताकें ॥ ५ ॥
सुनत बिभीषन बचन कृपाला । हरषि गहे कर बान कराला ॥ ६ ॥

nābhikuṇḍa piyūṣa basa yākēṁ. nātha ji'ata rāvanu bala tākēṁ. 5.
sunata bibhīṣana bacana kṛpālā. haraṣi gahē kara bāna karālā. 6.

The nectar or the elixir that bestows life to him (Ravana) is stored in his navel. Oh Lord; it is on its strength that Ravana has managed to live (survive) for so long¹.’ (5)

Upon hearing these words of Vibhishan, the Lord who is merciful, gracious and kind (kṛpālā)², felt glad³ and lifted a fierce arrow in his hand. (6)

[Note—¹According to Yoga philosophy, the region of the navel is the location of the “Nabhi Chakra”, a center of energy that forms the base of life inside the body of a creature. It is also called the “Manipur Chakra”; it is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun’s solar energy that focuses on at this point.

Refer also to Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 53-54.

There are said to be five subtle energy centers in the body of a living being; they are called the ‘Chakras’, or circles of energy. Each of these Chakras is associated with one primary element of Nature, of which there are five in number, such as the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the sky elements, in ascending order of subtlety and descending order of grossness.

Now, let us briefly acquaint ourselves with these ‘Chakras’. (a) The lower part of the body has the ‘Muladhar Chakra’, or the root plexus where the ‘earth element’ is dominant. (b) Rising above, the next is the ‘Swadisthan Chakra’, or the sacrum region or the sacral plexus where water dominates. (c) The next is the ‘Nabhi Chakra’ located near the navel and the central part of the body; here the fire element plays a vital role. This Chakra, being the center of the fire element, is also called the solar plexus as it the sun which heats the world and keeps it alive by providing it with much needed energy. (d) The next higher energy center is called the ‘Hridaya Chakra’ or the heart plexus; it is here that the Atma lives. It represents the air element; it is so because the heart and the lungs are located in this region, and these organs help a creature to breathe and circulate air inside the body. (e) Going higher up we meet the ‘Vishudha Chakra’ or the throat plexus. Here the sound is produced as the upward moving wind rubs against the vocal cords. This represents the ether element, which is a subtler form of the air element itself. And finally, (f) we come to the Brahm-randhra Chakra. It is located in at the top of the head, and is so-named because the cosmic Consciousness enters the body of a living being through a split here, and it is from here that it would finally escape at the time of death.

Now, coming to our point with respect to Ravana and the way he would be finally killed, the Nabhi Chakra in his body was the ‘center of the fire element’ that

keeps the body warm, and its wind elements heated and active, which in turn makes the physical body perform all its deeds, externally as well as internally. It's like the boiler of a steel plant or a steam engine; if the boiler cools down then no steam is produced and the working of the machinery would stop.

This is why Ravana kept on living while this Nabhi Chakra managed to keep his wind elements heated and active; it also enabled Ravana to perform miraculous deeds of dare-devilry.

When his heads were cut, they grew back instantly; it meant that the wind element, known as the 'Pran' that kept his body active, could not escape by that way. Growing of a new head the instant the earlier one was cut-off kind of hermetically sealed the rupture the very moment it was created.

We shall read below, in verse nos. 1 and 4 that precede Doha no. 103 that when Lord Ram shot a final arrow at Ravana's navel, he had tottered and swooned violently before collapsing to the ground. This brought about his end—because while he was protected from death by cutting of heads as they would re-grow the moment they were cut, no such boon was available to him regarding the navel; there was no provision that any rupture made in his navel would be immediately sealed.

So therefore, while his Pran, the vital wind element that kept his body alive, could not leave through the path of the mouth as the head grew back instantly, it could leave his body through the ruptured navel when an arrow hit and pierced it, for there was no provision for sealing it instantaneously.

That understood, we come to the next vital point. Remember: The Nabhi Chakra is the center of the 'fire element' that heats the water and the wind elements present inside the body of a creature. The gases and the steam in the body of Ravana escaped with a violence blast when the seal of the navel was broken.

The 'abdomen', where the navel is located, is not hard like a boiler of an engine or the blast furnace of a steel mill, but rather it is softer, flexible and stretchable like a balloon filled with hot air. This is why we breathe; the muscles of the abdomen expand and contract to help us breathe.

Now visualize what would happen in practice if a hot air balloon is pricked by an arrow or any sharp instrument at one point on its side—as soon as a hole is made, the trapped hot air, which is already under intense pressure exerted on it from all the sides of the balloon as its rubber skin tries to shrink back to its original size after air is pumped inside it, would naturally escape out from the hole in the form of a jet of hot air; it would make a mighty hissing sound, or may escape with a fiery blast from this hole, depending upon the size of the aperture made.

Visualize another scene. What would happen if a hole is suddenly made in kettle full of boiling water or a cooker in which food is being cooked over an oven? Along with the jet of the escaping hot air, the contents of the kettle or the cooker would also escape.

And in which direction would this 'jet of hot air and boiling things go'? It would go in the same direction in which the hole is made; it's as simple and obvious as that. And anyone coming in the way, especially if he is not far away, would be struck violently with the blast of the hot air, and drenched with the hot liquid that is shot out along with it, leaving him scorched and dazed.

This is what exactly might have happened during the moments Ravana died. His 'Pran', i.e. his heated wind element that sustained life inside his body, suddenly escaped from the rupture made in his navel by the arrow shot by Lord Ram. It was exceptionally hot, because Ravana was agitated, angry and frantic, breathing heavily

and engaged in violent muscular activity as a fierce war was underway; it was no leisure time when the internal winds are cooler.

So therefore, the blast of air escaping from his gigantic body made huge sound as the abdomen suddenly collapsed; and this air was so hot that it appeared like a flame of fire leaping out of Ravana's colossus body. It escaped out in a fiery jet in the direction of Lord Ram, for the simple reason that the hole was made in the navel while Ravana was facing the Lord, and it was the only exit point of the body through which the hot air escaped. Naturally it gushed out in the straight direction where the Lord was standing, opposite Ravana,

The scene was so astoundingly amazing and never heard of earlier that for a moment Lord Ram stood with an open mouth, in awe and wonder. And so what happened? This hot and flaming air was inhaled by him—which the poets and bards who chronicled this Story depicted by saying “a brilliant shaft of light and energy representing Ravana's soul escaped from his body and entered the body of Lord Ram”. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

Ravana had been all the while shrieking and yelling at Lord Ram, and then suddenly there was a mighty blast as his heated wind element escaped from his navel. It was a deafening sound; and then suddenly everything fell quiet. This eerie moment and its preceding chaos has been depicted by the same poets and bards by saying “Ravana roared violently: where is Lord Ram whom I wish to defeat in battle” before he collapsed and fell to the ground. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 103.}

A question now arises: From where did this ‘Amrit’, or the elixir of life, come to be stored in the navel of Ravana? The answer is this: Ravana used to practice Yoga, and was an expert in it. During his practice, he used to perform certain Aasans (postures) which helped to rejuvenate his body and stir the reservoir of subtle energy present inside his body. Since the Nabhi Chakra is the center of solar energy, it was used to heat his body from the inside; it was virtually like the ‘power station’ of his body. When Lord Ram's arrow struck it, it got short-circuited like any electricity grid would, and this short-circuit blew out the fuse that kept his body energized, charged and active; which meant simply that he died due to this outage in electric current that kept his body and its internal organs, such as his heart, alive and active.

According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, Vibhuti Paad, verse nos. 29-33, when one practices Yoga then Amrit drips from one's tongue, gets sucked up into the Brahm-randhra, the upper-most part of the skull, from where it travels downwards and gets sucked up and stored at the bottom of the body around the navel. The heat of the navel keeps this Amrit from freezing, and this warm subtle source of energy, which can be likened to ‘honey’ stored by honey bees, forms the basis of keeping the body alive.

This is what must have actually happened in the case of Ravana. Vibhishan knew that his brother used to do regular Yoga practice, and what kind of Aasans he did. So he was the best person to know the key by which Ravana's seemingly inexhaustible source of energy could be neutralized.

²It seems absurd and incongruous to call Lord Ram “merciful and kind” especially when he is determined to kill Ravana. But the fact is that what externally seems to be ‘killing of Ravana’ was actually ‘liberating and delivering his soul from the trap of a demon body in which it was caught’. By committing so many sins, Ravana had unwillingly and unwittingly and unintentionally and inadvertently, created such a hard

shell around his soul—which is also known as the Atma that is inherently pure and holy, as well as consciousness that is the true self of all living beings, including Ravana—that it became impossible for this soul to break free from the hardened crust of sins symbolized by Ravana’s physical body in order to attain deliverance. Hence, in order to grant emancipation and salvation to this soul of Ravana, it became imperative to hit his body hard with such a forceful blow that it would rupture and enable the pure consciousness to escape from it. It was no easy task, because Ravana was no ordinary creature. Just like special diseases need specialized cure, Ravana too needed the Supreme Being to come and kill him so that his soul could be delivered.

To wit, Lord Ram was actually doing Ravana a favour by killing his gross mortal body covered by a thick crust of sins and evils so that his subtle Atma could be freed from this trap and find emancipation and salvation that would grant him eternal peace and beatitude. As the things turned out, this is actually what happened, for at the end Ravana’s glorious soul emerged from his body in a radiant shaft of light to merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram, which was effected when this brilliant light entered the body of the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

Surely then, it was a kind and merciful deed done by Lord Ram as it gave eternal peace and rest to Ravana’s soul, which would have otherwise continued to commit sins and suffer their consequences forever.

³So well; why did Lord Ram feel “glad”? The Lord felt happy that Vibhishan has stood true to his vows of loyalty and allegiance to him; that Vibhishan has reciprocated the Lord’s graciousness in accepting him unconditionally inspite of knowing that he was Ravana’s brother, and inspite of Sugriv, the king of the monkeys and the Lord’s chief advisor, advising the Lord not to accept him for he might be a spy. Say, what answer would the Lord have given to Sugriv and others who were against his accepting Vibhishan if the latter had not proved his integrity and loyalty at this crucial juncture of the war when his help was sought to vanquish Ravana? Surely it would have been embarrassing for the Lord if Vibhishan had double-crossed him now.]

असुभ होन लागे तब नाना । रोवहिं खर सृकाल बहु स्वाना ॥ ७ ॥
 बोलहिं खग जग आरति हेतू । प्रगट भए नभ जहँ तहँ केतू ॥ ८ ॥
 दस दिसि दाह होन अति लागा । भयउ परब बिनु रबि उपरागा ॥ ९ ॥
 मंदोदरि उर कंपति भारी । प्रतिमा स्रवहिं नयन मग बारी ॥ १० ॥

asubha hōna lāgē taba nānā. rōvahiṁ khara sṛkāla bahu svānā. 7.
 bōlahiṁ khaga jaga ārati hētū. pragaṭa bha'ē nabha jahaṁ tahaṁ kētū. 8.
 dasa disi dāha hōna ati lāgā. bhaya'u paraba binu rabi uparāgā. 9.
 mandōdari ura kampati bhārī. pratimā sravahiṁ nayana maga bārī. 10.

All sorts of bad signs and ill omens began to appear then¹. Large numbers of jackals, donkeys and dogs began howling mournfully. (7)

Birds that are regarded as inauspicious (such as crow, owls, vultures etc.) made their own horrifying sounds portending doom. Comets (indicating bad omen) suddenly appeared and streaked past in the sky here and there. (8)

There was an unnatural deathly glow and intense heat in all the ten directions of the world². [To wit, the sky became red and the temperature rose everywhere as if there was an upcoming deadly heat wave that would roast everything alive.] (9)

Mandodari's (Ravana's wife) heart trembled with great fear (at the prospect of a calamity striking her husband). Statues began shedding a lot of tears. (10)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86.

²The ten directions are: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

छं०. प्रतिमा रुदहिं पबिपात नभ अति बात बह डोलति मही । १ ।
 बरषहिं बलाहक रुधिर कच रज असुभ अति सक को कही ॥ २ ॥
 उतपात अमित बिलोकि नभ सुर बिकल बोलहिं जय जए । ३ ।
 सुर सभय जानि कृपाल रघुपति चाप सर जोरत भए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

pratimā rudahiṁ pabipāta nabha ati bāta baha ḍōlati mahī. 1.
 baraṣahiṁ balāhaka rudhira kaca raja asubha ati saka kō kahī. 2.
 utapāta amita bilōki nabha sura bikala bōlahiṁ jaya ja'ē. 3.
 sura sabhaya jāni kṛpāla raghupati cāpa sara jōrata bha'ē. 4.

Statues wept; lightening struck and thunder covered the sky; a fierce storm began raging; the earth shook; (Chanda line no. 1)

The clouds rained down blood, hairs and sand. Verily, there were so many ill signs that no one can fully enumerate them. (Chanda line no. 2)

Indeed, countless bad signs and inauspicious signals indicative of a grave calamity and disaster descending on the world prevailed everywhere. Seeing them, however, the gods cried out in unison "Victory; victory"¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

When the merciful Lord Ram observed that the gods were horrified, he assembled an array of arrows on his bow². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The gods, though terrified at these horrible signs, yet shouted 'victory', because they judged that inspite of initial horrors created by these evil signs they indicate that the end of Ravana was near, and Lord Ram would finally attain victory.

Hence, they welcomed these ill omens as being a good sign. One would not fail to observe the ways of this selfish world: what is ruin for one is a boon for another! Ravana's ruin was a welcome gift for the gods.

²Lord Ram would shoot thirty-one arrows almost simultaneously; ten would cut-off Ravana's ten heads, twenty arrows would sever his twenty arms, and the thirty-first arrow would hit his navel and dry up its nectar-of-life which had kept Ravana alive—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 herein below.]

दो०. खैंचि सरासन श्रवन लागि छाड़े सर एकतीस ।
रघुनायक सायक चले मानहुँ काल फनीस ॥ १०२ ॥

dōhā.

khaiñci sarāsana śravana lagi chārē sara ēkatīsa.
raghunāyaka sāyaka calē mānahuṁ kāla phanīsa. 102.

Lord Ram pulled the string of his bow right back upto his ears, and shot thirty-one arrows rapidly.

The fierce arrows of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) darted towards their target as if so many deadly serpents were flying towards their prey. (Doha no. 102)

चौ०. सायक एक नाभि सर सोषा । अपर लगे भुज सिर करि रोषा ॥ १ ॥
लै सिर बाहु चले नाराचा । सिर भुज हीन रुंड महि नाचा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sāyaka ēka nābhi sara sōṣā. apara lagē bhuja sira kari rōṣā. 1.
lai sira bāhu calē nārācā. sira bhuja hīna ruṇḍa mahi nācā. 2.

One of the (thirty-one) arrows dried up the source of the life-giving elixir stored in Ravana's navel¹; and the rest of the thirty arrows swiftly severed his ten heads and twenty arms. (1)

The severed heads and arms got stuck to the arrows that had pierced through them, and were carried away by the arrows as they continued to fly speedily ahead in the sky by the virtue of their momentum.

Meanwhile, the trunk of Ravana's body, from which the heads and arms were ripped away, remained agitated and active in the battle-field for some more time as it lurched and reeled madly in every direction (stepping to the right and the left, to the front and the backwards) giving the impression that it was enacting the steps of the last dance of death. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102, and a note appended to it.

It ought to be particularly noted here that Lord Ram had not shot any arrow at Ravana's heart. Why did the Lord avoid it? The answer to it is given by Trijata when she told Sita that the Lord desists from shooting an arrow at Ravana's heart as she is present there—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 12-13 that precede Doha no. 99. I have elaborately explained this aspect as a note appended to these verses.

Besides what Trijata said, there is another aspect to it. The Lord did not hit the heart because Ravana's Atma, his pure conscious soul, lived there. Lord Ram had come to provide deliverance to this soul, which is a holy and pure entity as it is pure consciousness; this soul or Atma of Ravana was suffering intensely because it was trapped inside the gross body of a demon. Since the main objective of Lord Ram was to grant liberation and deliverance to Ravana's soul, to provide him with emancipation and salvation, he would not harm this soul by hitting it with an arrow.

Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince who was fighting his enemy to rescue his kidnapped wife; he was the Supreme Being who wished to grant rest and peace to the tormented soul of a sinful creature represented by Ravana. The Lord is forgiving and merciful; he is not vengeful and unkind. He had come to liberate Ravana's soul and deliver it from its sufferings, he had come to grant the unfortunate creature known as Ravana with the spiritual benefits of emancipation and salvation by killing his gross body to enable the trapped soul to make its escape and attain peace; the Lord had not come to send it to hell. This is a crucial factor which must always be kept in mind to judge and analyze all the events of the Story of the Ramayan.

So the Lord chose to avoid the heart and select an alternative method to kill Ravana—and it was by hitting his body in the navel to enable his Pran to escape. Once the Pran escaped, there was no question of Ravana surviving any longer in his physical form. But his 'soul' survived, because the soul is eternal and imperishable. Yet the Lord wished to make certain that the soul of Ravana gets its final rest, and it may not suffer any longer in the absence of a permanent place to rest, for if it is not given its final rest then it would enter any other body and take a rebirth to become a demon once again.

That is why Lord Ram would make it so happen that Ravana's soul emerged from his body and entered the body of Lord Ram: a remarkable development indeed. We shall read more about it in verse no. 9 herein below.

The way Ravana was finally killed has been narrated differently in "Ram Charit Manas" of Tulsidas, and "Adhyatma Ramayan" of Veda Vyas. We read in Adhyatma Ramayan that Matli—the charioteer of Lord Ram's chariot, who was sent by the gods to help the Lord in the war—had advised the Lord that Ravana would be killed only by shooting an arrow at his heart. On hearing this advice, the Lord had shot an arrow directly at Ravana's heart, bringing about his end. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 61-72.}

Though seemingly contradicting each other, the fact is that both the narratives are correct—for it is indeed possible that Lord Ram has shot arrows aimed at Ravana's heart as well as his navel to ensure that all precautions are taken to make sure that Ravana is certainly slayed, for the Lord did not want to take any further risk of playing games with him as time was running out, and already all other methods had miserably failed to the demon's life.

The apparent dichotomy in the actual way how Ravana was finally slayed appears to be caused due to the difference in the way the attention of the two chroniclers of the Story—i.e. Tulsidas and Veda Vyas—was focused. To wit, Tulsidas' attention was focused on what Vibhishan had advised, i.e. he documented about the arrow that hit Ravana in his navel, while Veda Vyas's attention was on Ravana's heart where Matli said Lord Ram ought to shoot the arrow, and consequently he attributed Ravana's death to this arrow.

The fact is a combination of both—Lord Ram shooting arrows simultaneously at Ravana's heart and navel to ensure his death; for time was running out and the Lord did now wish to let any means escape to bring about Ravana's end. This was because

all other means had failed miserably, and when two different methods were advised for Ravana's death—one by Vibhishan who said that the Lord ought to shoot an arrow at Ravana's navel, and by Matli who said that the arrow ought to be aimed at Ravana's heart—the Lord determined that it would be wise to do both at the same instant; which was to shoot arrows aimed both at Ravana's heart as well as his navel simultaneously.

This was done almost at the same time, so quickly that it could not be separately judged which arrow caused the actual death of Ravana. To wit, from the practical point of view, both the versions of how Ravana was killed are true: the primary objective of bringing about the end of the demon king was achieved, and whether it was achieved by the arrow that hit his heart or by the one that hit his navel is only of secondary or peripheral importance.

This particular instance where we read about two apparently different ways as to how Ravana was finally slayed, and both the versions are from authentic sources, viz. *Adhyatma Ramayan* of the illustrious sage Veda Vyas, and *Ram Charit Manas* of the renowned saint-poet Tulsidas, both equally revered and equally authoritative, explains why I, the author of the present Book which my esteemed readers have now in their hands and are currently reading, chose to cite more than one version of this classic Story of Lord Ram, universally known as the 'Ramayana' but given a specific name by the narrator of a particular version, to pen my own narrative—as this approach helps one to get a comprehensive and a wide-angled understanding of the entire Story in general, and any given episode of it in particular.

This therefore is the reason why I have quoted in full two well-respected, authoritative and acclaimed versions of the Ramayana, viz. 'Ram Charit Manas' and 'Adhyatma Ramayan'. Besides these two, I have also included, as the reader must have noticed by now, two other magnificent narratives of Tulsidas, viz. 'Geetawali Ramayan' and 'Kavitawali Ramayan'. It is because these two latter classical Books describe selected episodes of the Story in fine detail, pausing every now and then to look at it from different angles in a slow-motion mode, as compared to the other two versions of the same Story (i.e. *Ram Charit Manas* and *Adhyatma Ramayan*) which are continuous in their narrative of the events in a chronological fashion, without pausing to focus attention on any given episode.]

धरनि धसइ धर धाव प्रचंडा । तब सर हति प्रभु कृत दुइ खंडा ॥ ३ ॥

गर्जेउ मरत घोर रव भारी । कहाँ रामु रन हतौं पचारी ॥ ४ ॥

dharani dhasa'i dhara dhāva pracaṇḍā. taba sara hati prabhu kṛta du'i khaṇḍā. 3.

garjē'u marata ghōra rava bhārī. kahāṁ rāmu rana hataurṇ pacārī. 4.

The earth started caving in with the force of the heavy steps with which his trunk stomped and tottered on the ground, moving in a bewildered state of confusion (before collapsing).

Lord Ram then shot another fierce arrow that slammed into the trunk and cut it into two halves¹. (3)

At the time of his death, he (Ravana) thundered with a terrible roar², 'Where is Lord Ram that I may challenge and slay him in battle³.' (4)

[Note—¹The death of Ravana reminds one of the way Kumbhakaran was killed and his colossal body collapsed in the battle-field, which was almost in the same way as it happened with Ravana. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71.}]

²A very remarkable thing has happened here. Remember that Ravana's heads were already cut-off, so how come he 'roared and thundered' without his mouths its tongues?

Well, the answer is this: The head of any living being, along with its mouth and tongue, is like any other organ of the creature's gross physical body, such as the hands and legs, the eye, the nose and the skin. These individual parts have no independent life of their own; they remain active and give the impression of being alive only as long as the creature lives and is conscious of his surroundings, for as soon as it 'dies' or becomes 'senseless', these same organs become 'lifeless' or 'senseless'.

That means that there is some other factor that is called 'life' present inside the body of a living being, for surely it is not the gross organs of this body as they do not have any life of their own. This independent entity that infuses 'life' in the otherwise inane and lifeless gross body is called the "Pran", the life-giving force present inside the body, which makes a body 'living' and differentiates it from a 'dead body'. According to the Upanishads, this 'Pran' factor is an aspect of the Wind Element that drives the body, keeps it active, and helps it to carry out all its different functions, both externally and internally. When a creature dies, this Pran, that is present inside the gross body, escapes from it to merge with the open 'air' outside, to become one with it.

It is like the case of air present inside and outside of an earthen pitcher. As long as the pitcher is there, we artificially distinguish the air within and without it by using the body of the pitcher as the demarcation line. When the pitcher is broken, the air within merges with the air outside seamlessly, without any ado.

Now, take another example. Suppose there is an air-filled balloon. If its air is allowed to escape slowly it won't make any sound, but if a hole is pricked in it with a needle, then what happens? It 'bursts with a loud bang', as the wind trapped inside suddenly meets the wind outside, and there is a clash of two opposite pressures.

This is what happened in the case of Ravana too. The life-giving wind element, called the Pran that was present inside his body, suddenly escaped when the arrow pierced his navel, like a pin pricking a hole in a balloon. This caused a snapping sound, but it was no ordinary sound and no ordinary wind. Ravana had a colossus body, so the quantity of wind must have been huge, and besides it the wind was agitated by the heat of war. So it must have escaped with a mighty sound, like a bomb exploding.

Then there is one other factor: There are two types of sounds, one which is heard by the ear, and the one which isn't. The first type of sound is called 'Baikhari', and the other is called 'Pashyanti'. For example, when we talk with each other, we use the 'Baikhari' form of sound as our ears can hear what we speak; but the sound that is transmitted by radio stations or mobile towers is called 'Pashyanti' as our ears can't hear it directly. The Baikhari form of sound is grosser, while the Pashyanti form is subtler by nature. Living beings such as us humans can hear the Baikhari words, while the gods can hear the Pashyanti words.

But, 'who' is that entity that actually 'speaks'? Is it the gross body or even its life-giving Pran? No, neither of them. The entity that actually speaks is the living being, and this living being is neither the body nor the Pran; it is an independent entity known as the 'self', which is its 'Atma'. What is this Atma? It is the 'pure consciousness' that lives inside the gross body of a creature; it is also known as the 'soul'. This Atma is a sublime, ethereal and a subtlest form of element that exists, and it is the entity that is the 'true self and the true identity' of any living being. If there is no Atma or consciousness present in the body, then the mere presence of the 'wind element' won't make a body alive. A balloon also has a wind inside it, it hops and moves around, it can fly and make a sound when rubbed, but not even a mad man would call it a 'living being'.

To wit, the Atma and the Pran, both of them invisible and subtle elements, act together in a tango to make what is known as a living being. The Pran is a manifestation of the dynamic energy of the Atma that makes a creature a living being; the 'Atma' is the Master that instructs the 'Pran', which in turn drives the 'body' towards the creature's desired destination.

In the case of Ravana, his Pran escaped first, and it made a loud sound while escaping from his gross body because it is a form of wind. After the Pran left the gross body, the Atma too left it. So then, what happened to this Atma? We shall read about it in verse no. 9 herein below.

³When Marich, the demon who had been forced by Ravana to assume the form of a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted, had died when hit by the arrow shot by Lord Ram, he too had called out aloud first the name of Laxman and then that of Lord Ram. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 27.}

Similarly, when Meghanad had died, he too had cried aloud the names of Laxman and Lord Ram. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 76 along with Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes it.}]

डोली भूमि गिरत दसकंधर । छुभित सिंधु सरि दिग्गज भूधर ॥ ५ ॥
धरनि परेउ द्वौ खंड बड़ाई । चापि भालु मर्कट समुदाई ॥ ६ ॥

ḍōlī bhūmi girata dasakandhara. chubhita sindhu sari diggaja bhūdharma. 5.
dharani parē'u dvau khaṇḍa baṛhāī. cāpi bhālu markṭa samudāī. 6.

When Ravana, the one with ten shoulders (dasakandhara), finally fell down on the ground with a mighty thud, the earth shook, the ocean developed huge splashing waves, the rivers had violent currents, while the Diggas (the elephants who are supposed to support the earth from its corners) turned and shifted in their positions, and the mountains trembled too due to the excessive pressure and jolting vibrations caused by the falling of Ravana's huge body. (5)

The two halves of his colossus body collapsed on the ground, and while doing so it crushed underneath large numbers of monkeys and bears¹. (6)

[Note—¹This scene is reminiscent of Kumbhakaran dying as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 71.]

मंदोदरि आगें भुज सीसा । धरि सर चले जहाँ जगदीसा ॥ ७ ॥
 प्रबिसे सब निषंग महु जाई । देखि सुरन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाई ॥ ८ ॥

mandōdari āgēm̐ bhuja sīsā. dhari sara calē jahām̐ jagadīsā. 7.
 prabisē saba niṣaṅga mahu jā'ī. dēkhi suranha dundubhīm̐ bajā'ī. 8.

The arrows put (or rather dropped) the severed heads and arms of Ravana at the place where Mandodari (his queen) was (i.e. inside Ravana's palace)¹; and then these arrows went back to Lord Ram, the Lord of the world (jagadīsā). (7)

These arrows returned and entered the Lord's quiver², seeing which the gods played their musical drums in the heaven³. (8)

[Note—¹When Kumbhakaran was killed, his head flew and fell down in the front of Ravana, though it is not clearly mentioned during the narration as to how it was carried there—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 71.

Lord Ram has been universally praised as being gracious and magnanimous. He wished to give Ravana an honourable death, and therefore would not cause anything to happen that would undermine the dignity and respect of Ravana's glorious soul, his stature as a great king of the demon race, as well as of being a valiant warrior the like of which the world had never seen heretofore, and would never see hereafter. If his heads would have fallen to the ground in the battle-field, there were chances that jackals, dogs, hyenas, vultures and other flesh eating birds and animals would pounce on them at once, which would be insulting to Ravana's memory. Lord Ram did not wish that to happen.

Remember: Lord Ram himself was a great king of a great kingdom of Ayodhya, and so he was aware of the sort of treatment that ought to be given to another king of great stature. A gallant warrior fights his adversary with all energy and fury, but once the latter falls or surrenders, the former would not do anything to cause insult to his dead body, or to the vanquished opponent, as the case may be.

²One would not fail to marvel at the weapon technology known during those days. The arrows were like reusable missiles; they hit their targets with precision and then came back to the shooter. A similar scene of the arrows coming back to Lord Ram is witnessed elsewhere in the war also: for instance, we read the same thing happening at the time when Kumbhakaran was slayed—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 68.

³The gods were now certain that Ravana was dead, because his body collapsed and no newer heads and arms grew again on it. So they celebrated.]

तासु तेज समान प्रभु आनन । हरषे देखि संभु चतुरानन ॥ ९ ॥
 जय जय धुनि पूरी ब्रह्मंडा । जय रघुबीर प्रबल भुजदंडा ॥ १० ॥
 बरषहिं सुमन देव मुनि बृंदा । जय कृपाल जय जयति मुकुंदा ॥ ११ ॥

tāsu tēja samāna prabhu ānana. haraṣē dēkhi sambhu caturānana. 9.
 jaya jaya dhuni pūrī brahmaṇḍā. jaya raghubīra prabala bhujadaṇḍā. 10.
 baraṣahim sumana dēva muni bṛndā. jaya kṛpāla jaya jayati mukundā. 611.

His (Ravana's) 'Tej' (i.e. his pure consciousness, his true self, his energy of life) escaped from his gross body and emerged in the form of a brilliant shaft of light that went straight to Lord Ram and entered him (through the Lord's mouth or nostrils)¹.

When Lord Shiva and the four-headed Creator (Brahma) observed it, they felt very glad². (9)

A loud chorus of 'Victory, victory' resonated throughout the universe. Everyone applauded Lord Ram and proclaimed his glory by saying: 'Gory and Victory to Lord Ram, who has stupendous valour and astounding powers in his two arms.' (10)

The gods and the sages (who were watching the war from their respective stations in the sky) showered a rain of flowers, repeatedly praising Lord Ram: 'Glory to the merciful Lord; victory to him who grants liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul (mukundā)³' (11)

[Note—¹The Soul of a living being is pure consciousness. It is glorious and self-illuminated with the light of knowledge, called being enlightened. The individual creature's soul is an image of the supreme Soul of this creation; the former is called the 'Atma', while the latter is called the 'Parmatma'.

It is just like the case of a pot filled with water of the ocean. The water inside the pot is the Atma of an individual; the pot itself is like the gross body of that individual; the ocean is the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma as it consists of an endless source of water from which countless pots can be filled without exhausting its supply of water, which in this metaphor is the Supreme Atma, the primary Atma or the cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout this creation.

So therefore, when Ravana died, his own Atma emerged from his gross body to enter the body of Lord Ram who was the Supreme Being, the Parmatma, to merge and become one with the Supreme Atma present inside the body of Lord Ram just like the case when the water-pot breaks and its content (water) falls back into the ocean, to become one and inseparable with the latter.

This was truly a great honour that Lord Ram bestowed upon Ravana, for he had granted Ravana's soul permanent peace by accepting it within his own Self. That is why these two gods, Shiva and Brahma, rejoiced.

From the spiritual perspective, and in accordance with the philosophy as enunciated in and espoused by the Upanishads, the best destination for the Atma, or the soul of the individual creature, is its merger with the cosmic Atma, the Supreme Atma, or the cosmic Soul, as it grants the individual creature eternal rest and peace; it is the ultimate and the final destination of the Atma; it is that destiny that grants eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity. It is this destination that was granted to Ravana's Atma, for it left his gross body that was physically in the form of a demon, to enter the holy body of Lord Ram who was none but the Supreme Being himself, to become one with the latter.

By accepting Ravana's soul within his own self, Lord Ram clearly signaled to the world that he actually had no ill-will or anger against him, for whatever he did by way of waging a fierce war with the apparent objective of killing Ravana was merely

a show, for the Lord's actual intention was to grant deliverance to Ravana and peace to his soul.

Heaven is not the ultimate destination for a soul, just like hell which does not mean eternal condemnation. These two, heaven or hell, are only transitory stations where the soul would reside for sometimes before it steps onto the next phase in its journey. It stays in heaven to enjoy the rewards of its meritorious deeds done in its previous life, and in hell to undergo punishment for its mischief. How long the soul stays in either heaven or hell depends upon the quantum of its reward or punishment respectively. So therefore, when the reward or the punishment is done with, the soul is bound to move on, either back to this mortal world to take a rebirth, or to move higher to attain Moksha, or the state of eternity, the state of permanent bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity. This is attained when the 'individual soul' loses its individuality and dissolves itself into the 'cosmic Soul' to become one with the latter.

Since the soul, or the Atma of an individual, is pure consciousness, it can be said that true Moksha is when the individual's consciousness merges with the cosmic Consciousness. In our present case, it is depicted in Ravana's soul merging with the cosmic Soul represented by Lord Ram.

Verily, the way Ravana died fulfilled his desire to attain eternal peace and beatitude for which he was so eager. For remember, he knew very well that there is no way he can attain this exalted destiny on his own account because of the quantum of sins that he had done throughout his life, not realizing what the consequences would be for him in the long run at the time when he was recklessly doing mischief; and by the time he realized what horrors he had created for his own self, it was too late. So he decided that the only way out for him was to continue with his way of life, for it was too late to make amends and change his habits, and patiently wait for the time when the merciful and compassionate Supreme Being, reading the innermost thoughts of his heart that yearned for deliverance and emancipation, would decide to fulfill his wishes by coming himself to free his Atma, and the only way it can be done was to break the hardened shell in which the Atma was trapped.

And what was this hardened shell that trapped Ravana's Atma? It was his demonic body which had become so thick and stiff with layers and layers of accumulated sins and evil deeds done over time that it only could be broken by someone skilled in it, and not by ordinary means. This is what had happened in reality in this war, and this is why Lord Ram has been praised as being 'merciful, compassionate, kind, gracious, magnanimous and benevolent' as he had granted a sinful creature the grand reward of spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation inspite of knowing that the creature, in this case Ravana, had been to most sinful and disgraceful fellow in his creation.

Come to think of it—Lord Ram was so gracious, magnanimous and forgiving that he granted deliverance to the souls of all the demon warriors, and not Ravana alone. But to honour Ravana and treat him with dignity befitting his stature as the king of the demon race, the Lord granted him a special seat alongside his own self by accepting his soul within himself. Even the gods had appreciated this fact that all the demons had been granted emancipation and salvation by Lord Ram, and that Ravana was shown a special privilege that even great sages would envy. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

We can therefore safely conclude that inspite of all the ignominy and infamy that Ravana got, after all his soul was as holy and pure as it should have been, and not sinful and evil as it was made out to be by the external actions and deeds that his demonic body was engaged in doing, for otherwise Lord Ram would never have

honoured him by giving his soul a place within his own self—which is like a great king welcoming another great king and showing the latter great honour by making the guest king sit by his side on his own throne! What more can be said in favour of and in honour of Ravana?

²When Ravana's soul entered Lord Ram's body, Lords Brahma and Shiva felt happy. This is because Ravana had done tough Tapasya and got boons from Brahma, and he also was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Therefore they both felt happy that their devotee has been given Sayujya Moksha- ultimate Mukti by Lord Rama.

³The fact that Lord Ram granted deliverance and emancipation to Ravana's soul, instead of condemning him to hell for his sins, and inspite of knowing that he was the one who had kidnapped his wife Sita, was noted by all the assembled gods and sages, who blessed and praised the Lord for his gracious and merciful nature as well as for this glorious and noble deed of his.

Ravana—whom the world always took to be an embodiment of sins and evil—was indeed singularly fortunate and very blessed soul to have attained such an exalted death because the Supreme Being had himself come to his doorstep to grant him eternal liberation and deliverance, to bless him with emancipation and salvation.

The fact that Ravana's soul or Atma was accepted by Lord Ram and granted a place within himself proves how much the Lord respected the purity and holiness of his soul. Forsooth and without any gainsay, verily, Lord Ram realized that the Ravana whom the world so much loathed and reviled was actually his gross physical body, and not his Atma which was his 'true self', the Atma which was as holy and pure as it ought to be. And therefore, the just and kind and all-knowing Supreme Lord of the world, who judges each individual very minutely, by taking everything and every aspect into consideration before passing a judgment against or in favour of anyone, decided that Ravana does not deserve to be condemned to eternal hell to suffer.

The Lord determined that whatever Ravana he had done was done as a 'demon', and the word 'demon' refers to his gross physical body but not definitely to his Atma, and this physical body was made to give its due penalty by being sacrificed in the war, for it was mutilated and decapitated in the final hours of the war before being killed. This was a sufficient sacrifice for Ravana, and once it was offered his soul had the right to redemption.

The question arises: Why did Lord Ram accept Ravana's soul within his own self? The answer is this: (i) To show the world that the Lord was exceptionally forgiving, merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind, understanding, magnanimous and benevolent so much so that he is ready to go to any extent to welcome anyone who wishes to come to him, overlooking all other things that would normally hinder such warm welcome. (ii) To show the world that the Lord had no personal ill-will against Ravana, and was merely punishing him for his misdeeds. (iii) To tell the world that a wise, just and enlightened judge is one who applies intelligence and always looks deeper before passing a judgment for or against anyone, for oftentimes what meets the eye is very deceptive—as was clearly the case with Ravana, for the world treated him as a vile person, whereas his 'true self', his Atma, was as holy and pure as it ought to be, and it was for this reason that Lord Ram had no second thoughts in accepting Ravana's Atma within his own self. (iv) To give a cue to the world as to why valiant warriors who prefer to die fighting their adversaries in the battle-field are said to go to heaven—because by dying they would have made the ultimate sacrifice, and once a

self-sacrifice is made the soul has the rightful claim to deliverance and eternal peace, which must be granted to it.

There is another reason also—Ravana was so loathed and feared by the Gods that they would never give his soul permission to ascend to heaven; so going to the heaven was ruled out. As for going to hell for his sins, that was also not possible for Ravana because the lord of hell, i.e. Yam, too hated and feared him as much as his brethren in the heaven. To wit, both the Gods in heaven and Yam in hell refused to accept Ravana. So Lord Ram thought: “Doesn’t matter; I will grant Ravana a place where no one can object, for it is my own sanctuary. I have made him pay for his misdeeds, so now it is obligatory for me to give his soul a place to abide. If the Gods and Yam won’t accept him, well and good; I myself would accept him! And no one can say anything as to this abode for Ravana’s soul, because I have a right to grant admission to anyone in my personal chambers.” Say, how gracious and loving Lord Sri Ram, our Lord, is, indeed!]

छं०. जय कृपा कंद मुकुंद द्वंद हरन सरन सुखप्रद प्रभो । १ ।
 खल दल बिदारन परम कारन कारुणीक सदा बिभो ॥ २ ॥
 सुर सुमन बरषहिं हरष संकुल बाज दुंदुभि गहगही । ३ ।
 संग्राम अंगन राम अंग अनंग बहु सोभा लही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaya kṛpā kanda mukunda dvanda harana sarana sukhaprada prabhō. 1.
 khala dala bidārana parama kārana kārunīka sadā bibhō. 2.
 sura sumana baraṣahim haraṣa saṅkula bāja dundubhi gahagahī. 3.
 saṅgrāma aṅgana rāma aṅga anaṅga bahu sōbhā lahī. 4.

The gods and sages lavishly honoured and praised Lord Ram, praying as follows: ‘Glory to Lord Ram who is an embodiment of mercy, kindness and compassion (kṛpā kanda), who is a bestower of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature (mukunda), who is a remover or dispeller of all confusions, doubts and perplexities (dvanda harana), who grants happiness and joy to those who seek refuge in his holy feet (sarana sukhaprada) --- (Chanda line no. 1)

---Who is an eliminator of hordes of wicked and evil creatures (khala dala bidārana), who is the primary cause of everything coming into being (“parama kārana kārunīka”, as he is Brahm, the Supreme Being who has created this world), who is eternal and absolute (sadā), and who is the almighty Lord of this creation (bibhō).’ (Chanda line no. 2)

Praising Lord Ram in this way, and overwhelmed with gratitude and joy, all the gods showered a rain of flowers upon him from the sky; they simultaneously played their kettle-drums to celebrate the occasion. (Chanda line no. 3)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram looked so handsome, beauteous and charming in the battle-field as if he was an embodiment of millions of Kamdeo, the god of beauty and charm. (Chanda line no. 4)

सिर जटा मुकुट प्रसून बिच बिच अति मनोहर राजहीं । ५ ।
 जनु नीलगिरि पर तड़ित पटल समेत उडुगन भ्राजहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 भुजदंड सर कोदंड फेरत रुधिर कन तन अति बने । ७ ।
 जनु रायमुनीं तमाल पर बैठीं बिपुल सुख आपने ॥ ८ ॥

sira jaṭā mukuṭa prasūna bica bica ati manōhara rājahīm. 5.
 janu nīlagiri para taḍita paṭala samēta uḍugana bhrājahīm. 6.
 bhujadaṇḍa sara kōdaṇḍa phērata rudhira kana tana ati banē. 7.
 janu rāyamunīm tamāla para baiṭhīm bipula sukha āpanē. 8.

[These verses describe the physical beauty of Lord Ram.]

The Lord looked bewitchingly charming with a crown of matted hairs on his head (sira jaṭā mukuṭa) in which flowers were tucked here and there (prasūna bica bica)¹. (Chanda line no. 5)

The sight reminded one of the ‘Blue Mountain’ (nīlagiri) over which lightening dazzled in the sky (taḍita paṭala) along with the stars that twinkled here and there as soon as they could peep thorough the gap in the clouds (samēta uḍugana)². (Chanda line no. 6)

The Lord was moving his hands over his bow and arrows (bhujadaṇḍa sara kōdaṇḍa phērata)³. Drops of blood that were sprinkled over his body too added to the beauty of his form (rudhira kana tana ati banē)⁴. (Chanda line no. 7)

This fascinating sight was like so many birds of red colour sitting here and there on a dark catechu plant⁵. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹At the time of leaving for the battle-field, we have already read that Lord Ram had been so relaxed that he had spent some time to tuck in flowers in the lock of his hairs on his head—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 86.

²In this imagery, the crown of matted hairs on Lord Ram’s head is like the blue mountain because of his dark complexion, the ear rings that shine as he moves his head is the dazzle of lightening, and the flowers tucked in the layers of hairs are the many stars that are seen in the sky.

³This line can also be read as “Lord Ram was turning or moving the bow and arrows in his two hands.”

⁴It was a battle-field, and not a royal court. A warrior who has just a while ago vanquished his enemy in a bloody duel is bound to be splattered with blood, and not sprinkled with scented water. Everything has its proper place where it finds its glory; while blood would be at odds in the ceremonial environment of pomp and pageantry of a royal court, it fits in perfectly well in the background of a battle-field.

⁵Here, the dark complexioned body of Lord Ram is compared to the catechu plant, and the drops of blood on his body to the bird with red feathers.]

दो०. कृपादृष्टि करि बृष्टि प्रभु अभय किए सुर बृंद ।
भालु कीस सब हरषे जय सुख धाम मुकुंद ॥ १०३ ॥

dōhā.

krpādr̥ṣṭi kari br̥ṣṭi prabhu abhaya ki'ē sura br̥nda.
bhālu kīsa saba haraṣē jaya sukha dhāma mukunda. 103.

Lord Ram glanced gracefully at the gods as if he was showering his blessing of fearlessness upon all of them.

All the monkeys and bears too felt exhilarated, applauding the Lord and saying: 'Glory to the Lord, Victory to you who is an embodiment of happiness, and a provider of joy and freedom from fears to others'. (Doha no. 103)

[Note—This is the 8th day that marks the end of the Epic War of Lanka. Now let us quickly recapitulate the verses of Ram Charit Manas that help us to trace the progress of the war and count the number of days it lasted.]

Chronology of the War of Lanka:

1st day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48.

2nd day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 55.

3rd day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72.

4th day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75. {Meghanad fights during the day and does a fire sacrifice in the night.}

5th day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78. {Meghanad killed by Laxman.}

6th day of war—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 84. {Ravana enters the battle field; he performs a fire sacrifice in the evening.}

7th day of the war—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 85—to Doha no. 98.

The intervening night of the 7th and 8th day of the war—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 100.

8th day of the war (Ravana's death)—RCM, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 100—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

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Section 18.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 9, verse no. 59—to Canto 11, verse nos. 1-88.

Before proceeding further and reading what happened after Ravana was dead, let us pause for a little while to read how sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan describes the events that culminated in Ravana's death. These are narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, from Canto 9, verse no. 59—to Canto 11, verse no. 88.

Section 18.2.1: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 59-68:-

मेघनादं हतं श्रुत्वा लक्ष्मणेन महाबलम् ।
रावणः पतितो भूमौ मूर्च्छितः पुनरुत्थितः ।
विललापातिदीनात्मा पुत्रशोकेन रावणः ॥ ५९॥

meghanādaṃ hataṃ śrutvā lakṣmaṇena mahābalaṃ ।
rāvaṇaḥ patito bhumau mūrccitaḥ punarutthitaḥ ।
vilalāpātīdīnātmā putraśokena rāvaṇaḥ ॥ 59॥

Hearing that the most brave, strong and courageous Meghnad has been killed by Laxman, Ravana fainted and fell on the ground. When he regained his consciousness, he lamented, mourned and wailed woefully, grieving gravely for his dead son (59).

पुत्रस्य गुणकर्माणि संस्मरन् पर्यदेवयत् ।
अद्य देवगणाः सर्वे लोकपाला महर्षयः ॥ ६०॥
हतमिन्द्रजितं ज्ञात्वा सुखं स्वप्स्यन्ति निर्भयाः ।
इत्यादि बहुशः पुत्रलालसो विललाप ह ॥ ६१॥
ततः परमसङ्कुद्धो रावणो राक्षसाधिपः ।
उवाच राक्षसान् सर्वान्निनाशयिषुराहवे ॥ ६२॥

putrasya guṇakarmāṇi saṁsmaran paryadevayat ।
 adya devagaṇāḥ sarve lokapālā maharṣayaḥ ॥ 60॥
 hatamindrajitam jñātvā sukhaṁ svapsyanti nirbhayāḥ ।
 ityādi bahuśaḥ putralālaso vilalāpa ha ॥ 61॥
 tataḥ paramasaṅkruddho rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
 uvāca rākṣasān sarvānnināśayiṣurāhave ॥ 62॥

60-62. Recalling the great qualities, the unique characters, the rare virtues and the valiant deeds of his son, Ravana began grieving and mourning a lot. 'Today, all the Gods, Lokpals (custodians of the Lokas or the various worlds) and great sages and hermits (60) shall sleep happily and fearlessly knowing that Indrajeet (my son) has been killed'—in this sarcastic manner, he lamented for his son in various ways, overwhelmed as he was by affection for his late son (61).

Thence, after sometimes, the king of demons, Ravana, recovered himself; he became extremely furious with anger and indignation. He discussed with all his ministers how to destroy the enemy in the war (62).

स पुत्रवधसन्तप्तः शूरः क्रोधवशं गतः ।
 संवीक्ष्य रावणो बुद्ध्या हन्तुं सीतां प्रदुद्रुवे ॥ ६३॥
 खड्गपाणिमथायान्तं क्रुद्धं दृष्ट्वा दशाननम् ।
 राक्षसीमध्यगा सीता भयशोकाकुलाभवत् ॥ ६४॥

sa putravadhasantaptaḥ śūraḥ krodhavaśaṁ gataḥ ।
 saṁvīkṣya rāvaṇo buddhyā hantum sītāṁ pradudruve ॥ 63॥
 khaḍgapāṇimathāyāntaṁ kruddhaṁ drṣṭvā daśānanam ।
 rākṣasīmadhyagā sītā bhayaśokākulābhavat ॥ 64॥

63-64. Then the brave and courageous Ravana, being overwhelmed by remorse and grief at the death of his son, thought of something, and then he angrily rushed to kill Sita¹ (63).

Seeing the 10-headed demon rushing wrathfully and full of vengeance towards herself with a sword drawn in his hands, Sita—who was sitting surrounded by demonesses—became terrified by fear (64).

[Note—¹What did Ravana suddenly think that made him spring up and dash for Sita like a mad man? He thought for a while and came to the conclusion that it was she who was the cause of this war in which his dear son Meghnad was killed. This thought filled him with a burning desire to kill her, to avenge his son's death, for he concluded that even if his enemy wins the war and enters Lanka as a conqueror, he will find the trophy, for which all this havoc was perpetrated, gone.

Ravana decided that he will never let his enemy win hands down; and if nothing else then at least he would ensure that he fails to get back Sita for whom he had waged this destructive war.

So the mere thought that it was Sita who was responsible for all the disaster and the ruin that had befallen on the demon race, and the desire to defeat his enemy by default, filled him with wrathful vengeance against her; and in order to vent his ire,

he madly dashed to her, with all the ferocity at his command and the objective of killing her.]

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे तस्य सचिवो बुद्धिमान् शुचिः ।
 सुपाश्वो नाम मेधावी रावणं वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ ६५॥
 ननु नाम दशग्रीव साक्षाद्वैश्रवणानुजः ।
 वेदविद्याव्रतस्नातः स्वकर्मपरिनिष्ठितः ॥ ६६॥

etasminnantare tasya sacivo buddhimān śuciḥ ।
 supārśvo nāma medhāvī rāvaṇaṁ vākyamabravīt ॥ 65॥
 nanu nāma daśagrīva sākṣādvaiśravaṇānujaḥ ।
 vedavidyāvratasnātaḥ svakarmapariniṣṭhitaḥ ॥ 66॥

65-66. Just at that time, one of his ministers named Supaarshava, who was intelligent, wise, pure-hearted and scholarly, intervened and said (65), 'Oh the Lord with ten necks (daśagrīva)! What is this? What are you doing? You are a younger brother of Kuber, the son of the illustrious sage Visrawa. You are an expert in the tenets of the Vedas, and you diligently observe all the rules and regulations prescribed by them—such as bathing at the end of sacrifices etc. (to purify yourself), observing fast, and in general doing all other such things that are ordained by the scriptures for a person of your stature and birth¹. (66)

[Note—¹To wit, you diligently follow all the tenets of the scriptures known as the Vedas, and are very particular about adhering to them. You must remember that you are not an ordinary demon, but have a great sage named Visrawa as your father. This being the case, thou art also a Brahmin by birth, and by the same relationship thou art are a brother of Kuber, the treasurer of gods and the son of the same sage by another wife, and hence thou art related to both Kuber as well as the gods. So therefore, thou ought to be careful with what thou doest.

Why truly, if thou wert like other demons, thou wouldn't have bothered to follow the instructions of the Vedas, for demons are against them as a general rule. It shows that thou are aware of thine noble birth and lineage. So then, what has happened to thee now that thou act so rashly and against thine own very nature? Why do thou give an excuse to Fate to push thee to the fire of hell by doing aught in reckless anger that violates the limits of tolerance and nullifies all the merit that has accrued to thee for thy diligently observing the tenets of the Vedas and performing great fire sacrifices all thine life?

Ponder over what I have said; weigh all the pros and cons, the losses and the gains, before acting rashly in any manner, for me thinks that thou hast much to lose and little to gain, and thou therefore ought naught to do something without due diligence.]

अनेकगुणसम्पन्नः कथं स्त्रीवधमिच्छसि ।
 अस्माभिः सहितो युद्धे हत्वा रामं च लक्ष्मणम् ।
 प्राप्स्यसे जानकीं शीघ्रमित्युक्तः स न्यवर्तत ॥ ६७॥

ततो दुरात्मा सुहृदा निवेदितं वचः सुधर्म्यं प्रतिगृह्य रावणः ।
गृहं जगामाशु शुचा विमूढधीः पुनः सभां च प्रययौ सुहृदृतः ॥ ६८॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे नवमः
सर्गः ॥ ९॥

anekaguṇasampannaḥ katham strīvadhamicchasi ।
asmābhiḥ sahito yuddhe hatvā rāmaṁ ca lakṣmaṇam ।
prāpsyase jānakīm śīghramityuktaḥ sa nyavartata ॥ 67॥
tato durātmā suhrdā niveditaṁ vacaḥ sudharmaṁ pratigrhya rāvaṇaḥ ।
grhaṁ jagāmāśu śucā vimūḍhadhīḥ punaḥ sabhāṁ ca prayayau suhrdvṛtaḥ ॥
68॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe navamaḥ
sargaḥ ॥ 9॥

67-68. Being endowed with so many virtues and respecting so many moral values, how can you ever think of killing a woman (specially when she is unarmed and already distressed)? Accompanied by all of us, you will soon kill Sri Ram and Laxman in the war, and then you can have Janki (Sita) (as a trophy of war).

[To wit, if you can have Sita by conquest, why should you dirty your hands by killing a woman? Will it not make you infamous in the world; will it not give your name a blot that you vented your frustration on an unarmed lady when you could not vanquish her husband in the battle-field? Would it not nullify instantly the glory that you have so diligently acquired by your famed conquests when you had successfully trounced even the mighty gods? Have patience for a while. Be sure that we, the mighty demons, will soon defeat your enemy, and then you can rightly claim that lady for whom you had taken so much trouble. You will lose your trophy if you act recklessly now. What's the use?]¹

When Ravana was thus dissuaded by his minister from acting rashly in haste, he checked himself and returned back (67).

The wicked and pervert Ravana, being greatly confounded, disturbed and confused by the developments, as he was already under great mental stress and overwhelmed with grief at the loss of his son Meghnad, could not think rationally himself. So he meekly accepted whatever advice that was given to him by his well-wisher (the minister Suparshava), all the more because this advice seemed logical to him, and was in accordance with established rules of behaviour and code of conduct meant for a person of his stature and birth.

Thereafter, he went back home. Next day he went to the royal court; he was accompanied by his well-wishers (68).

Thus ends Canto 9 of Lanka Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan, that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Uma.

Section 18.2.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-61:-

॥दशमः सर्गः ॥
 श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।
 स विचार्य सभामध्ये राक्षसैः सह मन्त्रिभिः ।
 निर्ययौ येऽवशिष्टास्तै राक्षसैः सह राघवम् ॥ १॥
 शलभः शलभैर्युक्तः पूज्वलन्तमिवानलम् ।
 ततो रामेण निहताः सर्वे ते राक्षसा युधि ॥ २॥
 स्वयं रामेण निहतस्तीक्ष्णबाणेन वक्षसि ।
 व्यथितस्त्वरितं लङ्कां प्रविवेश दशाननः ॥ ३॥

॥daśamaḥ sargaḥ ॥
 śrīmahādeva uvāca ।
 sa vicārya sabhāmadhye rākṣasaiḥ saha mantribhiḥ ।
 niriyayau ye'vaśiṣṭāstai rākṣasaiḥ saha rāghavam ॥ 1॥
 śalabhaḥ śalabhairiyuktaḥ prajvalantamivānalam ।
 tato rāmeṇa nihatāḥ sarve te rākṣasā yudhi ॥ 2॥
 svayaṃ rāmeṇa nihatastīkṣṇabāṇena vakṣasi ।
 vyathitastvaritaṃ laṅkāṃ praviveśa daśānanaḥ ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Then he (Ravana) discussed the situation with other demons and ministers present in the court. Deciding on a final course of action, he collected all the remaining demons that had survived the war till now, and headed to the battle-field to face Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) (1), just like the moth is accompanied by other insects when it heads towards a flame to get burnt in the fire.

Lord Ram engaged all the demons who had accompanied Ravana and killed them in the battle that followed. (2)

The 10-headed one (Ravana) was gravely hurt himself by sharp arrows shot by Sri Ram which hit him in his chest. Being thus gravely wounded, Ravana immediately returned back to the fort of Lanka (3).

दृष्ट्वा रामस्य बहुशः पौरुषं चाप्यमानुषम् ।
 रावणो मारुतेश्चैव शीघ्रं शुक्रान्तिकं ययौ ॥ ४॥
 नमस्कृत्य दशग्रीवः शुक्रं प्राञ्जलिब्रवीत् ।
 भगवन् राघवेणैवं लङ्का राक्षसयुथपैः ॥ ५॥
 विनाशिता महादैत्या निहताः पुत्रबान्धवाः ।
 कथं मे दुःखसन्दोहस्त्वयि तिष्ठति सद्गुरौ ॥ ६॥

dr̥ṣṭvā rāmasya bahuśaḥ pauruṣaṃ cāpyamānuṣam ।
 rāvaṇo māruteścaiva śīghraṃ śukrāntikaṃ yayau ॥ 4॥
 namaskṛtya daśagrīvaḥ śukraṃ prāñjalirabravit ।
 bhagavan rāghaveṇaivamaṃ laṅkā rākṣasayuthapaiḥ ॥ 5॥

vināsitā mahādaityā nihatāḥ putrabāndhavāḥ ।
katham me duḥkhasandohastvayi tiṣṭhati sadgurau ॥ 6॥

4-6. Awed and dumbfounded when he noted that both Lord Sri Ram and Maruti (Hanuman) were doing countless super-human deeds that defied his imagination¹, Ravana wasted no time as he hurriedly went to his Guru Sukracharya (to seek his advice on the future course of action) (4).

The 10-necked Ravana (daśagrīvaḥ) bowed before him with reverence and said with folded hands, 'Oh Lord! Raghav (Sri Ram) has destroyed the whole city of Lanka along with the chief commanders of the demon army, great demon warriors, their sons, relatives and friends. How come we have reached such a miserable and sorrowful state of affairs while having you as our true Guru²? (5-6).

[Note—¹Ravana was utterly confused and at his wits end to observe how easily his mighty demon army, that was reputed to be virtually invincible, was being routed so quickly by Lord Ram and Hanuman. So he rushed to his Guru named Sukracharya to report the matter and seek advice.

²Ravana politely admonished his guru Sukracharya, saying that the latter is doing nothing to prevent such a catastrophic sequence of events from happening. Why is he not doing or devising some way to help the demons as a true and honest guru ought to do; why is not being loyal to the race which has always revered him as its guide and well-wisher?

Remember: Sukracharya is said to be the Guru, a moral preceptor, teacher and advisor, of the demon race, just like Brihaspati is for the Gods.]

इति विज्ञापितो दैत्यगुरुः प्राह दशाननम् ।
होमं कुरु प्रयत्नेन रहसि त्वं दशानन ॥ ७॥
यदि विघ्नो न चेद्धोमे तर्हि होमानलोत्थितः ॥ ८॥
महान् रथश्च वाहाश्च चापतूणीरसायकाः ।
सम्भविष्यन्ति तैर्युक्तस्त्वमजेयो भविष्यसि ॥ ९॥

iti vijñāpito daityaguruḥ prāha daśānanam ।
homaṁ kuru prayatnena rahasi tvaṁ daśānana ॥ 7॥
yadi vighno na ceddhome tarhi homānalotthitaḥ ॥ 8॥
mahān rathaśca vāhāśca cāpatūṇīrasāyakāḥ ।
sambhaviṣyanti tairyuktastvamajeyo bhaviṣyasi ॥ 9॥

7-9. When the 10-headed Ravana (daśānana) pleaded remorsefully in this manner, the Guru of demons decided to help his disciple. So he prescribed the following way (by which Ravana could fulfill his objectives and achieve success in his endeavours): 'Oh the 10-headed one! In whatever way it is possible for you, go to a secluded place and perform a fire sacrifice (7). If there is no interference in it (i.e. if you are able to complete the fire sacrifice successfully), then out of it shall emerge a large chariot, horses, a bow, a quiver and arrows. Once you get them, you would become

unconquerable and invincible. [So go immediately, and perform this victory begetting fire sacrifice.] (8-9).

गृहाण मन्त्रान् मदतान् गच्छ होमं कुरु द्रुतम् ।
 इत्युक्तस्त्वरितं गत्वा रावणो राक्षसाधिपः ॥ १०॥
 गुहां पातालसदृशीं मन्दिरे स्वे चकार ह ।
 लङ्काद्वारकपाटादि बद्ध्वा सर्वत्र यत्नतः ॥ ११॥
 होमद्रव्याणि सम्पाद्य यान्युक्तान्याभिचारिके ।
 गुहां प्रविश्य चैकान्ते मौनी होमं प्रचक्रमे ॥ १२॥

grhāṇa mantrān maddattān gaccha homaṁ kuru drutam ।
 ityuktastvaritaṁ gatvā rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ॥ 10॥
 guhāṁ pātālasadrśīṁ mandire sve cakāra ha ।
 laṅkādvāarakapāṭādi baddhvā sarvatra yatnataḥ ॥ 11॥
 homadravyāṇi sampādyā yānyuktānyābhicārike ।
 guhāṁ praviśya caikānte maunī homaṁ pracakrame ॥ 12॥

10-12. Accept the Mantras (a group of letters, syllables, words or phrases having magical powers) which I give you for this purpose, and go and perform the fire sacrifice using them immediately'.

When Sukracharya had advised this to Ravana, the king of demons (10), the latter went away and returned to his palace, where he got a deep pit (in the form of an underground bunker or a cavern) constructed underneath it.

Then he got all the gates and entrance points firmly closed shut (i.e. he ensured that they were properly bolted and sealed, double-checked and secured them, and then appointed guards to man them) (11).

Having done this, he thoughtfully collected all the different items required for doing such fire sacrifices as prescribed in the scriptures, and then entered the cave he had got ready.

Once inside, he selected a remote part of the cavern, and sitting down quietly there, he engaged himself in performing the prescribed sacrifice by observing due diligence and remaining focused on the task at hand (12).

उत्थितं धूममालोक्य महान्तं रावणानुजः ।
 रामाय दर्शयामास होमधूमं भयाकुलः ॥ १३॥
 पश्य राम दशग्रीवो होमं कर्तुं समारभत् ।
 यदि होमः समाप्तः स्यात्तदाऽजेयो भविष्यति ॥ १४॥

utthitaṁ dhūmamālokyā mahāntaṁ rāvaṇānujaḥ ।
 rāmāya darśayāmāsa homadhūmaṁ bhayākulaḥ ॥ 13॥
 paśya rāma daśagrīvo homaṁ kartuṁ samārabhat ।
 yadi homaḥ samāptaḥ syāttadā'jeyo bhaviṣyati ॥ 14॥

13-14. Then Ravana's younger brother (Vibhishan) saw a huge column of smoke rising in the sky¹, and he became alarmed (because it clearly hinted to him that Ravana was doing a sacrifice to gain victory in the war).

He showed that plume of smoke coming out of the fire sacrifice to Sri Ram (13). He (Vibhishan) said, 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! Look there; the 10-necked Ravana has started performing a fire sacrifice. If it is completed successfully, without any interference or hindrance, then he shall become unconquerable and invincible² (14).

[Note—¹The cave, cavern or pit had a chimney or vent to let the smoke emanating from the fire of the sacrifice to escape. This plume of smoke was seen by Vibhishan. It may also have been drifting towards Sri Ram's camp because of wind blowing that way. The aromatic herbs used as offering to the fire further confirmed the fact that it was not an accidental fire somewhere in Lanka, but a sacrificial ritual. Vibhishan got alarmed as he knew such things well, and was also aware that Ravana used to perform such sacrifices when he was faced with uncertainties in his many military campaigns.

Earlier, it is the same way that Vibhishan had realized that Meghnad was performing a fire sacrifice to gain victory in the battle. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 57-60.

²In Section 18.1 of this Chapter, that describes the death and deliverance of Ravana as narrated in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', we have also read that Ravana performed a fire sacrifice to gain victory in the war, and that Vibhishan had got wind of it and immediately alerted Lord Ram about it. But there is no mention about 'who advised Ravana to do this fire sacrifice, what would he gain by doing it, and how Vibhishan came to know of it'. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85.

These questions are answered here—(i) It was advised by Ravana's Guru Sukracharya; (ii) It would provide him with certain war paraphernalia, such as a chariot, horses, bows, arrows, quiver etc., that would make him invincible if he succeeds in completing the sacrifice, and (iii) Vibhishan got a hint of this sacrifice when he saw a thick plume of smoke rising high in the sky, and also when he could smell the aroma of certain herbs used for the purpose of making offerings in the sacrifice when the wind blew the smoke in the direction of Lord Ram's camp.]

अतो विघ्नाय होमस्य प्रेषयाशु हरीश्वरान् ।
तथेति रामः सुग्रीवसम्मतेनाङ्गदं कपिम् ॥ १५॥
हनूमत्प्रमुखान् वीरानादिदेश महाबलान् ।
प्राकारं लङ्घयित्वा ते गत्वा रावणमन्दिरम् ॥ १६॥

ato vighnāya homasya preṣayāśu harīśvarān ।
tatheti rāmaḥ sugrīvasammatenāṅgadaṁ kapim ॥ 15॥
hanūmatpramukhān vīrānādideśa mahābalān ।
prākāraṁ laṅghayitvā te gatvā rāvaṇamandiram ॥ 16॥

15-16. Hence, it is prudent and necessary for you to dispatch the commanders of the monkey army as soon as possible to create obstacles in the completion of the fire sacrifice (for otherwise Ravana would never be defeated)'.

Saying 'alright', Sri Ram consulted Sugriv, and ordered Angad, Hanuman and other great, valiant and strong warriors to proceed forthwith on the mission¹. All of them leapt across the ramparts of the city wall (i.e. the fort of Lanka), and quickly reached Ravan's palace (15-16).

[Note—¹It will be noted that Ravana and Meghnad had got a taste of their own medicine. They were used to defiling the fire sacrifices of sages, hermits and seers. Though this ordering of destruction of a fire sacrifice was not a good act for Lord Ram to do, as he was an upholder of righteousness and supporter of good deeds, but we must remember that he was fighting a war with a cunning and evil enemy, and that wars have different set of rules as compared to peaceful times when conditions are normal.

Besides this, the Lord wished to give a message that a thorn has to be plucked out by another thorn or a needle; it was a literal tit-for-tat for the demons who had been relentlessly defiling fire sacrifices of sages.

It also shows that when all means to avoid confrontation were exhausted, when the wicked, the pervert, the rascal and the unrighteous evil fellows who were embodiments of every imaginable forms of sin and cruelty, would not see reason and mend their ways, then for the larger good of the world, in the larger interest of restoring order and peace in this world, the Lord had no other alternative but to administer a bitter medicine to the demons to which they were so accustomed. Drastic situations need equally drastic remedies, for oftentimes it does become imperative to use harsh methods for the larger interest of the society and humanity. If the carrot doesn't work, the stick has to be oftentimes used.

If the Lord would have shown mercy and compassion—which is actually his habit and wont—on these cruel demons, then it would have meant that multitudes would have continued to suffer due to the wickedness of a handful of evil creatures. So it was better to sacrifice such cruel creatures and salvage the boat of peaceful and harmonious existence rather than pretending to be righteous and let the humanity at large suffer. Being a King and Lord of the universe and a caretaker of its inhabitants, it was morally bound on Sri Ram to protect his suffering subjects from the cruelty and tyranny unleashed by Ravana and his kith and kin.

So the ordering of the destruction of Ravana's fire sacrifice should be seen in this context.]

दशकोट्यः प्लवङ्गानां गत्वा मन्दिररक्षकान् ।
 चूर्णयामासुरश्वांश्च गजांश्च न्यहनन् क्षणात् ॥ १७॥
 ततश्च सरमा नाम प्रभाते हस्तसञ्ज्ञया ।
 विभीषणस्य भार्या सा होमस्थानमसूचयत् ॥ १८॥

daśakoṭyaḥ plavaṅgānāṃ gatvā mandirarakṣakān ।
 cūrṇayāmāsuraśvāṃśca gajāṃśca nyahanan kṣaṇāt ॥ 17॥
 tataśca saramā nāma prabhāte hastasanjñayā ।
 vibhīṣaṇasya bhāryā sā homasthānamasūcayat ॥ 18॥

17-18. Those 10 crore¹ monkeys crushed (trounced and defeated) the guards of the palace, and killed numerous horses and elephants in a very short while (17).

[There was a great tumult throughout the night in Lanka as the monkeys rampaged wildly through the city.] As soon as it was dawn, the wife of Vibhishan, whose name was Sarma, indicated the place of the sacrifice by a gesture of her hands. [To wit, Sarma showed the monkeys the trap-door leading to the cavern where Ravana was doing his fire sacrifice.]² (18).

[Note—¹1 Crore = 10 million. Poets and bards are accustomed to using hyperbole while describing events. So what actually is meant here is ‘multitudes of monkey warriors’; or ‘a large number of monkey warriors’; or ‘hundreds of monkey warriors’.

²This is how ‘the enemy within’ betrays. Ravana's bad times had made him forget about Sarma, or perhaps he regarded her as irrelevant, someone who did not require any special attention. It proved fatal for him. Ravana should have imprisoned her as soon as he kicked Vibhishan out of Lanka. This slight miss in his radar of prudence, coupled with a faulty strategy of neglecting a traitor's wife, resulted in the whole planning to win a ruthless war came tumbling down like a pack of cards. He should have, at the least, put her under strict guard of trusted female demons to monitor all her activities; he should have suspected her because her husband, Vibhishan, had turned out to be a traitor. This was a big blunder from the strategic point of view that Ravana made and never lived to regret.

But at the same time it also proves how tolerant and accepting he was. Vibhishan had offended him, so there was no reason he had though why he should punish his wife for it. If we be neutral observers then this point must not miss us, and we will be inclined to empathise with Ravana that when the time was in his favour everyone raised a toast for his health, but when the tide of time turned against him then even those whom he never offended or harmed or suspected turned against him, such as Sarma in this case who was not punished or harmed in any way just because her husband Vibhishan had become a betrayer and a traitor by turning hostile to his own brother Ravana, who was also the king of the demon race.]

गुहापिधानपाषाणमङ्गदः पादघट्टनैः ।
 चूर्णयित्वा महासत्त्वः प्रविवेश महागुहाम् ॥ १९॥
 दृष्ट्वा दशाननं तत्र मीलिताक्षं दृढासनम् ।
 ततोऽङ्गदाज्ञया सर्वे वानरा विविशुर्द्रुतम् ॥ २०॥

guhāpidhānapāṣāṇamaṅgadaḥ pādaghaṭṭanaiḥ ।
 cūrṇayitvā mahāsattvaḥ praviveśa mahāguhām ॥ 19॥
 dr̥ṣṭvā daśānanam tatra mīlitākṣam dṛḍhāsanam ।
 tato'ṅgadājñayā sarve vānarā viviśurdrutam ॥ 20॥

19-20. The most strong and valorous Angad kicked aside and broke to pieces the heavy stone which was put at the entrance of the cave to block it. Then he entered the deep pit or cavern (where Ravana was performing his fire sacrifice) (19).

There he saw the 10-headed one (Ravana) sitting cross-legged in a meditative posture with closed eyes. Then, on the orders of Angad, all the monkeys quickly trooped inside the cave (20).

तत्र कोलाहलं चक्रुस्ताडयन्तश्च सेवकान् ।
 सम्भारांश्चिद्विपुस्तस्य होमकुण्डे समन्ततः ॥ २१॥
 सुवमाच्छिद्य हस्तात्त्वं रावणस्य बलादुषा ।
 तेनैव सञ्जघानाशु हनूमान् प्लवगाग्रणीः ॥ २२॥

tatra kolāhalaṃ cakrustāḍayantaśca sevakān ।
 sambhārāṃścikṣipustasya homakuṇḍe samantataḥ ॥ 21॥
 sruvamācchidya hastācca rāvaṇasya balāduṣā ।
 tenaiva sañjaghānāśu hanūmān plavagāgrāṇiḥ ॥ 22॥

21-22. The monkeys barged inside the grotto and went berserk, ransacking the cave. They started thrashing the servants and attendants, and created a great ruckus. They threw all the different items kept there for the fire sacrifice in the fire pit (21).

Hanuman, who was leading the monkeys, snatched the ladle forcefully from the hands of Ravana, and hit him hard with it (using it as a baton) (22).

घ्नन्ति दन्तैश्च काष्ठैश्च वानरास्तमितस्ततः ।
 न जहौ रावणो ध्यानं हतोऽपि विजिगीषया ॥ २३॥
 प्रविश्यान्तःपुरे वेष्टमन्यङ्गदो वेगवत्तरः ।
 समानयत्केशबन्धे धृत्वा मन्दोदरीं शुभाम् ॥ २४॥

ghnanti dantaisca kāṣṭhaisca vānarāstamitastataḥ ।
 na jahau rāvaṇo dhyānaṃ hato'pi vijigīṣayā ॥ 23॥
 praviśyāntaḥpure veśmānyaṅgado vegavattaraḥ ।
 samānayatkēśabandhe dhṛtvā mandodarīm śubhām ॥ 24॥

23-24. The monkeys were attacking Ravana from all sides, biting him with their teeth and hammering him with sticks. But he did not stop meditating inspite of being so fiercely attacked, hoping for ultimate victory (if he managed to successfully complete the sacrifice in the face of such aggravated insult to his self-respect) (23).

[When they had failed to provoke him or disturb him from doing his meditation and continuing with the fire sacrifice, then—] Angad swiftly went inside the royal palace and dragged the chaste Mandodari, Ravana's queen, out by pulling at her hairs; he brought her inside the cave where Ravana was doing the sacrificial ritual. (24).

रावणस्यैव पुरतो विलपन्तीमनाथवत् ।
 विददाराङ्गदस्तस्याः कञ्जुकं रत्नभूषितम् ॥ २५॥
 मुक्ता विमुक्ताः पतिताः समन्ताद्ग्लानसञ्चयैः ।
 श्लोणिसूत्रं निपतितं तुटितं रत्नचित्रितम् ॥ २६॥

rāvaṇasyaiva purato vilapantīmanāthavat ।

vidadārāṅgadastasyāḥ kañjukam ratnabhūṣitam ॥ 25॥
 muktā vimuktāḥ patitāḥ samantādratnasañcayaiḥ ।
 śroṇisūtram nipatitam truṭitam ratnacitritam ॥ 26॥

25-26. After hauling Mandodari inside the cave, Angad tore her clothes in front of Ravana. First he ripped off her bodice which was studded with different kinds of precious stones. Meanwhile, Mandodari wailed and lamented woefully and helplessly like a destitute (25).

The pearls of the bodice came off; they scattered here and there on the ground along with the other gems that too had been ripped off. In a similar way, the gem-studded chastity-belt also snapped and fell on the ground¹ (26)

[Note—¹When all other means to make Ravana abandon his fire sacrifice had failed, Angad decided to do something so reprehensible and denigrating for the dignity and honour of Ravana that no matter how much he would try to restrain his anger he will no longer be able to control himself.

So Angad went inside the royal palace and dragged his chief queen Mandodari out by pulling at her hairs. He hauled her inside the cave and disrobed her before her husband while the rest of his friends watched in amusement, and perhaps some of the close bodyguards of Ravana too watched in horror.

Angad did it on purpose as he judged that it would be such a singularly horrifying act of insult that Ravana would be forced to break his vows and get up from his seat. This would mean that his fire sacrifice was disrupted.]

कटिप्रदेशाद्विरस्ता नीवी तस्यैव पश्यतः ।
 भूषणानि च सर्वाणि पतितानि समन्ततः ॥ २७॥
 देवगन्धर्वकन्याश्च नीता हृष्टैः प्लवङ्गमैः ।
 मन्दोदरी रुरोदाथ रावणस्याग्रतो भृशम् ॥ २८॥

kaṭipradeśādvistrastā nīvī tasyaiva paśyataḥ ।
 bhūṣaṇāni ca sarvāṇi patitāni samantataḥ ॥ 27॥
 devagandharvakanyāśca nītā hrṣṭaiḥ plavaṅgamaiḥ ।
 mandodarī rurodātha rāvaṇasyāgrato bhr̥śam ॥ 28॥

27-28. The garment worn by her on the lower half of her body became loose from the waist, and even while Ravana watched, stunned and appalled in horror, and overwhelmed with excess of indignation, it slid down from her waist. All her ornaments fell down and scattered everywhere (27).

Similarly, out of jest and mischief, other monkeys gleefully brought there from the royal palace numerous other maidens belonging to the Gods and Gandharvas (who had been forcefully kept by Ravana as his mistresses).

At the sight of this awful spectacle of mass disrobing and dishonouring of the women of the royal household, Mandodari began weeping and lamenting gravely in front of Ravana (28).

[Note—Angad tried to violate the modesty of Mandodari to instigate Ravana. Though it was a most outrageous and shocking incident to have been perpetrated by Angad, it

was part of the job to cause hindrance in the completion of Ravana's fire sacrifice. Success in stopping Ravana from completing the fire sacrifice was of paramount importance, because it was a do or die situation in a war, and no chances could be taken. So goes the saying: "Everything is fair in war and love". Caution and scruples is always a casualty in these two situations.]

क्रोशन्ती करुणं दीना जगाद दशकन्धरम् ।
 निर्लज्जोऽसि परैरेवं केशपाशे विकृष्यते ॥ २९॥
 भार्या तवैव पुरतः किं जुहोषि न लज्जसे ।
 हन्यते पश्यतो यस्य भार्या पापैश्च शत्रुभिः ॥ ३०॥
 मर्तव्यं तेन तत्रैव जीवितान्मरणं वरम् ।
 हा मेघनाद ते माता विलश्यते बत वानरैः ॥ ३१॥

krośanti karuṇaṃ dīnā jagāda daśakandharam ।
 nirlajjo'si parairevaṃ keśapāśe vikṛṣyate ॥ 29॥
 bhāryā tavaiva purataḥ kiṃ juhoṣi na lajjase ।
 hanyate paśyato yasya bhāryā pāpaiśca śatrubhiḥ ॥ 30॥
 martavyaṃ tena tatraiva jīvitānmaraṇaṃ varam ।
 hā meghanāda te mātā kliśyate bata vānaraiḥ ॥ 31॥

29-31. She (Mandodari) became horrified; she felt helpless and hapless, miserable and pitiful, and wept and wailed most woefully. She shuddered in anger as she minced no words to sternly rebuke her 10-shouldered husband Ravana (*daśakandharam*), saying contemptuously: 'Alas! You are very shameless fellow. Your enemies are pulling your wife by her hairs, and you are trying to complete your fire sacrifice as if nothing matters. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? A person whose wife is humiliated and insulted in public, and her modesty so openly violated by his enemies committing such a ignoble act right in front of the person who calls himself her husband, while he watches such a heinous crime being perpetrated right before his nose, such an impotent husband should die then and there, for he has no right to live.

Oh Meghnad, my dear son! Alas, today your mother is being subjected to such horrible humiliation at the hands of these wicked monkeys (and your father does nothing to save her honour)! [I say on oath that had you been alive, this would not have happened. But alas, you are no more with me to protect your poor mother, and I am left to the mercy of fate. Why didn't I die the moment you left me; why didn't you take me along with you to the other world?] (29-31).

त्वयि जीवति मे दुःखमीदृशं च कथं भवेत् ।
 भार्या लज्जा च सन्त्यक्ता भार्त्रा मे जीविताशया ॥ ३२॥
 श्रुत्वा तद्देवितं राजा मन्दोदर्या दशाननः ।
 उत्तस्थौ खड्गमादाय त्यज देवीमिति बुवन् ॥ ३३॥

tvayi jīvati me duḥkhamīdrśaṃ ca kathaṃ bhavet ।
 bhāryā lajjā ca santyaktā bhartrā me jīvitāśayā ॥ 32॥

śrutvā taddevitaṃ rājā mandodaryā daśānanah ।
uttasthau khaḍgamādāya tyaja devīmiti bruvan ॥ 33॥

32-33. (Oh son!) If you had been alive, why would I have had to suffer so much? My husband has turned his face away from shame as well as from his wife in order to save his own life (because he thinks that by completing the fire sacrifice and appeasing the goddess Nikumbhi he would become invincible, so that his enemy may not kill him even if the same enemy would have no compunctions in disrobing his wife and dishonouring her right before his eyes)' (32).

Hearing this acerbic taunt and the mournful laments of Mandodari, the 10-headed Ravana (daśānanah) lost his patience, and stood up indignantly with a sword in hand, saying disgustfully: 'Oh you rascals! Leave this lady alone.' (33).

जयानाङ्गदमव्यग्रः कटिदेशे दशाननः ।
तदोत्सृज्य ययुः सर्वे विध्वंस्य हवनं महत् ॥ ३४॥
रामपार्श्वमुपागम्य तस्थुः सर्वे प्रहर्षिताः ॥ ३५॥

jaghānāṅgadamavyagraḥ kaṭideśe daśānanah ।
tadotsrjya yayuḥ sarve vidhvaṃsya havanam mahat ॥ 34॥
rāmapārśvamupāgamy tasthuḥ sarve praharṣitāḥ ॥ 35॥

34-35. As soon as he got up, the 10-headed one Ravana kicked Angad violently on the small of his back. Meanwhile, all other monkeys ransacked the fire sacrifice, and departed immediately from there (34).

Successfully completing their mission, all of them presented themselves before Sri Ram; they were very cheerful and elated at their success (35).

[Note—As soon as Ravana got up from his seat, which meant that his meditation and the strict vows that he was supposed to keep while performing the fire sacrifice were disrupted, the monkeys immediately stopped harassing Mandodari and other ladies of his royal household. It implies that they had no real intention of outraging their modesty, for they had done so only to provoke Ravana and make him stop his fire sacrifice. They had no actual intent to violate the chastity and modesty of Ravana's women, but what they did, though truly a reprehensible act, was surely a tactic of war. Though disgusting, this measure had become necessary for Angad because otherwise Ravana's fire sacrifice could not have been stopped, and then he would have become invincible in the theatre of war.]

रवणस्तु ततो भार्यामुवाच परिसान्त्वयन् ।
दैवाधीनमिदं भदे जीवता किं न दृश्यते ।
त्यज शोकं विशालाक्षि ज्ञानमालम्ब्य निश्चितम् ॥ ३६॥
अज्ञानपूभवः शोकः शोको ज्ञानविनाशकृत् ।
अज्ञानपूभवाहन्धीः शरीरादिष्वनात्मसु ॥ ३७॥

rāvaṇastu tato bhāryāmuvāca parisāntvayan ।

daivādhīnamidaṃ bhadre jīvatā kiṃ na dṛśyate ।
 tyaja śokaṃ viśālākṣi jñānamālambya niścitam ॥ 36॥
 ajñānaprabhavaḥ śokaḥ śoko jñānavināśakṛt ।
 ajñānaprabhavāhandhīḥ śarīrādiṣvanātmasu ॥ 37॥

36-37. Ravana became philosophical as he consoled his wife, saying: 'Oh Bhadre (i.e. a gentle and chaste lady)! All this sorrow and joy are dependent upon destiny; it ought to be obvious to any wise living being. Oh my lady with wide charming eyes (viśālākṣi)! By becoming aware of this established wisdom, you must stop lamenting, regretting, feeling remorseful and sorrowful¹ (36).

All sorts of sorrows, sadness, remorse, misery, gloom, dismay etc., have their origin in ignorance; they arise because the creature is unaware of the reality and he lacks true wisdom. For in all sooth, ignorance and lack of wisdom creates a false sense of attachment with the gross body and its sense organs, for the truth is that these entities are not conscious entities like one's Atma, one's 'self', is; and therefore this false sense of attachment unnecessarily makes the 'true self' of the creature feel affected by what happens to the body² (37)

[Note—¹Destiny decides what would happen in one's life. It is hard to change it. So it is futile to cry over misfortunes and rejoice over good fortunes. One must accept both with equanimity, fortitude, calmness and poise. This attitude will help a creature to tide over the greatest of misfortunes and adverse circumstances. Wailing and lamenting and cursing are of no avail, for what is destined to happen will happen. Stoic forbearance and tolerance is the bold way out, not buckling to the pressure tactics of Destiny as it would mean weakness of character.

²To wit, the body of a creature is gross, while the Atma, which is the true self of the creature, is subtle and sublime. The body is perishable, while the Atma is eternal. The Atma is eternally blissful, while the body is full of misery and pain. The body is not the true identity of a living being; his true identity is his Atma which is pure consciousness.

So therefore, only a fool would think that he is feeling miserable and suffering from pain as these negative emotions are limited to his gross body alone, and they do not affect his Atma, which is not only his 'true self' but is also eternally blissful and happy.

To regard these two entities, the body and the Atma, as one and the same is the root cause of all pain and misery. A wise man would understand that they are two independent entities; while the Atma is his true self and pure consciousness, the body is gross and inane.]

तन्मूलः पुत्रदारादिसम्बन्धः संसृतिस्ततः ।
 हर्षशोकभयक्रोधलोभमोहस्पृहादयः ॥ ३८॥
 अज्ञानप्रभवा ह्येते जन्ममृत्युजरादयः ।
 आत्मा तु केवलं शुद्धो व्यतिरिक्तो ह्यलेपकः ॥ ३९॥

tanmūlaḥ putradārādisambandhaḥ saṃsṛtistataḥ ।
 harṣaśokabhayakrodhalobhamohasprhādayaḥ ॥ 38॥

ajñānaprabhavā hyete janmamṛtyujarādayaḥ ।
ātmā tu kevalaṃ śuddho vyatirikto hyalepakaḥ ॥ 39॥

38-39. This false sense of belonging or identification of the soul with the external, gross body is at the root of all illusions that create all deceptive relationships that exist in the mortal world of transmigration, such as of one being someone's son, wife or any other kind of kinship.

These relations and the attachments they create are the cause of all emotions, such as that of joy and happiness on one hand, and of grief, sorrow, regret, misery and lamentation on the other hand. It also leads to other negative traits such as anger, greed, delusions, envy and jealousy (38).

The stages in a creature's life, such as birth, death and decay (i.e. old age and its related problems of the body) are all due to ignorance—because the ignorant creature thinks the body to be his 'true self' or his true identity, whereas the fact is that it is not his gross body but his Atma (pure conscious soul) that is his true identity. And this Atma never takes a birth, gets old or dies as it is an eternal and constant entity. So therefore, where is the cause of one having 'three stages of life'?

Similarly, the Atma is eternally blissful and happy, so where is the cause of one suffering from sorrows and grief? And consequently, where is the cause of the Atma separately feeling happy or cheerful when it is inherently possessed of these virtues? (39).

आनन्दरूपो ज्ञानात्मा सर्वभावविवर्जितः ।
न संयोगो वियोगो वा विद्यते केनचित्सतः ॥ ४०॥
एवं ज्ञात्वा स्वमात्मानं त्यज शोकमनिन्दिते ।
इदानीमेव गच्छामि हत्वा रामं सलक्ष्मणम् ॥ ४१॥
आगमिष्यामि नो चेन्मां दारयिष्यति सायकैः ।
श्रीरामो वज्रकल्पैश्च ततो गच्छामि तत्पदम् ॥ ४२॥

ānandarūpo jñānātmā sarvabhāvavivarjitaḥ ।
na saṃyogo viyogo vā vidyate kenacitsataḥ ॥ 40॥
evaṃ jñātvā svamātmānaṃ tyaja śokamanindite ।
idānīmeva gacchāmi hatvā rāmaṃ salakṣmaṇam ॥ 41॥
āgamiṣyāmi no cenmāṃ dārayiṣyati sāyakaiḥ ।
śrīrāmo vajrakalpaiśca tato gacchāmi tatpadam ॥ 42॥

40-42. That Atma is an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment; it is blissful and graceful; it is free from all feelings, emotions or sentiments pertaining to this mortal world. That Atma, which is an embodiment of Truth, does not have a union or separation with anybody or anything (and hence it does not suffer in any way) (40).

Oh the eternal, blissful one (a reference to Mandodari, albeit to her Ama which was her true identity, and not her physical body)¹! Forsake all your emotions of sorrow, lamentations, grieving, mourning and gloom of all kind (tyaja śokamanindite)! Realise the true nature of your soul (Atma), and become cheerful.

I am going right now to the battle-field. Either I shall return victorious after killing my enemy Sri Ram and Laxman (his brother) (41), or Sri Ram will perforate

me and cut me into pieces (kill me) by his arrows which are as strong as Vajra (also “Bajra”; Indra's weapon). If the latter happens, then I shall attain emancipation and deliverance by going to the Lord's own abode and residing near his holy feet (gacchāmi tatpadam)² (42).

[Note—¹Ravana is addressing the ‘true self’ of Mandodari, which in the context of his discourse is obviously her Atma, and not her physical body. And since the Atma is eternal and blissful, Ravana addresses her with these epithets to remind her to abandon her grieving, and become happy.

²Ravana is very clear in his mind. It is that either he would win the war by getting rid of his enemy, or dying himself like a valiant warrior. In the latter case, he is sure to go to heaven. Why is he so sure of ‘going to heaven’ when everyone knows that he was a sinful demon?

Well, herein lies the wonderful trick! Anyone who has carefully read and understood his discourse for Mandodari would easily understand what he means. All the sins and evil deeds were done by Ravana's ‘gross body which was in the form of a demon’, but this body was ‘not his true self’. Who or what was his ‘true self’ or ‘true identity’? It was his ‘Atma, his soul’ which is pure consciousness, holy and divine.

So therefore, though seemingly committing great sins and evil deeds by his gross body of a demon, Ravana's soul remained pure within, and it is of this soul that he is now talking about going to heaven. Once his demonic gross body was fell by the arrows of Lord Ram, his Atma would be freed from the cage in which it had been trapped, and once out of it, the Atma would revert to its primary form of cosmic Consciousness. This is what Ravana hints at here.]

तदा त्वया मे कर्तव्या क्रिया मच्छासनात्प्रिये ।
सीतां हत्वा मया सार्धं त्वं प्रवेक्ष्यसि पावकम् ॥ ४३॥
एवं श्रुत्वा वचस्तस्य रावणस्यातिदुःखिता ।
उवाच नाथ मे वाक्यं शृणु सत्यं तथा कुरु ॥ ४४॥

tadā tvayā me kartavyā kriyā macchāsanātpriye ।
sītāṃ hatvā mayā sārdhaṃ tvaṃ pravekṣyasi pāvakam ॥ 43॥
evaṃ śrutvā vacastasya rāvaṇasyātiduḥkhitā ।
uvāca nātha me vākyaṃ śṛṇu satyaṃ tathā kuru ॥ 44॥

43-44. [Expressing his last wish, in case he dies in the battle-field, Ravana tells Mandodari—] ‘Oh my dear! If by mischance I die in the battle-field, I command you to do one thing, and treat it as my last wish. You must kill Sita¹ and then enter the funeral pyre with my dead body².’ (43)

Hearing these words of Ravana, Mandodari became very distressed, dismayed and gloomy. She said, ‘Oh my Lord! I tell you what is proper and fit under the present circumstances. Please pay heed to my advise and be wise to do accordingly³ (44).

[Note—¹There is nothing surprising in this wish of Ravana. This is a strategy usually followed by kings who are despots and tyrants—let not the enemy get what is

considered a prized trophy of war; let not the enemy gain complete victory by denying him access of something for which he had fought the war.

By getting rid of Sita, Ravana wished to ensure that Sri Ram would be wringing his hands in utmost disgust, abject frustration, excessive of distress and dismay after the initial euphoria of winning the battle when he finds that Sita is dead. It would prove disastrous for the victor Sri Ram—for inspite of having won physical victory over Ravana in the battle, he would have actually lost the war because Sita, for whom the war was waged, would not be found alive.

²Ravana also wished to ensure that Mandodari is not subjected to grave insult and torture when the invading army finds out that Sita— for whom the whole war took place in the first place—is no more. It is very possible that they would wreak vengeance on Mandodari. Ravana's assumptions are not out of place after what Angad and his companions did to her to disrupt Ravana's fire sacrifices in verse nos. 24-28. Ravana feared for the worst.

But as it eventually happened, Mandodari did not keep his last wish. This is probably because Ravana had said so in a fit of disgust and rage, not with a cool head and rational thinking. It was a reckless instruction given at the time when he was under great emotional stress, and on the verge of losing everything. At such times one is apt to become irrational in one's thinking and words.

One is left to wonder the course the story of Ramayan would have taken had Mandodari carried out Ravana's last wish of killing Sita and burning herself in his funeral pyre! What would have then happened? How would Lord Ram return triumphantly and victoriously to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile during which he was proclaimed to have won a vicious war of Lanka that so much glorified him? Surely, if Sita would have been killed by Mandodari to honour her husband's last wish, the story would have ended in a complete different note.

But one thing cannot be denied: Mandodari had committed an error by not obeying the last wish of her husband. Though ordering of 'killing of Sita' was a wrong wish of Ravana, as it only indicated his frustration and perverted mind, and nothing else, so it was okay that Mandodari neglected it. But at least she could have carried out the other part of his instructions that was proper and fit, and certainly not out of order—which was 'to burn herself along with his dead body'. It is because for a chaste wife of a warrior king, life after her husband dies in a war is not worth an honourable living; the scriptures that deal with such matters as well as established traditions endorse it. It is thus prescribed so that her dignity, chastity, honour and self-respect are not compromised in the least after her husband is no more to protect her. It is to protect her honour from prying eyes of other ill-intentioned men who care little about propriety and probity as long as their passions are satisfied, and a helpless widow is their easy target.

³Please refer to verse nos. 55-61 herein below which clearly state the reason why Ravana did not pay heed to Mandodari's entreaty and advice to cease hostility. It also shows that he was certain of death, even determined to embrace it, and lays down the reasons why he wished Mandodari to die with him. He wished that all those who were associated with him must be killed in the presence of Sri Ram about whom he was convinced was the supreme Lord himself.

With this thinking as a backdrop of the war, one concludes that Ravana was being very wise in all his actions and deeds. In fact, by getting the sinful demons killed at the hands of the Lord God in the physical form of Lord Sri Ram, Ravana had

ensured their spiritual well-being and eternal life; he had laid the ground for liberation and deliverance of his whole race which otherwise would have continued to suffer due to the excess of sinful life its members had been leading. The souls of the demons were cleaned of all the sins and the consequences of the evil deeds done by them when they were killed in the war with Lord Ram, as a result of which all of them attained emancipation and salvation. Their souls found eternal peace and rest.]

शक्यो न राघवो जेतुं त्वया चान्यैः कदाचन ।
 रामो देववरः साक्षात्प्रधानपुरुषेश्वरः ॥ ४५॥
 मत्स्यो भूत्वा पुरा कल्पे मनुं वैवस्वतं प्रभुः ।
 ररक्ष सकलापद्भ्यो राघवो भक्तवत्सलः ॥ ४६॥

śakyo na rāghavo jetuṃ tvayā cānyaiḥ kadācana ।
 rāmo devavaraḥ sākṣātpradhānapuruṣeśvaraḥ ॥ 45॥
 matsyo bhūtvā purā kalpe manuṃ vaivasvataṃ prabhuḥ ।
 rarakṣa sakalāpadbhyo rāghavo bhaktavatsalaḥ ॥ 46॥

45-46. Raghav (Sri Ram) cannot be conquered by you or anybody else at any time. Sri Ram is the supreme and the almighty Lord of the world; he is supreme Purush (the cosmic Being; the Supreme Lord); and he is the Lord of all the Gods (45).

Raghav (Sri Ram), who is beloved of his devotees, and he is benevolent and munificent towards them, had assumed the form of the legendary Fish and protected Vaivastamanu¹ from all his troubles at the beginning of this Kalpa (one cycle of creation and destruction) (46).

[Note—¹It refers to the Fish incarnation of Lord Vishnu; it is called the ‘Matsya Avatar’. In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah’s Arc.]

रामः कूर्मोऽभवत्पूर्वं लक्षयोजनविस्तृतः ।
 समुद्रमथने पृष्ठे दधार कनकाचलम् ॥ ४७॥
 हिरण्याक्षोऽतिदुर्वृतो हतोऽनेन महात्मना ।
 क्रोडरूपेण वपुषा क्षोणीमुद्धरता क्वचित् ॥ ४८॥

rāmaḥ kūrmo'bhavatpūrvam lakṣayojanavistr̥taḥ ।
 samudramathane pṛṣṭhe dadhāra kanakācalam ॥ 47॥
 hiraṇyākṣo'tidurvṛtto hato'nena mahātmanā ।
 kroḍarūpeṇa vapuṣā kṣoṇīmuddharatā kvacit ॥ 48॥

47-48. Lord Sri Ram was the one who had become (or manifested himself as) the legendary Tortoise¹ with a body extending up to 1 lakh (100 thousand) Yojans (i.e.

800 thousand miles approximately). At the time of the churning of the legendary ocean, it was he (in the form of the Tortoise) who had borne the huge mountain called Sumeru on his back (47).

During another of the earlier (ancient) times, he had assumed the form of the legendary Boar², and this great Soul had slayed the demon Hiranyaksha, who was very wicked and pervert, to liberate the earth from his clutches (48).

[Note—¹It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara, also known as Sumeru, which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

²It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.]

त्रिलोककण्टकं दैत्यं हिरण्यकशिपुं पुरा ।
हतावन्नारसिंहेन वपुषा रघुनन्दनः ॥ ४९॥
विक्रमैस्त्रिभिरेवासौ बलिं बद्ध्वा जगत्त्रयम् ।
आक्रम्यादात्सुरेन्द्राय भृत्याय रघुसत्तमः ॥ ५०॥

trilokakaṇṭakaṃ daityaṃ hiraṇyakaśipuṃ purā ।
hatavānnārasimhena vapuṣā raghunandanaḥ ॥ 49॥
vikramaistribhirevāsau baliṃ baddhvā jagattrayam ।
ākramyādātsurendrāya bhr̥tyāya raghusattamaḥ ॥ 50॥

49-50. This Raghunandan (Lord Sri Ram) had killed the cruel demon Hiranyakshipu, who was like a thorn for all the three divisions of the world (celestial, terrestrial and subterranean worlds), by assuming the body of half-man half-lion¹. [This incarnation of the Lord was called 'Narsingh' or 'Nir Singh'.] (49).

The same one who is the most exalted in king Raghu's race of Ayodhya (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) had tied king Bali², measured the whole of the world in his three giants steps, and then returned it to Indra, the king of gods, who was the Lord's follower, being the Lord's subordinate and servant. [This refers to the Dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu.] (50).

[Note—¹Lord Nrisingh or Narsingh is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. In this incarnation, the Lord appeared from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in

general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

²This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a ‘Vaaman’ or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali’s own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali’s head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called ‘Trivikram’—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali’s principles of keeping one’s words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali’s head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper.]

रक्षसाः क्षत्रियाकारा जाता भूमेर्भरावहाः ।

तान् हत्वा बहुशो रामो भुवं जित्वा ह्यदान्मुनेः ॥ ५१॥

स एव साम्प्रतं जातो रघुवंशे परात्परः ।

भवदर्थे रघुश्रेष्ठो मानुषत्वमुपागतः ॥ ५२॥

rākṣasāḥ kṣatriyākārā jātā bhūmerbharāvahāḥ ।

tān hatvā bahuśo rāmo bhuvam jitvā hyadānmuneḥ ॥ 51॥

sa eva sāmpratam jāto raghuvaṃśe parātparaḥ ।
bhavadarthe raghuśreṣṭho mānuṣatvamupāgataḥ ॥ 52॥

51-52. When the demons assumed the form of Kshatriyas (warrior kings) and began tormenting mother earth, then the Lord manifested himself as sage Parashuram¹, killed them many times in battle, and having won (or snatched) the earth from their domination (or clutches) he handed it over to sage Kashyap (a Brahmin) (51).

Presently the same almighty Lord God of creation, who is eternal, infinite, almighty and unconquerable, has manifested himself as a human prince in the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya. He has done so for your sake².

[To wit, Lord Vishnu has come down as Lord Ram to punish you for the mischief you have been committing throughout your life just like he had done on other occasions I mention above.] (52)

[Note—¹This is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Shursena, the son of Kaartavirya-Arjuna, because the sage had refused to hand over the celestial cow known as Kapila to him. Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Kaartavirya-Arjuna.

²Mandodari had not realised what was in the mind of her husband. She was not privy to his internal thoughts, which made him so outwardly stubborn. Ravana had decided that he would attain emancipation and salvation by the only way he knew as a demon—which was to wage a fierce war and get himself killed by the Supreme Being, instead of having to endure the long-drawn process of attaining the same objective by other peaceful, righteous and auspicious means as prescribed by the scriptures.

There is no doubt as to this when we consider his conversation with Marich (Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 30-35), his instructions to female demons whom he had appointed to guard Sita (Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 65), his thoughts when he heard of the slaying of Khar and Dushan (Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19), as well as what he thinks in verse nos. 55-61 herein below.]

तस्य भार्या किमर्थं वा हता सीता वनाद्गता ।
मम पुत्रविनाशार्थं स्वस्यापि निधनाय च ॥ ५३॥
इतः परं वा वैदेहीं प्रेषयस्व रघूत्तमे ।
विभीषणाय राज्यं तु दत्त्वा गच्छामहे वनम् ॥ ५४॥

tasya bhāryā kimartham vā hr̥tā sītā vanādbalāt ।
 mama putravināśārtham svasyāpi nidhanāya ca ॥ 53॥
 itaḥ param vā vaidehīm preṣayasva raghūttame ।
 vibhīṣaṇāya rājyaṁ tu dattvā gacchāmahe vanam ॥ 54॥

53-54. Why did you abduct his wife Sita from the Tapovan (Panchvati) to get my son (Meghanad) killed and get yourself killed too? (53).

[It is till not too late to make amends. At least you are alive. So listen to what I have to say—] You should send Vaidehi (Sita) back to Lord Sri Ram even at this late hour. Then you will do a wise thing by anointing your brother Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka. After that, we two, you and me, will go to the forest as Vanprastha (to spend the rest of our lives doing penances and austerities for the welfare of our souls as ordained by the scriptures, for it would prepare us for making an honourable exit from the world when our end comes)' (54).

मन्दोदरीवचः श्रुत्वा रावणो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।
 कथं भद्रे रणे पुत्रान् भ्रातृन् राक्षसमण्डलम् ॥ ५३॥
 घातयित्वा राघवेण जीवामि वनगोचरः ।
 रामेण सह योत्स्यामि रामबाणैः सुशीघ्रणैः ॥ ५४॥
 विदार्यमाणो यास्यामि तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ।
 जानामि राघवं विष्णुं लक्ष्मीं जानामि जानकीम् ।
 ज्ञात्वैव जानकी सीता मयानीता वनाद्धृतात् ॥ ५५॥
 रामेण निधनं प्राप्य यास्यामीति परं पदम् ।
 विमुच्य त्वां तु संसाराद्गमिष्यामि सह प्रिये ॥ ५६॥

mandodarīvacaḥ śrutvā rāvaṇo vākyamabravīt ।
 katham bhadre raṇe putrān bhrātṛn rākṣasamaṇḍalam ॥ 55॥
 ghātayitvā rāghaveṇa jīvāmi vanagocaraḥ ।
 rāmeṇa saha yotsyāmi rāmabāṇaiḥ suśīghragaiḥ ॥ 56॥
 vidāryamāṇo yāsyāmi tadviṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam ।
 jñānāmi rāghavaṁ viṣṇuṁ lakṣmīm jñānāmi jānakīm ।
 jñātvaiḥ jānakī sītā mayānītā vanādbalāt ॥ 57॥
 rāmeṇa nidhanaṁ prāpya yāsyāmīti paramaṁ padam ।
 vimucya tvāṁ tu saṁsārādgamiṣyāmi saha priye ॥ 58॥

55-58. Hearing the words of Mandodari, Ravana said 'Oh noble lady (bhadre)! After having had my sons (i.e., Akshay Kumar, Meghanad), brother (Kumbhakarna) and all the demon warriors slayed in the battle, how can I ever dream of spending my life in the forest as a forest-dwelling hermit doing penances?

There is no choice left for me now but to fight to the end with Sri Ram. I know that I shall be wounded and pierced by his swift arrows. But that would ensure I go to the abode of Lord Vishnu (i.e. to heaven).

I understand and I recognise that Raghav (Sri Ram) is Lord Vishnu himself, and Janki (Sita) is goddess Laxmi (the consort of Lord Vishnu). With this full

understanding, and being well aware of it, I had purposely brought Sita forcibly from the forest (55-57) so that I can die at the hands of Sri Ram, and as a consequence attain his (Lord Vishnu's) supreme abode.

Oh dear! Now I shall take your leave and exit from this mundane delusory world of transmigration very happily and gladly and willingly. Nay, I will not go alone, but I shall take along with me all my faithful followers (i.e. the demons) who had been loyal to me all through (58).

[Note—¹This is Ravana's open confession. It shows that he was firm in his resolve to get all the male demons attain liberation and deliverance for their tormented souls by making them fight unto death in this war.

It also shows that he was not a selfish king who would seek spiritual rewards only for himself, but a generous and magnanimous ruler who wished to share with his fellow citizens this great reward like the way he had shared with them the spoils of his previous wars.

The question is: what happened to the female demons who survived their male companions? Well, many of them had perished in the fierce fire lit by Hanuman when he was burning Lanka—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 43-44. As a result, only the righteous members of the demon race had survived this cruel war; they were the citizens of the new Lanka which would be ruled by Vibhishan who ascended its throne. Once peace returned, prosperity followed, and the population multiplied to re-populate this majestic kingdom once again.]

परानन्दमयी शुद्धा सेव्यते या मुमुक्षुभिः ।
तां गतिं तु गमिष्यामि हतो रामेण संयुगे ॥ ५९॥
प्राप्त्य कल्मषाणीह मुक्तिं यास्यामि दुर्लभाम् ॥ ६०॥

parānandamayī śuddhā sevyate yā mumukṣubhiḥ ।
tām gatiṁ tu gamiṣyāmi hato rāmeṇa saṁyuge ॥ 59॥
prakṣālya kalmaṣāṇīha muktiṁ yāsyāmi durlabhām ॥ 60॥

59-60. The supreme state of pure and eternal bliss, the eternal state of peace and tranquility that spiritual aspirants and seekers of emancipation and salvation expect to enjoy, I shall get that stellar opportunity by voluntarily getting killed at the hands of Sri Ram (59).

In this manner, by washing (purging, cleaning) away all my sins, evils, misdeeds and vices that have tarnished my soul, I shall achieve the rarest of rare state of purity that would finally grant me liberation from the cycle of birth and death that entangles a creature to this gross mundane world of transmigration, along with its attendant delusions, horrors and miseries (60).

वलेशादिपञ्चकतरङ्गयुतं भूमादयं
दारात्मजासधनबन्धुञ्जपाभियुक्तम् ।
और्वानलाभनिजरोषमनङ्गजालं
संसारसागरमतीत्य हरिं वृजामि ॥ ६१॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे दशमः
सर्गः ॥ १०॥

kleśādipañcakataraṅgayutaṁ bhramāḍhyaṁ
dārātmajāptadhanabandhujhaṣābhiyuktam ।
aurvānalābhanijaroṣamanaṅgajālaṁ
saṁsārasāgaramatītya hariṁ vrajāmi ॥ 61॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe daśamaḥ
sargaḥ ॥ 10॥

61. I shall finally cross the world-like ocean that traps the creature endlessly in its whirlpools of delusions and false charms.

This huge ocean has five great tormentors or trouble-givers¹ in the form of its gigantic waves; its swirling whirlpools are symbolised by the countless deceits, shams, illusions and deceptions that are prevalent in this world; the many relationships that one develops in this artificial world are the many varieties of fish that dwell in the water of this ocean; anger, wrathfulness and vengeance are the many fires that rage here; and the net which keeps the creature trapped inside this ocean is symbolized by Kaam, the overbearing emotions of passion, lust, desires and longing for pleasure and comfort of the sense organs that dominate the mental horizon of all its inhabitants.

Well, how lucky and fortunate I am indeed that now I shall cross over this huge and intractable ocean that has trapped by soul, and go to the other side to find my way to the abode of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu; i.e. to heaven).² (61).

[Note—¹The five tormenters referred in verse no. 61 that keep the creature miserable in this world are the following—(a) Avidya (ignorance); (b) Asmita (to regard Atma and the subtle body consisting of mind-intellect complex as one; also means pride, ego, haughtiness, hypocrisy, arrogance—or Ahankar; (c) Raag (attachment, infatuation, desire etc.); (d) Dwesh (ill-will, enmity, malice, hatred, confrontationist attitude etc.) and (e) Abhinivesh (fear of death).

²Verse nos. 55-61 are eye-openers for all those who doubt Ravana's intentions for waging this war. These verses explicitly tell that Ravana was well aware of what he was doing. His intention was noble and holy to the core. The external tantrums that he had thrown were just to mislead other demons—otherwise they wouldn't have fought at all. Like a true and benevolent king, he wanted all his men to share the largesse of emancipation and salvation which has literally come a-begging to be accepted at their very doorstep.

Please also refer to Uttar Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 31-42, 58-59.]

Thus ends Canto 10 of Adhyatma Ramayan, narrating the conversation between Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Uma.

Section 18.2.3: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 1-88:-

[This Canto describes the battle between Lord Ram and Ravana, and the latter's final deliverance when he dies in the battle-field and his soul emerges from his gross demonic body to enter the holy body of the Lord to find eternal rest.]

॥एकादशः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

इत्युक्त्वा वचनं प्रेम्णा राज्ञीं मन्दोदरीं तदा ।

रावणः प्रययौ योद्धुं रामेण सह संयुगे ॥ १॥

दृढं स्यन्दनमास्थाय वृतो घोरैर्निशाचरैः ।

चक्रैः षोडशभिर्युक्तं सवरूथं सकूबरम् ॥ २॥

पिशाचवदनैर्घोरैः खरैर्युक्तं भयावहम् ।

सर्वास्त्रशस्त्रसहितं सर्वोपस्करसंयुतम् ॥ ३॥

॥ekādaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

ityuktvā vacanaṁ premṇā rājñīṁ mandodarīm tadā ।

rāvaṇaḥ prayayau yoddhum rāmeṇa saha saṁyuge ॥ 1॥

dṛḍhaṁ syandanamāsthāya vṛto ghorairniśācaraiḥ ।

cakraiḥ ṣoḍaśabhiryuktaṁ savarūthaṁ sakūbaram ॥ 2॥

piśācavadanairghoraiḥ kharairyuktaṁ bhayāvaham ।

sarvāstraśastrasahitaṁ sarvopaskarasamyutam ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Having affectionately consoled the chief queen Mandodari as described above, Ravana started off for the battle-field to fight the final battle with Sri Ram (1).

He mounted a sturdy and strong chariot which was surrounded by most formidable, ferocious and fierce demons. That chariot had 16 wheels, protective reinforced armour called a 'Baruth', and a 'Kubar' (a part of the chariot through which all the reins of the animals used to pull the chariot pass) (2).

Horrifying mules—which had faces like that of Satan or the Devil—were yoked to it¹. This made the chariot appear grotesque, very fearful, inauspicious and terrible to behold. It was provided with all types of arms and armaments, and was well equipped with all the paraphernalia and accoutrements needed for war (3).

[Note—¹Instead of horses or bulls, Ravana's chariot had mules to pull it.]

निश्चक्रामाथ सहसा रावणो भीषणाकृतिः ।

आयान्तं रावणं दृष्ट्वा भीषणं रणकर्कशम् ॥ ४॥

सन्त्रस्ताभूतदा सेना वानरी रामपालिता ॥ ५॥

niścakrāmātha sahasā rāvaṇo bhīṣaṇākṛtiḥ ।

āyāntaṃ rāvaṇaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā bhīṣaṇaṃ raṇakarkaśaṃ ॥ 4॥
santrastābhūttadā senā vānarī rāmapālītā ॥ 5॥

4-5. In this manner, Ravana came out of the city presenting a most formidable, horrifying and scary sight. Seeing that the most ferocious, ruthless and battle-hardened war veteran Ravana was approaching with a vengeance (4), the monkey army, though under Lord Sri Ram's protection, was nevertheless extremely terrified (5).

हनूमानथ चोत्प्लुत्य रावणं योद्धुमाययौ ।
आगत्य हनुमान् रक्षोवक्षस्यतुलविक्रमः ॥ ६॥
मुष्टिबन्धं दृढं बद्ध्वा ताडयामास वेगतः ।
तेन मुष्टिप्रहारेण जानुभ्यामपतद्रथे ॥ ७॥

hanūmānatha cotplutya rāvaṇaṃ yoddhumāyayau ।
āgatya hanumān rakṣovakṣasyatulavikramaḥ ॥ 6॥
muṣṭibandhaṃ dr̥ḍhaṃ baddhvā tāḍayāmāsa vegataḥ ।
tena muṣṭiprahāreṇa jānubhyāmapatadrathe ॥ 7॥

6-7. Then Hanuman leapt at once to the front to face Ravana and engage him in battle. As soon as he came there (in front of Ravana), the most valiant and valorous Hanuman (6) clenched his fists firmly and hit him swiftly hard on the chest. No sooner had he been hit by the blow of Hanuman's clenched fist, than he (Ravana) swooned and fell down on his knees on the chariot (7).

मूर्च्छितोऽथ मुहूर्तेन रावणः पुनरुत्थितः ।
उवाच च हनूमन्तं शूरोऽसि मम सम्मतः ॥ ८॥
हनूमानाह तं धिक्त्वा यस्त्वं जीवसि रावण ।
त्वं तावन्मुष्टिना वक्षो मम ताडय रावण ॥ ९॥

mūrcchito'tha muhūrtena rāvaṇaḥ punarutthitaḥ ।
uvāca ca hanūmantaṃ śūro'si mama sammataḥ ॥ 8॥
hanūmānāha taṃ dhiṇmāṃ yastvaṃ jīvasi rāvaṇa ।
tvaṃ tāvanmuṣṭinā vakṣo mama tāḍaya rāvaṇa ॥ 9॥

8-9. He remained unconscious for 1 Muhurt (literally for a short while), and then regained his senses once again. Then he praised Hanuman's valour and strength by saying: 'Oh Hanuman! I accept that you are very strong, agile, powerful, potent, valorous, bold and courageous; there is no doubt about it.' (8).

Hanuman replied, 'Oh Ravana! It is shameful for me that inspite of my hitting you with my fists you have still survived. Alright, now you hit me on my chest'¹ (9).

[Note—¹This is truly remarkable and show how two valiant warriors meet each other. Here we read that first Ravana has no compunctions in lauding Hanuman's valour,

and then Hanuaman offers himself to be hit as hard as he had hit Ravana on the chest as a reciprocal gesture to set the account straight and give Ravana a chance to feel satisfied.

They told each other: “Well buddy; we are fighting an honourable duel, and in such an engagement it’s expected of a valiant warrior to acknowledge his adversary’s valour and strength, and at the same time it’s equally honourable for them to give each other an opportunity to try his own hands to show how valiant and strong he is, for its not honourable and worthy of any of the two warriors to vanquish a fallen hero.”

So therefore, Hanuman thanked Ravana for his gesture of praising him and made this offer: “Since you are noble enough to publicly acknowledge my strength, instead of cursing me for hitting you so hard that you swooned and fell down with a single blow of my fist, I will now offer myself to you to give me an equal punch on my chest to settle this first bout of the duel in a draw. Come, you’re welcome.”]

पश्चान्मया हतः प्राणान्मोक्ष्यसे नात्र संशयः ।
तथेति मुष्टिना वक्षो रावणेनापि ताडितः ॥ १०॥
विघूर्णमाननयनः किञ्चित्कश्मलमाययौ ।
सञ्ज्ञामवाप्य कपिराद् रावणं हन्तुमुद्यतः ॥ ११॥

paścānmayā hataḥ prāṇānmokṣyase nātra saṁśayaḥ ।
tatheti muṣṭinā vakṣo rāvaṇenāpi tāḍitaḥ ॥ 10॥
vighūrṇamānanayanaḥ kiñcitkaśmalamāyayau ।
sanjñāmavāpya kapirāḍ rāvaṇaṁ hantumudyataḥ ॥ 11॥

10-11. After that (i.e. after you have hit me, and then I retaliate by hitting you back) there is no doubt that you shall die with my next fist with which I shall hit you'.

Then Ravana said 'alright' and accepted the challenge; he hit Hanuman hard on his chest with his clenched fist (10).

Hanuman braced himself for the blow, but when he was hit, his eyes went round in circles; he felt giddy, swooned a bit, and became disoriented and uneasy.

Then, when he had recovered himself, the great monkey prepared himself to make a counter-attack at Ravana (11).

ततोऽन्यत्र गतो भीत्या रावणो राक्षसाधिपः ।
हनूमानङ्गदश्चैव नलो नीलस्तथैव च ॥ १२॥
चत्वारः समवेत्याग्रे दृष्ट्वा राक्षसपुङ्गवान् ।
अग्निवर्णं तथा सर्परोमाणं खड्गरोमकम् ॥ १३॥
तथा वृश्चिकरोमाणं निर्जघ्नुः क्रमशोऽसुरान् ।
चत्वारश्चतुरो हत्वा राक्षसान् भीमविक्रमान् ।
सिंहनादं पृथक् कृत्वा रामपार्श्वमुपागताः ॥ १४॥

tato'nyatra gato bhītyā rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ ।
hanūmānaṅgadaścaiva nalo nīlastathaiva ca ॥ 12॥

catvāraḥ samavetyāgre dr̥ṣṭvā rākṣasapuṅgavān ।
 agnivarṇaṃ tathā sarparomāṇaṃ khaḍgaromakam ॥ 13॥
 tathā vṛścikaromāṇaṃ nirjaghnūḥ kramaśo'surān ।
 catvāraścaturō hatvā rākṣasān bhīmavikramān ।
 siṃhanādaṃ pr̥thak kṛtvā rāmapārśvamupāgatāḥ ॥ 14॥

12-14. The king of demons Ravana became very astonished¹, as well as apprehensive and terrified²; so he made good his escape from there to go to some other place³.

Meanwhile, Hanuman, Angad, Nala and Neel presently found (12) that four demons, who were the best amongst the demon warriors, and whose names were Agnivarna, Sarparoma, Khangroma (13) and Vrishchikarom respectively, were standing in front of them. Then those four brave monkeys killed those four most valiant and powerful demons who stood facing them to challenge them and block their way, one by one⁴.

Thereafter, roaring individually at this victory, they came back and stood in front of Sri Ram (14).

[Note—¹Why was Ravana astonished? It is because he had hit Hanuman with all his might, putting all the strength that he possessed in the force of that single strike; and Ravana's might and strength were no small things, as he had even vanquished the famed gods by the might and strength of the same arms of his with which he had hit Hanuman hard. So he was surprised as to how this blow did not have its desired effect on Hanuman; he wondered how the latter managed to bear it with just a bit of swooning and tottering, for Hanuman had recovered soon to hit back at Ravana. This was not a small feat for Hanuman, and it dumbfounded Ravana, for the latter had expected that his adversary would lay unconscious on the ground for quite some time if at all he managed to survive the force of the blow.

²Why did Ravana become apprehensive and got terrified? It is because now he feared for the worse from Hanuman. He had had a first hand experience of what Hanuman could do if he became wrathful and decided to take revenge, for the events in Lanka when Hanuman had killed so many of his brave demons and burnt the city were fresh in his memory.

³Why did Ravana run away from there? He felt scared what Hanuman would do to him now that he has been hurt. He feared for the worst from an angry Hanuman, so he decided to escape from while there was time to avert Hanuman's wrath, for he was sure that it would be a fiery wrath, and if he fell down once again under Hanuman's beating it would humiliate him in front of his own demon warriors. This would have a cascading affect on their morale, and the whole demon army would be too scared to fight even before the battle-royal with Lord Sri Ram actually begins.

⁴To wit, each monkey warrior killed the demon who was before him, as the latter not only challenged the former to settle scores with them on behalf of Ravana but also blocked their way.

Hence, Hanuman killed the demon Agnivarna who was facing him; Angad slayed Sarparoma who was standing in his front; Nala did away with the demon Khangroma; and Neela killed the last of them, the demon Vrishchikarom who stood opposite him.]

ततः क्रुद्धो दशग्रीवः सन्दश्य दशनच्छदम् ॥ १५॥
 विवृत्य नयने क्रूरो राममेवान्वधावत ।
 दशग्रीवो रथस्थस्तु रामं वज्रोपमैः शरैः ॥ १६॥
 आजघान महाघोरैर्धाराभिरिव तोयदः ।
 रामस्य पुरतः सर्वान् वानरानपि विव्यधे ॥ १७॥

tataḥ kruddho daśagrīvaḥ sandaśya daśanacchadam ॥ 15॥
 vivṛtya nayane krūro rāmamevānvadhāvata ।
 daśagrīvo rathasthastu rāmaṁ vajropamaiḥ śaraiḥ ॥ 16॥
 ājaghāna mahāghorairdhārābhiriva toyadaḥ ।
 rāmasya purataḥ sarvān vānarānapi vivyadhe ॥ 17॥

15-17. After this, the 10-shouldered Ravana became very angry and furious; he bit all his ten lips with his teeth (in indignation, resentment and dismay, that his four great warriors were so quickly killed) (15).

That cruel and ferocious fellow glared at Sri Ram and lunged at him angrily. The 10-headed one (Ravana) was on a chariot, while unfortunately Lord Sri Ram was on foot. Finding that his opponent was in a disadvantageous position, Ravana began raining a hail of Vajra-like arrows¹ on Lord Sri Ram (16) just like clouds rain torrential rain on the ground². He wounded all the monkeys even as Sri Ram watched (17).

[Note—¹Vajra or Bajra is the weapon of Indra, the king of gods. The word also means refers to any other thing that is extremely hard, sharp, strong and powerful enough to pierce through any obstacle. Here the arrows shot by Ravana are called ‘Vajra-like’ as they were very sharp, strong and able to either kill or at least severely wound their target.

²Here it means that the arrows were shot by Ravana so swiftly and in quick succession that they first appeared to fill the sky and obstruct the sun before falling down upon the ground in the form of a blanket of nails, injuring those on the battle-field, just like hail or sleet falls along with lashing rain during a severe thunder-storm, to injure all those who are exposed to it.]

ततः पावकसङ्काशैः शरैः काञ्चनभूषणैः ।
 अभ्यवर्षद्रुणे रामो दशग्रीवं समाहितः ॥ १८॥
 रथस्थं रावणं दृष्ट्वा भूमिष्ठं रघुनन्दनम् ।
 आहूय मातलिं शक्रो वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ॥ १९॥

tataḥ pāvakasankāśaiḥ śaraiḥ kāñcanabhūṣṇaiḥ ।
 abhyavarṣadrūṇe rāmo daśagrīvaṁ samāhitaḥ ॥ 18॥
 rathasthaṁ rāvaṇaṁ drṣṭvā bhūmiṣṭhaṁ raghunandanam ।
 āhūya mātaliṁ śakro vacanaṁ cedamabravīt ॥ 19॥

18-19. Then Sri Ram became alert and began showering gold-plated arrows at the demons; these arrows were glowing like fire¹ (18).

When Indra (the king of gods) saw that Ravana was on a chariot while Raghunandan (Sri Ram) was on the ground (i.e. on foot), he called his charioteer Matli and said (19)—

[Note—¹To wit, these arrows shot by Lord Ram were energized; they radiated their energy just like fire glows in its fiery brilliance. They were also gold-plated, which meant that they dazzled in sunlight and shot beams of light that were reflected from their polished surfaces as they streaked in the sky towards their target.

It appeared that countless fiery streaks of flame had suddenly flared up on the battle-field from the spot where Lord Ram stood, and were dashing across the sky towards the demons.]

रथेन मम भूमिष्ठं शीघ्रं याहि रघूत्तमम् ।
 त्वरितं भूतलं गत्वा कुरु कार्यं ममानघ ॥ २०॥
 एवमुक्तोऽथ तं नत्वा मातलिर्देवसारथिः ।
 ततो हयैश्च संयोज्य हरितैः स्यन्दनोत्तमम् ॥ २१॥
 स्वर्गाज्जयार्थं रामस्य ह्युपचक्राम मातलिः ।
 प्राञ्जलिर्देवराजेन प्रेषितोऽस्मि रघूत्तम ॥ २२॥

rathena mama bhūmiṣṭhaṁ śīghraṁ yāhi raghūttamam ।
 tvaritaṁ bhūtalaṁ gatvā kuru kāryaṁ mamānagha ॥ 20॥
 evamukto'tha taṁ natvā mātaliṛdevasārathiḥ ।
 tato hayaiśca saṁyojya haritaiḥ syandanottamam ॥ 21॥
 svargājjayārthaṁ rāmasya hyupacakrāma mātaliḥ ।
 prāñjalirdevarājena preṣito'smi raghūttama ॥ 22॥

20-22. 'Oh Anagh¹! Look, the most exalted Raghu (Sri Ram) is standing on the ground, on foot (while our enemy Ravana has the benefit of a war chariot). So please take my chariot and go to the earth immediately, and do this work for me with all haste' (20).

Having received his orders, the charioteer of the gods named 'Matli', bowed his head before Indra; he expeditiously yoked green coloured horses to his excellent chariot (21), and came down from the heavens for the purpose of serving Lord Sri Ram and helping him attain victory.

He presented himself before the Lord and said to him with folded hands, 'Oh the most exalted of the Raghus! I have been sent by the king of gods (to place myself in your service) (22).

[Note—¹The word 'Anagh' literally means an exalted person who has no faults and has done no sins. Here it is a polite way of address that Indra uses for Matli just like we say "My honourable gentleman".]

रथोऽयं देवराजस्य विजयाय तव प्रभो ।
 प्रेषितश्च महाराज धनुरैन्द्रं च भूषितम् ॥ २३॥
 अभेद्यं कवचं खड्गं दिव्यतूणीयुगं तथा ।
 आरुह्य च रथं राम रावणं जहि राक्षसम् ॥ २४॥
 मया सारथिना देव वृत्रं देवपतिर्यथा ।
 इत्युक्तस्तं परिक्रम्य नमस्कृत्य रथोत्तमम् ॥ २५॥

ratho'yaṃ devarājasya vijayāya tava prabho ।
 preṣitaśca mahārāja dhanuraindraṃ ca bhūṣitam ॥ 23॥
 abhedyaṃ kavacaṃ khaḍgaṃ divyatūṇīyugaṃ tathā ।
 āruhya ca rathaṃ rāma rāvaṇaṃ jahi rākṣasam ॥ 24॥
 mayā sārathinā deva vṛtraṃ devapatiriyathā ।
 ityuktastam parikramya namaskṛtya rathottamam ॥ 25॥

23-25. Oh Lord! This is the king of god's chariot, and he has sent it for your service so that victory can be easily attained by you.

Oh Lord! He has also sent you some of his own weapons. Here are they: this is his bow (23); and here is the impregnable armour, a sword, and two divine quivers (from which an endless stock of arrows are got)¹.

Oh Sri Ram! Mount this chariot and slay the demon Ravana (24) even as the Lord of Gods (Indra) had killed the demon Vrittasur² with me as his charioteer'.

When Matli had said so, Lord Sri Ram circumambulated the excellent chariot and bowed before it (to show his respect to the divine chariot as it belonged to the gods; it was also done to give thanks to the gods for extending help to him) (25).

[Note—¹Here the version of Adhyatma Ramayan varies from that of Ram Charit Manas. As we find here, Lord Ram was armed with weapons sent to him by Indra, the king of gods, and it is with these arms that he fought Ravana. But in Ram Charit Manas no such thing has happened; there Indra has sent his chariot alone, and the Lord fought and won the war with the weapons that he traditionally used, i.e. a bow and arrows.

Of course it is true that the chariot sent by Indra was well equipped with all sorts of arms and ammunitions, and so it was taken for granted that Lord Ram would have the benefit of their use, and so it was needless to mention them separately. So in Ram Charit Manas their special mention was skipped.

²Demon Vrittasur, though having an evil body of a demon, was at heart a great devotee of the Lord and an enlightened soul. During the battle with Indra, his enunciations on devotion and wisdom are worth their weight in gold. (This episode appears in Bhagwat Mahapuran). To kill him, the God asked sage Dadhichi to give his bones which were used to mould the Vajra (thunderbolt; the weapon of Indra), and it was used to kill him.]

आरुरोह रथं रामो लोकान्लक्ष्म्या नियोजयन् ।
 ततोऽभवन्महायुद्धं भैरवं रोमहर्षणम् ॥ २६॥
 महात्मनो राघवस्य रावणस्य च धीमतः ।

आग्नेयेन च आग्नेयं दैवं दैवेन राघवः ॥ २७॥
 अस्त्रं राक्षसराजस्य जघान परमास्त्रवित् ।
 ततस्तु ससृजे घोरं राक्षसं चास्त्रमस्त्रवित् ।
 क्रोधेन महताविष्टो रामस्योपरि रावणः ॥ २८॥

āruroha ratham rāmo lokānllakṣmyā niyojayan ।
 tato'bhavanmahāyuddham bhairavam romaharṣaṇam ॥ 26॥
 mahātmano rāghavasya rāvaṇasya ca dhīmataḥ ।
 āgneyena ca āgneyam daivam daivena rāghavaḥ ॥ 27॥
 astram rākṣasarājasya jaghāna paramāstravit ।
 tatastu sasrje ghoram rākṣasam cāstramastravit ।
 krodhena mahatāviṣṭo rāmasyopari rāvaṇaḥ ॥ 28॥

26-28. Sri Ram mounted the chariot of the gods sent to him by Indra. It was a magnificent sight to behold the Lord on this divine chariot; it was a sight that heralded hope, good fortunes and auspiciousness for the whole world.

[The final duel between Lord Sri Ram and Ravana started now—]

Then the final spectacularly fierce, ruthless and no-holds-barred great duel, which was chillingly exciting, nail biting, hair raising and thrilling to the core (26) started between the great and most exalted Raghav (Sri Ram) and Ravana who, though being a demon by birth, was however wise and intelligent (rāvaṇasya dhīmataḥ)¹.

Raghav (Sri Ram)—who was an expert in the art of warfare and singularly adept in the use of weapons—cut down Ravana's weapon known as 'Agneyastra' (a missile-like weapon tipped with fire) with a matching 'Agneyastra' and 'Devastra' (a weapon shot after invoking separate patron Gods to make it very potent) and other similar weapons of his own.

Then Ravana—who was well versed in the art of use of weapons—became very furious, and he shot a most formidable weapon known as 'Rakshashastra' (a weapon that was exclusively used by demons) at Sri Ram (27-28).

[Note—¹Why is Ravana honoured by the epithet of “dhīmataḥ”, i.e. someone who is wise and intelligent? Well, the answer is not far to be sought.

He is praised as being wise and intelligent because not only did he find the spiritual reward of deliverance for his own soul but also for the entire demon race, but he also saved his honour and self-respect as well as that of his race by not surrendering before his enemy in a war, but preferring to die like a valiant warrior, fighting his enemy and falling in the battle-field instead of either running away like a coward or making compromises out of fear of life.

He is honoured because he has used this opportunity of waging a war with Lord Ram to provide himself as well as all other members of his demon race a golden chance to attain liberation and deliverance of their souls. He knew that it is not possible for any of them to find deliverance by the usual method as prescribed by the scriptures, such as living a pious and noble way of life, doing good deeds, worshipping god, doing penances and austerities, making charities etc., being merciful to others, observing the laws of Dharma (propriety, probity, righteousness, ethics and meritorious deeds), and in general leading a life that would help them to accumulate

some spiritual merit that would grant them emancipation and salvation as a reward. It was out of the question.

That meant that if he missed this chance then his entire race would be eternally condemned to live an evil life of sin and vices, from which there would be redemption. He also knew that Lord Ram was none but Lord Vishnu, and if he died at the hands of the Lord then it was sure that neither he nor his race would be condemned to hell as the Lord was so merciful and gracious by his nature that he was bound to show his compassion on these tormented souls and grant them deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Ravana has minced no words in expressing his mind clearly on this subject while conversing with his queen Mandodari—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 55-61.

To wit, he had killed two birds with the same arrow: he kept his dignity as a valorous warrior who never bowed before his enemy, and he easily attained deliverance of his soul inspite of having led a life full of sins, vices and evil deeds.

Even the gods, who all the while had bethought Ravana to be a vile and pervert demon, were astonished at his spiritual attainment when his soul had exited his gross body in the form of a brilliant shaft of light to enter the divine and holy body of Lord Ram to find a place of eternal rest there, as his soul merged with the cosmic Soul represented by the Lord—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 78-82.]

रावणस्य धनुर्मुक्ताः सर्पा भूत्वा महाविषाः ।
शयः काञ्चनपुङ्खाभा राघवं परितोऽपतन् ॥ २९॥
तैः शरैः सर्पवदनैर्वमद्भिरनलं मुखैः ।
दिशश्च विदिशश्चैव व्याप्तास्तत्र तदाभवन् ॥ ३०॥

rāvaṇasya dhanurmuktāḥ śarpā bhūtvā mahāviṣāḥ ।
śarāḥ kāñcanapuṅkhābhā rāghavaṃ parito'patan ॥ 29॥
taiḥ śaraiḥ śarpavadanairvamadbhiranalam mukhaiḥ ।
diśaśca vidiśaścaiva vyāptāstatra tadābhavan ॥ 30॥

29-30. The arrows shot from the bow of Ravana had fins made of golden strands, and when they fell all around Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) they transformed themselves into very poisonous and fierce snakes (29).

All the directions of the compass were saturated by arrows shot by Ravana; these missiles had flames of fire leaping up and spreading in all the directions from their tips, giving the impression of so many flying dragons with wide open mouths from which tongues of fire leapt out¹ (30).

[Note—¹To wit, the arrows shot by Ravana transformed themselves by magical powers employed by Ravana instantly into poisonous dragons squirting flame, brimstone and fire, and they covered the ground all around Sri Ram in the battle-field. It appeared that hot balls of fire were raining down from the sky, with flames emanating from them trailing in the rear in the form of their tails.]

रामः सर्पास्ततो दृष्ट्वा समन्तात्परिपूरितान् ।

सौपर्णमस्तुं तद्गोरं पुरः प्रावर्तयद्रणे ॥ ३१॥
 रामेण मुक्तास्ते बाणा भूत्वा गरुडरूपिणः ।
 चिच्छिदुः सर्पबाणांस्तान् समन्तात् सर्पशत्रुवः ॥ ३२॥

rāmaḥ sarpāṁstato drṣṭvā samantātparipūrītān ।
 sauparṇamastraṁ tadghoraṁ puraḥ prāvartayadraṇe ॥ 31॥
 rāmeṇa muktāste bāṇā bhūtvā garuḍarūpiṇaḥ ।
 cicchiduh sarpabāṇāmstān samantāt sarpaśatravaḥ ॥ 32॥

31-32. When Sri Ram observed that the whole area (of the battle-field) was covered by serpents resembling fierce dragons, he shot the most potent and formidable weapon called ‘Garudastra’, so called because on being shot, it metamorphosed into Garud, the legendary Eagle who is said to be the mount of Lord Vishnu (31).

Those arrows launched by Sri Ram immediately began cutting down or neutralizing the serpent-like or dragon-like magical arrows that had spread everywhere¹ (32).

[Note—¹Ravana had shot arrows that transmuted themselves into serpents. To counter them, Lord Ram shot his arrows that became Garud, the legendary Eagle who is reputed to devour serpents. So in effect what happened was this: Lord Ram’s arrows neutralized those shot by Ravana by becoming Garuds who easily devoured the serpents that Ravana’s arrows had become, thereby clearing the battle-field of this illusion.]

अस्त्रे प्रतिहते युद्धे रामेण दशकन्धरः ।
 अभ्यवर्षततो रामं घोराभिः शरवृष्टिभिः ॥ ३३॥
 ततः पुनः शरानीकै राममक्लिष्टकारिणम् ।
 अर्दयित्वा तु घोरेण मातलिं प्रत्यविध्यत ॥ ३४॥

astre pratihate yuddhe rāmeṇa daśakandharaḥ ।
 abhyavarṣattato rāmaṁ ghorābhiḥ śaravṛṣṭibhiḥ ॥ 33॥
 tataḥ punaḥ śarāṇīkai rāmamakliṣṭakāriṇam ।
 ardayitvā tu ghoreṇa mātaliṁ pratyavidhyata ॥ 34॥

33-34. When the 10-shouldered Ravana found that all his magical weapons had been nullified and made ineffective by Sri Ram in the battle, he showered a fresh volley of fierce arrows on the latter (33).

As a result, he once again caused immense trouble for Sri Ram by peppering him with sharp arrows, besides wounding his charioteer Matli (34).

पातयित्वा रथोपरथे रथकेतुं च काञ्चनम् ।
 ऐन्द्रानश्वानभ्यहनद्रावणः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः ॥ ३५॥
 विषेदुर्देवगन्धर्वाश्चरणाः पितरस्तथा ।
 आर्ताकारं हरिं दृष्ट्वा व्यथिताश्च महर्षयः ॥ ३६॥

pāṭayitvā rathopasthe rathaketuṃ ca kāñcanam ।
 aindrāśvānabhyahanadrāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrcchitaḥ ॥ 35॥
 viṣedurdevagandharvāścāraṇāḥ pitarastathā ।
 ārtākāraṃ harim dr̥ṣṭvā vyathitāśca maharṣayaḥ ॥ 36॥

35-36. Not satisfied by it, Ravana—who was mad with anger and indignation—severed the golden flag (the war standard) of Sri Ram's chariot that fell down at the back; he also wounded the horses of Indra (who were driving the chariot) (35).

Seeing that Hari (another name for Lord Sri Ram) was in great trouble, the Gods, Gandharvas (celestial semi-Gods; regarded as musicians of heaven), Charans (celestial bards) and Pittars (dead ancestors in spirit form) became remorseful and gloomy, while the great sages and hermits lamented gravely in their hearts¹ (36).

[Note—¹Falling of the flag flying atop a king's chariot in the battle-field is considered to be a bad sign; it is tantamount to his virtual defeat. It also breaks the morale of his army as they regard it as a sign that their enemy is having an upper hand in the war.

In the present case, there is a direct confrontation between Lord Ram and Ravana, while their respective armies are watching the duel. So when the flag atop Lord Ram's chariot was broken by Ravana and it tumbled down, those who supported the Lord in this war, such as the gods, the gandharvas, the charans, the hermits and the sages, were bound to be worried.]

व्यथिता वानरेन्द्राश्च बभूवुः सविभीषणाः ।
 दशास्यो विंशतिभुजः प्रगृहीतशरासनः ॥ ३७॥
 ददृशे रावणस्तत्र मैनाक इव पर्वतः ।
 रामस्तु भ्रुकुटिं बद्ध्वा क्रोधसंरक्तलोचनः ॥ ३८॥
 कोपं चकार सदृशं निर्दहन्निव राक्षसम् ।
 धनुरादाय देवेन्द्रधनुराकारमद्भुतम् ॥ ३९॥
 गृहीत्वा पाणिना बाणं कालानलसमप्रभम् ।
 निर्दहन्निव चक्षुर्भ्यां ददृशे रिपुमन्तिके ॥ ४०॥

vyathitā vānarendrāśca babhūvuḥ savibhīṣaṇāḥ ।
 daśāsyō viṃśatibhujāḥ pragṛhītaśarāsanāḥ ॥ 37॥
 dadṛśe rāvaṇastatra maināka iva parvataḥ ।
 rāmastu bhrukuṭiṃ baddhvā krodhasamraktalocanāḥ ॥ 38॥
 kopam cakāra sadṛśam nirdahanniva rākṣasam ।
 dhanurādāya devendradhanurākāramadbhutam ॥ 39॥
 gr̥hītvā pāṇinā bāṇam kālānalasamaprabham ।
 nirdahanniva cakṣurbhyām dadṛśe ripumantike ॥ 40॥

37-40. All the commanders and chiefs of the monkey army, as well as Vibhishan, became very worried and confounded. At that time, Ravana, with his 10-heads and 20-arms, and holding bows and arrows (37), looked formidably fearful and colossus in form like a personified Mainak Mountain.

Meanwhile, Lord Sri Ram's eyes became red with anger; his eyebrows curved like a bow in his annoyance and anger (38). Fiercely glaring at the demon as if he would burn him to death, he (Sri Ram) picked up another great and magnificent bow that was like the 'rainbow', the majestic bow of Indra (39), and picking up an arrow that was as splendid, radiant and glowing as 'the fiery dart of death' used by Kaal, the god of death, in his hands, the Lord looked at his enemy with such fierce eyes as if he would reduce him to ashes (40).

पराक्रमं दर्शयितुं तेजसा प्रज्वलन्निव ।
प्रचक्रमे कालरूपी सर्वलोकस्य पश्यतः ॥ ४१॥
विकृष्य चापं रामस्तु रावणं प्रतिविध्य च ।
हर्षयन् वानरानीकं कालान्तक इवाबभौ ॥ ४२॥

parākramaṃ darśayitum tejasā prajvalanniva ।
pracakrame kālarūpī sarvalokasya paśyataḥ ॥ 41॥
vikṛṣya cāpaṃ rāmastu rāvaṇaṃ pratividhya ca ।
harṣayan vānarāṇīkaṃ kālāntaka ivābabhau ॥ 42॥

41-42. Lord Sri Ram, who presently looked as if was a personified form of Kaal, the god of death, became so intensely furious that his entire form glowed like fire. He now determined to exhibit his valour and gallantry before the whole world that would watch the proceedings in awe and amazement (41).

He pulled the string of his bow and perforated Ravana with his arrows. The Lord looked majestic, awe-inspiring and formidable as Kaal himself was personified in his ferocious form; all the monkeys and bears once again became hopeful of victory, making them feel cheerful, exhilarant and elated at this favourable turn of events on the battle-field¹ (42).

[Note—¹ Just a while ago there was gloom everywhere when the flag atop Lord Ram's chariot was broken by Ravana. Now, when the Lord retaliated fiercely and peppered Ravana with his arrows, a cry of jubilation rang out in the ranks of the army of monkeys and bears.]

क्रुद्धं रामस्य वदनं दृष्ट्वा शत्रुं प्रधावतः ।
तत्रसुः सर्वभूतानि चचाल च वसुन्धरा ॥ ४३॥
रामं दृष्ट्वा महारौद्रमुत्पातांश्च सुदारुणान् ।
त्रस्तानि सर्वभूतानि रावणं चाविशद्भयम् ॥ ४४॥

kruddhaṃ rāmasya vadaṇaṃ drṣṭvā śatruṃ pradhāvataḥ ।
tatraśuḥ sarvabhūtāni cacāla ca vasundharā ॥ 43॥
rāmaṃ drṣṭvā mahāraudramutpātāṃśca sudāruṇān ।
trastāni sarvabhūtāni rāvaṇaṃ cāviśadbhayaṃ ॥ 44॥

43-44. Looking at the fearsome angry face of Sri Ram while he attacked the enemy, all the creatures became terrified, while the earth shook and trembled (43).

Observing Lord Ram's ferocious, uncompromising and extremely wrathful countenance, as well as these greatly ominous, violent and patently dangerous developments that unfolded in the battle-field, panic, dismay and distress that come with uncertainty gripped the creatures of the world, while terror and awe took firm roots in the heart of Ravana¹ (44).

[Note—¹It was a ferocious war the world had never ever witnessed so far. The tide of war swung so widely, once in favour of Lord Ram and then in favour of Ravana, that it created an atmosphere of uncertainty. This made the world worried and terrified, because wars are so unpredictable that no one could say with surety that Lord Ram would win it.

But Ravana was wiser; he knew his weaknesses, and as a veteran warrior he could also discern the subtle signs that indicated the way the tide of war seemed to be moving, and from all indications it was not going in his favour. This alarmed him.]

विमानस्था सुरगणाः सिद्धगन्धर्वकिन्नराः ।
ददृशुः सुमहायुद्धं लोकसंवर्तकोपमम् ।
ऐन्द्रमस्त्रं समादाय रावणस्य शिरोऽच्छिनत् ॥ ४५॥
मूर्धन्यो रावणस्याथ बहवो रुधिरोक्षिताः ।
गगनात्प्रपतन्ति स्म तालादिव फलानि हि ॥ ४६॥

vimānasthā suragaṇāḥ siddhagandharvakinnarāḥ ।
dadṛśuḥ sumahāyuddhaṁ lokasaṁvartakopamam ।
aindramastram samādāya rāvaṇasya śīro'cchinat ॥ 45॥
mūrdhāno rāvaṇasyātha bahavo rudhirokṣitāḥ ।
gaganātprapatanti sma tālādiva phalāni hi ॥ 46॥

45-46. At that time all the Gods, Siddhas (mystics), Gandharvas (celestial musicians), Kinnars (celestial dancers and singers; a form of god with the head of a horse) etc. rode their air vehicles and watched this great and epic war, which resembled the all-hell-broke-loose scenario of dooms day, from their stations in the sky.

Meanwhile, Lord Sri Ram shot the 'Aendrastra' (a weapon used by Indra) and chopped off the head of Ravana (45).

The numerous blood-soaked heads of Ravana began falling from the sky just like the fruits of the palm tree fall from it (when a fierce wind shakes the tree violently and rips the fruits off its branches, or when they are ripe and fall on the ground on their own account) (46).

न दिनं न च वै रात्रिर्न सन्ध्यां न दिशोऽपि वा ।
प्रकाशन्ते न तद्रूपं दृश्यते तत् सङ्गरे ॥ ४७॥
ततो रामो बभूवाथ विस्मयाविष्टमानसः ।
शतमेकोत्तरं छिन्नं शिरसां चैकवर्चसाम् ॥ ४८॥

na dinam na ca vai rātrirna sandhyām na diśo'pi vā ।
 prakāśante na tadrūpaṃ drśyate tatra saṅgare ॥ 47॥
 tato rāmo babhūvātha vismayāviṣṭamānasah ।
 śatamekottaraṃ chinnaṃ śirasām caikavarcaśām ॥ 48॥

47-48. At that time, the whole place was so filled with the hideous sight of blood-soaked severed heads of Ravana flying here and there in the sky in all directions and falling to the ground everywhere that they obscured everything else, for one was so dazed and confounded that it was not possible to distinguish between day and night, or determine what time it was, or between the different directions of the compass.

The situation was so grave that not even the physical presence of Ravana could be seen by anyone. [To wit, the falling heads of Ravana so completely obscured everyone's sight in the battle-field that no one could see Ravana present there.]¹ (47)

This magical development mightily astonished Lord Sri Ram; he thought to himself in amazement: 'I have chopped-off one hundred one heads of Ravana, all of which are equal in their radiance'² (48).

[Note—¹The falling heads of Ravana covered the sky and obscured the sun, and even made it impossible to see anything a little away on the ground. The sight resembled a thick blanket of dark of clouds in the sky that makes it difficult to determine the time of the day as the sun is obscured from view; and the falling heads were so numerous in numbers that they reminded one of hail and rain falling so heavily on the ground that one is unable to see anywhere.

²Ravana had ten heads. So it means that Lord Ram had cut-off his heads ten times in quick succession. $10 \times 10 = 100$ heads. The extra head in this counting, i.e. the one hundred and first head (śatamekottaraṃ), refers to one primary head of Ravana with which he was born, the others being extra heads that he had got as a boons.

Lord Ram was amazed because it seemed incredulous that any living being would survive if his heads were severed so quickly, and yet Ravana seemed not to be affected at all. What was the mystery of his survival, wondered the Lord; why didn't he die? It was indeed very surprising that Ravana should continue to live and newer heads grow on his body, as it means that getting rid of him by this method would be in vain. So the Lord thought, some other alternative has to be swiftly discovered.]

न चैव रावणः शान्तो दृश्यते जीवितक्षयात् ।
 ततः सर्वास्तूविद्धीरः कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनः ॥ ४९॥
 अस्तैश्च बहुभिर्युक्तश्चिन्तयामास राघवः ।
 यैर्यैर्बाणैर्हता दैत्या महासत्त्वपराक्रमाः ॥ ५०॥
 त एते निष्फलं याता रावणस्य निपातने ।
 इति चिन्ताकुले रामे समीपस्थो विभीषणः ॥ ५१॥
 उवाच राघवं वाक्यं ब्रह्मदत्तवरो ह्यसौ ।
 विच्छिन्ना बाहवोऽप्यस्य विच्छिन्नानि शिरांसि च ॥ ५२॥
 उत्पत्स्यन्ति पुनः शीघ्रमित्याह भगवानजः ।
 नाभिदेशेऽमृतं तस्य कुण्डलाकारसंस्थितम् ॥ ५३॥

na caiva rāvaṇaḥ śānto dr̥śyate jīvitakṣayāt ।
 tataḥ sarvāstraviddhīraḥ kausalyānandavardhanaḥ ॥ 49॥
 astraiśca bahubhīryuktaścintayāmāsa rāghavaḥ ।
 yairyairbāṇairhatā daityā mahāsattvaparākramāḥ ॥ 50॥
 ta ete niṣphalaṃ yātā rāvaṇasya nipātane ।
 iti cintākule rāme samīpastho vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 51॥
 uvāca rāghavaṃ vākyaṃ brahmadattavaro hyasau ।
 vicchinnā bāhavo'pyasya vicchinnāni śīrāṃsi ca ॥ 52॥
 utpatsyanti punaḥ śīghramityāha bhagavānajaḥ ।
 nābhideśe'mṛtaṃ tasya kuṇḍalākārasaṃsthitam ॥ 53॥

49-53. But still Ravana does not appear to calm down by the loss of his vitality and life (i.e., he continues to live inspite of his heads being severed repeatedly)'.
 Then Lord Ram—who was a son of Kaushalya, an expert in the art of using all types of weapons, who was steadfast, courageous, strong and brave in the battle-field (49), and who had all types of weapons at his disposal—thought to himself: 'All those arrows which I had previously used to slay demons renowned for their might, valour, strength and courage (50), have failed to kill this fellow Ravana, and they have become ineffective against him.'

Seeing that Sri Ram was very worried, confounded and perturbed, Vibhishan—who was standing near him (51)—said, 'Oh Raghav (Sri Ram)! Lord Brahma (the creator) had given Ravana a boon, and at that time he (Brahma) had said that all his (Ravana's) heads and arms will grow back immediately as soon as they are cut-off. Oh Lord! Amrit (the elixir of life that keeps him alive) is kept securely in a circular patch in his navel¹ (52-53).

[Note—¹This is the Nabhi Chakra, the circular center of subtle energy that sustains life inside the body of a creature; it is stored near the navel. It can also refer to the Kundalini, the source of subtle but dynamic energy of the body that is located near the navel, and is shaped like a coiled serpent or a coiled rope. According to Yoga philosophy, an ascetic who practices Yoga or meditation can excite this source of energy to enable him attain stupendous mystical powers and do supernatural things that are normally not within the reach of ordinary persons.

Ravana was an expert in Yoga; so he had activated this secret source of life, which in turn kept him alive inspite of him suffering the severance of any part of his physical body.

Vibhishan was his brother, and so he was privy to some information that no one else knew. And this was one: that Ravana managed to survive because he had successfully been able to harness the eternal source of energy that sustains life, and this source is stored in the Nabhi Chakra or the Kundalini. It means that if this source of vital energy is disrupted, or the electric current that keeps him going is short-circuited at its major junction point, then he would die.]

तच्छोषयानलास्त्रेण तस्य मृत्युस्ततो भवेत् ।
 विभीषणवचः श्रुत्वा रामः शीघ्रपराअक्रमः ॥ ५४॥
 पावकास्त्रेण संयोज्य नाभिं विव्याध रक्षसः ।

अनन्तरं च विच्छेद शिरांसि च महाबलः ॥ ५५॥
 बाहूनापि च संरब्धो रावणस्य रघूतमः ।
 ततो घोरां महाशक्तिमादाय दशकन्धरः ॥ ५६॥
 विभीषणवधार्थाय चिक्षेप क्रोधविह्वलः ।
 विच्छेद राघवो बाणैस्तां शितैर्हमभूषितैः ॥ ५७॥

tacchoṣayānalāstreṇa tasya mṛtyustato bhavet ।
 vibhīṣaṇavacaḥ śrutvā rāmaḥ śighraparākramaḥ ॥ 54॥
 pāvakāstreṇa saṃyojya nābhiṃ vivyādha rakṣasaḥ ।
 anantaram ca ciccheda śirāṃsi ca mahābalaḥ ॥ 55॥
 bāhūnapi ca saṃrabdho rāvaṇasya raghūttamaḥ ।
 tato ghorāṃ mahāśaktimādāya daśakandharaḥ ॥ 56॥
 vibhīṣaṇavadhārthāya cikṣepa krodhavihvalaḥ ।
 ciccheda rāghavo bāṇaistāṃ śitairhemabhūṣitaiḥ ॥ 57॥

54-57. So therefore oh Lord, dry it up with your fire-weapon. That is the only way to bring about his death'.

Hearing these words of Vibhishan, Lord Ram acted immediately. He made a bold decision (54), mounted the fire-weapon on his bow, and shot it at the navel of the demon Ravana.

After that, the valiant Lord Sri Ram severed the demon's head and arms in quick succession.

At this, betrayed by Vibhishan, the 10-headed Ravana aimed a very fierce weapon called Mahashakti (55-56) at Vibhishan to kill him, because he (Ravana) was extremely agitated, annoyed, peeved and angry at the Vibhishan (for having betrayed him)¹.

But Raghav (Sri Ram) immediately intercepted this missile shot by Ravana to kill his treacherous brother Vibhishan, and cut it down by shooting his own arrow that was gold-plated and had a sharp tip (57).

[Note—¹Indeed, Vibhishan was never able to wash his hands off the epithet of a 'betrayor', as well as the ignominious charge of treason, treachery, regicide and fratricide ever since. In fact, his name has been synonymous with these bad traits in the character of any individual—selfishness, betrayal, treachery, treason, fratricide and regicide, notwithstanding the expediency of his actions, such as the necessity of fulfillment of his vows of loyalty to Lord Ram.

From this point of view, if we view things neutrally and dispassionately, Kumbhakarn, Vibhishan's elder brother, stands out as a noble, honourable and great demon warriors who did not betray his brother-and-king Ravana inspite of being aware that the latter was in the wrong; nor did he betray his family or the demon race; for he preferred to die like a gallant warrior fighting an invading army (of Lord Ram) to defend his king (Ravana) and his kingdom (of Lanka) than to preserve his life by means of deceit and betrayal, or think of surrender—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 51-70; and Canto 8, verse nos. 1-30.]

दशग्रीवशिरश्छेदात्तदा तेजो विनिर्गतम् ।

म्लानरूपो बभूवाथ छिन्नैः शीर्षैर्भयङ्करैः ॥ ५८॥
 एकेन मुख्यशिरसा बाहुभ्यां रावणो बभौ ।
 रावणस्तु पुनः क्रुद्धो नानाशस्त्रास्त्रवृष्टिभिः ॥ ५९॥
 वर्ष वर्षं तं रामस्तथा बाणैर्वर्ष च ।
 ततो युद्धमभूद्धोरे तुमुलं लोमहर्षणम् ॥ ६०॥

daśagrīvaśiraśchedāttadā tejo vinirgatam ।
 mlānarūpo babhūvātha chinnaiḥ śīrṣairbhayaṅkaraiḥ ॥ 58॥
 ekena mukhyaśirasā bāhubhyāṃ rāvaṇo babhau ।
 rāvaṇastu punaḥ kruddho nānāśastrāstravṛṣṭibhiḥ ॥ 59॥
 vavarṣa rāmaṃ taṃ rāmastathā bāṇairvavarṣa ca ।
 tato yuddhamabhūdghoraṃ tumulaṃ lomaharṣaṇam ॥ 60॥

58-60. No sooner than the extra heads of the 10-necked Ravana (daśagrīva) were severed from his body, making him look like a hideous monster, his 'Tej' (i.e. his energy, dynamism, dare-devilry, and the will to fight and win) too escaped from his body¹ (58).

With the severance of all other extra heads and arms that Ravana possessed, only his primary head and the two arms (with which he was born) remained on his body². Excessively exasperated and angry, Ravana became all the more vicious and wrathful; he began shooting all sorts of powerful weapons he had in his possession on Lord Sri Ram.

Sri Ram retaliated in equal measure by shooting volleys of formidable arrows on Ravana. It was the moment when a fierce and no-holds-barred duel between two powerful and valiant warriors took place on the battle-field. (59-60)

[Note—¹The word 'Tej' refers to the forces of life present inside the body of Ravana. It refers to his energy, dynamism, and the will to fight and win the war. 'Tej' can be visualized in the form of a splendorous source of brilliant light and the radiance of blazing fire. It refers to Ravana's domineering, majestic and authoritative presence in the battle-field, with his colossus figure of ten large heads and twenty long muscular arms extending out from his body dominating all other things there.

With all extra heads and arms yanked off, he presented a dull and dark shadow of his former majestic and dynamic self. Till this point his heads and arms grew back as soon as they were severed, but now the source of energy that had kept him alive, that had rejuvenated him and aided in his swift recovery, was well-nigh exhausted. His life was ebbing away fast, and he was like an oil lamp in which the oil had been exhausted. During its final moments, the flame of the lamp leaps up high and bright from the burning wick, before it flickers and dies away.

This is what is meant here. When the last tranche of his heads and arms fell off, and there were no chances of his getting them back, Ravana lost all hopes of survival. He felt crestfallen, forlorn, gloomy and dejected. But nevertheless, and indeed to give credit to Ravana, he kept a brave face, and like a gallant warrior aware of his reputation and honour, he continued his battle as fiercely as before, and as if nothing had mattered to him.

²Remember: Ravana was famed to have 'ten heads' and 'twenty arms'. So when only 'one head and two arms' remained on his body during his last moments, it simply

means that the surplus heads and arms that he had obtained by the virtue of his boons were severed, but the single head and the two arms with which he was born still remained attached to his body.]

अथ संस्मरयामास मातली राघवं तदा ।
 विसृजास्त्रं वधायास्य ब्राह्मं शीघ्रं रघूत्तम ॥ ६१॥
 विनाशकालः प्रथितो यः सुरैः सोऽद्य वर्तते ।
 उत्तमाङ्गं न चैतस्य छेत्तव्यं राघव त्वया ॥ ६२॥
 नैव शीर्ष्णि प्रभो वध्यो वध्य एव हि मर्मणि ।
 ततः संस्मारितो रामस्तेन वाक्येन मातलेः ॥ ६३॥

atha saṁsmārayāmāsa mātālī rāghavaṁ tadā ।
 visrjāstraṁ vadhāyāsyā brāhmaṁ śīghraṁ raghūttama ॥ 61॥
 vināśakālaḥ prathito yaḥ suraiḥ so'dya vartate ।
 uttamāṅgaṁ na caitasya chettavyaṁ rāghava tvayā ॥ 62॥
 naiva śīrṣṇi prabho vadhyo vadhya eva hi marmaṇi ।
 tataḥ saṁsmārīto rāmastena vākyaena mātaleḥ ॥ 63॥

61-63. At that point, Matli (the charioteer) reminded (saṁsmārayāmāsa) Raghav (Sri Ram): 'Oh the most exalted of the Raghus! To kill him, you must shoot the Brahmastra (a weapon shot by invoking Lord Brahma) forthwith (61), because the time determined by the Gods for the destruction of the monster Ravana is present now. [And if there is any delay, this window will close, and perhaps then it may not be possible to slay him ever.]

So therefore oh Raghav (Sri Ram), you must not waste time in severing his head (62), because, oh Lord, he cannot be killed by cutting it off. His end can be brought about only by piercing his core or vital organ (i.e. his heart).'

These words of Matli reminded Sri Ram of what Vibhishan had told him earlier as to the impossibility of slaying Ravana by merely cutting off his heads¹ (63).

[Note—¹A point to note here is that the way Ravana was finally slayed has been depicted in two different ways as follows:-

According to Tulsidas' 'Ram Charit Manas', Ravana was killed when Lord Ram, on the advice of Vibhishan, had shot an arrow at his navel where the source of his eternal life was stored in the form of Amrit, the ambrosia of life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 102 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

In 'Adhyatma Ramayan', we read that Vibhishan has made a similar suggestion—apropos: verse nos. 51-53 herein above. But here the similarity ends—because the way in which Ravana was actually killed was based on the advice given to Lord Ram by Matli, the charioteer of the divine chariot of gods that was sent by Indra to help Lord Ram in the war, and not in accordance with the advice of Vibhishan.

Vibhishan had suggested that Ravana could only be killed if the Amrit stored in his navel was dried up, but we read that Matli told Lord Ram that he could be killed only if his vital organ or the core of his body was pierced by a powerful arrow. What

was this ‘vital organ’? It was Ravana’s “heart”—as it would be clear in verse no. 71 herein below.

Another point to note is this: In Ram Charit Manas we have read about Trijata’s conversation with Sita, wherein the former had also suggested that Ravana would be finally done in when Lord Ram shoots an arrow at his heart—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 99 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-13 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.]

जग्राह स शरं दीप्तं निःश्वसन्तमिवोरगम् ।
यस्य पार्श्वे तु पवनः फले भास्करपावकौ ॥ ६४॥
शरीरमाकाशमयं गौरवे मेरुमन्दरौ ।
पर्वस्वपि च विन्यस्ता लोकपाला महौजसः ॥ ६५॥

jagrāha sa śaraṁ dīptaṁ niḥśvasantamivoragam ।
yasya pārśve tu pavanaḥ phale bhāskarapāvakau ॥ 64॥
śarīramākāśamayaṁ gaurave merumandarau ।
parvasvapi ca vinyastā lokapālā mahaujasah ॥ 65॥

64-65. At Matli’s suggestion, Lord Sri Ram took out an arrow that was very powerful and radiant like glowing fire; with its fiery tip, red-hot shaft and flaming fins, it resembled a serpent or a dragon that was hissing ferociously as it prepared to fly towards its prey.

That arrow was unique and strange; it possessed great mystical powers, and was singularly majestic to behold: it had the force of wind that propelled it from the rear; its tip was splendorous and fiery as the sun and the fire; it was as heavy as Mt. Sumeru or Mt. Mandrachal; its joints were supported by the powerful Lokpals (the custodians of the world); and its dimension and expanse were as vast and extensive as the sky itself. (64-65)

जाज्वल्यमानं वपुषा भातं भास्करवर्चसा ।
तमुग्रमस्त्रं लोकानां भयनाशनमद्भुतम् ॥ ६६॥
अभिमन्त्र्य ततो रामस्तं महेषुं महाभुजः ।
वेदप्रोक्तेन विधिना सन्दधे कर्मके बली ॥ ६७॥

jājvalyamānaṁ vapuṣā bhātaṁ bhāskaravarcaśā ।
tamugramastraṁ lokānāṁ bhayanāśanamadbhutam ॥ 66॥
abhimantrya tato rāmastaṁ maheṣuṁ mahābhujah ।
vedaproktena vidhinā sandadhe karmuke balī ॥ 67॥

66-67. Since this majestic arrow was supernatural, divine and brilliant in shape and size, it resembled the sun in its splendour, brilliance, magnificence and dazzle.

In order to vanquish and eliminate the fear and torments of all the worlds, this arrow—which was very violent, potent, sharp and effective, as well as most strange, mysterious, wonderful, splendid and stupendous in its prowess, magnificence and majesty (66)—was employed by Sri Ram who was very brave and had strong arms.

The Lord empowered the arrow by invoking certain Mantras (mystical formula that acted as a charm that lent special power to this arrow by concentrating cosmic energy in it) as prescribed in the Vedas (that deal with the art and science of archery). Then he mounted this special arrow on his strong bow, and readied it to shoot (67).

तस्मिन् सन्धीयमाने तु राघवेण शरोत्तमे ।
सर्वभूतानि वित्रेसुश्चाल च वसुन्धरा ॥ ६८॥
स रावणाय सङ्कुद्धो भृशमानम्य कार्मुकम् ।
विक्षेप परमायत्तस्तमस्त्रं मर्मघातिनम् ॥ ६९॥

tasmin sandhīyamāne tu rāghaveṇa śarottame ।
sarvabhūtāni vitresuścacāla ca vasundharā ॥ 68॥
sa rāvaṇāya saṅkrudho bhr̥śamānamya karmukam ।
cikṣepa paramāyattastamastraṁ marmaghātinam ॥ 69॥

68-69. When Raghav (Sri Ram) raised that excellent arrow, which was the best amongst all the arrows, and readied it to shoot, all the creatures became terrified, while the earth shook and trembled (68).

He became very angry, pulled the string of the bow tight, and aiming carefully he shot the arrow which was powerful enough to rupture the vital organ of Ravana (i.e. the organ in his body that had sustained his life till now) (69).

स वज्र इव दुर्धर्षो वज्रपाणिविसर्जितः ।
कृतान्त इव घोरास्यो न्यपतद्रावणोरसि ॥ ७०॥
स निमग््नो महाघोरः शरीरान्तकरः परः ।
बिभेद हृदयं तूर्णं रावणस्य महात्मनः ॥ ७१॥
रावणस्याहरत्प्राणान् विवेश धरणितले ।
स शरो रावणं हत्वा रामतूणीरमाविशत् ॥ ७२॥

sa vajra iva durdharṣo vajrapāṇivisarjitaḥ ।
kṛtānta iva ghorāsyō nyapatadrāvaṇorasi ॥ 70॥
sa nimagno mahāghoraḥ śarīrāntakaraḥ paraḥ ।
bibheda hr̥dayaṁ tūrṇaṁ rāvaṇasya mahātmanaḥ ॥ 71॥
rāvaṇasyāharatprāṇān viveśa dharaṇitale ।
sa śaro rāvaṇaṁ hatvā rāmatūṇīramāviśat ॥ 72॥

70-72. That arrow—which was most formidable, mighty, severe and uncompromising like the Vajra or Bajra (thunderbolt) throne by ‘Bajrapani’ (i.e. Indra, the one who holds the Vajra / Bajra), which resembled the fierce and horror-full mouth of Death, and which was formidably ferocious—hit Ravana on his chest (70).

That most formidable, severe, uncompromising, unrelenting, powerful and fatal arrow (mahāghoraḥ)—which was empowered with a special quality enabling it to slay the body of an individual whom it struck (śarīrāntakaraḥ)—entered the body

of the great Ravana (*rāvaṇasya mahātmanah*)¹, and ruptured his heart (*bibheda hrdayam*)² (71).

It ended (terminated) the life of Ravana, and after having done its assigned task it (emerged from the other side of his body) and bored (drilled) itself into the earth³. In this way, having slayed Ravana, the arrow returned back to the quiver of Sri Ram⁴ (72).

[Note—¹The use of the prefix “*mahātmanah*”, i.e., the ‘great soul’ for Ravana in verse no. 71 shows that his killing should be viewed in the correct perspective. For far from being an ordinary pervert and vile sinner, he was indeed a great soul, a realized individual who had acquired this outwardly evil body due to his past misdeeds and misdemeanours, but he was nevertheless an enlightened and wise soul. There are umpteen numbers of verses highlighting this aspect of his character—such as for example Canto 10, verse nos. 55-61 of Lanka Kand itself. Even the Gods—who were always tormented by Ravana and were behind his death—had to concede that Ravana was indeed a great and privileged soul. See verse nos. 78-82 below.

²The way Ravana has been finally killed has been narrated differently in Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas: Here there is no mention of Matli, the charioteer, advising Lord Ram anything about how Ravana should be slayed, and the Lord has relied on Vibhishan’s advice of shooting an arrow at Ravana’s navel to dry up the source of Amrit that was sustaining his life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 102; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 103.

But there is a strange coincidence worthy to be noted here: In Ram Charit Manas we read that Trijata, the demoness appointed by Ravana to guard Sita, has told the latter that Ravana would be finally killed when “Lord Ram shoots an arrow at his heart”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 99.

We can therefore safely say that both these two classics, viz. Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, and Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, must be read to get a comprehensive picture of what may have actually transpired at that period of time long-long ago, for we discover that there seems to be some sort of subtle form of synergy between the two narratives, inasmuch as they compliment each other to fill in the dotted lines.

Though these two versions may give an impression of contradiction—because whereas in Adhyatma Ramayan it is said that Ravana was killed when Lord Ram hit him in his heart (verse no. 71), while Ram Charit Manas says he was killed by an arrow shot at his navel (Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103)—but on close examination it seems that both the things may have happened simultaneously: to wit, Lord Ram must have shot arrows aimed at Ravana’s heart as well as his navel to ensure that all precautions are taken to make sure that Ravana is certainly slayed, for the Lord did not want to take any further risk of playing games with him as time was running out, and already all other methods had miserably failed to the demon’s life.

³The arrow literally drilled its way through Ravana’s armour. Since Ravana knew that the most sensitive part of his body were his navel (verse nos. 53-54) and his heart (verse nos. 63, 71), he surely must have secured them to the best of his ability. This arrow penetrated through the thick shield of armour that Ravana wore, bored through the thickness of his flesh and bones, went through his heart, and emerged from the

other side of his body to enter the earth. In modern parlance it could have been an armour penetrating missile. For that matter, all the special arrows or projectiles shot by both of them, Ravana and Lord Ram, at each other—such as the Indrastra, the Brahmastra, the Agneyastra etc.—could have been state-of-the-art, technologically advanced war heads.

⁴The technology of recovering the arrows and other projectiles once shot for re-use was the primary reason why big battles were fought with only one or two quivers in stock. There was no need for fresh supply of arrows because all the arrows could be retrieved. The skill lay in using these technologically advanced weapons on the enemy meticulously and properly, with correct timing and aim, so that they could be effective and properly controlled.

The question now arises: It is said here that this special arrow which finally killed Ravana had emerged from the other side of his body, after having pierced through his heart, and then drilled itself into the earth. And then it is said that it returned to the quiver of Lord Ram. These two things don't seem to add up; how was it possible that the arrow was retrieved by Lord Ram after it had drilled itself into the earth?

Well, this mystery can be answered in the following way: The term 'earth' refers to the gross physical body of an individual, because his skin, bones, muscles etc. are said to be made of the 'earth element'. This term, 'earth', is especially applicable to a 'dead body', a body from which life has exited. Hence, the moment Ravana was 'dead', his body was nothing but the 'earth' element in its grossness. So therefore, at the time of attack the arrow had entered a 'living body' on an individual whose name was Ravana, but after having killed him it emerged through his 'dead body' by piercing it on the back, and thence returned back to the quiver of Lord Ram just like a re-usable missile, as explained herein above in this note. The 'dead body' represents the 'earth element'. So therefore, for all practical purposes, the arrow had 'entered the body of Ravana', and when he was dead the instant the arrow ruptured his heart, the arrow 'pierced or drilled through the earth element' symbolized by the dead body of Ravana. After having emerged from it, the arrow went back to the place from where it was shot—viz. the quiver of Lord Ram, for it was designed that way, to return to the place from where it was shot.]

तस्य हस्तात्पपाताशु सशरं कार्मुकं महत् ।
गतासुर्भूमिवेगेन राक्षसेन्द्रोऽपतद्भुवि ॥ ७३॥
तं दृष्ट्वा पतितं भूमौ हतशेषाश्च राक्षसाः ।
हतनाथा भयत्रस्ता दुद्रुवुः सर्वतोदिशम् ॥ ७४॥

tasya hastātpapātāśu saśaraṃ karmukam mahat ।
gatāsurbhramivegena rākṣasendro'patadbhuvi ॥ 73॥
taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā patitaṃ bhūmau hataśeṣāśca rākṣasāḥ ।
hatanāthā bhayatrastā dudruvuḥ sarvatodiśam ॥ 74॥

73-74. As soon as the arrow hit him, Ravana's huge bow as well as his arrow fell down from his hand. He swooned and tottered, and the great king of the demons collapsed to the ground (73).

Seeing him lying on the ground, the remaining demons who had survived death till now became without a Lord (or King); so they lost all hopes (of victory) and fled everywhere from the battle-field, terrified and defeated (74).

दशग्रीवस्य निधनं विजयं राघवस्य च ।
ततो विनेदुः संहृष्टा वानरा जितकाशिनः ॥ ७५॥
वदन्तो रामविजयं रावणस्य च तद्वधम् ।
अथान्तरिक्षे व्यनदत्सौम्यस्त्रिदशदुन्दुभिः ॥ ७६॥

daśagrīvasya nidhanam vijayam rāghavasya ca ।
tato vineduḥ saṁhr̥ṣṭā vānarā jita-kāśinaḥ ॥ 75॥
vadanto rāma-vijayam rāvaṇasya ca tad-vadham ।
athāntarikṣe vyanadatsaumyastridaśadundubhiḥ ॥ 76॥

75-76. 'The 10-necked Ravana has died (daśagrīvasya nidhanam), and Raghav (Lord Sri Ram) has been victorious (vijayam rāghavasya ca)'—exclaimed the elated monkeys who were jubilant and ecstatic with joy at this glorious victory (75).

They praised and applauded the victory of Sri Ram (vadanto rāma-vijayam) over the sinful Ravana (rāvaṇasya tad-vadham). In the sky, there was a thunderous sound of kettle-drums and trumpets that were played by the assembled gods to celebrate this singularly happy occasion (76).

पपात पुष्पवृष्टिश्च समन्ताद्वाघवोपरि ।
तुष्टुवुर्मुनयः सिद्धाश्चारणाश्च दिवौकसः ॥ ७७॥
अथान्तरिक्षे ननृतुः सर्वतोऽप्सरसो मुदा ।
रावणस्य च देहोत्थं ज्योतिरादित्यवत्स्फुरत् ॥ ७८॥
प्रविवेश रघुश्रेष्ठं देवानां पश्यतां सताम् ।
देवा ऊचुरहो भाग्यं रावणस्य महात्मनः ॥ ७९॥

papāta puṣpavṛṣṭiśca samantādrāghavopari ।
tuṣṭuvurmunaḥ siddhāścāraṇāśca divaukaśaḥ ॥ 77॥
athāntarikṣe nanṛtuḥ sarvato'psaraso mudā ।
rāvaṇasya ca dehottham jyotirādityavatsphurat ॥ 78॥
praviveśa raghuśreṣṭham devānām paśyatām satām ।
devā ūcuraho bhāgyam rāvaṇasya mahātmanaḥ ॥ 79॥

77-79. Flowers were showered on Lord Sri Ram from all directions, while the sages, hermits, ascetics, mystics, bards and the gods all joined together to sing the Lord's glory and say their prayers to him (77).

Then the Apsaras (celestial damsels) began dancing merrily in the sky (heavens) to celebrate this auspicious occasion. Just at that time, a shaft or ball of splendourous, dazzling effulgence of light, which was blinding, brilliant and as magnificent as the sun, emerged from the body of Ravana (78) and entered the body

of the most exalted Raghu (Lord Sri Ram)¹ even as the Gods watched in awe and wonder. Seeing this wonderful and rarest of rare spectacle, the gods were very amazed; they exclaimed, 'Oh! The great soul Ravana is indeed very fortunate and privileged² (79).

[Note—¹This brilliant effulgence of light that exited from Ravana's gross body to enter the body of Lord Sri Ram was the 'soul' or the Atma of the demon king. This Atma is pure consciousness; it is self-illuminated; it is eternally enlightened; and it is inherently pure, divine and holy; and it is the 'true-self' of an individual. The gross physical body of a creature can be sinful and evil due to the bad deeds the creature does, but the Atma always remains pure and holy irrespective of what the body does. According to the metaphysical principles expounded in the Upanishads, this is the quintessential Truth of the Atma of any living being.

Now, an individual's Atma is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma, which is its macrocosmic counterpart. While the former is known as a 'creature' or a 'living being' or an 'individual', the latter is known as the 'Parmatma' or the Supreme Being.

The final rest or destination of the individual's Atma is when it becomes one with the Supreme Atma, the Parmatma.

This is what has indeed happened here with Ravana. His Atma had found its eternal rest and beatitude when it entered the body of Lord Ram, who was none else but the Parmatma, to become one with the latter.

²This is why it is said that Ravana was truly very fortunate and privileged inasmuch as 'he'—in the form of his 'true self' known as the Atma—has attained deliverance, emancipation and salvation inspite of him having the evil body of a 'demon' so easily, even without doing any religious service or any meritorious deed worth the name all through his life.

This is also why Lord Ram has been lauded and applauded repeatedly as being as ocean of kindness, of being merciful, compassionate, benevolent, gracious and magnanimous, for the Lord has not taken any of Ravana's evil deeds into consideration when the Lord discovered that his soul, his Atma, was yearning eagerly for deliverance. The Lord has clearly indicated that he has no personal ill-will or malice against Ravana—because the Lord is omniscient and all-knowing, and he is enlightened about the hidden wish of Ravana that he hopes to find emancipation and salvation for himself in a way he is comfortable with in his birth as a 'demon'; for a 'demon' is not expected to live a pious and holy life like that of a hermit or an ascetic or a sage, but that should not come in the way of the deliverance of his soul if this individual sincerely wishes for liberation from the body of a demon in which his soul is unfortunately trapped due to certain circumstances in the past, but for which he is full of regret and remorse at present. So such a tormented soul must be given a fair chance of redemption by invoking the virtue of forgiveness—which Lord Ram has actually done in the case of Ravana. These metaphysical and spiritual Truths are explicitly expressed in Tulsidas' epic Story of Lord Ram as narrated in 'Ram Charit Manas', Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 104 along with Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.]

वयं तु सात्विका देवा विष्णोः कारुण्यभाजनाः ।

भयदुःखादिभिर्व्याप्ताः संसारे परिवर्तिनः ॥ ८०॥

अयं तु राक्षसः कूरो ब्रह्महाऽतीव तामसः ।
 परदाररतो विष्णुद्वेषी तापसहिंसकः ॥ ८१॥
 पश्यत्सु सर्वभूतेषु राममेव प्रविष्टवान् ।
 एवं ब्रुवत्सु देवेषु नारदः प्राह सुस्मितः ॥ ८२॥

vayaṃ tu sātṭvikā devā viṣṇoḥ kāruṇyabhājanāḥ ।
 bhayaduḥkhādibhirvyāptāḥ saṃsāre parivartinaḥ ॥ 80॥
 ayaṃ tu rākṣasaḥ krūro brahmahā'tīva tāmasaḥ ।
 paradārarato viṣṇudveṣī tāpasahiṃsakaḥ ॥ 81॥
 paśyatsu sarvabhūteṣu rāmameva praviṣṭavān ।
 evaṃ bruvatsu deveṣu nāradaḥ prāha susmitaḥ ॥ 82॥

80-82. We Gods primarily have good virtues and noble characteristics in abundance, and we are the favourites (or preferred ones) of Lord Vishnu, but still we wander in this world surrounded and tormented by fears, sorrows etc. of different sorts (80).

Compared to this, he (Ravana) was very cruel, pervert and merciless, a murderer (literally a slayer) of Brahmins, one who possessed the most lowly and detestable characteristics one can imagine, such as being a repository of all sorts of sins, vices and evils. He was lascivious, promiscuous, insincere and unchaste; he was opposed to the Lord God; he was a heretic, an infidel; he harboured an abiding malice towards Lord Vishnu; and he was a tormentor of those who were doing penances and austerities (Tapa) (81).

But what a wonder-of-wonders it is that while all the world watched in amazement and awe, he has been so singularly fortunate that his soul has found its eternal bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity by merging with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram (who is none else but the Supreme Being himself in his form)¹.

When the assembled Gods were thus wondering in amazement, the celestial sage Narad smiled and said (82)—

[Note—¹The Gods were astonished because they had never expected Ravana—whom they had always thought to be an embodiment of sins and evil—to attain such an exalted death because the Supreme Being would himself come to his doorstep to grant him eternal liberation and deliverance, to bless him with emancipation and salvation.

The fact that Ravana's soul or Atma was accepted by Lord Ram and granted a place within himself proves how much the Lord respected the purity and holiness of his soul. Forsooth and without any gainsay, verily, Lord Ram realized that the Ravana whom the world so much loathed and reviled was actually his gross physical body, and not his Atma which was his 'true self', the Atma which was as holy and pure as it ought to be. And therefore, the just and kind and all-knowing Supreme Lord of the world, who judges each individual very minutely, by taking everything and every aspect into consideration before passing a judgment against or in favour of anyone, decided that Ravana does not deserve to be condemned to eternal hell to suffer.

The Lord determined that whatever Ravana he had done was done as a 'demon', and the word 'demon' refers to his gross physical body but not definitely to his Atma, and this physical body was made to give its due penalty by being sacrificed in the war, for it was mutilated and decapitated in the final hours of the war before

being killed. This was a sufficient sacrifice for Ravana, and once it was offered his soul had the right to redemption.

The question arises: Why did Lord Ram accept Ravana's soul within his own self? The answer is this: (i) To show the world that the Lord was exceptionally forgiving, merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind, understanding, magnanimous and benevolent so much so that he is ready to go to any extent to welcome anyone who wishes to come to him, overlooking all other things that would normally hinder such warm welcome. (ii) To show the world that the Lord had no personal ill-will against Ravana, and was merely punishing him for his misdeeds. (iii) To tell the world that a wise, just and enlightened judge is one who applies intelligence and always looks deeper before passing a judgment for or against anyone, for oftentimes what meets the eye is very deceptive—as was clearly the case with Ravana, for the world treated him as a vile person, whereas his 'true self', his Atma, was as holy and pure as it ought to be, and it was for this reason that Lord Ram had no second thoughts in accepting Ravana's Atma within his own self. (iv) To give a cue to the world as to why valiant warriors who prefer to die fighting their adversaries in the battle-field are said to go to heaven—because by dying they would have made the ultimate sacrifice, and once a self-sacrifice is made the soul has the rightful claim to deliverance and eternal peace, which must be granted to it.

There is another reason also—Ravana was so loathed and feared by the Gods that they would never give his soul permission to ascend to heaven; so going to the heaven was ruled out. As for going to hell for his sins, that was also not possible for Ravana because the lord of hell, i.e. Yam, too hated and feared him as much as his brethren in the heaven. To wit, both the Gods in heaven and Yam in hell refused to accept Ravana. So Lord Ram thought: "Doesn't matter; I will grant Ravana a place where no one can object, for it is my own sanctuary. I have made him pay for his misdeeds, so now it is obligatory for me to give his soul a place to abide. If the Gods and Yam won't accept him, well and good; I myself would accept him! And no one can say anything as to this abode for Ravana's soul, because I have a right to grant admission to anyone in my personal chambers." Say, how gracious and loving Lord Sri Ram, our Lord, is, indeed!]

शृणुतात् सुरा यूयं धर्मतत्त्वविचक्षणाः ।
 रावणो राघवद्वेषादनिशं हृदि भावयन् ॥ ८३॥
 भृत्यैः सह सदा रामचरितं द्वेषसंयुतः ।
 श्रुत्वा रामात्स्वनिधनं भयात्सर्वत्र राघवम् ॥ ८४॥
 पश्यन्ननुदिनं स्वप्ने राममेवानुपश्यति ।
 क्रोधोऽपि रावणस्याशु गुरुबोधाधिकोऽभवत् ॥ ८५॥

śṛṇutātra surā yūyaṃ dharmatattvavicakṣaṇāḥ ।
 rāvaṇo rāghavadveṣādaniśaṃ hṛdi bhāvayan ॥ 83॥
 bhr̥tyaiḥ saha sadā rāmacaritaṃ dveṣasaṃyutaḥ ।
 śrutvā rāmātsvanidhanaṃ bhayātsarvatra rāghavam ॥ 84॥
 paśyannanudināṃ svapne rāmamevānupaśyati ।
 krodho'pi rāvaṇasyāśu gurubodhādhiko'bhavat ॥ 85॥

83-85. [Narad said to the gods—] 'Oh my dear Gods! Listen to my views. All of you are well-versed in the essential wisdom of Dharma (i.e. the principles that govern the destiny of the soul). Since Ravana was opposed to Sri Ram, he constantly thought of him day and night, albeit with enmity and malice (83).

He was not alone in this remembrance, for all his dependants, such as his warriors, ministers, servants etc., too were constantly thinking of Lord Sri Ram. When Ravana heard that he was destined to die at the hands of Lord Sri Ram, he was so mentally terrified of the Lord that he constantly saw (i.e., imagined, visualized, thought of) Raghav (Sri Ram) every moment of his life; he saw Lord Ram everywhere (84) so much so that he even dreamt of him in the night when he slept.

In this way, Ravana's anger and vengeance became his reward or boon, and it proved to be more fruitful and useful for him (as it provided deliverance to his soul) than all the teachings and preaching of Guru (a spiritual teacher) would have ever benefited him (85).

रामेण निहतश्चान्ते निर्धूताशेषकल्मषः ।
रामसायुज्यमेवाप रावणो मुक्तबन्धनः ॥ ८६॥

rāmeṇa nihataścānte nirdhūtāśeṣakalmaṣaḥ ।
rāmasāyujyamevāpa rāvaṇo muktabandhanaḥ ॥ 86॥

86. In the end, being killed at the hands of Sri Ram himself, all his residual sins and their attendant negative effects were washed away; his soul was cleaned and of all his sins.

As a result, being freed or liberated from all the fetters (of sins and evil deeds), Ravana attained the supreme stature of being one with the Supreme Being who had come to provide him deliverance in the form of Lord Sri Ram (86).

पापिष्ठो वा दुरात्मा परधनपरदारेषु सक्तो यदि स्या-
न्नित्यं स्नेहाद्भयाद्वा रघुकुलतिलकं भावयन् सम्परेतः ।
भूत्वा शुद्धान्तरङ्गो भवशतजनितानेकदोषैर्विमुक्तः
सद्यो रामस्य विष्णोः सुखरविनुतं याति वैकुण्ठमाद्यम् ॥ ८७॥

pāpiṣṭho vā durātmā paradhanaparadāreṣu sakto yadi syā-
nnityaṁ snehādbhayādvā raghukulatilakaṁ bhāvayan samparetaḥ ।
bhūtvā śuddhāntaraṅgo bhavaśatajanitānekadoṣairvimuktaḥ
sadyo rāmasya viṣṇoḥ suravaravinutaṁ yāti vaikunṭhamādyam ॥ 87॥

87. [Now in this verse, Narad prescribes the method for the creatures of this world to attain salvation—] Even though a person had been a sinner, wicked, pervert and evil, or he had been rapacious towards the wealth and women of others—if he still remembers Lord Sri Ram, constantly, persistently and consistently, either by way of devotion or out of fear (i.e. willingly out of devotion and faith, or fearfully out of fear of hell and retribution for his sins and misdeeds), and should he die this way, then surely he is deemed to have become purified in his mind and heart. This entitles him to attain freedom from all spiritual torments, for he is surely liberated from all his

sufferings caused by his sins and misdeeds that may have accumulated over numerous births.

Consequently, this purified creature is granted access to the heaven where holy souls who have been cleansed of all spiritual impurities are destined to go. This 'heaven' is the eternal abode of Lord Vishnu whose incarnation is in the person of Lord Sri Ram.

Verily indeed, forsooth and without any gainsay, Lord Sri Ram no one else but Lord Vishnu himself.

The exalted abode of Lord Vishnu is known as 'Vaikuntha'; it is praised and honoured even by Indra (the king of Gods)¹ (87).

[Note—¹It clearly means that the heaven which is referred to here as 'Vaikuntha', where Lord Vishnu lives, is superior to the general 'heaven' where those souls who have lived a good and meritorious life would usually go after death of their bodies. Vaikuntha is attained by that individual who dies while remembering Lord Ram—for it is said that "the soul of a creature attains a destiny of which it has been thinking at the time of death of the creature".

So therefore, if a dying person thinks of this world, then his soul would come back to this world, i.e. it will take a re-birth. In which form it takes a re-birth would then be determined by what stands to the credit or debit in the account of his past life, which depends on the net result that is obtained by balancing the account of his past life's actions and deeds.

But should he surrender his soul to the thoughts of the Lord God at the time of his death, sincerely regretting his evil deeds and sinful actions, and prays to the Lord to forgive him and grant redemption to his soul, then let him be assured that he will rise higher than even the ordinary 'heaven', for the merciful and compassionate Lord God welcomes him in his own abode in 'Vaikuntha' with open arms.

This in brief is the message of Narad in these verses.]

हत्वा युद्धे दशास्यं त्रिभुवनविषमं वामहस्तेन चापं
भुमौ विष्टभ्य तिष्ठन्नितरकरधृतं भ्रामयन् बाणमेकम् ।
आरक्तोपान्तनेत्रः शरदलितवपुः सूर्यकोटिप्रकाशो
वीरश्रीबन्धुराङ्गस्त्रिदशपतिनुतः पातु मां वीररामः ॥ ८८॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे एकादशः सर्गः ॥ ११॥

hatvā yuddhe daśāsyam tribhuvanaviṣamaṁ vāmahastena cāpaṁ
bhumau viṣṭabhya tiṣṭhannitarakaradhṛtaṁ bhrāmayan bāṇamekaṁ ।
āraktopāntanetraḥ śaradalitavapuḥ sūryakoṭiprakāśo
vīraśrībāndhurāṅgastridaśapatinutaḥ pātu māṁ vīrarāmaḥ ॥ 88॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe ekādaśaḥ
sargaḥ ॥ 11॥

88. [Now, Narad describes the divine and heavenly view of Lord Sri Ram after he has just obtained victory over Ravana—]

'Having killed the 10-headed Ravana—who was tormenting the three worlds¹—in the battle, he (Sri Ram) is standing majestically in the battle-field, holding in his left hand his bow one end of which rests on the ground, while he is gently moving his arrow that he holds in the other (right) hand (as if to show his grace upon it with his caresses).

The corners of his eyes are red; and his body—which has been peppered with arrows and sprinkled with blood—looks radiant, splendid and glorious like millions of suns shining at the same time. His muscular, well built and handsome body is crowned by the Glory of Victory.

He is being praised, honoured and shown due reverence by Indra, the king of Gods.

Oh the most valorous, gallant and majestic Lord Sri Ram, please grant me your abiding protection' (88).

[Note—¹The “three worlds” refer to the three divisions of the living world: the heaven, the earth and the nether world.]

Thus ends Canto 11 of Adhyatma Ramayan that describes the conversation between Lord Shiva and goddess Uma, his consort.

{This brings to an end the Epic War of Lanka. In the next Chapter we shall read what happened in the wake of Ravana’s death and Lord Ram’s victory.}

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Part 6

The War Ends with Victory for Lord Ram’s Forces; Mandodari grieves for her husband Ravana; Vibhishan made the New King of Lanka; Sita is Re-United with Lord Ram; The Return of Lord Ram with His Companions back to His Capital at Ayodhya.

Introduction:

This is the Final Part of our Book. Here we shall read what happened after Ravana was killed in the War of Lanka and Lord Ram attained victory, and then about Sita’s reunion with the Lord, followed by the Lord’s triumphant return to his capital city of Ayodhya at the end of his 14-years of forest sojourn.

We shall round off our narrative by quickly going over the entire Story of the Ramayana, by way of recapitulation. For this purpose too, we shall be reading relevant verses directly from Ram Charit Manas, for these verses are especially dedicated to this quick reading of the whole Story presented in brief.

For the purpose of our narrative, we have divided this Part no. 6 into following Chapters and their Sections as detailed herein below:-

Chapter 19: The War Ends with Victory for Lord Ram's Forces; Jubilation in the ranks of the Gods and their Praise of Lord Ram; Appointment of Vibhishan as the New King of Lanka:

Section 19.1 Geetawali Ramayan

Section 19.2 Kavitalawali Ramayan

Section 19.3 Ram Charit Manas

Section 19.4 Adhyatma Ramayan

Chapter 20: Sita Re-United with Lord Ram:

Section 20.1 Ram Charit Manas

Section 20.2 Adhyatma Ramayan

Chapter 21: Epilogue—

Lord Ram Embarks on His Journey Back Home to Ayodhya with His Companions onboard the Air-Plane called Pushpak; Lord Ram's Arrival in Ayodhya to a warm and tumultuous Welcome; Lord Ram's ascending the Throne of Ayodhya as a King and the Lord Emperor; Lord Ram's guests from Kishkindha and Lanka return to their respective kingdoms:

Section 21.1 (sub-section 21.1.1—21.1.5) Ram Charit Manas

Section 21.2 (sub-section 21.2.1—21.2.2) Adhyatma Ramayan

Section 21.3 (sub-section 21.3.1—21.3.2) Geetawali Ramayan

Chapter 22: The whole Story of the "Ramayana"—Recapitulated and Told Quickly in a 'Fast Motion' mode from 'Ram Charit Manas' of Goswami Tulsidas.

So now, let us start our narrative.

Chapter 19

The War Ends with Victory for Lord Ram's Forces; Jubilation in the ranks of the Gods and their Praise of Lord Ram; Appointment of Vibhishan as the New King of Lanka.

Section 19.1: Geetawali Ramayan

Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse no. 16

Lord Ram has finally been victorious in the epic War of Lanka. He has vanquished the evil demons and has ended their terror in the world; all living beings were relieved of their horrors. The prayers of Mother Earth and the Gods were answered. Sages, ascetics, hermits and all other holy persons, who were constantly under threat from

the demons, felt very happy. The balance of Gunas (virtues and characters) was restored in favour of Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, good and ethical conduct, and general adherence to norms of meritorious life as advised by the scriptures). There was cheer and happiness all around; a new dawn of peace and rule-of-law dawned.

But all these benefits were for the world; what about the demons who were killed in this ferocious war? Forsooth and without gainsay, they too had their share of good fortune, as each and every demon who died in this war found instant liberation and deliverance for his soul; everyone of the demons attained emancipation and salvation; every one of them found beatitude and felicity for their souls. Why so if they were so cruel and nasty? This particular aspect is what makes Lord Ram so great and exalted: for the Lord is so exceptionally merciful, kind, gracious, magnanimous, benevolent and compassionate, as well as forgiving and tolerant that he decided to liberate the souls of all these sinful creatures, to provide them with salvation, and ensure that all of them are granted deliverance and emancipation—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.

Now, let us go back to the Battle-Field of Lanka and have a look around to see what is taking place there.

After the war ended with Ravana's soul being granted deliverance from his demon-body, a sudden calm descended on the arena of this ferocious war. The victorious Lord Ram stood in the middle of the battle-field, looking gallant, majestic and charming.

The illustrious and blessed poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas describes the Lord's beauty and the singular charm of his form in Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse no. 16. Let us read it quickly as follows:-

विजयी राम

राग कान्हरा

(6 / 16)

राजत राम काम-सत-सुंदर ।

रिपु रन जीति अनुज सँग सोभित, फेरत चाप-बिसिष बनरुह-कर ॥ 1 ॥

स्याम सरीर रुचिर श्रम-सीकर, सोनित-कन बिच बीच मनोहर ।

जनु खद्योत-निकर, हरिहित-गन, भ्राजत मरकत-सैल-सिखरपर ॥ 2 ॥

घायल बीर बिराजत चहुँ दिसि, हरषित सकल रिच्छ अरु बनचर ।

कुसुमित किंसुक-तरु समूह महँ, तरुन तमाल बिसाल बिटप बर ॥ 3 ॥

राजिव-नयन बिलोकि कृपा करि, किए अभय मुनि-नाग, बिबुध-नर ।

तुलसिदास यह रूप अनूपम हिय-सरोज बसि दुसह बिपतिहर ॥ 4 ॥

vijayī rāma

rāga kānharā

(6/16)

rājata rāma kāma-sata-sundara.

ripu rana jīti anuja saṁga sōbhita, phērata cāpa-bisiṣa banaruha-kara.. 1..

syāma sarīra rucira śrama-sīkara, sōnita-kana bica bīca manōhara.

janu khadyōta-nikara, harihita-gana, bhrājata marakata-saila-sikharapara.. 2..

ghāyala bīra birājata cahuṁ disi, haraṣita sakala riccha aru banacara.

kusumita kinsuka-taru samūha mahaṁ, taruna tamāla bisāla biṭapa bara.. 3..

rājiva-nayana bilōki kṛpā kari, ki'ē abhaya muni-nāga, bibudha-nara.

tulasidāsa yaha rūpa anūpama hiya-sarōja basi dusaha bipatihara.. 4..

Victorious Lord Ram

Verse no. 6/16—[As had been already noted in an introduction to verse no. 6/5 herein above, Tulsidas has preferred to skip the details of the War of Lanka in this book Geetawali. The probable reasons are also outlined therein.

So, he comes straight to the point of time when the demons were defeated and Lord Ram won the war. This point of time in the story—Lord Ram's victory—is also narrated in (i) Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 6/56—6/58; and (ii) Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-11 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

Having conquered his enemy, victorious Lord Ram is present in the battle-field with his brother Laxman. He appears most charming and magnificent like thousands of Kamdeos (cupids) appearing in his person at once. He is moving his hands on his bows and arrows (1).

Sweat drops interspersed with blood drops are glistening on his dark complexioned body as if red creepers look magnificent surrounded by hordes of glow-worms on the summit of Mt. Markat Mani (i.e. a mountain of emerald)¹ (2).

[¹Here, the dark complexioned body of Lord Ram is likened to Mt. Markat Mani; the streams of blood flowing from his body to the 'creepers of red colour' that drape the sides of this mountain; and the glistening sweat drops to the 'glow worms'.]

Wounded warriors are sitting around him. All those monkeys and bears are extremely happy. Lord Ram looks as magnificent as a large and young but huge Tamaal Tree (taruna tamāla bisāla biṭapa bara) amongst smaller Kinskuk Trees that have blooming flowers (kusumita kinsuka-taru samūha mahaṁ)² (3).

[²The "Tamaal tree" is the Black Catechu tree (Xanthocymus epictorius); the "Kinsuk tree" is the Butea Frondosa tree which bears beautiful flowers.

Here, Lord Ram is likened to the Black Catechu tree because of his dark complexion, and the monkeys who sit around him in a jubilant mood to the countless flowers that bloom on the comparatively smaller tree called Butea Frondosa.]

At that moment, that lotus-eyed Lord glanced at the gods, hermits, legendary serpents and men, and made them fearless³.

Tulsidas prays that this vision of peerless beauty which vanquishes all mighty troubles of the heart and torments of the mind, should ever reside in his heart (4).

[³Refer: (a) Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/22, stanza no. 2; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 103.]

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Section 19.2: Kavita wali Ramayan

Kavita wali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 56-58

Like in the case of Geetawali Ramayan, Lord Ram's exceptional charm and beauty as he stood victorious in the battle-field of Lanka has been described by Tulsidas in Kavita wali Ramayan too, the difference being in the style of composition—for whereas Geetawali is in the form of a 'Geet', meaning a "song", Kavita wali is in the form of a 'Kavita', meaning a "poetry".

A 'song' is sung, and one who is an expert in this skill is called a singer, while 'poetry' is recited, and one who recites it is a poet. Basically these two styles of composition are the same as they touch the heart of the listener and are pleasing to the ears, though technically there may be some form of subtle difference between the two formats and styles of renderings.

Now, after we have read how Lord Ram's beauty and charm have been described in Geetawali Ramayan once the war ended, and before we move ahead with our narrative of what subsequently happened in Lanka in the wake of Lord Ram's victory in this war, let us briefly recapitulate the 'landmark events' of this epic war as narrated in Kavita wali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 56-58:-

The War Ends

बाप दियो काननु, भो आननु सुभाननु सो,
 बैरी भो दसाननु सो, तीयको हरनु भो ।
 बालि बलसालि दलि, पालि कपिराजको,
 बिभीषनु नेवाजि, सेत सागर-तरनु भो ॥
 घोर रारि हेरि त्रिपुरारि-बिधि हारे हिउँ,
 घायल लखन बीर बानर बरनु भो ।
 ऐसे सोकमें तिलोकु कै बिसोक पलही में,
 सबही को तुलसीको साहेबु सरनु भो ॥ 56 ॥

56. bāpa diyō kānanu, bhō ānanu subhānanu sō,
 bairī bhō dasānanu sō, tiyakō haranu bhō.
 bāli balasāli dali, pāli kapirājakō,
 bibhīśanu nēvāji, sēta sāgara-taranu bhō..
 ghōra rāri hēri tripurāri-bidhi hārē hi'ēñ,
 ghāyala lakhana bīra bānara baranu bhō.
 aisē sōkamēm tilōku kai bisōka palahī mēm,

sabahī kō tulasīkō sāhēbu saranu bhō..56..

Verse no. 6/56—“Lord Ram’s face never showed anger, remorse, annoyance or dejection and any other negative signs even though his father exiled him, or a warrior as brave as Ravana became his enemy and kidnapped Sita. He protected Sugriv by killing his enemy and arch rival, the powerful Bali, had mercy on Vibhishan, crossed the ocean by constructing a bridge across it, fought such a furious war that even Brahma and Shiva shuddered and had lost all hopes of victory in their hearts, and his brother Laxman was wounded in the battle, got so much smeared with blood and dust that his countenance resembled those of red-faced monkeys.

Even in the face of such adversities and misfortunes, he could redeem the three Lokas (by vanquishing the fear of the Gods)—Tulsidas says that his Lord is such that he gives refuge to all and obliges them fully.”

[Note—Verse nos. 56—58 sort of recapitulates the story of Lord Ram since his coming to the forest till the time the epic war of Lanka ended and the Lord was victorious.]

कुंभकरन्नु हन्यो रन राम, दल्यो दसकंधरु कंधर तोरे।
पूषनबंस बिभूषन-पूषन-तेज-प्रताप गरे अरि-ओरे॥
देव निसान बजावत, गावत, साँवतु गो मनभावत भो रे।
नाचत-बानर-भालु सबै ‘तुलसी’ कहि ‘हा रे! हहा भै अहो रे’॥ 57॥

57. kumbhakarannu han'yō rana rāma, dalyō dasakandharu kandhara tōrē.
pūśanabansa bibhūśana-pūśana-tēja-pratāpa garē ari-ōrē..
dēva nisāna bajāvata, gāvata, sām̐vatu gō manabhāvata bhō rē.
nācata-bānara-bhālu sabai ‘tulasī’ kahi ‘hā rē! hahā bhai ahō rē’.. 57..

Verse no. 6/57—Lord Ram killed Kumbhkaran and Ravana by breaking the latter's neck in the war. In this way the hail (enemy) melted by the heat of the sun (the glory of Lord Ram) (1).

The Gods sing and beat their trumpets and drums because their dependence on Ravana ended and their wishes were fulfilled. Even the monkeys and bears are dancing with joy, cheering, ‘Oh what a wonder! How great! Fantastic!’ (2).”

मारे रन रातिचर रावनु सकुल दलि,
अनुकूल देव-मुनि फूल बरषतु हैं।
नाग, नर, किन्नर, बिराँचि, हरि, हरु हेरि
पुलक सरीर हिउँ हेतु हरषतु हैं॥
बाम ओर जानकी कृपानिधानके बिराजै,
देखत बिषादु मिटै, मोदु करषतु हैं।
आयसु भो, लोकनि सिधारे लोकपाल सबै,
‘तुलसी’ निहाल कै कै दिये सरखतु हैं॥ 58॥

58. mārē rana rāticara rāvanu sakula dali,
anukūla dēva-muni phūla barāśatu haiṁ.
nāga, nara, kinnara, birañci, hari, haru hēri
pulaka sarīra hi'ēṁ hētu haraśatu haiṁ..
bāma ōra jānakī kṛpānidhānakē birājaiṁ,

dēkhata biśādu miṭai, mōdu karaśatu hairi.
 āyasu bhō, lōkani sidhārē lōkapāla sabai,
 ‘tulasi’ nihāla kai kai diyē sarakhatu hairi..58..

Verse no. 6/58—Lord Ram crushed Ravana along with his kin and other demons in the war. Exhilarated and ecstatic at the victory, the gods and sages showered flowers upon the Lord (from the sky / heaven). Watching the scene, the terrestrial serpents, humans, ‘Kinnars’ (dancers and singers) as well as Lords Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu became thrilled, and their hearts overflowed with joy, delight, love and affection.

The merciful (Lord Ram) has Sita on his left¹, the very vision of which results in (provides) freedom from sorrows and enhances happiness. All the Lokpals (guardians) took leave and went to their respective posts (Lokas).

Tulsidas says that the Lord Ram made everyone happy and contented, and declared that now onwards they should all be fearless.”

[Note—¹This stanza prepares us for the next phase of this marvelous and fascinating Story of Lord Ram’s victory over the demon forces, led by their king Ravana, in the Epic War of Lanka—for it refers to “Sita standing to the left of Lord Ram”, which obviously means that she has been freed from her captivity in Lanka after Ravana’s death.

What transpired during the time between Ravana’s death and her restoration to Lord Ram is the subject matter of our reading in the pages that follow.]

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Section 19.3: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104—to Doha no. 106.

{Note—After the brief pause of Sections 19.1 (Geetawali Ramayan) and 19.2 (Kavitawali Ramayan), now we shall resume our narrative in this Section no. 19.3 by picking up the thread from where we had left it earlier in Chapter 18, Section 18.1.}

The severed heads of Ravana fell before his chief queen Mandodari. Though she grieved and lamented sorely at the death of her husband Ravana, she also lauded the grace and magnanimity of Lord Ram that he had been exceptionally and singularly kind and gracious to grant emancipation and salvation to the soul of Ravana in spite of his being very sinful, pervert, vile and evil. When the assembled gods and sages heard her, they very much appreciated Mandodari’s wisdom and enlightened thoughts because her praise of Lord Ram showed that she understood that the Lord had not actually ‘killed’ her husband with any sort of animosity and malice in his heart, but the fact was quite the contrary, for the Lord had provided her husband’s soul the rare blessing of ‘liberation from the demonic body in which it was trapped, granting it

deliverance, emancipation and salvation' which Ravana would never have got if he was allowed to live a life on his own terms as a 'demon'. The greatness and magnanimity of Lord Ram, of whom Mandodari was certain was none but the Supreme Being himself*, lay in this very thing—that the Lord had taken the trouble to suffer himself so much in order to free her husband's soul from the swamp of sins and evil deeds that it was trapped in by the virtue of the body of a demon in which this soul lived, by 'killing' the sinful body as it paved the way for the soul of her dear husband to escape from it and find its freedom, just like a prisoner who is suddenly freed from a prison from which he had never imagined he would ever be freed. Forsooth, this therefore was not 'killing of her husband by Lord Ram', but it was a mighty blessing in disguise for him; it was a blessing that had left even the gods and sages amazed at Ravana's good fortune, and made them laud him for the exalted destiny that his soul had attained in spite of his spending his life sinfully#.

{*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.

#Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 103; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 79-88.}

However, from the perspective of this gross world, we see everyone in Ravana's family grieving and lamenting on his death. Even Vibhishan was emotionally upset and sad when he saw everyone in his bereaved family weeping and wailing so sorrowfully. Laxman stepped forward to condole Vibhishan and assuage his feelings. After that, Lord Ram summoned his chief ministers and instructed them to go to Lanka with Vibhishan, and anoint him as the kingdom's new King.

These episodes have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104—to Doha no. 106.

Let us now commence to read what happened immediately after the demise of Ravana, the great king of the demon race. First we shall read that as soon as it was clear that Ravana was dead, a thick pall of gloom descended on his family; his chief queen Mandodari as well as all others in the royal household lamented and grieved most woefully. Then Vibhishan too grieved at the death of his brother, and Laxman comforted him. Finally we shall see Lord Ram fulfilling his promise given to Vibhishan: that at the end of the war he would make the latter a King of Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

चौ०. पति सिर देखत मंदोदरी । मुरुछित बिकल धरनि खसि परी ॥ १ ॥

जुबति बृंद रोवत उठि धाई । तेहि उठाइ रावन पहि आई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pati sira dēkhata mandōdarī. muruchita bikala dharani khasi parī. 1.

jubati br̥nda rōvata uṭhi dhā'īm. tēhi uṭhā'i rāvana pahim ā'īm. 2.

No sooner had Mandodari seen her husband's head falling right before her¹, than she swooned and fell down unconscious on the ground. (1)

The women folk of the royal household (maids, servitors, guards and other royal attendants) too broke down, weeping and grieving along with Mandodari at the death of their lord (Ravana). They lifted Mandodari up from the ground, and brought her to the place (in the battle-field) where Ravana's body lay on the ground². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²They all came to the battle-field to see Ravana's dead body for the last time, and pay their last respects to him.

They also wanted to verify if Ravana was actually dead, for merely seeing his heads was no guarantee that he was really dead. During the course of the war, his heads were severed many times by Lord Ram, and all these heads had flown here and there in the sky, and after sometimes they must have landed somewhere. So therefore, the palace women could not be absolutely certain that Ravana was dead by merely seeing his severed heads. Hence, they wished to ascertain the facts by visiting the battle-ground and seeing for themselves that Ravana was indeed dead.]

पति गति देखि ते करहिं पुकारा । छूटे कच नहिं बपुष सँभारा ॥ ३ ॥
उर ताड़ना करहिं बिधि नाना । रोवत करहिं प्रताप बखाना ॥ ४ ॥

pati gati dēkhi tē karahim pukārā. chūṭē kaca nahim bapuṣa saṁbhārā. 3.
ura tāṛana karahim bidhi nānā. rōvata karahim pratāpa bakhānā. 4.

When they (Mandodari as well as all other ladies who accompanied her) saw the condition of their lord (“pati”; i.e. Ravana)¹ (lying prostrate and motionless on the ground, with all his heads and limbs cut-off, and covered with a thick cake of dust mixed with dried blood), they wailed and lamented most woefully, crying in agony of grief, dismay and distress.

Their long tresses were disheveled and in complete disorder; they weren't in control of themselves and their bodies. (3)

All of them woefully beat their chests and felt utterly miserable in their hearts while remembering their lord's greatness and glories, which they, led by their grieving queen Mandodari, enumerated in laudable terms, praising him for his outstanding achievements for which he was so famed and acclaimed³. (4)

[Note—¹The word used in the text for Ravana is “pati”: it has a dual meaning: for Mandodari it meant her ‘husband’, and for the rest of the ladies it meant their ‘lord’.

²The ladies were in great grief and overcome with remorse. No matter how bad, evil and cruel Ravana may have been for the rest of the world, for them he was their caretaker who provided them their security, their needs and their comforts; and with his death they had lost their lord and master. They stared at a morbid, gloomy and uncertain future, for they did not know what was in store for them, and how the new ruler would treat them. They feared for the worse as they already had a very bitter experience of how an invading army behaves on several occasions during the war, but more specifically when recently the small detachment of monkeys, who were sent to

stop Ravana's fire sacrifice, had ill-treated and humiliated them by dragging them by their hairs and pulling them out from the inside of the palace. {Apropos: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 85; and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 24-32.}

They guessed that after this victory, Vibhishan would surely ascend the throne of Lanka, as he was the next in line of natural succession. With the memory of how roughly his brother Ravana had treated him in full court and then kicked him out of the kingdom very unceremoniously, there were fair chances of his squaring up the account of the insults that he had been subjected to by avenging his anger on Ravana's ladies; if not physically ravishing them in the worst scenario, then at the best by treating them as his mistresses and concubines on-call, who would be expected to gratify his pleasures at his will, or else face punishment, thereby robbing them of their freedom, honour, dignity and self-respect that all of them had hitherto enjoyed under their lord Ravana.

³When a person is dead, it is a matter of courtesy and civility and good manners that only his goodness and achievements are recounted, and not his sins and evilness; this is the standard way obituaries are written. No one, not even those who had malice against him while he was alive, would say in public that the dead man was a vile person; for with his death his sins also die with his dead body. What survived Ravana was his soul, and this soul is eternally pure and holy, and hence without blemishes.

If outsiders refrain from criticizing a dead person, how can his kith and kin, his close family members such as his wife and brother, durst ever gather courage to insinuate him, for in case they do so then they themselves become objects of scorn and ridicule in this world?

It is forsooth an undeniable fact that there was no greater warrior at that time than Ravana who had conquered the whole world with the formidable strength of his arms. He was not only invincible in the battle-field but also a great performer of sacrifices, as well as scholar in his own right. Even the almighty gods were vanquished by him; he had performed many a great sacrifices by the virtue of which Brahma, the creator, and Lord Shiva, the concluder of this creation, had themselves been so pleased with him that they had granted him several boons; and as for scholarship, Ravana was well-versed in the scriptures and their Mantras, and his prayer, called "Shiva Tandava Stotra" in honour of Lord Shiva, who incidentally was his patron deity, has no match in Sanskrit literature. He also did severe penances, observed austerities, practiced meditation and contemplation, and taken all-in-all, he was a learned and wise soul.

As to the question "why did he do so many sins", the answer is: it was not 'he', i.e. his true self known as his Atma (pure consciousness) that commit any sin, but it was his gross body of a demon that did it.

And further, if we examine the circumstances of his getting a demonic body, we find that it was not because of some grave sin or evil deed of his own doing, but because of a nasty scheme laid out by one of his enemies in his previous life that led to Brahmins falsely holding him guilty and cursing him to become a demon for a grave sin that he had not at all committed. We have already read this story earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 176.

So therefore, to be honest to Ravana, the real blame for all his sufferings was not his own misdeeds, but the over-jealous Brahmins who had misused their powers to curse him without finding out the truth.]

तव बल नाथ डोल नित धरनी । तेज हीन पावक ससि तरनी ॥ ५ ॥
 सेष कमठ सहि सकहिं न भारा । सो तनु भूमि परेउ भरि छारा ॥ ६ ॥

tava bala nātha ḍōla nita dharanī. tēja hīna pāvaka sasi taranī. 5.
 sēṣa kamaṭha sahi sakahim na bhārā. sō tanu bhūmi parē'u bhari chārā. 6.

Mandodari, who was all the more sad and remorseful at the loss of her dear husband, honoured her departed lord by lauding his achievements in the following words: 'Oh Lord! The earth shook by the might of your valorous arms. The Fire God, the Moon and the Sun faded in comparison to your grand majesty and astounding glory. (3)

It is such an irony that you, who once were so mighty and great that the Tortoise and Seshnath (who are said to support the earth and the world on their back and hoods respectively) shook and shuddered when you walked majestically¹, now lie fallen on the ground covered with dust! (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 182; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

बरुन कुबेर सुरेस समीरा । रन सन्मुख धरि काहुँ न धीरा ॥ ७ ॥
 भुजबल जितेहु काल जम साई । आजु परेहु अनाथ की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

baruna kubēra surēsa samīrā. rana sanmukha dhari kāhuṁ na dhīrā. 7.
 bhujabala jitēhu kāla jama sā'īm. āju parēhu anātha kī nā'īm. 8.

Varun (the patron god of water), Kuber (the treasurer of gods), Suresh (the king of gods; Indra), and Samira (the wind god)¹—none of them dare to stand before you in the battle-field. (7)

Oh Lord; you had vanquished even Kaal, the god of death, by the force of your powerful arms².

Alas! It is so unfortunate that today you are lying helplessly on the ground as if you are without any support; as if your legendary valour, gallantry, strength and power have altogether abandoned you. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 8

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 96.]

जगत बिदित तुम्हारि प्रभुताई । सुत परिजन बल बरनि न जाई ॥ ९ ॥

राम बिमुख अस हाल तुम्हारा । रहा न कोउ कुल रोवनिहारा ॥ १० ॥

jagata bidita tumhāri prabhutāī. suta parijana bala barani na jāī. 9.
rāma bimukha asa hāla tumhārā. rahā na kō'u kula rōvanihārā. 10.

Your (Ravana's) majesty, greatness, achievements, gallantry and glories are famed throughout the world; the strength and valour of your kith and kin were so immense that they could not be sufficiently enumerated and praised by anyone. (9)

But alas, such a woeful has been your fate by being hostile towards and harbouring animosity with Lord Ram that no one is left in your race (and family) to at least weep for you on your demise¹. (10)

[Note—¹It is surely a biting and bitter taunt on Vibhishan—for everyone knows that he was Ravana's brother, and when the ladies said that “no one lives in Ravana's family to weep for him after he died”, a finger of scorn and contempt is pointed directly at his brother Vibhishan. Ravana's ladies blame Vibhishan for their lord's death, and for all practical purposes they indicate that they treat him as an outcaste from the demon race.

It was sure to pinch Vibhishan's conscience sorely, and he would understand that in the final analysis of history he would never be forgiven for his betrayal and for being an agent to bring about the ruin of his own family.]

तव बस बिधि प्रपंच सब नाथा । सभय दिसिप नित नावहिं माथा ॥ ११ ॥
अब तव सिर भुज जंबुक खाहीं । राम बिमुख यह अनुचित नाहीं ॥ १२ ॥
काल बिबस पति कहा न माना । अग जग नाथु मनुज करि जाना ॥ १३ ॥

tava basa bidhi prapañca saba nāthā. sabhaya disipa nita nāvahiṁ māthā. 11.
aba tava sira bhuja jambuka khāhīm. rāma bimukha yaha anucita nāhīm. 12.
kāla bibasa pati kahā na mānā. aga jaga nāthu manuja kari jānā. 13.

Oh Lord (nāthā)! The entire world, which the creator Brahma had created, was under your domain and command. The Lokpals (the gods who are appointed as custodians of the world) used to bow their heads before you daily to pay their respects to your majesty. (11)

What a paradox and an irony of fate it is that now your majesty's heads and arms are being eaten by jackals. [Why has this come to be?]

But there is no wonder that this has come to be your fate because it is not unexpected as a punishment for your being against Lord Ram. (12)

[Mandodari laments—] Oh my dear husband (pati)! You were under the influence of Kaal (death) because you had not paid heed to my advice that I had proffered to you repeatedly in this regard (that you were committing a grave folly by being hostile to Lord Ram, and that you must make peace with him at any cost)¹.

This Kaal had so much deluded your wisdom that inspite of my entreaties you had been so stubborn that you thought Lord Ram to be a human prince. (13)

[Note—¹There are several occasions when Mandodari had tried to persuade Ravana to end hostility with Lord Ram and make his peace with him, but he stubbornly refused.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede it; (b) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 37.]

छं०. जान्यो मनुज करि दनुज कानन दहन पावक हरि स्वयं । १ ।
जेहि नमत सिव ब्रह्मादि सुर पिय भजेहु नहिं करुनामयं ॥ २ ॥
आजन्म ते परद्रोह रत पापौघमय तव तनु अयं । ३ ।
तुम्हहू दियो निज धाम राम नमामि ब्रह्म निरामयं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jān'yō manuja kari danuja kānana dahana pāvaka hari svayaṁ. 1.
jēhi namata siva brahmādi sura piya bhajēhu nahim karunāmayam. 2.
ājanma tē paradrōha rata pāpaughamaya tava tanu ayam. 3.
tumhahū diyō nija dhāma rāma namāmi brahma nirāmayam. 4.

[Regretting her husband's stubborn attitude that he did not pay any attention to her entreaties to him to make peace with Lord Ram, which culminated in his death, Mandodari laments woefully—]

What an irony of fate it is that you had been so deluded as to have treated the great Lord God as an ordinary human being, for you did not realize (inspite of my warnings) that Lord Ram is no one else but Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being) himself in this form, and that he is like a great wild-fire that would reduce to ashes the huge forest symbolized by the great demon race. (Chanda line no. 1)

Oh my dear husband (piya)! It is so unfortunate and regrettable that you had failed to worship Lord Ram before whom all the gods, including Lords Shiva and Brahma (the two great gods of the Trinity), bow their heads in reverence. (Chanda line no. 2)

From the time of your birth you had always been hostile towards others, harbouring malice and ill-will for one and all. Indeed, your body was an embodiment of sins and evilness. (Chanda line no. 3)

But inspite of all these shortcomings of yours, it is such a mighty wonder and a great good fortune for you that Lord Ram had bestowed you with the boon of being able to live in his own place¹. [To wit, the merciful and compassionate Lord Ram has forgiven you for all your sins and misdeeds, and instead of condemning you to suffer eternally in hell, he has granted your soul eternal peace and beatitude. Verily and in all sooth, the gracious Lord has bestowed your soul with the reward of deliverance, emancipation and salvation that you could never have ever expected in your life.]

So therefore, I most sincerely, and with the greatest of honesty that I can command, pay my reverence to such a benevolent Lord Ram who is none but the

eternal and faultless supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, himself personified².
(Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that the Atma, or the soul, of Ravana had emerged from his body to go and enter directly in the holy body of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

This is why Mandodari says that “Lord Ram has given her husband a residence very close to the Lord himself”, because a person’s heart is a place where those who are very close and dear to him find a place to dwell in a subtle way, in a symbolic manner.

How did Mandodari come to know of this development that took place in the battle-field, far away from the inner chambers of the royal palace where she was at that time? This bit of knowledge that she had shows that whatever transpired in the battle-field was instantly communicated to her inside the palace by a network of informers and spies. After all, wars can’t be fought without having real time intelligence of the enemy’s strategies, and so every king had his own way of gathering it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15 where Mandodari has told her husband Ravana exactly this thing—that Lord Ram is none but the Supreme Being himself.]

दो०. अहह नाथ रघुनाथ सम कृपासिंधु नहिं आन ।

जोगि बृंद दुर्लभ गति तोहि दीन्हि भगवान ॥ १०४ ॥

dōhā.

ahaha nātha raghunātha sama krpāsindhu nahim āna.
jōgi br̥nda durlabha gati tōhi dīnhi bhagavāna. 104.

[Expressing her regret and sadness that her lord, i.e. her husband Ravana, had not paid his attention to her, Mandodari praises Lord Ram for his graciousness and compassionate nature by saying—]

Ah indeed, there is no Lord in this world such as Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) who is an ocean (or an embodiment) of the virtues of mercy, compassion, kindness, grace, benevolence and magnanimity—for he has granted you a destiny that is even difficult for great sages, hermits and ascetics to attain¹.’ (Doha no. 104)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114 where the gods have said the same thing.

Presently, Mandodari explains why she praises Lord Ram. She was a wise and prudent woman, and so she obviously understood that she has to live under a changed situation. Her husband was dead; her brother-in-law, Vibhishan, will most certainly not have a kind view of her; and she was now surrounded by those who were hostile to her husband.

Even inside the city of Lanka, once Ravana was dead, all those who survived the war would side with the new sovereign, simply because it would serve them right to be in his good books. Some of Ravana’s trusted ministers, such as Malyawant# for

example, had already expressed their resentment at Ravana's behaviour openly {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49.}

So therefore, Mandodari thought it wise and prudent to express her praise for Lord Ram in public at this crucial juncture to erase all traces of remaining animosity and ill-will that may linger even after the war ended. After all, she had always held the view that Lord Ram was the Supreme Being, and that he was very kind and gracious, but till this point of time her views were known only to Ravana. So she thought that it was the right time now that she should come out publicly with her thoughts, as it would make her an instant favourite with Lord Ram and his army, as well as with the new sovereign whoso he might be.

This favourable view of hers for Lord Ram, and she hoped which would be graciously reciprocated by the Lord himself, would definitely ensure her peace under the new dispensation that would rule Lanka after the war.]

चौ०. मंदोदरी बचन सुनि काना । सुर मुनि सिद्ध सबन्हि सुख माना ॥ १ ॥
 अज महेस नारद सनकादी । जे मुनिबर परमारथबादी ॥ २ ॥
 भरि लोचन रघुपतिहि निहारी । प्रेम मगन सब भए सुखारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

mandōdarī bacana suni kānā. sura muni sid'dha sabanhi sukha mānā. 1.
 aja mahēsa nārada sanakādī. jē munibara paramārathabādī. 2.
 bhari lōcana raghupatihi nihārī. prēma magana saba bha'ē sukhārī. 3.

Hearing these gratuitous words of Mandodari, all the gods, sages and mystics felt very happy¹. (1)

The creator Brahma (aja), Lord Shiva (mahēsa), the celestial sages Narad and Sankadi, as well as all other sages and ascetics who were learned, wise and enlightened --- (2),

--- All of them watched the glorious form of Lord Ram till their eyes were satisfied. The magnificent sight of the Lord (smiling and looking calm) made them feel exhilarant in their hearts so much that they became overwhelmed with emotions. (3)

[Note—¹They felt happy that since Mandodari was favourably inclined to Lord Ram, there was no chance of any resumption of hostility, for if she, being the queen of the demon race, decided against surrender, she could have led a fresh wave of revolt against the Lord by gathering all the remaining demon warriors—who had vowed their allegiance in favour of her husband, and who would now willingly side with her if she chose to lead them against the invading army, as well as against Vibhishan whom all of them held in contempt for being a traitor—to launch a second round of this destructive war.

A war that destroys everything is not liked by anyone; so when the gods, sages and mystics found Mandodari in favour of Lord Ram, that she harbours no ill-will against the Lord, they rejoiced that at last peace would reign on earth.]

रुदन करत देखीं सब नारी । गयउ बिभीषनु मन दुख भारी ॥ ४ ॥
 बंधु दसा बिलोकि दुख कीन्हा । तब प्रभु अनुजहि आयसु दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
 लछिमन तेहि बहु बिधि समुझायो । बहुरि बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आयो ॥ ६ ॥

rudana karata dēkhīm saba nārī. gaya'u bibhīṣanu mana dukha bhārī. 4.
 bandhu dasā bilōki dukha kīnhā. taba prabhu anujahi āyasu dīnhā. 5.
 lachimana tēhi bahu bidhi samujhāyō. bahuri bibhīṣana prabhu pahim āyō. 6.

[Vibhishan at last was moved by remorse and guilt. Blood is said to be always thicker than water. So when he saw the ladies of his brother's family, who obviously were closely related to him as well, weeping and grieving for his elder brother Ravana, he became emotional.]

When Vibhishan saw the ladies of the royal household weeping, lamenting and grieving sorely (for his dead brother Ravana), he was moved emotionally, and felt very sad and sorry.

Then Vibhishan went there (“gaya'u bibhīṣanu”; i.e. Vibhishan went to the place near the dead body of his brother Ravana where these ladies had gathered to grieve for him)¹. (4)

So, seeing the condition and fate of his dead brother Ravana, Vibhishan expressed his grief and remorse.

At this juncture, Lord Ram called his younger brother (Laxman) and instructed him according to the prevailing situation. [To wit, Lord Ram asked Laxman to go and comfort Vibhishan.] (5)

Laxman went and comforted Vibhishan in many ways². Then he came back to the Lord, bringing Vibhishan along with him³. (6)

[Note—¹This means that till now Vibhishan was standing away from the spot where Ravana's body lay on the ground, for he was near Lord Ram.

The sight of the ladies weeping over the dead body of his elder brother Ravana at last made Vibhishan emotional as he was overcome with pangs of guilt and shame. He bethought to himself:

“If I do not express any sort of sorrow at this juncture, it will be a tremendous scandal, and it will make the whole world scorn at me for my rudeness and showing irreverence for a departed soul, which is a contemptible thing to do by all accounts. I have already achieved my objective of getting rid of my cruel brother who had tormented the world for so long, who had relentlessly been committing all sorts of sinful deeds, who had so impudently abducted Sita, who was like a thorn for the world, and who had insulted me in public when I was being sincere in my advice to him to abandon his hostile attitude towards Lord Ram and make peace with him. But now he is dead, and in spite of all his drawbacks and shortcomings, after all, he was my elder brother who had sustained me all my life till that unfortunate moment when he kicked me out of the kingdom in a fit of rage. I must now forgive him; I must show my respects to him as my brother—this the world expects from me.

Lord Ram is closely watching me and my actions. Say, what would he think of me and my character if I do not show any remorse for my dead brother, if I do not pay my last respects to his soul? Surely, I would fall in his esteem; he will think that I am a selfish and a pervert demon in heart, no better than Ravana. Should this idea sprout in the Lord's heart against me, it would be disastrous for my own future.

So therefore it is prudent and advisable for me to show remorse and sadness for my dead brother, and at least make an external show of sympathy for the grieving ladies of our household."

²Let us see what may have transpired between Laxman and Vibhishan. To begin with, Laxman went through the usual things one says while condoling someone who has been bereaved. He told Vibhishan: "My dear friend. Don't thou grieve for Ravana; for dost thou wot naught that Ravana's body was evil and sinful, and aren't thou well enough enlightened to know that the gross body of any living being in this world, no matter how great he is, is mortal, and this body has to perish by way of dying one or the other day in order to release the trapped soul. Being sinful, evil, vile and cruel, the body of Ravana was destined to suffer severe punishment in hell; so what thou seest of Ravana's gross physical body is what his body hadst deserved.

As for Ravana himself, aren't thou wise enough to know also that the gross body of any individual is not his 'true self'; for it is the Atma, the pure consciousness also known as the soul, that is truly that individual's 'self'. And haven't thou seen thyself that Ravana's soul has attained eternal deliverance; haven't thou witnessed how the Atma of Ravana emerged from his sinful body to find an abiding rest in the holy body of Lord Ram who is none but the Supreme Being himself? Dost thou wot naught that? So why dost thou grieve; there is no reason for thee to doest that? The fact of the matter is that Ravana has been very fortunate that inspite of living a life of sensual pleasures, doing what he thought fit to gratify his senses, doing nothing worthy to be called meritorious that would entitle him for any spiritual reward, yet he foundest a destiny that is rare even for learned and illustrious sages, hermits and ascetics to attain.

Have thou not heard thyself that thine sister-in-law Mandodari has herself acknowledged that her husband has been exceptionally fortunate because his soul has been bestowed with an exalted and singularly rare destiny that even the greatest of sages and hermits yearn for? Why dost thou grieve for Ravana then, for he hast attained deliverance, he hast achieved eternal beatitude and felicity, which he wouldn't have ever attained if allowed to live a life of sin and cruelty to which he was accustomed? There is no need for thee even to pray for his soul, as people usually do when remembering and grieving for a dead person, for that destiny of the soul hast already been achieved by Ravana. Forsooth therefore, instead of grieving and lamenting and feeling remorseful, it wouldst be in fitness of things for thee to become calm, and make arrangements for his funeral."

After finishing this formal discourse to comfort Vibhishan, Laxman came to the main point for which Lord Ram had so hurriedly sent him to follow Vibhishan. Laxman instinctively and intuitively realized what was going on in Lord Ram's mind. He had an apprehension that there are fare chances of Vibhishan suddenly having a change of heart when he sees his family members sorely weeping and grieving for his dead brother, as also the fact that since 'blood is always thicker than water' he might think that after all the demons are related to him by blood, that he is 'one of them', whereas the 'others', Lord Ram and his companions, are outsiders; these 'outsiders' had invaded his kingdom, they have killed his brother, ruined his kingdom, and may

be now their chief, i.e. Lord Ram, would appoint any trusted minister of his, say Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, as a governor of Lanka, and assign some secondary role to Vibhishan just to keep him happy. It was also possible that Vibhishan, with these and other such thoughts churning his mind, would be prone to become more sympathetic to his demons than the Lord could expect.

After all, with Ravana dead, Vibhishan's objective in joining Lord Ram's camp was fulfilled; there were chances of his thinking: "Well, after all I will be welcomed by my friends in Lanka if I explain to them the circumstances why I abandoned them earlier. Lord Ram is only concerned with retrieving his wife Sita, and that done he would go away to his own kingdom far away in the north, in the city of Ayodhya. I have to live here amongst these demons. So it will be wise and prudent for me to make quick amends with the demons who have survived this war and tell them that I am one like them, I am one of them; that I have more to do with them than the invaders."

This was an unsavoury scenario that Lord Ram wished to avoid at all costs. So therefore, Laxman called Vibhishan aside and whispered in his ears: "Look my dear friend. Thou wilt be wise to come along with me to Lord Ram. See, the demon brothers of thine thinkest that Ravana was slayed by Lord Ram, ain't it? Well, suppose they are told the truth that it was thee who had divulged the secret of Ravana's death to Lord Ram—that he ought to shoot an arrow at Ravana's navel in order to kill him. Dost thou thinkest that then thine dear demon friends wouldst welcome thee warmly? All bonhomie that thou hope wouldst be there for thee in Lanka shouldst thou decide to go back to Lanka with these grieving ladies of the royal household, then perish the thought if thou hast it. Bless thine self if the demons wouldst naught kill thee mercilessly instantly for thy being a traitor who hast betrayed thine own race.

Remember friend, thou art to be anointed as the next king of Lanka; Lord Ram hast already promised this reward to thee, and the Lord is singularly true to his words. Since Lord Ram has been victorious in this war, no one wouldst durst oppose thee if thou are appointed king by the Lord himself, under his auspices. On the contrary, imagine thine doomed fate if the demon race comest to know that it is thee who hast been actually responsible for Ravana's death by divulging the secret way to kill him. Thou wouldst be loathed by one and all; thou wouldst be neither here nor there, and left high and dry; thou wouldst have no face to show to Lord Ram then and seek his intervention on thine behalf. Hence, it's in thine own interests to come along with me to Lord Ram forthwith. Thy wilt be absolutely safe that way and assured of gaining the crown of the kingdom of Lanka."

Obviously, Vibhishan was terrified at these prospects; if he had secretly harboured any thoughts of returning to Lanka at this point of time, such thoughts flew away fast from him as a dry leaf that is swept away in a gust of wind.

Meanwhile, the chronicler of this magnificent Story, the author of this Book, wishes to bring on record that the above narrative documents only the lighter part of what actually transpired between Laxman and Vibhishan at that point of time; for after this initial talk done in a lighter vein to dissuade Vibhishan from getting distracted by weeping ladies and his own heart that was overcome with remorse, Laxman became a little more serious and consoled Vibhishan by invoking metaphysical knowledge as expounded in the Upanishads, because this knowledge helps the grieving person to overcome the sadness of his heart and remove any guilt that his conscience may harbour.

What Laxman told Vibhishan next, according to Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 12, verse nos. 9-30, is this in brief: “My dear friend. Look, you are a wise soul, so I believe that you understand that the gross body of any living being is not his ‘true self’, that the ‘true self’ is his Atma, his soul, which is pure consciousness. You must know that the gross body has many faults and is perishable, while the Atma is eternal and pure. I am sure you must also be aware that the Atma has no relationships; all relationships that exist in this world are limited to the gross body. Tell me, for whom are you grieving? Is it for your brother Ravana? See for yourself how wrong you are. Your brother’s real identity is his Atma, and this Atma knows no relationships. Further, this Atma of your brother Ravana hasn’t died; on the contrary it has been freed from the cage of a sinful body of a demon in which it was trapped, to find liberation and deliverance.

Since the Atma is your brother Ravana’s true self or true identity, since the Atma does not die as it is an eternal entity, and since the Atma is sublime, holy and divine because it is pure consciousness, where is the cause of your lamenting at the death of you brother? It’s merely your imagination that Ravana has died; for the Atma never dies. You ought to rejoice instead of grieving because your brother’s Atma has found deliverance, emancipation and salvation; because it has been freed from the cage of a demonic body in which it was trapped. The longer Ravana’s Atma had lived in his body, the more it would have suffered, because his body was that of a ‘demon’ and so it would have continued to do what was normal for it to do, which means doing sinful and evil deeds. Again, since every action has its result, it would be natural to expect that Ravana’s Atma would have been burdened more and more by the sins he committed by his demon body.

So therefore, you must rather thank Lord Ram that he has blessed Ravana’s Atma by providing it liberation from the quagmire of sins and their consequences by killing his body so that the Atma that was trapped inside it can find its freedom.

What’s more glorious than anything else is that Ravana’s Atma has found a destination that even exalted sages and ascetics find it difficult to attain; it has been accepted by the Supreme Being himself. Have you not witnessed that Ravana’s Atma had exited from his sinful body in the form of a shaft of light to enter the holy body of Lord Ram, implying that the Lord has accepted Ravana’s Atma and made it indistinguishable and inseparable from his own Atma (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103).

Vibhishan, just imagine how fortunate and blessed your brother Ravana is; he does not deserve weeping and grieving; rather he deserves a salute from you. You ought to be proud in calling yourself Ravana’s brother, because remember that not everyone is fortunate to find a place inside Lord Ram’s heart as your brother has found.

And as for Ravana’s body, here it lies before you. It was sinful and evil. Tell me honestly, would any man in his right senses like to weep and lament at the loss of such a vile thing as was the body of Ravana? Its good riddance rather, ain’t it? So therefore, feel comforted; stop lamenting and feeling remorseful like an ignorant person. Get up and do what you are now expected to do for Ravana whom you call your brother: perform his last rites and pay your obeisance to him. That is the proper thing for you to do under the present circumstance. Grieving, lamenting, feeling remorseful and guilty for something over which you have no control does not behave of a wise soul like you.

³Lord Ram closely observed Vibhishan's behaviour. So the Lord decided quickly to send Laxman to Vibhishan with two purposes in mind: The first reason was obviously to comfort Vibhishan like a true friend should do in times of distress. The second reason was more subtle. It was to ensure that Vibhishan should not suddenly have a change of heart once Ravana was dead, and turn against the Lord by joining the demons who were, after all, related to him by blood.

It is to be noted here that when Vibhishan went forward to join the royal ladies grieving by the side of the dead body of Ravana, he had not taken Lord Ram's permission. Vibhishan had gone there impulsively, for he was overcome with remorse and shame. This raised certain doubts in the Lord's mind about his intentions.

Lord Ram felt that he could not take chances; there was a certain degree of risk in leaving Vibhishan too long with the ladies of his dead brother so that they can have a conference. Perhaps Vibhishan would now suddenly have a change of heart—because Ravana, with whom he wanted to settle personal scores for the insult that the latter had inflicted upon him, was now dead, and with his death Vibhishan's mind was freed of all fears from his brother. So there were chances that he may turn his back on his protector and patron Lord Ram now, thinking: "Since my chief objective in joining the Lord's camp has been achieved, why should I now remain under his sovereignty. Now I am a king of Lanka, and the demons are related to me by blood. After all, Lord Ram and his army are invaders. They are enemies of Lanka and the demon race; how can they be my true friends? They needed me to help them against Ravana and the demon army as I could provide them with vital information and clues as how to win the war, as much as I needed them to protect me against my inimical brother who was baying for my blood. We both have served our respective purposes. Enemies who have fought deadly wars can never be true friends in the long run, so goes the saying. I am a demon by birth, and no matter how much I try to prove my integrity and allegiance in favour of Lord Ram, to whom I truly feel obliged and submissive, yet I doubt that few in the monkey army would truly believe me and have faith in me, for they will always treat me as Ravana's brother.

And now that I have openly shown my remorse and grief at my brother's death, which was spontaneous and natural for me to do, the doubt about my integrity and loyalty for Lord Ram that anyone in the Lord's company has had for me would be reinforced and aggravated. What should I do now? Shall I excuse myself from Lord Ram and explain to him that I must return to the city of Lanka with these ladies in order to restore order there, as a void has been created with Ravana's death and the throne is empty. Or should I wait to see if Lord Ram fulfils his promise of making me the king of Lanka at the end of the war. But supposing the Lord changes his mind once his objective of vanquishing Ravana has been accomplished; suppose he decides to appoint someone else as Lanka's governor before returning to his own kingdom of Ayodhya? What would I do then? If I oppose, the monkeys would catch me and put me in shackles. So, should I join these ladies and accompany them back to the fort while there is still time for me? Surely, Lord Ram would not be as ungracious and incourteous as to show any rudeness in the front of these ladies; which will provide me a safety net to escape. Say, what am I ought to do?"

Laxman was quickly by Vibhishan's side, leaving no time for him to enter into any consultation with either the grieving ladies or the remaining demon warriors who stood guarding the dead body of Ravana. After usual condolences and formalities for such occasions as noted herein above in note no. 2, Laxman diplomatically prevailed upon Vibhishan to bring him to Lord Ram.]

कृपादृष्टि प्रभु ताहि बिलोका । करहु क्रिया परिहरि सब सोका ॥ ७ ॥
कीन्हि क्रिया प्रभु आयसु मानी । बिधिवत देस काल जियँ जानी ॥ ८ ॥

krpādr̥ṣṭi prabhu tāhi bilōkā. karahu kriyā parihari saba sōkā. 7.
kīnhi kriyā prabhu āyasu mānī. bidhivata dēsa kāla jiyam̐ jānī. 8.

Lord Ram looked at Vibhishan very gracefully and courteously (to reassure him that the Lord has a great degree of respect for him, and that he should never doubt Lord Ram's abiding faith in him, as well as the Lord's promise of abiding friendship with him).

Then Lord Ram advised Vibhishan to discard all grief and do his duty of performing the last rites of Ravana¹. (7)

Whereat, Vibhishan obeyed the instructions of Lord Ram and performed the last rites of Ravana in accordance with the circumstances of place and time², and as prescribed by the scriptures. (8)

[Note—¹It is so praiseworthy and an honourable act for Lord Ram that he should take care that Ravana's mortal remains was properly laid to rest. Rarely would any conqueror think in this righteous and laudable way—that he would pay special attention that those who have fallen dead during the war were given a proper funeral.

Vibhishan was Ravana's brother, and so being related with blood to the dead king, he was the right person to perform Ravana's last rites.

²The circumstances of place and time of Ravana's death were not ordinary. It was a battle-field; it was the country of demons who had their own system of dealing with their dead; it was almost the end of the day and time of eventide when the war finally ended; the whole ground was littered with dead warriors.

So therefore Ravana's last rites were performed by Vibhishan in the best manner he could under these circumstances. There couldn't be elaborate rituals befitting the funeral of a king; everything had to be done in brief. Nevertheless, all basics as prescribed by the scriptures were observed.

How did Vibhishan perform the last rites of Ravana? This question is answered in Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Lanka Kand, Canto 12, verse nos. 36-37.

This is what is narrated there:

चित्यां निवेश्य विधिवत्पितृमेधविधानतः ।
आहिताग्नेर्यथा कार्यं रावणस्य विभीषणः ॥ ३६॥
तथैव सर्वमकरोद्धन्धुभिः सह मन्त्रिभिः ।
ददौ च पावकं तस्य विधियुक्तं विभीषणः ॥ ३७॥
स्नात्वा चैवार्द्रवस्त्रेण तिलान् दर्भाभिमिश्रितान् ।
उदकेन च सम्मिश्रान् पूदाय विधिपूर्वकम् ॥ ३८॥
पूदाय चोदकं तस्मै मुध्ना चैनं पूणम्य च ।
ताः स्त्रियोऽनुनयामास सान्त्वमुक्त्वा पुनः पुनः ॥ ३९॥

cityāṃ niveśya vidhivatpitṛmedhavidhānataḥ ।
 āhitāgneryathā kāryaṃ rāvaṇasya vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 36॥
 tathaiva sarvamakarodbandhubhiḥ saha mantribhiḥ ।
 dadau ca pāvakaṃ tasya vidhiyuktaṃ vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 37॥
 snātvā caivārdravastreṇa tilān darbhābhimiśritān ।
 udakena ca sammiśrān pradāya vidhipūrvakam ॥ 38॥
 pradāya codakaṃ tasmai murdhnā cainaṃ praṇamya ca ।
 tāḥ striyo'nunayāmāsa sāntvamuktvā punaḥ punaḥ ॥ 39॥

36-39. Vibhishan laid the corpse of Ravana on the funeral pyre by observing all the traditional regulations and rules that are prescribed for the cremation of a father¹. Then he duly consigned the body of Ravana to the flames by lighting the funeral pile in the prescribed manner (36).

In these rituals, he was accompanied by his surviving relatives and ministers of the demon kingdom. He also duly completed the ‘offering of the fire’ ritual (**dadau ca pāvakaṃ tasya**)² in a traditional and sanctified manner (37)#.

Then he (Vibhishan) took a purifying bath as part of the ritual of ablution, and with wet clothes still on his body, he offered a palm-full of water having some sesame seeds and a few blades of grass in it to the departed soul as per established tradition for performing of last rites (38).

After offering his oblations in this way, he put his head to the ground as a token of respect and reverence to the departed soul, and then repeatedly consoled those grieving women (of Ravana's household) by using soothing words of consolation and condolence² (39).

{Note—¹To the credit of Vibhishan, he showed all respects to Ravana and performed his last rites like a son would do for his father. All past animosity and hatred was buried and burnt with the burning of the body of Ravana.

This verse is crucial in the sense that since Vibhishan had performed the last rites of his dead brother as a ‘son would do for his father’, he cleared for himself all obstacles that may have risen against him for his right to the throne of the kingdom of Lanka—because a son has the right to the crown after his father, the king, is dead.

²The ‘offering of the fire’ ritual is a last rite when the eldest son or nearest male relative of the deceased puts the fire to ignite the funeral pile. When the body is almost burnt, he punctures the skull with a wooden spike and puts a globule of fire into it so as to complete the cremation process. Often times, this fire is put in the mouth of the deceased. This is called “Agnidaan”.

²Another point worth noting here is that no mention is made anywhere of whatever happened to the dead bodies of Kumbhakarn, Meghnad etc. It appears that their funeral rites were done quickly by Ravana himself as is usually done in war times. ‘Quickly’—because there was no time for elaborate funeral rituals for a dead individual, and they were cremated along with the other casualties of the day in a mass funeral.”}]

दो०. मंदोदरी आदि सब देइ तिलांजलि ताहि ।

भवन गई रघुपति गुन गन बरनत मन माहि ॥ १०५ ॥

dōhā.

mandōdarī ādi saba dē'i tilāñjali tāhi.

bhavana ga'īm raghupati guna gana baranata mana māhi. 105.

Mandodari and other ladies paid their last respects to Ravana by offering sesame seeds and water for the peace of the departed soul (as prescribed by the scriptures for such occasions)¹.

Thereafter, all of them went back to their palace, all the while recounting the glories and majesty of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)². (Doha no. 105)

[Note—¹According to established tradition, a dead body is first cremated, and then those who are closely related to the dead person take a purifying bath, hold some water with sesame seeds in the hollow of the palm, and sprinkle it on the pyre while praying for peace of the departed soul. This last rite is called “tilāñjali”.

Valmiki's Ramayan says Vibhishan performed Ravana's last rites in this manner—refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 111, verse nos. 120-122.

But from a practical point of view this elaborate ritual seems difficult to have been actually observed, as Ravana had died in the middle of a battle-field, and though a funeral pyre could be lit to cremate his body, but taking a purifying bath and finding sesame seeds, as well as a priest to preside over such rites, seems quite impossible there. This is why our chronicler, Goswami Tulsidas, whose book Ram Charit Manas we are presently reading, chose to say “Vibhishan did the last rites of Ravana in accordance with the circumstances of time and place”—apropos: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha.

It means that Vibhishan did what could best be done under the given situation. He may have cremated the body of Ravana, bowed his head, raised his two hands before his chest while their palms touched each other, and stood silently for a while to say a quiet prayer for peace and rest of the departed soul of Ravana.

Then the ladies went back to the fort of Lanka, and Vibhishan came to Lord Ram.

²It is quite normal that after the last rites of a person are over, those who attend the funeral would go home while saying prayers and talking of God. Hence, the ladies were actually remembering the Lord God when they praised the glories of Lord Ram, for it was known to Mandodari that the Lord was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. This is what is implied here.]

चौ०. आइ बिभीषन पुनि सिरु नायो । कृपासिंधु तब अनुज बोलायो ॥ १ ॥

तुम्ह कपीस अंगद नल नीला । जामवंत मारुति नयसीला ॥ २ ॥

सब मिलि जाहु बिभीषन साथ । सारेहु तिलक कहेउ रघुनाथा ॥ ३ ॥

पिता बचन में नगर न आवउँ । आपु सरिस कपि अनुज पठावउँ ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ā'i bibhīṣana puni siru nāyō. kṛpāsindhu taba anuja bōlāyō. 1.

tumha kapīsa aṅgada nala nīlā. jāmavanta māruti nayasīlā. 2.

saba mili jāhu bibhīṣana sāthā. sārēhu tilaka kahē'u raghunāthā. 3.
pitā bacana mairṁ nagara na āva'uṁ. āpu sarisa kapi anuja paṭhāva'uṁ. 4.

Vibhishan came back to Lord Ram and bowed his head. Then, the gracious Lord called his younger brother Laxman (1) ---

---And instructed him: 'You, as well as the king of the monkeys Sugriv, Angad, Nala, Neela, Jamvant (the king of bears), Marut (Hanuman; the son of the wind-god)—all of whom are wise, sagacious and intelligent (2) ---

---All of you go with Vibhishan and anoint him on the throne of Lanka as its next King¹. (3)

[Addressing the group, Lord Ram said—] I refrain from going personally as I have to honour the words I gave to my father whereby I am not supposed to visit a city till the time of my forest exile is over².

So therefore, I am sending my younger brother on my behalf; he will represent me in the ceremony of Vibhishan's appointment as the King of Lanka. (4)

[Note—¹A similar thing had happened when Sugriv was appointed on the throne of Kishkindha, the kingdom of monkeys. At that time too Lord Ram had deputed Laxman to anoint Sugriv on his behalf. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.

²Lord Ram had given a word of honour to king Dasrath, his father, that he would live in forest for a period of 14 years as demanded from him by Kaikeyi, the Lord's step-mother—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Some time was still left before this period ended; and so Lord Ram did not wish to do anything which would violate this oath.]

तुरत चले कपि सुनि प्रभु बचना । कीन्ही जाइ तिलक की रचना ॥ ५ ॥
सादर सिंहासन बैठारी । तिलक सारि अस्तुति अनुसारी ॥ ६ ॥

turata calē kapi suni prabhu bacanā. kīnhī jā'i tilaka kī racanā. 5.
sādara simhāsana baiṭhārī. tilaka sārī astuti anusārī. 6.

As soon as the Kapis (i.e. Sugriv, Angad, Nala, Neela, Hanuman, as well as Jamvant) heard the words (instructions) of Lord Ram (to accompany Laxman and go with Vibhishan to anoint him on the throne of Lanka as its next king), they set off immediately to carry out the Lord's instructions. They went and made all arrangements for the ceremony to appoint Vibhishan as the King of Lanka. (5)

They respectfully made Vibhishan sit on the royal throne and anointed him by making a Tilak Mark on his forehead. After that, they praised him and recited some verses to laud and glorify him¹. (6)

[Note—¹When a new king is installed on the throne of a kingdom, all nobles of the realm assemble and put a ceremonial mark, called a ‘Tilak Mark’, on his forehead as a token of their acceptance of him as their king. In the case of Vibhishan, however, there was a difference: He had gone into exile after Ravana, the late king of Lanka and his elder brother, had disinherited him by kicking him out of the city. So under normal circumstances, Vibhishan had forfeited his right to the throne of Lanka; and had there been no war, the nobles of the demon race would have called a conference to decide who would be the next king. But that would have been the case if Ravana had died a natural death, or the throne had fallen vacant for some other reason.

However, the situation here was different; there had been a war in which the demons had lost, and in this circumstance it is the king or the general of conquering army who decides whom to make a king of the conquered kingdom or country; for the vanquished, as the tradition is, lose their right to decide on this matter.

Therefore, it was at Lord Ram’s discretion to decide whom to make the next king of Lanka. The Lord had already promised Vibhishan that the latter would be the next king after Ravana was vanquished—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.

So now Lord Ram keeps his words by sending his representatives to appoint Vibhishan as the King of Lanka in a formal ceremony. Since Vibhishan was appointed by the conquering general (Lord Ram in this case), no one in Lanka dared to resist or oppose him, even if they did not fully support him, for fear of severe reprisal under the changed circumstances wherein a new dispensation has been put in place in the wake of defeat of their erstwhile king Ravana. Hence, all demons accepted Vibhishan as their new King, willingly or grudgingly, but nevertheless vowing their allegiance to him.

Once formally declared a ‘King of Lanka’, Vibhishan had to be shown all respects and dignities behooving of a king. Now he was not an ordinary member of the demon race; now he was not an ordinary companion of the monkeys and bears with whom they can show common friendliness: for now he was a ‘King’ of a great and renowned kingdom of Lanka, and hence he commanded due respect and reverence. Now he could not be addressed simply as ‘my dear Vibhishan; or my dear friend’, but must be addressed as ‘Your Majesty; Your Royal Highness’ etc. Now if anyone comes to him, even his former friends in Lord Ram’s army, they must respect his stature; they just can’t walk in and put their arms around his shoulder, saying ‘Oh chum; how art thou?’ They would have to seek permission to present themselves before his majesty; and once ushered in they were expected to bow and pay their respect before saying any word.

So therefore, once Vibhishan was duly appointed as the King of Lanka, the ambassadors of Lord Ram paid their due respects to him as befitting a King.]

जोरि पानि सबहीं सिर नाए । सहित बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आए ॥ ७ ॥

तब रघुबीर बोलि कपि लीन्हे । कहि प्रिय बचन सुखी सब कीन्हे ॥ ८ ॥

jōri pāni sabahīm sira nā'ē. sahita bibhīṣana prabhu pahim ā'ē. 7.

taba raghubīra bōli kapi līnhē. kahi priya bacana sukhī saba kīnhē. 8.

All of them (Lord Ram’s ambassadors) joined their palms and bowed their heads before him (Vibhishan) to pay their respects to him.

After these formalities were over, all of them, including Vibhishan, came back to Lord Ram. (7)

Then, Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) called all the Kapis (monkeys and bears) near him and said words that pleased them all. [What did the Lord say? We shall read about it in the next set of verses.] (8)

छं०. किए सुखी कहि बानी सुधा सम बल तुम्हारे रिपु हयो । १ ।
पायो बिभीषन राज तिहुँ पुर जसु तुम्हारो नित नयो ॥ २ ॥
मोहि सहित सुभ कीरति तुम्हारी परम प्रीति जो गाइहैं । ३ ।
संसार सिंधु अपार पार प्रयास बिनु नर पाइहैं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ki'ē sukhī kahi bānī sudhā sama bala tumhārēm ripu hayō. 1.
pāyō bibhīṣana rāja tihuṁ pura jasu tumhārō nita nayō. 2.
mōhi sahita subha kīrati tumhārī parama prīti jō gā'ihaim. 3.
sansāra sindhu apāra pāra prayāsa binu nara pā'ihaim. 4.

Lord Ram spoke sweet words which seemed to be like nectar; and these words mightily pleased all those who listened to them.

[Lord Ram expresses his profound sense of thankfulness and gratitude for the service every individual did to him. He said he was very grateful to them in the following words:-]

‘It is by your strength, full help and unquestioned support that the enemy has been vanquished. (Chanda line no. 1)

Vibhishan had got the throne of the kingdom of Lanka.

Verily indeed, in all sooth, and without gainsay, these achievements have made your glory eternal, and have immortalized your fame in all the three divisions of the world (i.e. in the heaven, on the earth and in the nether world). (Chanda line no. 2)

Those who would sing (remember and tell others about) the good and honourable deeds that you have done along with those of mine, with due respect and faith in their remembrance of these events (instead of scoffing at them, treating them with scorn, or attempting to find unnecessary faults with them) --- (Chanda line no. 3)

--- Such persons would verily be able to easily cross (i.e. find deliverance from) this mundane mortal world which is like a huge ocean². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram means that people must not read this history as a war launched by one prince to get back his wife who was abducted by some villain. It has to read in the correct context, with the right mind, and proper perspective. It is the history of how the merciful Supreme Being showed his grace upon unfortunate creatures who had committed grave sins in their lives, but who nevertheless yearned for deliverance for their souls. The Lord came down to earth to provide liberation to the souls of these poor creatures by killing their sinful bodies.

It is also the history that teaches one to have courage and resilience in times of adversity; of what great things can be achieved by strength of will and firmness of resolution; of what selfless service and true friendship consists of; of how evil never succeeding in the long run; of the universal truth that no matter how powerful and mighty one may become at a point of time, yet a day comes when everything becomes a naught; of how oftentimes even the humblest of individuals can perform stupendous feats (as exemplified by Hanuman's glorious achievements), and how such individuals can provide help when needed by someone much superior in the social and evolutionary hierarchy to them (as was the case of the monkeys and bears helping Lord Ram to defeat the mighty forces of Ravana whom even the almighty gods feared like the plague), implying that no one should be judged by his appearances.

²To wit, by singing Lord Ram's glories and remembering that the Lord God is always willing to come to the help of his devotees, a person would never feel alone, hapless and helpless in this world even if he is surrounded by seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

This stanza also assures the devotee that even if he has committed any sins and errors in his life, there is still hope for him for getting redemption; he must have courage and purity of intentions, he must have faith and trust in the Lord God, for if he prays to the Lord for his deliverance, if he is sincere and honest in his prayers, then the Lord would fulfill his wishes as he had done for Ravana and the rest of the demons, all of whom were granted the fruit of emancipation and salvation inspite of their being sinful and evil—for the Lord is very merciful and forgiving.

Reading this enchanting Story that beguiles the heart and evokes wonder in the mind, reading it with the right perspective and thinking, will bring out its subtle goodness and the auspicious messages of exemplary spiritual and secular value that are incorporated in it.]

दो०. प्रभु के बचन श्रवन सुनि नहिं अघाहिं कपि पुंज ।

बार बार सिर नावहिं गहहिं सकल पद कंज ॥ १०६ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu kē bacana śravana suni nahim aghāhim kapi puñja.
bāra bāra sira nāvahim gahahim sakala pada kañja. 106.

Hearing such nice and gracious words from Lord Ram, the monkeys and bears were overwhelmed with emotions of gratitude towards the Lord.

All of them bowed their heads repeatedly before the Lord and touched his feet to express their joy and thankfulness to him¹ for being so kind, gracious and obliging as to publicly praise them and acknowledge their services. (Doha no.106)

[Note—¹Later on in the Story of the Ramayan, we read that once the citizens of Ayodhya were also so filled with joy and gratitude towards Lord Ram that they too had bowed their heads and touched the Lord's feet to express their happiness at the Lord's kind nature and gracious attitude—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Again, when Garud felt extremely glad upon hearing the Story of Lord Ram as narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund, he too had expressed his joy by bowing

his head repeatedly before the latter—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 125.]

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Section 19.4: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand,
Canto 12, verse nos. 1-50.

Let us once again pause for a little while and read this episode as narrated in Veda Vyas' classic 'Adhyatma Ramayan' before moving ahead with our narration. The episode of Mandodari's lamentations over the dead body of Ravana and of Vibhishan being appointed as the new King of Lanka has been described in Adhyatma Ramayan's Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 12, verse nos. 1-50 as follows:-

॥द्वादशः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।
रामो विभीषणं दृष्ट्वा हनूमन्तं तथाङ्गदम् ।
लक्ष्मणं कपिराजं च जाम्बवन्तं तथा परान् ॥ १॥
परितुष्टेन मनसा सर्वानेवाब्रवीद्वचः ।
भवतां बाहुवीर्येण निहतो रावणो मया ॥ २॥

॥dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।
rāmo vibhīṣaṇaṁ dr̥ṣṭvā hanūmantam tathāṅgadam ।
lakṣmaṇaṁ kapirājaṁ ca jāmbavantaṁ tathā parān ॥ 1॥
parituṣṭena manasā sarvānevābravīdvacaḥ ।
bhavatāṁ bāhuvīryeṇa nihato rāvaṇo mayā ॥ 2॥

Canto 12

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Sri Ram looked (compassionately, gratefully and thankfully) at Hanuman, Angad, Sugriv, Jamvant and others (1).

The Lord was satisfied and happy at the developments. Then he expressed his deep appreciation for their help in vanquishing Ravana when he said to them: 'I have killed Ravana today on the strength of your arms!' (2).

कीर्तिः स्थास्यति वः पुण्या यावच्चन्द्रदिवाकरौ
कीर्तयिष्यन्ति भवतां कथां तैलोक्यपावनीम् ॥ ३॥

मयोपेतां कलिहरां यास्यन्ति परमां गतिम् ।
 एतस्मिन्नन्तरे दृष्ट्वा रावणं पतितं भुवि ॥ ४॥
 मन्दोदरीमुखाः सर्वाः स्त्रियो रावणपालिताः ।
 पतिता रावणस्याग्रे शोचन्त्यः पर्यदेवयन् ॥ ५॥

kīrtiḥ sthāsyati vaḥ puṇyā yāvaccandrādivākaraḥ
 kīrtayiṣyanti bhavatām kathām trailokyapāvanīm ॥ 3॥
 mayopetām kaliharām yāsyanti paramām gatim ।
 etasminnantare dr̥ṣṭvā rāvaṇam patitam bhuvi ॥ 4॥
 mandodarīmukhāḥ sarvāḥ striyo rāvaṇapālītāḥ ।
 patitā rāvaṇasyāgre śocantyāḥ paryadevayan ॥ 5॥

3-5. Your great glories and astounding feats shall remain established in this world as long as there is the sun and the moon shining here. Those creatures who shall sing these glories and narrate the wonderful stories pertaining to both myself and all of you, stories which will enchant all the three divisions of this world and grant happiness to all the creatures, stories that have the potential to vanquish all the blemishes and faults (such as fears and doubts) associated with Kaliyug—such creatures shall attain the supreme state of emancipation and salvation; their souls shall find beatitude and rest by attaining my holy feet, a goal which is the ultimate destination for the soul.'

Just about that time, as was expected, seeing that Ravana was lying dead on the ground [3-4], Mandodari and all other women of Ravana's household who were protected and taken care of by him, came there, fell down before him (i.e. his dead body), and began mourning and lamenting in grief [5]. (3-5)

विभीषणः शुशोचार्तः शोकेन महतावृतः ।
 पतितो रावणस्याग्रे बहुधा पर्यदेवयत् ॥ ६॥
 रामस्तु लक्ष्मणं प्राह बोधयस्व विभीषणम् ।
 करोतु भ्रातृसंस्कारं किं विलम्बेन मानद ॥ ७॥
 स्त्रियो मन्दोदरीमुख्याः पतिता विलपन्ति च ।
 निवारयतु ताः सर्वा रक्षसी रावणप्रियाः ॥ ८॥

vibhīṣaṇaḥ śuśocārtaḥ śokena mahatāvṛtaḥ ।
 patito rāvaṇasyāgre bahudhā paryadevayat ॥ 6॥
 rāmastu lakṣmaṇam prāha bodhayasva vibhīṣaṇam ।
 karotu bhrātr̥saṁskāram kiṁ vilambena mānada ॥ 7॥
 striyo mandodarīmukhyāḥ patitā vilapanti ca ।
 nivārayatu tāḥ sarvā rākṣasī rāvaṇapriyāḥ ॥ 8॥

6-8. Even Vibhishan was overwhelmed with remorse, and was greatly distressed, melancholic and worried¹. He fell down before Ravana and lamented most woefully² (6).

Then Sri Ram called Laxman near and said, 'Oh honourable gentleman (mānada; one who has vanquished pride, ego and vanity)! Go and console Vibhishan so that he does not waste any more time in performing the last rites of his brother. What is the good served now in unnecessarily delaying the funeral by wasting time in futile lamentations and show of grief?

Look, the beloved female demons of Ravana, the chief among them being Mandodari, are falling to the ground and woefully lamenting; go and stop them from doing it.' (8).

[Note—¹Why was Vibhishan “worried”? He was upset about his future prospects in Lanka. He was aware that everyone in the city would dislike him, treating him as a traitor and one who is responsible for bringing the death of the great king of Lanka, Ravana. He feared an internal rebellion; he feared that he would be quietly poisoned or publicly assassinated by disgruntled subjects. His conscience was loaded with guilt. He had committed treason, fratricide and regicide. He had sided with an invading army to suit his vested interests; he wished to usurp the crown of Lanka. None of these thoughts were encouraging for him; and he feared for the worse.

²After all, ‘blood is thicker than water’, so goes the good old adage. Perhaps it was this reason that Vibhishan was filled with remorse and grief, or perhaps he made a show of expressing grief at the death of his brother to gain some rudimentary form of sympathy from the demons who stood watching the developments, those who had either accompanied Mandodari when she came to the battle-field to pay her last respects to her dead husband, or those who survived the battle and presently stood guarding Ravana’s dead body. In the latter case, surely Vibhishan seems to shedding ‘crocodile tears’.]

एवमुक्तोऽथ रामेण लक्ष्मणोऽगादिभीषणम् ।
उवाच मृतकोपान्ते पतितं मृतकोपमम् ॥ ९॥
शोकेन महताविष्टं सौमित्रिरिदमब्रवीत् ।
यं शोचसि त्वं दुःखेन कोऽयं तव विभीषण ॥ १०॥

evamukto'tha rāmeṇa lakṣmaṇo'gādvibhīṣaṇam ।
uvāca mṛtakopānte patitaṁ mṛtakopamam ॥ 9॥
śokena mahatāviṣṭaṁ saumitriridamabravīt ।
yaṁ śocasi tvaṁ duḥkhena ko'yaṁ tava vibhīṣaṇa ॥ 10॥

9-10. When Sri Ram had instructed Laxman in this way, the latter came to Vibhishan who was lying motionless, as if himself dead, near the corpse of Ravana (9).

Vibhishan was overcome with immense grief, contrition and remorse. The son of Sumitra (i.e. Laxman) said, 'Oh Vibhishan! One for whom you are grieving and lamenting—who is he to you? (10).

त्वं वास्य कतमः सृष्टेः पुरेदानीमतः परम् ।
यद्वक्तव्योऽपतिताः सिकता यान्ति तदृशाः ॥ ११॥

संयुज्यन्ते वियुज्यन्ते तथा कालेन देहिनः ।
 यथा धानासु वै धाना भवन्ति न भवन्ति च ॥ १२॥
 एवं भूतेषु भूतानि प्रेरितानीशमायया ।
 त्वं चेमे वयमन्ये च तुल्याः कालवशोद्भवाः ॥ १३॥

tvam vāśya katamaḥ sṛṣṭeḥ puredānīmataḥ param ।
 yadvattoyaughapatitāḥ sikatā yānti tadvaśāḥ ॥ 11॥
 samyujyante viyujyante tathā kālena dehinaḥ ।
 yathā dhānāsu vai dhānā bhavanti na bhavanti ca ॥ 12॥
 evaṁ bhūteṣu bhūtāni preritānīśamāyayā ।
 tvam ceme vayamanye ca tulyāḥ kālavaśodbhavāḥ ॥ 13॥

11-13. Further, what were you to him in the previous birth, or even in this birth, or in the future? Try to understand what I am saying. Just like a particle of sand is shifted around on the beach by the waves of the ocean or the sea, being here now and gone the next moment to a different location [11], in a similar fashion all the living beings who have assumed a physical body too are subjected to either union or separation from one another under the influence of Kaal (i.e. factors of time, circumstances, death and birth).

Even as it is normal that seeds are produced from other seeds, and on the other hand it is also possible that some of the seeds may die or decay without producing new ones [12], all the creatures are produced from other creatures (as off-springs or progenies), and some may die without producing any off-spring, for it is an universal truth that all those who are born must enter the cycle of birth and death under the command of the Lord's Maya (i.e. the Supreme Being's wish to keep the wheel of creation turning endlessly at his pleasure).

To wit, all of us—you, we, he, they and all others—are born as per the wish of Kaal (i.e. all living beings are guided by the wish of the Supreme Being who exercises control over the factors of time and circumstances at the macrocosmic as well as microcosmic level of existence) [13]. (11-13).

जन्ममृत्यु यदा यस्मात्तदा तस्माद्भविष्यतः ।
 ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानि भूतैः सृजति हन्त्यजः ॥ १४॥
 आत्मसृष्टैस्त्वतन्त्रैर्निरपेक्षोऽपि बालवत् ।
 देहेन देहिनो जीवा देहादेहोऽभिजायते ॥ १५॥
 बीजादेव यथा बीजं देहान्य इव शाश्वतः ।
 देहिदेहविभागोऽयमविवेककृतः पुरा ॥ १६॥

janmamṛtyū yadā yasmāttadā tasmādbhaviṣyataḥ ।
 īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtāni bhūtaiḥ sṛjati hantyaajāḥ ॥ 14॥
 ātmasṛṣṭairasvatantrainirapekṣo'pi bālavat ।
 dehena dehino jīvā dehādeho'bhijāyate ॥ 15॥
 bījādeva yathā bījaṁ dehānya iva śāśvataḥ ।
 dehidehavibhāgo'yamavivekakṛtaḥ purā ॥ 16॥

14-16. Birth and death are pre-destined; anybody who is destined to be instrumental in their happening would do what he is bound to do. To wit, anyone who is destined to become a parent of someone will be so; and likewise if someone is destined to die at the hands of anyone would also die this way.

[To wit, one cannot control who would be one's parents. Similarly, one cannot control who will be the cause of his death. These things are controlled by Kaal acting on behalf of the Supreme Being.]

For in all sooth, it is the 'Ishwar' (the supreme Lord God) who creates or destroys all the creatures (and everything besides) in this world playfully just like a child who involves himself in playful activities just for the fun of it.

[To wit, the Supreme Being creates and ends this world as if it was a mere sport for him; without any effort or exertion; just for the pleasure of his wish; just for the fun of doing it; just for a bit of diversion—just as a child would employ himself while playing around with his toys.]

The 'Atma', i.e. the pure cosmic Consciousness, is an eternal, ethereal, subtle and sublime entity that has neither a birth nor death. But this same Atma becomes a mortal 'creature' by allowing itself to be associated with a gross body—a body that takes a birth and dies. The Atma and the body of a creature are separate and independent entities. But unfortunately, under the influence of ignorance, the Atma becomes deluded and begins to identify itself with the gross body. The obvious result is that the Atma thinks that it takes a birth and dies because the gross body follows this cycle as a routine matter.

[The 'Atma' is the true 'self' of a creature, but under the influence of ignorance and delusions, the creature begins to think that his gross body is his 'self'. The Atma is imperishable and eternal, having no birth or death; but the body is quite the contrary, for it takes a birth and dies too. Hence, the cause of all grief associated with someone dying, or joy at someone taking birth are based on total ignorance of the reality.] (14-16)

नानात्वं जन्म नाशश्च क्षयो वृद्धिः क्रियाफलम् ।
द्रष्टुरभान्त्यतद्धर्मा यथान्नेर्दारुविक्रियाः ॥ १७॥
त इमे देहसंयोगादात्मना भान्त्यसद्ग्राहात् ।
यथा यथा तथा चान्यद्ध्यायतोऽसत्सदाग्रहात् ॥ १८॥
प्रसुप्तस्यानहम्भावात्तदा भाति न संसृतिः ।
जीवतोऽपि तथा तद्वद्विमुक्तस्यानहङ्कृतेः ॥ १९॥

nānātvam janma nāśaśca kṣayo vṛddhiḥ kriyāphalam ।
draṣṭurābhāntyataddharmā yathāgnerdāruvikriyāḥ ॥ 17॥
ta ime dehasaṃyogādātmanā bhāntyasadgrahāt ।
yathā yathā tathā cānyaddhyāyato'satsadāgrahāt ॥ 18॥
prasuptasyānahambhāvāttadā bhāti na saṃsṛtiḥ ।
jīvato'pi tathā tadvadvimuktasyānahāṅkr̥teḥ ॥ 19॥

17-19. Even as the various faults or shortcomings that are present in a sample of fire wood as represented by its impurities (such as moisture, textural defects, hollowness

or solidness, its decay caused by germs and insects such as white-ant etc.) become visible or evident only when the wood is put in a fire¹, the different faults that get associated with the Atma, that is otherwise pure, holy, constant and eternal, become evident in the way it begins to treat its self by thinking or believing that it has different forms, that it takes a birth and dies, that it can become old and can be subjected to decay in its form, that it rises or falls, that it does deeds and either enjoys or suffers from their consequences, and so on². The fact is that the Atma has no such things associated with it. (17)

For an ignorant creature who erroneously thinks that the Atma and the body are inseparable from one another, all sorts of problems pertaining to this gross world, such as the pain of separation and sufferance from doing deeds, would affect him.

On the other hand, a creature who is free from this delusion, who realizes that his Atma and body are two independent and separate entities, there is no grief or misery of any kind whatsoever. For such an illustrious creature, all things that may normally appear to cause pain, grief and misery are merely imaginary as they do not affect him just like a bad dream that does not actually affect a person once he wakes up from his nightmare. (18)

Hence, just like a person who dreams of something while asleep is not at all actually affected by it when he wakes up, a wise, self-realised and enlightened person remains immune to all influences of this gross mortal world³. (19)

[Note—¹When the firewood is lighted, only then one can determine its quality. If it has moisture, if it is not perfectly dry, then it would give a lot of smoke. Likewise, the smell of the burning wood would tell from which kind of tree it has come. If it is solid wood it will burn longer; if it is hollow from the inside then it would quickly turn to ash.

²In a similar way, how enlightened and wise a creature is becomes evident in the way he understands about himself, about his Atma that is his 'true self'. If the creature is self-enlightened then he would remain calm and suffer no emotional changes under different circumstances as he would know that these changes affect only his gross body, which is not his true self. On the contrary, an ignorant person gets easily influenced by circumstances, such as weeping at a loss or dancing in joy at some achievement as he erroneously thinks that 'he' is suffering or enjoying it.

He forgets that his 'self' is his Atma and not the body that is affected by external things; the Atma remains undisturbed and uniform under all circumstances.

The soul is pure and these things have got nothing to do with it. But because there is the false belief that the creature is the gross body and not the pure consciousness and pure self which is called the soul or Atma, all the external actions done by the body appears to have been done by the creature which, in fact, is an erroneous conclusion.

³To wit, for all practical purposes, such a person is as good as asleep as far as the external world is concerned. A sleeping person forgets all about the outside world because his sense of belonging to it ends while he sleeps. He snaps all his relations with everyone in the external world as long as he sleeps. If someone dies during his sleep, he is not bothered. All senses of the anything being mine and your, of having love or hatred, of attachment or detachment, of animosity or friendship, of happiness or grief—all such emotions vanish with his sleep.

Similarly, a person who does not have Ahankar in him, a person who is free from ego and does not feel that something belongs to him, would be freed from such emotions as anger or grief at a loss, or happiness at an acquisition.

In brief, Laxman intends to tell Vibhishan that all such relations as someone being a brother, or the grief that someone related to me has died, or the sad feeling that I have been the cause of his death directly or indirectly—all such emotions and thought are misplaced and unwise. The reality is that the Atma has no relations; that the body may die but the Atma never dies; that what is destined to happen would happen. So therefore, Vibhishan should not grieve for Ravana—as his body was not his ‘true self’, it was his Atma; and this Atma of Ravana is eternal; it has found its deliverance and beatitude; it has found a peaceful destination after exiting from the body; it has not died like the body. So what is the cause of grief and feeling sad?]

तस्मान्मायामनोधर्मं जह्यहम्ममताभ्रमम् ।
रामभद्रे भगवति मनो धेह्यात्मनीश्वरे ॥ २०॥
सर्वभूतात्मनि परे मायामानुषरूपिणि ।
बाह्येन्द्रियार्थसम्बन्धात्याजयित्वा मनः शनैः ॥ २१॥

tasmānmāyāmanodharmaṃ jahyahammamatābhramam ।
rāmabhadre bhagavati mano dhehyātmanīśvare ॥ 20॥
sarvabhūtātmani pare māyāmānuṣarūpiṇi ।
bāhyendriyārthasambandhāttyājayitvā manaḥ śanaiḥ ॥ 21॥

20-21. So you must forsake all delusions and erroneous thoughts that create a sense of ego and false attachment with things pertaining to this perishable world, which in their turn cause distraction for the mind and intellect.

You must gradually learn to restrain your sense organs from being attracted towards their respective objects in this world by practicing renunciation and self-control over their natural inclinations. To wit, detach yourself from the external world of sense objects, and slowly learn to turn your mind inwards so that it can focus on your ‘true self’, which is pure consciousness known as the Atma.

You must also know that this Atma is an image of the Supreme Atma represented by Lord Ram. This Supreme Atma is a universal entity; it lives inside every living being as his true self; and it is this same Supreme Atma that has manifested itself in a visible form in the person of Lord Ram.

Hence, withdraw your mind from the gross world that is untrue, and then focus it on the universal truth represented by the Supreme Atma that is visible in the form of Lord Ram¹. (20-21)

[Note—¹To wit, you must first detach yourself from falsehood by realizing that all relations, such as a brother, wife, son etc., are limited to the gross world which itself is false. Then you must focus your mind and intellect on something that is ‘true’; the entity that is universally truthful is the Atma. This Atma has two aspects: at the microcosmic level it is represented by an individual living being, and at the cosmic level it is represented by the Supreme Being, who has revealed himself as Lord Ram.

Hence, you must meditate on Lord Ram with a clear understanding that you are meditating on the Supreme Atma, or the cosmic Consciousness.

Don't think that the person who is standing in front of you is any ordinary human prince by the name of Lord Ram, but understand that he is a manifestation of the Supreme Being himself.]

तत्र दोषान् दर्शयित्वा रामानन्दे नियोजय ।
 देहबुद्ध्या भवेद्भ्राता पिता माता सुहृत्प्रियः ॥ २२॥
 विलक्षणं यदा देहाज्जानात्यात्मानमात्मना ।
 तदा कः कस्य वा बन्धुर्भ्राता माता पिता सुहृत् ॥ २३॥

tatra doṣān darśayitvā rāmānande niyojaya ।
 dehabuddhyā bhavedbhrātā pitā mātā suhṛtpriyaḥ ॥ 22॥
 vilakṣaṇaṁ yadā dehājjānātyātmānamātmānā ।
 tadā kaḥ kasya vā bandhurbhrātā mātā pitā suhṛt ॥ 23॥

22-23. Show the mind-intellect complex the various faults, defects, shortcomings and blemishes in the outside world consisting of sensual objects, and appoint it (i.e. fix it, divert it and assign it) instead to the blissful, peaceful, serene and tranquil form of Sri Ram.

All these relationships—mother, father, brother, kith and kin, well-wishers etc.—exist because of the body (for the soul has no relations) (22).

At the instant a creature becomes enlightened and understands the universal truth that his soul (Atma) is a different entity than the body (i.e. these two are separate and distinct things altogether)—and this understanding must come from within, with pure wisdom, complete faith and full conviction—he realises that no one is his mother, father, brother, friend, relative, kin or well-wisher¹ (23).

[Note—¹To wit, all relationships that exist in this world are limited to a creature's gross body; for the Atma of the creature has no relationships.]

मिथ्याज्ञानवशाज्जाता दारागारादयः सदा ।
 शब्दादयश्च विषया विविधाश्चैव सम्पदः ॥ २४॥
 बलं कोशो भृत्यवर्गो राज्यं भूमिः सुतादयः ।
 अज्ञानजत्वात्सर्वे ते क्षणसङ्गमभङ्गुराः ॥ २५॥

mithyājñānavaśājjātā dārāgārādayaḥ sadā ।
 śabdādayaśca viṣayā vividhāścaiva sampadaḥ ॥ 24॥
 balaṁ kośo bhr̥tyavargo rājyaṁ bhūmiḥ sutādayaḥ ।
 ajñānajatvātsarve te kṣaṇasaṅgamabhaṅgurāḥ ॥ 25॥

24-25. Having their origin in false, erroneous and misleading knowledge, or being based on illusions and deceptive conceptions, the feeling of attachment to a wife and household, the pride of having expertise in oratory and speech (i.e. bookish knowledge and the haughtiness of being educated and knowledgeable of voluminous texts, and quoting and preaching from them), the sense of possessing the various

objects of this world, such as property, wealth and prosperity (24), the pride in one's strength, valour and courage, the pride of having a treasury full of riches, or a retinue of servants and attendants, or of a kingdom and vast realm, or of land and property, or of sons and daughters etc.—all such things are tentative and impermanent like a bubble of water because of their temporary, transitory and unstable nature as well as an imaginary origin¹ (25).

[Note—¹To wit, a wise person realizes that all things related to this world are transient and impermanent—because the 'body' of a creature which has such relationships or possesses any kind of asset is perishable and it would die one day, and so would the world in which these relationships or things exist.]

अथोत्तिष्ठ हृदा रामं भावयन् भक्तिभावितम् ।
 अनुवर्तस्व राज्यादि भुञ्जन् प्रारब्धमन्वहम् ॥ २६॥
 भूतं भविष्यदभजन् वर्तमानमथाचरन् ।
 विहरस्व यथान्यायं भवदोषैर्न लिप्यसे ॥ २७॥

athottiṣṭha hṛdā rāmaṃ bhāvayan bhaktibhāvitam ।
 anuvartasva rājyādi bhuñjan prārabdhamanvaham ॥ 26॥
 bhūtaṃ bhaviṣyadabhajan vartamānamathācaran ।
 viharasva yathānyāyaṃ bhavadōṣairna lipyase ॥ 27॥

26-27. Hence, stop grieving unnecessarily for someone (i.e. Ravana) with whom your Atma has no connection. [The one with whom it should be connected is Lord Ram, and the Lord is waiting for you.]

So get up. Remember: Lord Sri Ram is attainable only by sincere devotion and purity of emotions. You must diligently engage yourself to look after the affairs of the kingdom as it is your moral duty, as this responsibility has come to you as a result of your destiny and a reward of your past deeds (26).

Not worrying about the past or the future which you cannot change, you must concentrate on the present that is in your own hands (as this can definitely change the course of your fate). But be careful that while doing what you choose to do in the present you must follow the laws and tenets of Dharma (that are based on the principles of probity, propriety, righteousness, auspiciousness, ethics, and nobility of intentions, actions and thoughts).

By doing so, you shall not get involved, attached or affected by the various faults and blemishes associated with this mundane world of delusions and different kinds of spiritual traps (27).

[Note—¹What has been said by Laxman to Vibhishan in verse nos. 10-27 serve as a seminal guide for us to help us decide how to live in this world and interact with it in our daily lives. If we follow what has been said in these verses, there will be no cause for anxiety of any kind, or for any remorse and worries. We shall be at peace with ourselves as we shall not be attached with anything or anyone in this world. Further, since we would follow the laws of Dharma, our lives would become holy, purified and divine, which in turn would purify our inner-selves, and bestow us with eternal peace, bliss and happiness.]

आज्ञापयति रामस्त्वां यद्भ्रातुः साम्परायिकम् ।
 तत्कुरुष्व यथाशास्त्रं रुदतीश्चापि योषितः ॥ २८॥
 निवारय महाबुद्धे लङ्कां गच्छन्तु मा चिरम् ।
 श्रुत्वा यथावद्वचनं लक्ष्मणस्य विभीषणः ॥ २९॥
 त्यक्त्वा शोकं च मोहं च रामपार्श्वमुपागमत् ।
 विमृश्य बुद्ध्या धर्मज्ञो धर्मार्थसहितं वचः ॥ ३०॥

ājñāpayati rāmastvāṃ yadbhrātuḥ sāmparāyikam ।
 tatkuruṣva yathāśāstraṃ rudatīścāpi yoṣitaḥ ॥ 28॥
 nivāraya mahābuddhe laṅkāṃ gacchantu mā ciram ।
 śrutvā yathāvadvacanaṃ lakṣmaṇasya vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 29॥
 tyaktvā śokaṃ ca mohaṃ ca rāmapārśvamupāgamat ।
 vimṛśya buddhyā dharmajñō dharmārthasahitaṃ vacaḥ ॥ 30॥

28-30. [After assuaging Vibhishan's sad feelings at the death of his brother Ravana, Laxman instructed him as follows—]

Lord Sri Ram orders you to perform the funeral rites of your brother as prescribed by the scriptures, and remove all these grieving and weeping women from here. My dear, you are wise and intelligent and prudent (*mahābuddhe*)! Let them go back to (the fort of) Lanka (from this battle-field). Do not delay in it'.

Hearing the words of wisdom from Laxman (that briefly expounded on the basic principles of metaphysics regarding the true identity of a living being, the eternity of the Atma, its independence from the gross body of a creature, and the truth of existence as espoused by the Upanishads and other scriptures), Vibhishan stopped feeling remorseful and unnecessarily grieving for Ravana. He overcame his delusions which made him think that Ravana was his brother, that Mandodari has been widowed, and the erroneous feeling that he was instrumental in the death of his brother or that he has lost all his relatives in the war.

Becoming enlightened about the reality, he regained his composure; he felt calm and poised as he was earlier. Then he came to where Lord Sri Ram was waiting for his return.

Vibhishan, who was temporarily affected by delusions which had made him show signs of a person who is not aware of the tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism, was nonetheless intelligent, wise and enlightened; he was an expert in the tenets of Dharma (principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct, wise thoughts).

So he spoke words after giving due thought to them (i.e. after considering the pros and cons of what he was about to say)¹ (30).

[Note—¹Vibhishan thought to himself before speaking to Lord Ram: “It is wise and prudent for me now to speak what would not offend the Lord, for any hint otherwise would be detrimental to my own interests. I had myself been very critical of Ravana, and the world knew him as a sinful demon who had a bad character. Hence, I must not speak otherwise, for if I do so it will look very bad now, for it would be construed as my being very selfish by first favouring Lord Ram's cause to get my brother

eliminated, and once my objective was achieved I have shown my true colour and the strength of filial ties by praising him once he was dead, implying that he was wrongly killed by an invading army led by Lord Ram. Should a wrong meaning be understood from any of my words and gestures, I would surely be condemned to death, and I have no means to escape as I am surrounded by the mighty forces of the monkeys and bears who are ready to grab me by my throat at the slightest signal from Lord Ram.

I must be cautious and farsighted; I must speak what Lord Ram and the conquering Generals of his army wish to hear from me. The world would spit on my face and treat me with utter scorn if I show any sympathy for Ravana now after being instrumental in his death. Woe to me; hadn't I disclosed the secret of his death by telling Lord Ram to shoot an arrow at my brother's navel so as to dry up the source of life that was preventing his death? Truly, I had been disloyal to my brother, but bygones are bygones. No purpose will be served now to regret that, except to ruin my own prospects. Circumstances have changed, and changed so drastically and irreversibly that it is wiser for me to sing the tune which would please my new friends.”]

रामस्यैवानुवृत्त्यर्थमुत्तरं पर्यभाषत ।
 नृशंसमनृतं क्रूरं त्यक्तधर्मवृतं प्रभो ॥ ३१॥
 नाहोऽस्मि देव संस्कर्तुं परदारभिमर्शिनम् ।
 श्रुत्वा तद्वचनं प्रीतो रामो वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ ३२॥
 मरणान्तानि वैराणि निवृतं नः प्रयोजनम् ।
 कियतामस्य संस्कारो ममाप्येष यथा तव ॥ ३३॥

rāmasyaivānuvṛttyarthamuttaram paryabhāṣata ।
 nṛśaṁsamanṛtaṁ krūraṁ tyaktadharmavratam prabho ॥ 31॥
 nārho'smi deva saṁskartuṁ paradārābhimarśinam ।
 śrutvā tadvacanam prīto rāmo vacanamabravīt ॥ 32॥
 maraṇāntāni vairāṇi nivṛttaṁ naḥ prayojanam ।
 kriyatāmasya saṁskāro mamāpyeṣa yathā tava ॥ 33॥

31-33. Vibhishan was very clever and prudent, so he said the following words which would be most acceptable and pleasant to hear for Sri Ram—'Oh Lord! This fellow Ravana was wicked, evil and pervert; he was tyrannical, cruel and merciless; he was a liar and devoid of all that is considered righteous, proper and ethical (31).

Oh Lord! I am not willing to do the last rites of this promiscuous adulterer'.

Hearing his words, Sri Ram felt pleased (i.e. he had expected Vibhishan to say something of the sort). Sri Ram said (32): 'Animosity, ill-will, malice, hatred, enmity etc. exist only up till the time of death. Our objective has been achieved, i.e. we have finished our job of killing him (i.e. killing his gross physical body). Since he is dead, there is therefore no further cause of animosity or ill-will. Now, he belongs to you as much as he belongs to me¹. Hence, you must do his last rites (33).

[Note—¹This is because the Atma, the soul, is pure consciousness; it is pure, holy, divine and free from all taints and blemishes. The Atma is a universal entity; it is the same in all creatures. What distinguishes one creature from the other the gross

physical body, and not the Atma. Hence, with the body of Ravana dead, all animosity and ill-will with him are also dead. There must not be any such negative thoughts vis-à-vis the Atma.

We must also note the following points regarding Vibhishan:-

(i) Verse no. 30 tells us that Vibhishan pondered over what to tell Sri Ram. Just a few moments ago, he was weeping and grieving on the death of his brother (verse no. 6) and suddenly he changed track to criticise him (verse no. 31). He realised that the odds were heavily stacked against him if he dared to show any sympathy for Ravana at the present time, and he must not say anything to Sri Ram that would alarm him or annoy him, for there was still a chance that having got rid of Ravana, Sri Ram might think of eliminating this betrayer also just to avoid any chance of back-stabbing or revolt at the last minute. Having seen Sri Ram's prowess and potent in the battle field, he feared for his life. This turn-coat attitude of Vibhishan is very apparent and glaring here.

(ii) He got the cue from Laxman himself in verse nos. 26-29. He had to decide quickly. Being a practical, prudent and sagacious man, he decided that the best course of action for him and the remainder of the demons under the present dispensation was not to displease Sri Ram in any way. That his criticism of Ravana pleased Sri Ram (verse no. 32) is evidence enough of his correct interpretation of the course of events and his coming to the decision to change tack and say things which are pleasing to Sri Ram (i.e. criticising Ravana).

(iii) But Sri Ram's reply is very interesting in this context. By saying that 'he (Ravana) is as much yours as he is mine', Sri Ram has emphasised the fact that the soul/Atma of all the creatures are pure and faultless. It is the body which indulges in all worldly deeds, and it is now dead, gross and useless. The entity called 'Ravana' is different from the body lying in the battle field. Sri Ram, in effect, tells Vibhishan what Laxman had said in verse nos. 10-25 a little while earlier. But this fool Vibhishan could not or did not grasp the subtle message—because had he realised the essential truth, he would not have cursed Ravana as he did and criticise an already dead person, nor would he have refused to perform his last rites, especially when Laxman had ordered him to do so (verse no. 28).]

रमाज्ञां शिरसा धृत्वा शीघ्रमेव विभीषणः ।
 सान्त्ववाक्यैर्महाबुद्धिं राज्ञीं मन्दोदरीं तदा ॥ ३४॥
 सान्त्वयामास धर्मात्मा धर्मबुद्धिर्विभीषणः ।
 त्वयामास धर्मज्ञः संस्कारार्थं स्वबान्धवान् ॥ ३५॥

rāmājñāṃ śirasā dhṛtvā śīghrameva vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
 sāntvavākyaairmahābuddhiṃ rājñīṃ mandodarīṃ tadā ॥ 34॥
 sāntvayāmāsa dharmātmā dharmabuddhirvibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
 tvarayāmāsa dharmajñaḥ saṃskārārthaṃ svabāndhavān ॥ 35॥

34-35. Then Vibhishan respectfully and swiftly carried out the instructions of Sri Ram. He consoled the wise queen Mandodari with a calm and soothing voice. After that (34), Vibhishan—who was of a righteous mind, was a noble soul, and was an expert in principles of probity and propriety—advised his relatives, compatriots and

others (who had survived the war) to arrange for the funeral of Ravana as soon as possible (35).

चित्यां निवेश्य विधिवत्पितृमेधविधानतः ।
 आहिताग्नेर्यथा कार्यं रावणस्य विभीषणः ॥ ३६॥
 तथैव सर्वमकरोद्धन्धुभिः सह मन्त्रिभिः ।
 ददौ च पावकं तस्य विधियुक्तं विभीषणः ॥ ३७॥

cityāṃ niveśya vidhivatpitrmedhavidhānataḥ ।
 āhitāgneryathā kāryaṃ rāvaṇasya vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 36॥
 tathaiva sarvamakarodbandhubhiḥ saha mantribhiḥ ।
 dadau ca pāvakaṃ tasya vidhiyuktaṃ vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 37॥

36-37. Vibhishan laid the corpse of Ravana on the funeral pyre by observing all the traditional regulations and rules that are prescribed for the cremation of a father¹. Then he duly consigned the body of Ravana to the flames by lighting the funeral pile in the prescribed manner (36).

In these rituals, he was accompanied by his surviving relatives and ministers of the demon kingdom. He also duly completed the ‘offering of the fire’ ritual (*dadau ca pāvakaṃ tasya*)² in a traditional and sanctified manner (37)#.

[Note—¹To the credit of Vibhishan, he showed all respects to Ravana and performed his last rites like a son would do for his father. All past animosity and hatred was buried and burnt with the burning of the body of Ravana.

This verse is crucial in the sense that since Vibhishan had performed the last rites of his dead brother as a ‘son would do for his father’, he cleared for himself all obstacles that may have risen against him for his right to the throne of the kingdom of Lanka—because a son has the right to the crown after his father, the king, is dead.

²The ‘offering of the fire’ ritual is a last rite when the eldest son or nearest male relative of the deceased puts the fire to ignite the funeral pile. When the body is almost burnt, he punctures the skull with a wooden spike and puts a globule of fire into it so as to complete the cremation process. Often times, this fire is put in the mouth of the deceased. This is called “Agnidaan”.

#Another point worth noting here is that no mention is made anywhere of whatever happened to the dead bodies of Kumbhakarn, Meghnad etc. It appears that their funeral rites were done quickly by Ravana himself as is usually done in war times. ‘Quickly’—because there was no time for elaborate funeral rituals for a dead individual, and they were cremated along with the other casualties of the day in a mass funeral.]

स्नात्वा चैवार्द्रवस्त्रेण तिलान् दर्भाभिमिश्रितान् ।
 उदकेन च सम्मिश्रान् प्रदाय विधिपूर्वकम् ॥ ३८॥
 प्रदाय चोदकं तस्मै मुध्ना चैनं पूणम्य च ।
 ताः स्त्रियोऽनुनयामास सान्त्वमुक्त्वा पुनः पुनः ॥ ३९॥

snātvā caivārdravastreṇa tilān darbhābhimiśritān ।
 udakena ca sammiśrān pradāya vidhipūrvakam ॥ 38॥
 pradāya codakam tasmai murdhnā cainaṃ praṇamya ca ।
 tāḥ striyo'nunayāmāsa sāntvamuktivā punaḥ punaḥ ॥ 39॥

38-39. Then he (Vibhishan) took a purifying bath as part of the ritual of ablution, and with wet clothes still on his body, he offered a palm-full of water having some sesame seeds and a few blades of grass in it to the departed soul as per established tradition for performing of last rites (38).

After offering his oblations in this way, he put his head to the ground as a token of respect and reverence to the departed soul, and then repeatedly condoled those grieving women (of Ravana's household) by using soothing words of consolation and condolence (39).

गम्यतामिति ताः सर्वा विविशुर्नगरं तदा ।
 प्रविष्टासु च सर्वासु राक्षसीषु विभीषणः ॥ ४०॥
 रामपार्श्वमुपागत्य तदातिष्ठद्विनीतवत् ।
 रामोऽपि सह सैन्येन ससुग्रीवः सलक्ष्मणः ॥ ४१॥
 हर्षं लेभे रिपून् हत्वा यथा वृत्तं शतक्रतुः ।
 मातलिश्च तदा रामं परिक्रम्या अभिवन्द्य च ॥ ४२॥
 अनुज्ञातश्च रामेण ययौ स्वर्गं विहायसा ।
 ततो हृष्टमना रामो लक्ष्मणं चेदमब्रवीत् ॥ ४३॥

gamyatāmiti tāḥ sarvā viviśurnagaram tadā ।
 praviṣṭāsu ca sarvāsu rākṣasīṣu vibhīṣaṇaḥ ॥ 40॥
 rāmapārśvamupāgatya tadātiṣṭhadviniṭavat ।
 rāmo'pi saha sainyena sasugrīvaḥ salakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 41॥
 harṣaṃ lebhe ripūn hatvā yathā vṛtraṃ śatakratuḥ ।
 mātaliśca tadā rāmaṃ parikramyāabhivandya ca ॥ 42॥
 anujñātaśca rāmeṇa yayau svargaṃ vihāyasā ।
 tato hr̥ṣṭamanā rāmo lakṣmaṇaṃ cedamabravīt ॥ 43॥

40-43. He instructed those women—'You should all go back now'. Then all of them went back to the city. When all the demonesses (of Ravana's household and sundry others whose husbands had been killed in the battle-field) had gone back to the city, Vibhishan (40) came near Lord Sri Ram and stood before him most politely and humbly. Sri Ram along with his army, Sugriv and Laxman (41) was very cheerful on having eliminated the enemy just like Indra felt after he had slayed the demon Vrittasur¹.

Thence, Matli (the charioteer of Indra who was sent to help Lord Ram in the war of Lanka) circumambulated Sri Ram and bowed before him (42), and getting his permission to leave, he went back to the heavens.

Then Sri Ram said cheerfully to Laxman (43)—

[Note—¹Demon Vrittasur, though having an evil body of a demon, was at heart a great devotee of the Lord and an enlightened soul. During the battle with Indra, his enunciations on devotion and wisdom are worth their weight in gold. This episode appears in Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ. To kill him, the God asked sage Dadhichi to give his bones which were used to mould the Bajra (thunderbolt; the weapon of Indra), and it was used to kill him.]

विभीषणाय मे लङ्कायाज्यं दत्तं पुरैव हि ।
 इदानीमपि गत्वा त्वं लङ्कामध्ये विभीषणम् ॥ ४४॥
 अभिषेचय विप्रैश्च मन्त्रवद्विधिपूर्वकम् ।
 इत्युक्तो लक्ष्मणस्तूर्णं जगाम सह वानरैः ॥ ४५॥
 लङ्कां सुवर्णकलशैः समुद्रजलसंयुतैः ।
 अभिषेकं शुभं चक्रे राक्षसेन्द्रस्य धीमतः ॥ ४६॥

vibhīṣaṇāya me laṅkārajyaṃ dattaṃ puraiva hi ।
 idānīmapi gatvā tvaṃ laṅkāmadhye vibhīṣaṇam ॥ 44॥
 abhiṣecaya vipraiśca mantravadvidhipūrvakam ।
 ityukto lakṣmaṇastūrṇaṃ jagāma saha vānaraiḥ ॥ 45॥
 laṅkāṃ suvarṇakalaśaiḥ samudrajalasaṃyutaiḥ ।
 abhiṣekaṃ śubhaṃ cakre rākṣasendrasya dhīmataḥ ॥ 46॥

44-46. 'I have already given the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan (see Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 43-45). Still, you must go to Lanka with him (44) and get him duly anointed on the throne of the kingdom as its next King in a proper, formal way by chanting of Mantras by Brahmins¹.'

Getting these instructions from Lord Sri Ram, Laxman, accompanied by other prominent monkey commanders (45), went to Lanka and anointed Vibhishan, who was wise and intelligent, as the King of the demon race by installing him on the throne of the kingdom at an auspicious moment. He sprinkled on him, for the purpose of his anointment, the water of the ocean that was especially brought in for this ceremony in a golden pot² (46).

[Note—¹This verse clearly hints that there were Brahmins in the city of Lanka. But how come they were there amongst the anti-Brahmin demons? The two plausible answers are—

(a) Multitudes of Brahmins were kept in Ravana's captivity, perhaps under shackles, and they were summoned by him anytime when he used to perform the various fire sacrifices and other religious rituals that necessitated the recital of Mantras by learned Brahmins. These rituals and sacrifices were performed by Ravana to serve his self interest—whether it was the conquest of Gods, or for winning the war against Lord Ram.

(b) Since Ravana himself was a Brahmin by birth, being the son of Visrasrava who was a Brahmin and a sage, and was a grandson of sage Pulastya, he spared the people of his own race from death if they pleaded mercy and vowed allegiance to him.

Otherwise, there is no question of getting Brahmins to chant the Mantras so

quickly, because Lanka was situated in the middle of the ocean and approximately 800 miles from the mainland of India where Brahmins lived.

²Verse no. 46 indicates that at that time, there were no rivers in the island of Lanka—it was surrounded by the ocean in all the directions, was south of the equator, and had no glaciers etc. to support any network of rivers. So this is why the water of the ocean was brought for anointment ceremony. Ordinarily, water from a river is used for this ritual.]

ततः पौरजनैः सार्धं नानोपायनपाणिभिः ।
 विभीषणः ससौमित्रिरुपायनपुरस्कृतः ॥ ४७॥
 दण्डपूणाममकरोद्रामस्याविलष्टकर्मणः ।
 रामो विभीषणं दृष्ट्वा प्राप्तं राज्यं मुदान्वितः ॥ ४८॥
 कृतकृत्यमिवात्मानममन्यत सहानुजः ।
 सुग्रीवं च समालिङ्ग्य रामो वाक्यमथाब्रवीत् ॥ ४९॥
 सहायेन त्वया वीर जितो मे रावणो महान् ।
 विभीषणोऽपि लङ्कायामभिषिक्तो मया नघ ॥ ५०॥

tataḥ pauraṇaiḥ sārḍhaṃ nānopāyanapāṇibhiḥ ।
 vibhīṣaṇaḥ sasaumitrirupāyanapuraskṛtaḥ ॥ 47॥
 daṇḍapraṇāmaṃ karoḍrāmasya viliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ ।
 rāmo vibhīṣaṇaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā prāptarājyaṃ mudānvitaḥ ॥ 48॥
 kṛtakṛtyamivātmānamamanyata sahānujaḥ ।
 sugrīvaṃ ca samāliṅgya rāmo vākyaṃ mathābravīt ॥ 49॥
 sahāyena tvayā vīra jito me rāvaṇo mahān ।
 vibhīṣaṇo'pi laṅkāyāmaḥiṣikto mayānagha ॥ 50॥

47-50. After that, accompanied by a large crowd of residents of the city holding numerous varieties of gifts in their hands as tributes for Lord Ram, Vibhishan accompanied Laxman (47) to come back to the Lord. Once there, Vibhishan prostrated himself before the Lord by falling down like a stick, to pay his obeisance and respects to him. He placed all those gifts in front of Lord Sri Ram whose deeds and actions are very difficult to understand (i.e. the Lord's ways are very mysterious and strange for everyone to understand).

On the other hand, Sri Ram was very pleased on seeing that Vibhishan has got the reign of the kingdom which the Lord had promised him (48).

Indeed, Lord Sri Ram and his younger brother (Laxman) felt highly satisfied and happy at the turn of events¹.

Then Sri Ram embraced Sugriv (the king of the monkeys) and said (49)—'Oh the brave one (tvayā vīra)! It is only due to your assistance and help that I have been able to conquer the great Ravana, and oh Anagh ("anagha"; one who is pure in heart and faultless in his deeds), it is also because of it (your help) that Vibhishan has been appointed to the throne of Lanka. [To wit, I am very thankful and obliged to you.]' (50).

[Note—¹That is because the Lord could fulfill the promise he had made to Vibhishan that he would put him on the throne of Lanka. Surely, Sri Ram felt highly relieved at the turn of events, for otherwise, he would not have been able to live up to his reputation of being true to his words.]

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Chapter 20

Sita Re-United with Lord Ram

After Vibhishan's appointment as the new King of Lanka, the next important thing that was to be done was to reunite Sita with Lord Ram. In this Chapter no. 20 we shall read about this episode in the following two Sections:

Section 20.1 Ram Charit Manas

Section 20.2 Adhyatma Ramayan

Section 20.1: Ram Charit Manas

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 109.

चौ०. पुनि प्रभु बोलि लियउ हनुमाना । लंका जाहु कहेउ भगवाना ॥ १ ॥
समाचार जानकिहि सुनावहु । तासु कुसल लै तुम्ह चलि आवहु ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni prabhu bōli liya'u hanumānā. laṅkā jāhu kahē'u bhagavānā. 1.
samācāra jānakihi sunāvahu. tāsu kusala lai tumha cali āvahu. 2.

After that, the Lord called Hanuman and instructed him thus: 'You go to Lanka [1] and convey to Janki (Sita) all that has happened¹. Then come back immediately with the news of her own welfare. [2]' (1-2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram instructed Hanuman to convey the good news to Sita that the Lord has been victorious in the war, that Ravana was dead, that Vibhishan had been appointed as the new King of Lanka, and that the time has finally arrived for her reunion with Lord Ram, a moment for which she had been longing and waiting for so long.

Why did Lord Ram choose Hanuman as his messenger to Sita? It is because Hanuman had been to Lanka earlier too and had personally met Sita[#]; so she would immediately recognize him, which she indeed does as we shall read in verse no. 5 herein below. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17.}

It must be remembered that when Hanuman had met her earlier, he had urged her to stop worrying, for sooner rather than later Lord Ram would come with a mighty army of monkeys and bears to free her*. His prophesy has now come true, and so he deserves, and has the right, to receive any blessings and gifts that Sita would like to bestow upon him. {*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16.}

And we shall soon see in the verses that follow herein below that he was indeed profusely blessed by Mother Sita for bringing the good news to her.]

तब हनुमंत नगर महुँ आए । सुनि निसिचरी निसाचर धाए ॥ ३ ॥

बहु प्रकार तिन्ह पूजा कीन्ही । जनकसुता देखाइ पुनि दीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥

taba hanumanta nagara mahum̐ ā'ē. suni nisicarī nisācara dhā'ē. 3.
bahu prakāra tinha pūjā kīnhī. janakasutā dēkhā'i puni dīnhī. 4.

Then Hanuman went to the city of Lanka. No sooner the male and female demon residents of the city came to know that he has come, than all of them rushed forward [3] to welcome him and show their respects to him by worshipping and paying their obeisance to him¹. Then they quickly showed him the place where Sita was confined². [4] (3-4)

[Note—¹Hanuman was now visiting the city as a representative of a conqueror. He went in Lanka with a head raised in pride, with a broad smile on his face, with the demeanours and the stride of a victorious warrior. The situation had now completely changed since his last visit when he was an enemy's spy, an intruder, a trespasser. At that time he was put in shackles, and the citizens had poked fun at him, kicked and punched him, and made merry at his discomfiture. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 25.}

But now all of them went out of their way, and literally went over backwards to welcome Hanuman and be in his good looks. This is the way how people change colours like chameleons to suit their own interests. These same demons had earlier been praising and paying their respects to Ravana, and now all of a sudden they forgot all that he had done for them, and instead of feeling any remorse for their great king Ravana, and showing any contempt for Hanuman, they collected in large numbers to bow their heads before the latter, knowing fully well that a few days ago Hanuman was one of their most hated and despised enemy, for let us not forget the havoc that Hanuman and Angad had unleashed on Lanka during the initial phases of the war. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 42; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.}

²Sita was confined in the royal garden of Lanka, known as the 'Ashok Van'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

दूरिहि ते प्रनाम कपि कीन्हा । रघुपति दूत जानकीं चीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
कहहु तात प्रभु कृपानिकेता । कुसल अनुज कपि सेन समेता ॥ ६ ॥

dūrihi tē pranāma kapi kīnhā. raghupati dūta jānakīm cīnhā. 5.
kahahu tāta prabhu kṛpānikētā. kusala anuja kapi sēna samētā. 6.

The Kapi (i.e. Hanuman) bowed his head to Sita from a distance¹. She immediately recognized him as a messenger of Lord Ram (because she had already met him and conversed with him)². (5)

She asked: ‘Say my dear son (tāta)³; how is the Lord who is an embodiment of mercy and compassion (prabhu kṛpānikētā)? Tell me about his own welfare, as well as that of his younger brother (Laxman) and the army of monkeys that accompanies him⁴.’ (6)

[Note—¹When Hanuman had met Sita for the first time during his mission of reconnaissance to Lanka to find where she was held captive, he had gone quite near to her. Sita was jolted with fright and was so sore affright at seeing him, as she had least expected a stranger of the form of Hanuman creeping up to her so secretly, that she withdrew herself as much as she could and turned her back to him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13.

So therefore, Hanuman wished to take precautions now; he did not wish to alarm her by his sudden presence. Hence, he stood at a reasonable distance and bowed his head before her.

Another reason of his standing at a distance now instead of going closer is this: During his previous visit he had to maintain secrecy and speak as softly as possible, so that his conversation with Sita remained out of earshot of the demon guards. But now that was not needed; he could stand at a distance and announce himself loudly—and this is what he did.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

³During his last visit to Sita, she had affectionately addressed Hanuman many times with this title “tāta”, which with reference to Hanuman means someone who is very dear to her like her own son—for example, we have the following verses in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 17; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 27.

⁴Hanuman had himself told Sita during that visit that Lord Ram had befriended the monkey race and was all poised to come with their army to free her. So Sita was in the knowing that the Lord had monkeys as his companions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 16.]

सब बिधि कुसल कोसलाधीसा । मातु समर जीत्यो दससीसा ॥ ७ ॥
अबिचल राजु बिभीषन पायो । सुनि कपि बचन हरष उर छायो ॥ ८ ॥

saba bidhi kusala kōsalādhīsā. mātu samara jītyō dasasīsā. 7.
abicala rāju bibhīṣana pāyō. suni kapi bacana haraṣa ura chāyō. 8.

Hanuman replied cheerfully: ‘The Lord of Kaushal (“kōsalādhīsā”; i.e. Lord Ram, the Lord of Ayodhya, the great kingdom which was also known as ‘Kaushal’) is fine and happy in all possible ways¹. Mother², he has vanquished the ten-headed Ravana in the war. (7)

Vibhishan has been crowned as a King of Lanka; he has attained everlasting sovereignty over his kingdom.³

Hearing these pleasant words of the Kapi (Hanuman), exhilaration and joy overwhelmed the heart of Sita. (8)

[Note—¹This answers Sita’s question: ‘How is Lord Ram, his brother Laxman, and the army of monkeys that accompanies them?’ Hanuman sums up by saying ‘everything is fine with the Lord’.

²We can recall here that during his first visit to Sita, Hanuman had also addressed her as ‘mother’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 13; Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 15; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27.

³We have read earlier that the old demoness named Trijata, who was appointed by Ravana to guard Sita, had become very friendly to her. She used to update Sita about the development in the war. So it is quite natural that as soon as Ravana was slayed, and a little while later Vibhishan was made the king of Lanka, Trijata must have hurried to give the good tidings to Sita. But Sita was suspicious of everything; she doubted when Trijata told her of Lord Ram’s victory etc., for she feared that it was some new trick by her tormentors to tease her.

When Hanuman told her of the Lord’s victory as well as of Vibhishan’s appointment as the new king, then only was Sita convinced of the veracity of the news.]

छं०. अति हरष मन तन पुलक लोचन सजल कह पुनि पुनि रमा । १ ।
का देउँ तोहि त्रैलोक महँ कपि किमपि नहिं बानी समा ॥ २ ॥
सुनु मातु मैं पायो अखिल जग राजु आजु न संसयं । ३ ।
रन जीति रिपुदल बंधु जुत पस्यामि राममनामयं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ati haraṣa mana tana pulaka lōcana sajala kaha puni puni ramā. 1.
kā dē'uṁ tōhi trailōka mahūṁ kapi kimapi nahim bānī samā. 2.
sunu mātu mairṁ pāyō akhila jaga rāju āju na sansayaṁ. 3.

rana jīti ripudala bandhu juta pasyāmi rāmamanāmayam. 4.

With great exhilaration in her heart, with her body thrilled with joy, and with tears of happiness filling her eyes, Rama¹ (“ramā”; i.e. Sita) said repeatedly --- (Chanda line no. 1)

‘Oh Kapi! For me, there is nothing in the three divisions of the world which is as sweet and pleasant to hear as the words you have spoken. [To wit, the news that you brought to me is the sweetest thing I had ever heard of.]’ (Chanda line no. 2)

Hanuman replied: ‘Oh Mother, listen! I am very fortunate and feel singularly privileged today, for I have had the good fortune of being symbolically granted the sovereignty of the whole world; there is no doubt about it. [To wit, since you are the Mother Goddess, being so affectionately blessed by you makes me exceptionally happy and delighted as if I have been made the king of the whole world.]’ (Chanda line no. 3)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, it’s an honour and a great blessing for me that I am a witness of Lord Ram’s victory over the enemy and his army, and I see the Lord and his brother safe and sound after the ordeal of a horrifying war.’ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The word “ramā” is used for goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. Since Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, it follows that Sita was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi.

दो०. सुनु सुत सदगुन सकल तव हृदयँ बसहुँ हनुमंत ।

सानुकूल कोसलपति रहहुँ समेत अनंत ॥ १०७ ॥

dōhā.

sunu suta sadaguna sakala tava hr̥dayam̐ basahuṁ hanumanta.
sānukūla kōsalapati rahahuṁ samēta ananta. 107.

Sita blessed Hanuman as follows: ‘Listen my son Hanuman (sunu suta -- hanumanta)! Let all the good virtues and auspicious qualities dwell in your heart.

Let Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal, and Laxman (Anant) be ever pleased with you, and have eternal affection for you.’ (Doha no. 107)

चौ०. अब सोइ जतन करहु तुम्ह ताता । देखौं नयन स्याम मृदु गाता ॥ १ ॥

तब हनुमान राम पहिं जाई । जनकसुता कै कुसल सुनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aba sō'i jatana karahu tumha tātā. dēkhaur̥m̐ nayana syāma mṛdu gātā. 1.
taba hanumāna rāma pahim̐ jā'ī. janakasutā kai kusala sunā'ī. 2.

[Sita continued—] ‘My dear son (tātā)! Now make haste to devise a method by which I can see with my own eyes¹ the pleasant dark-complexioned form of the Lord (Sri Ram).’ (1)

Then Hanuman immediately went back to Lord Ram and told him about the welfare of Sita, the daughter of king Janak (janakasutā). (2)

[Note—¹Sita meant that though it is absolutely true she had all this while been remembering Lord Ram and keeping his divine form before her mental eyes constantly, never forgetting him for a single moment of her existence in captivity in Lanka*, but it is also true that she had always been longing to see the Lord’s form physically, with her physical eyes#.

{*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14.}]

सुनि संदेसु भानुकुलभूषण । बोलि लिए जुबराज बिभीषण ॥ ३ ॥

मारुतसुत के संग सिधावहु । सादर जनकसुतहि लै आवहु ॥ ४ ॥

sunī sandēsu bhānukulabhūṣana. bōli li'ē jubarāja bibhīṣana. 3.
mārutasuta kē saṅga sidhāvahu. sādara janakasutahi lai āvahu. 4.

When Lord Ram, who was like an adornment of the Solar race (bhānukulabhūṣana)¹, heard the message of Sita (that she was longing to see him), he summoned Angad, the prince of the monkey race (jubarāja), and Vibhishan (the newly appointed king of Lanka). (3)

The Lord instructed them: ‘Both of you immediately go with Hanuman, the son of the wind god, and bring Sita, the daughter of Janak, here most honourably, by showing great respect to her, and ensuring that all manners of royal protocol and dignity are observed for her.’² (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was a descendant in the line of illustrious kings belonging to the Solar Race of Ayodhya. The epithet “adornment of the Solar race” means simply that Lord Ram was the most renowned and the most glorious King of this race.

²Lord Ram implied that Sita ought to be brought to him in a ceremonial and dignified way that suits her majestic stature. Put simply, the Lord wished that Sita should come to him like a noble lady who has been freed from her captivity; she should be properly escorted by female demon guards to show her the way to Lord Ram’s camp.

The Lord was very careful when he gave this instruction, for he guessed that it was quite possible that his messengers, Hanuman, Angad and Vibhishan, would not know, and therefore unable to decide as to how to bring her to the Lord under the present circumstances where his camp was situated on the other side of the battle-field, far away from the main city of Lanka. They might wonder as to what the Lord wants to be done to her, and what would please him: whether he wishes that Sita be brought to him in a palanquin, or in some other way they were used to transporting

their own noble women, or simply like any lady released from prison and being restored to her husband. Was she to be taken to the Lord in the way she had actually lived as a captive in Lanka, or was she to be given royal treatment, dressed and adorned with ornaments like a queen, and then led to Lord Ram in a regal procession, with all the pomp and pageantry that accompanies such occasions?

Lord Ram's instructions were brief, and it was to bring Sita with due respect, honour and dignity being shown to her, though it was not clearly mentioned by him as to what he meant by what he said.

In their zeal and enthusiasm to please the Lord and celebrate this happy moment, his messengers over-reacted; they thought that the Lord means that Sita was to be brought to him with due observance of royal protocol and dignity reserved for queens and noble ladies—which implied that Sita must first be bathed and sprayed with perfumes, then she must be attired like a queen and adorned in regal paraphernalia, and then she must be taken out in a royal procession in a decorated palanquin carried aloft by royal demon guards dressed in full regal regalia, with royal escorts and guards leading the way for the procession, accompanied by all the royal pomp and pageantry that are reserved for such occasions.

And this was how Sita was actually brought to Lord Ram by his messengers—she was first made to take a bath, adorn herself with fresh clothes and ornaments befitting a queen, and then carried to the Lord in a palanquin in ceremonial procession escorted by royal guards and heralds of the demon kingdom. We shall read about it in the verses which follow herein below. {Apropos: Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 108.}

Perhaps Hanuman, Angad and Vibhishan had, in their enthusiasm, overdone their preparations of bringing Sita to Lord Ram—because the first impression of Sita that Lord Ram got as she approached him from a distance was that of a well decked-up queen, fully decorated in regal regalia and smiling cheerfully with happiness, as if she had not undergone any suffering or pain at all; the Lord observed that she was being carried in a decorated carriage aloft the shoulders of royal guards and soldiers of the demon kingdom as if she was a 'queen of the demon kingdom going to meet some honoured guest', rather than 'a lady who had been long suffering from pain and misery at separation from her beloved husband, a lady who had become weak and emaciated by the mental torture and agony incurred during the long time she had been forcibly kept in captivity by a cruel abductor, who being finally freed, forgets about everything else as she rushes to meet her dear husband with quick and eager steps, and with tears of joy gushing out from her eyes'.

The watchful Lord observed that Sita showed no such signs. He also observed that all his companions in the army, the monkeys and bears, were fixedly looking in the direction from where the royal procession carrying Sita was coming towards them, and even the minutest detail wouldn't escape their scrutiny—apropos: Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 108 herein below.

These monkey and bear warriors were seeing Sita for the first time, and they would surely wonder at this incredulous sight of hers coming majestically like a queen attired in the finest of royal regalia, very happy and cheerful, showing no signs of pain and suffering. Surely, this would be an unexpected sight for all of them; it was totally incompatible with and at complete odds with the mental image they must have had of Sita based on the description given by Hanuman to Lord Ram after his return from the reconnaissance mission to Lanka earlier: as a sad, miserable, forlorn and despondent lady who had undergone long time of suffering and grief while living away from her dear husband, in the captivity of a cruel demon; who was supposed to

be under great stress and pain inflicted upon her for a long time since she was separated from her husband, and was not sure if she would ever be free again; who was not eating properly, thereby becoming thin and weak; who spent her time weeping and lamenting and grieving at her doomed fate. In brief, the sight of Sita coming bedecked in fine royal attire and accompanied by pomp and show did not at all fit-in with the miserable picture of hers that was given by Hanuman to Lord Ram#. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

The Lord was not happy that Sita should be brought to him in a royal procession like a queen, because it gave a very wrong impression of her amongst his army chiefs and warriors—and it would be clear below when he expressly asked his messengers, whom he affectionately called his ‘friends’, to make her come on foot. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 108 herein below.}

This is also one of the primary reasons why Lord Ram would be compelled to put Sita through the ‘fire test’ to clear her of any imaginary doubt regarding her integrity, honour, self-respect, dignity and loyalty to Lord Ram, a doubt that may taint her immaculate character for all times to come, that might crop up in the mind of anyone observing her demeanours, her clothes and her external form, about which we shall read soon. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 108—to Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109.}

It is clear that though the Lord had ordered that Sita be brought to him with due respect, he had not actually meant that she be brought to him like a queen being carried in a palanquin in a royal procession; he had meant that she be brought with dignity and honour behooving of a noble lady, in a simple and dignified manner. A simple procession would be alright, but a procession of pomp and show was odd for the moment. Lord Ram had not expected that his messengers would overreact in their enthusiasm to please him, or misunderstand him, by bringing Sita in such a royal procession, with Sita fully decorated in royal regalia, and coming to with all pomp and ceremony. Her sight did not go down well with Lord Ram at all—markedly because he and his companions, i.e. his wife Sita and his brother Laxman, were to dress and live like a ‘hermit’ during the time that they lived in forest for 14 years to fulfill the words the Lord had given to his father Dasrath at the time of his departure to the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 79.

In this background, Sita coming in a royal procession like a queen bedecked in all regal finery and wearing glittering ornaments was incongruous and completely out of order. Hence, instead of being pleased, the Lord took offence at it. He was also silently angry with Sita for being so careless as to allow herself being so decorated; had she forgotten her vows to live like her husband would in the forest; had she forgotten that the time of the forest exile was not yet over and her Lord was still dressed like a hermit. How could she then allow herself to be so finely decorated? The Lord decided that after undergoing so much hardship for so long a period of 14 years just to uphold the dignity and honour of his words, Sita’s single act of indiscretion undid all. The Lord felt very sad and unhappy. He had not expected Sita to be so careless and imprudent. So he decided she must be punished for her impertinent and careless behaviour.

Glory to Lord Ram who was so strict an adherent to, and an upholder of, the principles of Dharma, the laws that govern right conduct, right thought, probity, propriety, ethics and righteousness—wherein not a single error and transgression was

acceptable by the Lord. So therefore, the Lord decided to punish Sita by putting her to the 'fire test'.]

तुरतहिं सकल गए जहँ सीता । सेवहिं सब निसिचरीं बिनीता ॥ ५ ॥
 बेगि बिभीषन तिन्हहि सिखायो । तिन्ह बहु बिधि मज्जन करवायो ॥ ६ ॥
 बहु प्रकार भूषन पहिराए । सिबिका रुचिर साजि पुनि ल्याए ॥ ७ ॥
 ता पर हरषि चढ़ी बैदेही । सुमिरि राम सुखधाम सनेही ॥ ८ ॥
 बेतपानि रच्छक चहुँ पासा । चले सकल मन परम हुलासा ॥ ९ ॥

turatahiṁ sakala ga'e jahaṁ sītā. sēvahiṁ saba nisicarīṁ binītā. 5.
 bēgi bibhīṣana tinhaḥi sikhāyō. tinha bahu bidhi majjana karavāyō. 6.
 bahu prakāra bhūṣana pahirā'ē. sibikā rucira sāji puni lyā'ē. 7.
 tā para haraṣi caṛhī baidēhī. sumiri rāma sukhadhāma sanēhī. 8.
 bētapāni racchaka cahuṁ pāsā. calē sakala mana parama hulāsā. 9.

They (Hanuman, Angad and Vibhishan) immediately went to meet Sita who was now being served very politely and obediently by her female guards¹. (5)

Vibhishan gave them quick instructions, advising them as to how to treat Sita with great dignity, and prepare her for being taken to Lord Ram with due honour.

Thereafter, the female demon guards made Sita take a bath and clean herself in various ways (using soap and perfumes etc.). (6)

Then they adorned her with different kinds of ornaments. After that, a decorated palanquin was brought in for her to board it. (7)

Vaidehi (Sita, the daughter of king Videha, another name of her father king Janak; "baidēhī") then boarded it (the decorated palanquin) after remembering and paying her mental obeisance to Lord Ram who was an embodiment of (and a bestower of) bliss, joy and happiness². (8)

Holding batons in their hands, countless demon guards surrounded the palanquin and escorted it as it moved forward. All of them were very cheerfully and felt privileged to have gotten the chance to be the escorts of Sita. (9)

[Note—¹These were the same female guards who had been terrorizing Sita earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 10.

²To wit, Sita thanked Lord Ram for finally ending her misery and giving her peace, by invoking the merciful Lord's virtue of granting bliss, joy and happiness to all those who remember him.]

देखन भालु कीस सब आए । रच्छक कोपि निवारन धाए ॥ १० ॥
 कह रघुबीर कहा मम मानहु । सीतहि सखा पयादें आनहु ॥ ११ ॥

देखहुँ कपि जननी की नाई । बिहसि कहा रघुनाथ गोसाई ॥ १२ ॥

dēkhana bhālu kīsa saba ā'ē. racchaka kōpi nivārana dhā'ē. 10.

kaha raghubīra kahā mama mānahu. sītahi sakhā payādēm ānahu. 11.

dēkhahum kapi janani kī nā'īm. bihasi kahā raghunātha gōsā'īm. 12.

The monkeys and bears rushed forward to have a glimpse of Sita. There was a huge crowd of onlookers, jostling and pushing forward, compelling the guards who were escorting her to angrily push them back. (10)

Lord Ram ("raghubīra"; literally the brave warrior of the Raghu line of kings) called out to his messengers and said affectionately: 'My friends (sakhā); please pay heed to what I say; bring Sita on foot¹.' (11)

Turning to all the monkey and bear warriors who were eagerly craning their necks to have a glance of Sita, the wise Lord smiled in amusement (bihasi)² and instructed them as follows: 'Oh Kapis! Look at her as if she was your mother; perceive her to be like your own mother.³' (12)

[Note—¹Lord Ram chided his messengers for misunderstanding his instruction of bringing Sita to him with due respect, in a dignified and modest way, by showing unwarranted zeal and enthusiasm in bringing her astride a palanquin like a queen. It is immodest and impudent for her to be brought to the Lord in such a manner of pomp and pageantry—as it violates outright the vows they had taken at the time of leaving their kingdom fourteen years ago, that they will live an austere life in the forest like that of a hermit. The sight of Sita coming to him in a regal state procession accompanied by royal paraphernalia, with its attendant pomp and show, annoyed and upset the Lord very much.

So he politely admonished his messengers and said: "My friends, listen. Let Sita walk to me instead of riding in a carriage. We have taken a vow to live like hermits during the fourteen years of our forest sojourn. It is highly immodest and uncivil for her to come to me astride a palanquin while I stand on foot, and it violates the sanctity of the vow that we had made at the time of leaving our kingdom of Ayodhya that we would live the life of a forest-dwelling hermit for fourteen years. I have diligently followed this injunction all through this time, but unfortunately Sita has fallen prey to temptations and fallen astray by violating the vows of an austere life by conceding to ride on a carriage, a palanquin in this case, which all of you would agree is not what is expected from the loyal, obedient, faithful and diligent wife of a hermit. Anyhow, the damage has been done, but let us now rectify it as best as we can. So therefore, let Sita step out of the palanquin and walk the remaining distance to me on foot like a wife of a hermit. There is no cause of shame in it, and there is no reason why she would be reluctant in walking now—for hadn't she traveled all the way on foot from Ayodhya, thousands of miles away, walking through the villages and hamlets that fell on the way, through the lonely and fearful forest, visiting many hermitages of sages on the way? So, what is odd in it if she walks a few meters now?

Besides this, these monkey and bear friends of mine are so eager to have a glimpse of her; don't you see that they are craning their heads and shoving each other to get closer to the carriage? Well, let them have a chance to see their mother directly. There should be no hindrance in it. Let them see how miserable she has become

during her captivity in Lanka. Being a 'mother', let her see how her children are so eager to welcome her back, how glad and joyous they are to see her; let her bless them all with her benevolent and gracious smile, and let her glance at them to bless them all with her grace like the soothing spray of rainwater that falls on everyone equally, without making any distinction.

See, these warriors have left their homes and hearths in Kishkindha for my sake, and so it is obligatory for me to respect to them by honouring their wishes and treat them all as my family. And since every child has a right to see his mother, especially after she had suffered so much for so long, and these children had exerted themselves so strenuously to liberate her from her miseries, there should be no formalities now; there ought to be aught naught between these warriors and their mother Sita.

Hence, let Sita step out of the carriage onto the ground, and let her show modesty, prudence, wisdom and decency of behaviour by adhering to the vows that we had taken earlier that we will live an austere life of a forest-dwelling hermit for fourteen years, by walking to me on foot rather than riding on a palanquin.”

Now, let us examine the reasons why Lord Ram preferred that Sita should walk to him instead of riding a palanquin.

First, this would remove the danger of the palanquin toppling over in the chaos.

Second, it would forestall chances of a fight between the demon guards protecting Sita and the surging crowd of monkeys and bears trying to get close and look at her.

Third, it would give the eager friends of the Lord an easy chance to see Sita as she walks on foot as compared to her sitting in the palanquin with small windows with curtains drawn.

Fourth, by making her walk on foot, the terms of his forest exile, whereby he and his companions, Sita and Laxman, were to live as a hermit who travels on foot and not on a carriage, would be fulfilled.

Fifth, the Lord wished to remind Sita that she had done a wrong thing by allowing herself to be so finely decorated and riding in a palanquin, for did she forget that she was supposed to live like the wife of a hermit? It was inexcusable, and she must be strongly chided and adequately punished for her impertinent behaviour.

Sixth, the Lord owed enough gratitude to his monkey and bear friends to let them have the privilege of feeling like the Lord's own family members, and like children eager to meet their mother ought naught to be barred from this privilege, joy and pleasure, these monkeys and bears too had the right to see Sita openly and without any restrictions, albeit as their mother and not as a novelty.

But then, there was a simultaneous risk to her safety if she left the security of the palanquin and walked on foot, for there was a huge crowd anxious to see her, pushing and shoving closer, and they might rough-handle her in their eagerness and enthusiasm. So therefore, the Lord devised a clever and wise device to get over this risk—by asking all the monkeys and bears to look upon Sita as their 'mother'! This indeed pre-empted any imprudent behaviour on their part, and imposed a sense of self-discipline and restraint in them.

²Why did Lord Ram 'laugh' or 'smile' (*bihasi*) when he saw the approaching carriage bearing Sita and the huge crowd milling around it? When he saw the way the monkeys and bears were jostling and pushing and elbowing each other just to have a

glimpse of Sita, he was amused as well as alarmed. The impression that the unruly crowd gave was that they were looking at something novel and wished to be the one who would claim later to have had the first chance to cast his eye on this novelty; that they wished to see who this lady was for whom such a violent war was raged; that they broke all protocol and good manners of keeping a dignified distance while approaching Sita and the palanquin she was in; that there was the risk of a chaos and a riot as the demon guards tried to push back the eager monkeys and bears by use of force, and at certain point of time there were chances that these monkeys and bears would lose their control and a fight would ensue. It was a dangerous prospect; but Lord Ram smiled as this itself was a novel and interesting sight to behold, a sight that was sufficiently funny as to amuse the Lord.

³When he observed that the things were going out of hand, he decided to intervene by asking the monkeys and bears to observe self-restraint and good manners by treating Sita as a “mother”, which meant two things simultaneously—one, that she must not be treated as a trophy of war or a novelty, but regarded with full honour and respect that one would reserve for one’s mother; and two, that since a son inherently enjoys a certain degree of freedom while approaching his mother, so it would be alright for the monkeys and bears to come close to Sita to a limit, but they are expected to maintain a dignified and respectful distance from her.]

सुनि प्रभु बचन भालु कपि हरषे । नभ ते सुरन्ह सुमन बहु बरषे ॥ १३ ॥
सीता प्रथम अनल महुँ राखी । प्रगट कीन्हि चह अंतर साखी ॥ १४ ॥

sunī prabhu bacana bhālu kapi haraṣē. nabha tē suranha sumana bahu baraṣē. 13.

sītā prathama anala mahum̐ rākhī. pragaṭa kīnhi caha antara sākhī. 14.

Hearing the words of the Lord, the bears and the monkeys felt very glad¹; and the gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven)². (13)

Lord Ram had kept Sita in the safe custody of the fire god on an earlier occasion³. Now it was time to retrieve Sita’s original form that was presently invisible and subtle, so that she could be physically present, in flesh and blood, by the side of the Lord in a tangible form⁴. (14)

[Note—¹Why were the bears and monkeys happy? Till now Sita was sitting inside the palanquin, making it difficult for the Lord’s companions to have a glimpse of her. Now that the Lord ordered her to come on foot, she stepped out of the carriage. This enabled everyone to see her directly. They always had had the greatest of respects for Lord Ram, and so now they felt so fortunate that they were finally able to have a divine sight of Sita, the Lord’s consort. With Sita stepping out of the palanquin and walking on foot to Lord Ram, the need for jostling and pushing ended.

²Not only the monkeys and bears, this also gave the gods an opportunity to pay their respects to Sita; they too felt exhilarated and expressed their joy by showering flowers upon her.

³Prior to Sita's abduction by Ravana, Lord Ram had put her in the safe custody of the fire god to preserve her purity and secure her safety—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 24.

After Sita's original form vanished from sight when she entered the fire element, the patron deity of which was the 'fire god', what was left behind was a 'shadow'. Now it was time to bring her back from her safe haven; to retrieve her from the subtle existence in which she had lived during this period, and make her reveal her physical gross form that the world knows as 'Sita'.

So it was necessary to reverse the process by which she had been put into the safe custody of the fire god. What could that process be? It was to light a fire and burn the shadow in it, while at the same time inviting the original Sita, who lived in an invisible-subtle form till now, to emerge from behind the curtain formed by the brilliant light of the burning fire, and step out into the physical-visible world. Surely it was a fantastic development and a magical feat so astounding in proportion that our mind, with its limited abilities to comprehend certain mystical happenings that occur at the transcendental level of existence, fails to fully understand as to how it actually must have happened.

In order to do this, Lord Ram had to devise a clever device which would serve a dual purpose: first, it should bring the original Sita back to the physical world, and second, it should ensure that no taint would ever be cast by anyone on her immaculacy and purity of character. What this device was, we shall read about it in the following Doha no. 108.]

दो०. तेहि कारन करुनानिधि कहे कछुक दुर्बाद ।
सुनत जातुधानीं सब लागीं करै बिषाद ॥ १०८ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi kārana karunānidhi kahē kachuka durbāda.
sunata jātudhānīm saba lāgīm karai biṣāda. 108.

That is why Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of mercy and compassion (karunānidhi), said some harsh words (against Sita, or for Sita)¹.

The female demons (jātudhānīm) who had accompanied Sita felt very sad and sorry when they heard the Lord's words, and began lamenting². (Doha no. 108)**

[Note—¹The epithet "karunānidhi" has been used to qualify Lord Ram to emphasize that he is indeed very kind, compassionate, merciful and gracious by nature though what he was constrained to do now seems to be a very harsh form of treatment imposed upon Sita by him, especially after her long suffering and her being sinless and innocent of any crime.

Sita was made to undertake the 'fire test of purity'. This was obviously a harsh measure; it painted Lord Ram in a negative colour of being heartless and cruel upon his poor wife who was immaculate, chaste, pure, faithful, and loyal to him.

So, lest the world should form a negative opinion of Lord Ram as being heartless, merciless, cruel and over zealous for using harsh words for Sita and forcing her to undertake the fire test of purity, it is said here that it would be wrong to make such a erroneous surmise about him—for in reality the Lord was not harsh as he was

forced by the circumstances to appear to be, but on the contrary he was very soft-spoken, gracious, tender in heart, merciful, compassionate, benevolent and kind.

What could have Lord Ram said about Sita, either directly to her or indirectly by implication, that could be deemed as being harsh and seemingly unwarranted? Well, let us see.

Lord Ram addressed Sita with a heavy heart; he said: “Listen honourable lady! If thou art pure, holy, untouched by evil and loyal to thine husband as thee profess to be, and as I expect and hope thee to be, then prove it to be so. Prove thy self by the sacred fire god as a witness; invoke the fire god to bear witness of thine inviolable virtues and untarnished character; prove that thou art above and beyond reproach and scandals. In the good interest of both of us, it is prudent and wise to settle this matter once and for all since you have been living in a polluted environment for quite a while, and it necessitates that you ought to be sanitized first before being accepted by me, for I do not wish a even a whiff of a scandal to tarnish either my name and reputation or that of yours.”

“Sita”, further admonished the Lord with a sad heart, “You have committed a serious error. Are you the one whom I call ‘my beloved Sita’? I don’t think so from your appearances; you don’t seem to be the ‘Sita’ for whom I suffered so much, and for whose sake I took so much trouble myself and put my friends here into equal trouble. The ‘Sita’ I know was dressed like the wife of a hermit, modestly and in a most austere way^{#1}. The ‘Sita’ I know is the one whose sorrowful, pitiful and sad picture Hanuman had given me after his return from Lanka where he had met her as a captive of the demon king ^{#2}. The ‘Sita’ I know had walked hundreds of miles in the forest with me, never once hinting that she needed a carriage to carry her onwards on her journey.

{^{#1}apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 79 along with Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede it; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; and Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 94.

^{#2}apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.}

But I don’t see any of these signs in you. You are decked up in regal finery; you come in a royal procession with pomp and pageantry, astride a carriage carried on the shoulders of demon guards; your countenance is cheerful and quite the opposite of what I had expected it to be, and not only me but even my dear monkey and bear friends too had expected, based on Hanuman’s account of the Sita he saw in Lanka. So all those who are present here, tell me: how can I trust this lady that she is the same ‘Sita’ I loved and adored so much, and for whom I have called upon my monkey and bear friends to look up as their mother? With what face would I accept her as my loyal, faithful and chaste wife, and what face would I show in Ayodhya when I return there with a lady so regally attired as if she was a queen of the demon race, and not the honourable wife of a recluse Ram who had gone to the forest to live an austere life like a hermit for fourteen long years? I’ll make an utter fool of myself; I’ll subject myself to ridicule and scorn; and therefore it’s better for me to return to my capital city of Ayodhya without Sita than to carry this incredibly ridiculous and a glamorous shadow by my side as my wife.

Woe to you Sita; what have thy done? How durst thou even thinkest of adorning thyself in this ostentatious manner? Woes betide you and me if I ever accept thee in the manner thou hast presented thine self before mine horrified and unbelieving eyes.

Tell me, how can I be sure of the sincerity of your love for me; how can I ascertain that you had suffered in silence in my memory when it appears from all appearances that thou hast lived a life of luxury. How imprudent and impertinent and irreverent thou hast been for allowing thy self to break the vows of austere living by allowing thee to be decorated in royal regalia and carried on a palanquin, whilst your husband stands on foot dressed like a hermit? Shame should bear heavily upon thine head and make thee bow it low. Thy behaviour is completely unacceptable for me.

Nevertheless, I still wish to give thee a chance for repentance and offer penitence, for remember everyone who is present here, that I am the most forgiving and compassionate Lord the world has ever had and would ever know in the future. But to become eligible for forgiveness and acceptance, first it is expected that thee should prove thine integrity and purity and faithfulness by undertaking a test; and it has to be an acid test, for I don't want scurrilous scandals and wagging tongues dogging me for the rest of my life.

So therefore, be prepared to prove thine honesty and integrity by the 'fire test' as it would leave no scope for the smallest of doubts and existence of loopholes that might allow wrong impressions and ideas to flourish, that may eventually tarnish my own character and integrity, as well as that of my chaste wife Sita whom I indeed adore and love so much, to ever wiggle in and sour my reputation."

Lord Ram further chastised Sita by saying: "Thy honourable Lady! Do thee not remember that thou hadst cast aspersions on my beloved brother Laxman's character and intentions when he tried to dissuade thee from forcing him to leave thee alone in my hermitage in Panchvati and come to me while I was away chasing that golden deer which thy rapacity hadst forced me to go and capture for thy pleasure? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 28.}

Well now, repent for it; I pay thee back with the same coin by casting aspersions on thine character and integrity. Feel the pain and agony that Laxman may have suffered at that time due to thy uncontrollable tongue; now taste the same bitter pill that Laxman had had to swallow."

²The demonesses, i.e. the female demon guards who had kept vigil on Sita during her captivity in Lanka, and who had escorted Sita from the fort of Lanka to the battle-field where she would meet Lord Ram, felt astonished and extremely sad by what Lord Ram had said about Sita; they were stunned at the Lord's doubting Sita and using some unwarranted statements against her that were harsh and insinuating even by the standards of the demons who were accustomed to such things. It is because they had been first-hand witnesses of how Sita had suffered during the period of her captivity, and of her immaculate character. They had seen how she rebuffed all provocative gestures of Ravana, who had even threatened her with death if she did not relent and agree to surrender herself to his evil designs, and the harsh treatment she was subjected to. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Doha no. 10.}

These demonesses had guarded Sita all the while when she was a captive in Lanka, and they were witnesses and could vouchsafe for her chastity, integrity, inviolability, and purity of character. So they were stunned and rendered speechless when Lord Ram, of anyone else, should say certain things that were best unsaid. They felt extremely distressed and sad themselves, and they empathized with Sita and shared her pain and grief when they saw the colour of her face change from that of

happiness at the chance of her reunion with her beloved husband, to that of utter sadness, grief, shame and dismay.

****Laxman felt flabbergasted and extremely sad. He had never imagined that Lord Ram would be so harsh with Sita; it was incompatible with the Lord's inherent nature and merciful character. So this unexpected behaviour of Lord Ram much perplexed Laxman.**

Laxman was unaware that the main reason for Lord Ram undertaking such a hazardous enterprise as ridiculing Sita's character in public and compelling her to go through the rigours of the "fire test" was this: That the 'real Sita' had been kept in the safe custody of the fire god, that Ravana had abducted only a false form of Sita, i.e. merely her shadow, and that, with the objective of eliminating the cruel demons having been finally achieved, it was necessary for Lord Ram now to retrieve the 'original Sita' from the custody of the fire god, and burn her dark shadow which was a 'false form of Sita'. This event of keeping Sita in the safe custody of the fire god was done so secretly by Lord Ram that Laxman had no idea of it; and so Laxman can't be faulted if he did not know the actual cause of Lord Ram subjecting Sita to the 'fire test' in order to burn her false form and retrieve her true form. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

The drama that unfolded on the battle-field of Lanka whereby Lord Ram casts doubts about the character and integrity of Sita, whom he and everyone else knew very well to be absolutely chaste, immaculate, pure and faithful to the Lord, reminds me, the author of this fascinating Story, of an episode in the classic tale of "Don Quixote" by the celebrated author Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, which is narrated in its Book IV, Chapter VI, titled 'The Novel of the Curious Impertinent'. In this tale it is narrated that there were two fast and close friends named Anselmo and Lothario. Anselmo had a beautiful wife named Camilla. She was a perfect lady in beauty and character. But somehow, unfortunately, Anselmo got into his head to doubt her character. He prevailed upon his friend Lothario to become an instrument in testing his wife's integrity and loyalty. Lothario tried his best to show Anselmo the futility of this foolish enterprise and point out his folly; but Anselmo was so stubborn in his mind that he wouldn't listen to his dear friend's entreaties, for he had become determined to carry on with his hazardous venture even if it culminates in his ruin.

Now imagining how Lothario did his best to dissuade his friend Anselmo to abandon this stupid idea of testing his wife Camilla's integrity and loyalty to him, for it would prove ruinous for all, for himself, for his friend and for his wife, let us visualize in our minds how Laxman could have himself reacted at Lord Ram's suggestions regarding Sita, and how he could have tried to persuade the Lord to abandon this idea of testing Sita by the fire test, and what he might have said to the Lord in this connection as follows:

Laxman drew closer to Lord Ram and spoke to him softly and politely:

"My dear Lord and most respected Brother. I prithee to please pay attention to what I have to say to you before you decide to do what you wish to do. I beg that I don't agree with you. What you intend to do is a folly out of proportions. Remember this: a wife is the other half of her husband; so by casting aspersions on her character the husband is ruining his own reputation; and to rob a man of his reputation is akin to death for him. Why don't you see the ridiculous nature of what you propose to do: by casting doubts on Sita's character you would kill her, for to live a life of infamy is worse than death; and therefore by ruining Sita's reputation you are voluntarily trying

to kill her, and by corollary trying to kill your own self. Your desire is so strange and foreign to all manner of reasoning that it defies comprehension and logic.

My dear brother. If I didn't love you as I do, I would have left you to pursue your matter as you wish, but I know it would lead to certain ruin, to which I resist.

When a woman was given to man in marriage, heaven ordered that they were made and pronounced as one flesh with two forms. To wit, the husband is a piece of his wife, and vice versa. Whatever affects her affects him too, because he is a part of her as much as she is of him. For in all sooth, the whole body suffers the pain of any one part, and the head feels the pain of the foot. So the husband is touched by his wife's infamy because she is a part of him.

Say my brother; do you wot naught that Sita is so immensely honourable, immaculate, pure, chaste and faithful to you? And if you know that your wife is possessed of these noble characters and auspicious qualifications, what have you more to inquire after her by putting her to such great embarrassment, by subjecting her to this harassment? And believe me, she is impregnable; the fire would do her no harm whatsoever. But nevertheless, the very act of doubting her is a taint in itself, and though she would definitely emerge unscathed from the fire, what will the world say about you; have you considered it? What face would you then show Sita once she is proved true by the fire test; wouldn't it put you in the dock and shame you for having doubted her?

What gain will you get, I don't understand. What I fear the most is that unwillingly I would be forced to be an accomplice in this absurd affair, for being the next of kin to you it is but natural that I would be the one who is asked to carry out your orders to light the fire and walk Sita to it. What will Sita think of me? How will she ever excuse me? How will I ever explain to her my innocence? She has always loved me like her son, but what am I doing to her to repay her affection—helping her to step on her own funeral pyre? How will I ever convince her that I was not at fault; that I had no choice, for if I refused I would have disobeyed my Lord, that is you, and it would have been a sin of disobedience in its own right?

Come to think of it my dear and respected brother: All three of us are losers in this venture. Sita would ever remain emotionally affected by this humiliation though on the other hand it would clear her of all taints; You would never be able to excuse yourself for this harshness inflicted upon her innocence self, and this guilt would dog you for the rest of your life; and as for myself, I would be the worst loser who would be forced to roast in shame and guilt for all times to come, for if I refuse to carry out your orders I am offending you, and if I accept your orders I would be offending Sita.

You call me your dear brother whom you love like a son, and yet you would rob me of my honour; nay, you stop not there, for you oblige me to destroy yours too along with mine. It's such a ridiculous situation that defies all comprehension.

Suppose my dear brother, you had a brilliant piece of diamond that was priceless and rare, and the purity, quality and value of which was vouchsafed and guaranteed by the best of gem-testers and jewelers. Would you not be satisfied by their opinion; would it be wise of you to try its hardness by putting it on the anvil and using a hammer to hit it? You must own that should it be survive your blows, it would not be one jot more valuable and hard than really it was prior to your foolish trials and rashness. But consider this: should it break, or otherwise develop some scratch-mark due to the severity of your blows, the jewel would be entirely lost, and so would be the reputation of its owner, who would be so much the poorer for his impudent and silly act.

Sita is this rarest diamond; she ought to be held in the highest esteem of all, and that includes you. I don't understand, by any fanciful flight of my imagination, that why then should you imprudently put her in the danger of falling, for in all sooth, your trial will add no greater value to her than she already has? But, god forbid, if she should succumb to the harshness of the trial that you propose for her because of her frail and weak frame, reflect with yourself on the danger you put your own self in, the life-long infamy and gloom that would descend on you like an all-engulfing shadow of doom. Nay, not only this, but you would never be absolved of the sin of causing Sita's doom too, not to mention my own. What sense does it make?

Consider this: A woman's best asset is her reputation that is held high in the opinion of the world. Sita's reputation is matchless; her immaculacy and honour are undisputed and unquestioned. Why say then would you, of all others, and with no purpose served, question her righteousness and auspiciousness yourself, by calling the reality of these virtues in question?

Take another example. The virtues and reputation of an honourable woman is like a mirror of crystal. A mirror has the risk of being cracked if one uses a hammer against it, and it would be dimmed and stained by breathing too much upon it. Sita must be treated like a reliquary of saints, which ought to be adored and worshipped but not touched and tainted.

My most respected and beloved elder brother, in conclusion I can only say this much that it is highly impertinent for you who are so exceptionally compassionate, merciful, gracious, kind, forgiving, magnanimous, charitable, and noble in heart and mind by your very nature to question Sita's integrity, virtuousness, honour and righteousness by casting aspersions on her character by first using harsh words for her, and then adding salt to her wounds by insinuating her to prove her by the fire-test as if this test would establish something that is not already well known and vouchsafed with regard to her.

So therefore my Lord I beg of you to abandon this uncalled for and totally incredulous way you propose to prosecute the innocent Sita for some imaginary misdemeanours which she is falsely and erroneously being accused and held guilty of, something which thee wish to set right even at the tremendous cost that thou would incur for thine own honour and reputation, because I have already told thee that a wife is an equal part of her husband, and if any half of a body suffers then the whole of it suffers.

I know you love me more than anyone in this world, and I am aware how you lamented and grieved woefully for me when I had lain wounded on the battle-field after being shot by Meghanad's shaft (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 61). How come I know it? Well, one of our close friends here told me everything that happened during those moments. This unbound love betwixt us had given me the courage to speak up before you, for I am sure you will not take offence at me for questioning your wisdom and prudence in asking Sita to prove her innocence and integrity after her painful ordeal of separation from you when she suffered immense torment and grief. Why do you wish to compound her pain?

I and you share a unique bond of mutual trust, faith, love and affection, like no one else does. You have always treated me more like a dear friend than a younger brother, for you have confided with me your most private of thoughts that one would easily share with a friend but rarely with a brother, such as those related to your charm for Sita prior to her marriage with you (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal

Kand, Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 239).

On my part, I was up in arms whenever I perceived any threat to your reputation, honour and safety, as was the case first when Parashuram came angrily to punish you for breaking Lord Shiva's bow as a condition for marrying Sita^{#1}, and second when Bharat had come with his army to take you back from the forest, but I had misconstrued his intentions and thought he had come to fight and kill you so that he can usurp the crown of the kingdom^{#2}.

{^{#1}-- Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 280.

^{#2} -- Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230.}

This bond and trust betwixt us had encouraged me to tell thee what I thought, which no one else would durst have done. With this, I bring to a close my humble submission before thee. I will carry out whatever thine orders art for me now that I am satisfied that I have done my duty to express my reservations about what thou propose to do, and after thee has lent a patient hearing to me which ensures that thou would weigh all the pros and cons before arriving at a final decision.

My beloved brother; I once again pray to you to calmly consider your decision before proceeding ahead. I have nothing more to say.”

At this honest and sincere expression of his thoughts by Laxman, Lord Ram smiled; he put his reassuring hands on Laxman's shoulder, patted it most affectionately, and with love and warmth in his voice the Lord told Laxman:

“Laxman, I am exceptionally happy today. I have realised how much you love me. I listened to your submission with all attention, and every part of what you have said convinces me of your unbound and unrestricted love for me, and the greatness of your heart and wisdom. I thank you from the core of my heart for the honesty and love and consideration you have shown to me and Sita. I am fortunate to have you as my brother, for you are no less than the diamond you have cited for me. My dearest Laxman, rest assured that what I propose to do is in the best interests of all of us. There are certain things that have many facets and also have far reaching consequences, and a king has to consider all such aspects and weigh all the pros and cons of a given situation, as you have yourself advised me to do, before arriving at a decision, which may at times seem cruel, or incredulous and irrational to a lay observer, but for a king his decision has some definite purpose, it is taken by him with some far reaching consequences in mind, and it has a value that off-sets immediate criticism that a particular decision of his may evoke.

Brother, there are many things I have to keep in mind. I am a responsible person, and I have a reputation to maintain as you yourself say. Do you think that I am an irresponsible person who would act rashly, without thinking about the rationale and consequences of my actions? Perish the thought; there is no one wiser than me.

There are many things you aren't aware of, and it is better not to insist in knowing about them (such as the fact that the 'Sita' you see is not the real Sita, but a shadow of hers, for the 'real Sita' is in safe custody of the fire god, and I have to retrieve her).

Sita had insulted you and harmed your reputation by doubting your intentions and integrity at the time she forced you to leave her alone in the hermitage in Panchvati in defiance of my instructions not to do so. I could feel your distress and agony when I chided you for disobeying me and leaving Sita alone, at which you had expressed your helplessness because she had forced you to come to me by saying

things she oughtn't have uttered. Being a neutral judge of everyone, how can you expect me to excuse her for this insinuation? {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 28; and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.}

See, she has violated the terms of our forest-living, where we three are expected to live an austere life of a hermit. She has come to me bedecked in royal finery, like a queen, and to add insult to injury she had the temerity to ride a palanquin while I and you are standing on the ground attired like hermits. Tell me, is this excusable; do you want me to condone it? If the world begins to criticize me for not punishing Sita for all these misdemeanours just because she happens to be my wife, what right would I have to sit in fair judgment over similar and related wrong-doings of the subjects of the kingdom when I ascend the throne upon our return to Ayodhya and assume the role of its King?

My dear Laxman; I have an immaculate reputation to uphold; I am looked upon by the world as a bearer of the flag of Dharma (principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct and thought, ethics and morality etc.), and I have to be extra cautious in my actions and behaviour. I must not set a wrong precedent; I must ensure that no scandalous story is weaved later on about Sita and my own self at a time when I would not be able to change or rectify the events that would have become history by that time, though I would then regret I should have acted more prudently and wisely while there was yet time for it.

Remember: Gold is never tainted or dulled by putting it in fire; rather the fire purifies it further and removes all doubts about its quality. So is the case with Sita. Once she emerges unscathed from the 'fire test', her virtues of purity, holiness and divinity would be all the more shiny and radiant with glory, not any wee whit dulled as you might fear. I don't want a doubtful, shadowy character by my side.

So don't worry at all. Everything would be fine and end on a happy note. Be rest assured and trust me. Now, that said, I expect you to do obediently what I plan to do, like a faithful companion and a loving brother for whom his elder brother's wishes are paramount and sacrosanct, especially when that elder brother treats him as his own son.

As to your worry that you will fall in Sita's opinion for being instrumental in carrying out my instruction of putting her through the rigours of the fire test, nothing of the sort will happen as I myself would explain to her the circumstances of what had happened. Tell me: Do you wish somebody else should touch Sita and carry out my wishes of putting her through the fire test while you stand mutely by my side? Would it not in itself be a scandal that you had refused my orders?

My loving brother and son Laxman; don't worry at all. Have faith in me, that I shall do nothing that would injure either you or Sita in the least. But at the same time, I have to pretend to be harsh to ride over the wave of criticisms and scandals that would lash our shores in the future time. Remember and consider this: Sita had lived for too long a time in a tainted territory, a place infested with demons. They were flesh eaters; they were lascivious and rapaciously passionate; they were embodiments of all the vices and all manners of evil characters that one can imagine. So it is easy for anyone to say: 'How can Sita have remained untouched by and immune to such vices when she lived surrounded by them all the time for so long, just like the case of a person's clothes invariably catching the smell of the scent that has been sprayed in the room where he had tarried for some time, or of tobacco that has been smoked by others in a crowded room though he had not smoked anything himself?'

Well, I have to prevent such things at all costs. So be at ease with your self and relax your conscience. Everything would be alright soon.”

Lord Ram paused for a while and glanced at Laxman most affectionately. The Lord patted and gently pressed his remorseful brother's shoulders reassuringly once again, and continued:

“My dear son, I have a special commission for you, like I had for Hanuman and Angad earlier. And like Hanuman and Angad gaining eternal happiness and glory for being my ambassador, you too would realize that you are not an instrument of any ruin for anybody, but the one who brings the tidings that would grant excess of cheer and joy to them. Now pay attention to what I have to say.

When you draw closer to Sita, which you must in order to arrange the pile and light it for the fire test that is proposed for her, and then escort her to it and help her step on it, whisper my message in her ear. Tell her that I wish to remind her, in case she has forgotten it due to her long exposure to hardship, sufferance and grief of separation from me, of that private conversation that I have had with her in our hermitage in Panchavati, just prior to the appearance of Marich who came disguised as the golden deer at the behest of Ravana so that she could be abducted by the demon king. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

While you convey my message, keep your eyes fixed on her face. You will observe that the countenance and colours of her face would change from sadness, distress and gloom to that of extreme joy, happiness and exhilaration. This metamorphosis would in its self be sufficient to convince you that you are not an instrument that exacerbates her sorrows, but a herald of her happiness and good fortune. To wit, instead of cursing you or being angry at you for becoming a tool of aggravation of her sufferings or humiliation, she would rather bless you profusely like you never can imagine.

Don't worry at all; I shall never do anything that would bring pain either to you or to Sita. You will soon realise it.”

This mysterious commission and the assurance of joy from Lord Ram, who never speaks a lie and is true to his words, helped to overcome Laxman's inhibitions and any reluctance that he has had. So, Laxman obediently bowed his head before the Lord in silence, though his eyes welled-up with tears, even as contradictory emotions of sadness and joy, of helplessness and hope, of reluctance to carry out his orders and the courage to obey them irrespective of their merit, wafted through his distressed heart like a train of waves lapping on the shore of an ocean.]

चौ०. प्रभु के बचन सीस धरि सीता । बोली मन क्रम बचन पुनीता ॥ १ ॥

लछिमन होहु धरम के नेगी । पावक प्रगट करहु तुम्ह बेगी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu kē bacana sīsa dhari sītā. bōlī mana krama bacana punītā. 1.

lachimana hōhu dharama kē nēgī. pāvaka pragaṭa karahu tumha bēgī. 2.

When Sita heard the Lord's words (i.e. when she learnt what the Lord wished her to do; when she came to know his instructions for her)¹, she respectfully accepted them with a bowed head, and spoke with purity and calmness in her mind, heart, demeanours and speech². (1)

[She addressed Laxman and exhorted him to follow the path of Dharma (i.e. that which is righteous and proper to do), and help her prove her innocence.]

‘Laxman’, said Sita, ‘please follow the path of Dharma³ by assuming the role of a priest who presides over a fire sacrifice. Light a fire quickly (so that I can prove my innocence and integrity, and you shall be blessed for being a priest and a witness in this purification rite)’⁴.

[It is clear here that it was Sita herself who proposed that she be put through the Fire Test, and that Lord Ram had not asked for it in express terms.] (2)

[Note—¹We will observe that what has been said earlier in the notes appended to Doha no. 108 and verses that precede it, fit in perfectly well here and explain things in a logical, plausible, and coherent way.

We have read in our notes earlier that Lord had briefed Laxman with what he expects from him and what he was supposed to do. Hence, it was on the Lord’s instructions that Laxman quietly approached Sita and told her in a whisper what Lord Ram had asked him to convey to her. It is how Sita came to know “what the Lord wished her to do, and what was the reason for this request”.

On careful analysis of the verses of the Text we can easily see that Lord Ram has nowhere publicly asked Sita to prove herself by the fire test; he had only said some harsh and pinching words for her, but not anything about the ‘fire test’. So, how did Sita get this idea of conducting the ‘fire test’ on her self, and that too by making Laxman an instrument for it, if Lord Ram remained silent on this matter and not said anything of the sort in public?

The answer is crystal clear when the reader would carefully read the notes appended by this author to the verses earlier. Obviously Sita came to know of Lord Ram’s wish of putting her through the ‘fire test’ because Laxman had conveyed the Lord’s wish to her as his messenger. So she immediately agreed.

²The Lord’s message also reminded her of the private conversation he had with her prior to the episode of the golden deer and her abduction by Ravana. Laxman was unaware what Lord Ram meant because he was not present on the occasion. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.}

Nevertheless, Sita got the hint; she immediately realized that the Lord wished to retrieve her from the custody of the fire god where he had kept her for her own security and safety, because the time had come to eliminate the cruel demons as the Lord had promised the gods and mother earth on an earlier occasion, and to redeem this promise it was necessary to use Sita as a bait. This was surely a most hazardous and risky job, and the Lord wished to protect Sita at all costs. So he decided to lodge her in the custody of the fire god, for it was the safest and most secure place anywhere in the world for her to stay temporarily while Lord Ram carried out his mission of eliminating the demons. That mission having been finally accomplished, it was necessary now to invite the fire god to bring Sita back, in flesh and blood, to Lord Ram, and at the same time burn her shadowy form that she had left behind at the time when the Lord had put her in the safe custody of the fire god. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

It is very interesting why Lord Ram chose the ‘fire god’ to act as a custodian for Sita. The ‘fire’ is an element that can never be tainted or tarnished; it burns all impurities and leaves things pure and immaculate; it is so fierce and ferocious that it

scorches and reduces to ash anyone or anything trying to play fools and act smart with it. If one is required to prove one's innocence, the fire is the only element out of the five primary elements of creation that is invoked to stand witness to it. {The other elements are sky, air, water and earth. They can by mischance be polluted, but not the fire element.}

Lord Ram was a descendent of the 'Solar Race', and everyone knows how fiery the 'sun' is; no one would dare to go near this celestial oven if he wishes to remain alive. So therefore, Sita was safe and secure with the 'fire god'.

Further, Lord Ram himself had the fire god as his de jure ancestor. How come this happened? Well, if we carefully read the Story of the Ramayana, we will observe that his father, king Dasrath, had performed a 'fire sacrifice' to beget a son, and from sacred fire pit emerged the 'fire god' in a personified form. The fire god gave a cup of pudding to Dasrath that he was to give to his queens to partake, and it was from this sacred pudding that they conceived and Lord Ram and his three brothers were born. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190.}

By manifesting himself from the 'fire' as his source, Lord Ram wished to convey to the world that no one should ever question the purity of his ancestry and origin. So when he had put Sita in the custody of the fire god, the Lord had actually placed her in the safest place he could think of, in the safe hands of his own ancestor who was very competent, powerful, strong and able to carry out his mandate to protect his daughter-in-law Sita while his son Lord Ram was out on a divine mission.

And since the 'fire god' was Lord Ram's deemed ancestor and Sita's guardian at the same time, so assuredly there was no fear for her to step into the portal of the fire god's visible form, which is the 'lighted fire' as we see it.

This is why Sita became calm and relaxed while asking Laxman to light the fire for her.

³By asking Laxman to follow the path of Dharma and become a flag-bearer of this stellar virtue, and never think of relinquishing his duties in this regard, Sita exhorted him to stop lamenting and regretting about what is destined for him to do. She meant that by helping her to undertake the Fire Test, Laxman would be serving many noble causes at the same time, and glory would be his.

One, he would be obeying Lord Ram who besides being his elder brother was also the commander of the army, and refusal to carry out the Lord's orders, or wishes, would be tantamount to disobedience and violation of the principles of discipline.

Two, he would be helping Sita to obey the Lord's command, and fulfilling her obligation as a loyal, faithful and honourable wife for whom the fulfillment of her husband's wish is the paramount law.

Three, he will be an instrument of redemption of her honour, respect and glory, and a witness of her acquittal of any wrong-doing or misdemeanour for all times to come.

Four, he will help her maintain her honour and dignity by preventing anyone else from carrying out the Fire Test on behalf of Lord Ram, because were he to refuse then it is certain that the Lord would be compelled to appoint someone else from the monkey army to carry out this Test for him, which event would be most scandalous and demeaning for her honour by every count.

Five, by doing what he is called upon to do by Lord Ram, he will obey his own mother Sumitra's commands to him that he ought to do aught naught that would displease Lord Ram and cause uneasiness for him[#], which will be the case if he

refuses to carry out the Lord's instructions to put Sita through the Fire Test. {#Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 75.}

So therefore, it can be said that 'Laxman was also being tested along with Sita' during this episode of the 'Fire Test'. Both were being tested to see if they stand tall and with their heads held high in the unsparing judicious court of Dharma which favours none, and is neither prejudiced or biased against anyone.

⁴By asking Laxman to act as a priest of the sacrificial fire lit to prove Sita's honesty and integrity and purity, he was absolved of any sin that he imagined accrued to him in this exercise. A priest is a holy man; the fire rite he presides over is also a holy exercise; and the offering to this fire too becomes sanctified as it is meant for the fire god. So therefore, Laxman and Sita were both deemed to be holy for participating in this holy exercise, Laxman as a presiding priest, and Sita's shadow as the offering.

Just as the offering is burnt when it is put into the fire pit, Sita's shadow too burnt when she entered the lighted fire. And just as fire sacrifice is expected to produce some auspicious reward for the person, the patron, on whose behalf it is done, in the present case the reward is in the form of the 'original, untainted Sita' that is produced for Lord Ram on whose instructions and behalf this ritual was carried out.

Indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, what a fantastic coordination of auspicious things, all conjured up and occurring at the same time!]

सुनि लछिमन सीता कै बानी । बिरह बिबेक धरम निति सानी ॥ ३ ॥

लोचन सजल जोरि कर दोऊ । प्रभु सन कछु कहि सकत न ओऊ ॥ ४ ॥

देखि राम रुख लछिमन धाए । पावक प्रगटि काठ बहु लाए ॥ ५ ॥

sunī lachimana sītā kai bānī. biraha bibēka dharama niti sānī. 3.

lōcana sajala jōri kara dō'ū. prabhu sana kachu kahi sakata na ō'ū. 4.

dēkhi rāma rukha lachimana dhā'ē. pāvaka pragaṭi kāṭha bahu lā'ē. 5.

Laxman heard Sita's words which were imbued with a combination of diverse emotions: they were remorseful and full of sorrows, they were soaked in grief of separation from the Lord, and they were in accordance with the requirements of the principles of Dharma and laws of proper conduct¹. (3)

Laxman's eyes were filled with tears; he joined his palms and stood remorsefully; but he could not muster courage to say anything to Lord Ram². (4)

Realising that Lord Ram indeed wished him to carry out what Sita had asked him to do (which was to light a fire so that she could prove herself innocent and pure), Laxman had no choice left for him. So he immediately went ahead to collect firewood to light the desired fire. (5)

[Note—¹Sita felt remorseful and sad that after enduring all the hardships she was now being questioned and subjected to more suffering.

She feared that should anything go wrong by some remote mischance of fate, then she would be permanently separated from Lord Ram.

But she had no choice before her as she had to adhere to the laws of Dharma and the principles of noble conduct and probity, irrespective of the consequences that might befall on her, if she was to be accepted by Lord Ram.

²Laxman had already had a discourse with Lord Ram in this matter as we have noted in the previous verses. There was nothing more to be said and discussed. His orders and expectations were clear. So therefore, after hesitating for some moments, when Laxman realised that Lord Ram has given his tacit approval to what Sita asked him to do, he went ahead with the task at hand, albeit reluctantly, which was to make the fire ready and let Sita step into it.]

पावक प्रबल देखि बैदेही । हृदयं हरष नहिं भय कछु तेही ॥ ६ ॥

जौं मन बच क्रम मम उर माहीं । तजि रघुबीर आन गति नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥

तौ कृसानु सब कै गति जाना । मो कहूँ होउ श्रीखंड समाना ॥ ८ ॥

pāvaka prabala dēkhi baidēhī. hrdayaṁ haraṣa nahim bhaya kachu tēhī. 6. jaum mana baca krama mama ur māhīm. taji raghubīra āna gati nāhīm. 7. tau kṛsānu saba kai gati jānā. mō kahum hō'u śrīkhaṇḍa samānā. 8.

When Vaideh¹ (Sita) saw the fire burning fiercely and brightly, she had no trace of fear or joy in her heart (because she was calm and poised for this test; because she wished to look dignified and in control of herself; because she did not wish to create an impression on the onlookers that she was scared of the fire as she doubted her own self; that any sign of being forced into the fire against her will would boomerang on her beloved husband Lord Ram, because the world would accuse him of being cruel to her; and because she knew that the fire would do her no harm as its patron god, the ‘fire god’, was himself her guardian and protector). (6)

As she stepped into the fire, she declared on oath: ‘If in my heart and mind, in my spoken words and silent thoughts, and my actions and deeds, I have not considered or remembered anyone else but Lord Ram, if I have no destination or destiny other than Lord Ram, --- (7)

--- Then let the fire element and its patron god, who, being omniscient and all-pervading, is able to know the inner thoughts and the working of the mind of all living beings, become as cool as the paste of sandal-wood for me!

[To wit, let me step into the fire as if it was a cool pond of sandal-wood paste. Let this cool balm sooth my burning heart and offer succour to my suffering body by its graceful acceptance of me. I am pure and holy and untainted; and yet I am questioned. Oh revered Fire God; come to my aid and bear witness of my righteousness and auspiciousness. Have mercy and pity on me; I have been in your custody, so there is no one who can certify my virtues better than you. It’s your moral duty to do it now.]’ (8)

[Note—¹The use of the word “baidēhī”, meaning one who has ‘no physical body’, is very significant here. It clearly implies that the Sita who entered the fire was merely a

‘shadow’; some kind of apparition or specter that is not the real thing, that has no physical presence, that is not there in physical body made of bones, flesh and blood.

That indeed is true, because at the time of Lord Ram keeping her in the safe custody of the fire god, Sita had left behind a shadow that was her mirror image—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

छं०. श्रीखंड सम पावक प्रबेस कियो सुमिरि प्रभु मैथिली । १ ।
जय कोसलेस महेस बंदित चरन रति अति निर्मली ॥ २ ॥
प्रतिबिंब अरु लौकिक कलंक प्रचंड पावक महूँ जरे । ३ ।
प्रभु चरित काहुँ न लखे नभ सुर सिद्ध मुनि देखहिं खरे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

śrīkhaṇḍa sama pāvaka prabēsa kiyō sumiri prabhu maithilī. 1.
jaya kōsalēsa mahēsa bandita carana rati ati nirmalī. 2.
pratibimba aru laukika kalaṅka pracaṇḍa pāvaka mahum̐ jarē. 3.
prabhu carita kāhum̐ na lakhē nabha sura sid'dha muni dēkhahim̐ kharē. 4.

By remembering Lord Ram and invoking his grace and mercy, Sita (the daughter of the king of Mithila, i.e. king Janak of Janakpur; “maithilī”) entered the fire as if it was a coolant, as if the scorching flames of the blazing fire had transformed themselves into a cool paste of sandalwood that provides succour to those burnt by the same fire. (Chanda line no. 1)

Glory to Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya), whose holy feet is worshipped and revered by Lord Shiva (Mahesh) with the greatest of affection, faith and devotion¹! (Chanda line no. 2)

Both Sita’s shadowy form, as well as the social and worldly taint or stigma that were associated with it due to its prolonged presence in an evil environment during her captivity in Lanka, a place infested by evil demons, were burnt in the blazing flames of the fire². (Chanda line no. 3)

Lord Ram’s ways are so strange, magical, mystical and mysterious that no one present at the time, such as the gods, the mystics and sages who were watching everything from the sky (heaven), could perceive and understand what was actually happening³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹To wit, it was due to Lord Ram’s divine grace and quiet intervention that the fire did not affect Sita in the least. The fire, which has a natural habit of burning anything touching it, magically metamorphosed into a coolant, and did no harm to Sita.

²To wit, what burnt in the fire was the impurity associated with Sita’s form arising out of her symbolic presence in the land of the evil demons. It is very interesting to note how Lord Ram complied with the laws of Nature and Dharma simultaneously. He allowed the ‘fire’ to carry out its natural function and live up to its reputation—which

was to burn anything coming in contact with it, to burn only the impurity of gold and leave behind the purified metal, to burn rubbish from a heap of garbage and leave behind solids things of value, such as metals.

By devising this clever device, Lord Ram had ensured that any taint or stigma that might have been associated with Sita would be instantly and visibly eliminated, leaving no trace of doubt in anybody's mind, and that what survived would be her true and immaculate form that could not be questioned for its purity and truth.

³To wit, the gods, mystics and sages could not fathom why Lord Ram had said harsh words to Sita and forced her to undergo the fire test. They could not realize that it was merely a ploy by the Lord to settle all doubts and questions about Sita's purity and integrity, while at the same time destroying her fake form of a shadow and enabling the fire god to appear and produce the original Sita from behind the smokescreen of the glare of the blazing fire as we shall see in the verses herein below.]

धरि रूप पावक पानि गहि श्री सत्य श्रुति जग बिदित जो । ५ ।
जिमि छीरसागर इंदिरा रामहि समर्पी आनि सो ॥ ६ ॥
सो राम बाम बिभाग राजति रुचिर अति सोभा भली । ७ ।
नव नील नीरज निकट मानहुँ कनक पंकज की कली ॥ ८ ॥

dhari rūpa pāvaka pāni gahi śrī satya śruti jaga bidita jō. 5.
jimi chīrasāgara indirā rāmahi samarpī āni sō. 6.
sō rāma bāma bibhāga rājati rucira ati sōbhā bhalī. 7.
nava nīla nīraja nikaṭa mānahuṁ kanaka paṅkaja kī kalī. 8.

The Fire God revealed himself in a visible form, and holding the original Sita—who has been praised and honoured by the scriptures and famed in the world as the virtues wife of Lord Ram and a divine manifestation of goddess Laxmi—by the hand (as a elderly father or guardian would do for his daughter or ward respectively), he bestowed her to Lord Ram in the same way as the patron deity of the celestial ocean known as 'Kshir Sagar' had manifested himself and bestowed goddess Laxmi to Lord Vishnu (at an ancient time when the ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of bliss and eternity)¹. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

She (Sita) came and stood by the left-hand side of Lord Ram². This image was exceptionally beautiful and enthralling for the beholder. (Chanda line no. 3)

This bewitching sight reminded one of a blue-tinged lotus flower by the side of which there is a creeper made of gold³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram was married to Sita, a similar analogy is cited wherein it is said that her father Janak had held her hands and gave her in marriage to Lord Ram just like Parvati's father Himwant gave her in marriage to Lord Shiva, and the patron deity of the ocean has appeared himself to give goddess Laxmi to Lord Vishnu. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 324.

How did Sita look when she was produced by the Fire God at the end of her fire test? This question is answered in sage Veda Vyas' epic 'Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 19-20.

Let us see what these verses have to say:

श्रुत्वा स्तुतिं लोकगुरोर्विभावसुः स्वाङ्के समादाय विदेहपुत्रिकाम् ।
विभ्राजमानां विमलारुणद्युतिं रक्ताम्बरं दिव्यविभूषणान्विताम् ॥ १९॥
प्रोवाच साक्षी जगतां रघूत्तमं प्रपन्नसर्वार्तिहरं हुताशनः ।
गृहाण देवीं रघुनाथ जानकीं पुरा त्वया मय्यवरोपितां वने ॥ २०॥

śrutvā stutiṃ lokagurorvibhāvasuḥ svāṅke samādāya videhaputrikām ।
vibhrājamānāṃ vimalāruṇadyutiṃ raktāmbarāṃ divyavibhūṣaṇānvitām ॥ 19॥
provāca sākṣī jagatām raghūttamaṃ prapannasarvārtiharaṃ hutāśanaḥ ।
grhāṇa devīm raghunātha jānakīm purā tvayā mayyavaropitām vane ॥ 20॥

19-20. After Lord Brahma, the creator, had offered his prayers in honour of Lord Ram, the Fire God, who stands witness for the whole world, appeared on the site with the daughter of Videha (Sita) in his lap¹.

She was adorned in divine ornaments and attired in a red garment². Her glorious form was radiant with a reddish hue; she was surrounded by a halo of red splendorous light³.

The Fire God said to Lord Ram, the Lord who is a vanquisher of the sorrows and miseries of all those who seek refuge at his holy feet: 'Oh Lord Raghubir! Please be gracious and kind to accept Janki (Sita) whom you had previously kept in my safe custody in the forest (at Panchvati)⁴ (19-20).

[Note—¹When Sita had entered the fire, she sat down on the pile of firewood in a meditative posture known as 'Padmasan', the lotus posture. It was in this posture she emerged when the flames cooled down, giving a visual impression that she was sitting in the lap of the Fire God.

In this episode Lord Ram has shown two aspects of the 'fire', one is its 'elemental form' which is characterised by its inherent nature of burning whatever is put into it, and the other is its 'personified form' as the Fire God who is calm and cool like all other Gods. The illusionary or shadowy form of Sita was burnt by the elemental form of the fire, whilst her real and truthful form was produced by the deity who is responsible for controlling the fire element, i.e. the Fire God, who was calm and cool.

When king Dasrath of Ayodhya had performed the fire sacrifice to be blessed with sons, at that time too the Fire God had emerged from the sacrificial fire pit to give the king a pot of cool sweet porridge which he was to give to his queen so that she can bear a son—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190

This porridge was cool, not hot and boiling, which clearly indicates that the Fire God is cool like any other God or living entity in creation as compared to the element known as 'fire' which he represents.

²A married Hindu woman traditionally wears red coloured garments and ornaments as auspicious signs of her happy marriage. On the other hand, a widow is expected to shed all ornamentation and wear white clothes.

³This refers to the colour of the flames. Since she was in the lap of the Fire God, the red-coloured flames surrounded her. It is the colour of the setting sun, indicating that the flames of the fire were slowly cooling down.

The visualization is remarkable here. When Sita had entered the fire, it was burning fiercerly with leaping flames like a newly lit fire would. But soon the flames subsided, and Sita emerged from the fire like a golden idol that is red like ember and purified by the flames.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

²According to custom, a wife's place is on the left of her husband.

³In this metaphoric representation, Lord Ram is the 'blue lotus' because the colour of his body is bluish like the colour of the sky, and Sita is like the 'creeper of gold' as her complexion is fair and shiny.]

दो०. बरषहिं सुमन हरषि सुर बाजहिं गगन निसान ।
गावहिं किंनर सुरबधू नाचहिं चढ़ीं बिमान ॥ १०९ (क) ॥
जनकसुता समेत प्रभु सोभा अमित अपार ।
देखि भालु कपि हरषे जय रघुपति सुख सार ॥ १०९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

baraṣahim sumana haraṣi sura bājahim gagana nisāna.
gāvahim kinnara surabadhū nācahim caṛhīm bimāna. 109 (a).
janakasutā samēta prabhu sōbhā amita apāra.
dēkhi bhālu kapi haraṣē jaya raghupati sukha sāra. 109 (b).

The gods were jubilant and exhilarated. To celebrate the occasion and express their joy and happiness, they rained down flowers on the divine couple from their station in the sky, and simultaneously played their kettle-drums.

At the same time, the Kinnars (singers of heaven) sang and the goddesses danced in merriment in their aerial vehicles. (Doha no. 109-a)

Lord Ram, alongside Sita (the daughter of king Janak; "janakasutā samēta prabhu"), looked exceptionally adorable and charming beyond measure.

Beholding this fascinating sight, the bears and monkeys felt very glad and exhilarated. They applauded the divine couple and hailed them with cries of 'Glory to Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus, who is like an ocean of joy and bliss.'¹ (Doha no. 109-b)

[Note—¹The bears and monkeys were so charmed and overwhelmed by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Sita standing side-by-side that they could no longer restrain

their emotions of joy and happiness, breaking out in a loud chorus praising Lord Ram and extolling his virtues of granting happiness to one and all.

They chose this particular virtue of the Lord because just a while ago it seemed that there would be sadness and gloom everywhere, but the sudden positive turn of events convinced them that the Lord does everything that would ultimately bring nothing else but cheer to one and all.]

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Section 20.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand,
Canto 12, verse nos. 51-84; Canto 13, verse nos. 1-22.

Now, let us see how the legendary sage Veda Vyas describes this episode of Sita's 'Fire Test' in his classic narration in 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Lanka/Yudha Kand.

This Section has two Sub-sections, viz. (i) Sub-section 20.2.1 that covers Canto 12, verse nos. 51-84, and (ii) Sub-section 20.2.2 that covers Canto 13, verse nos. 1-9; 19-22.

(i) Sub-section 20.2.1: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 12, verse nos. 51-84:

ततः प्राह हनूमन्तं पार्श्वस्थं विनयान्वितम् ।
विभीषणस्यानुमतेर्गच्छ त्वं रावणालयम् ॥ ५१ ॥
जानक्यै सर्वमाख्याहि रावणस्य वधादिकम् ।
जानक्याः प्रतिवाक्यं मे शीघ्रमेव निवेदय ॥ ५२ ॥

tataḥ prāha hanūmantam pārsvastham vinayānvitam ।
vibhīṣaṇasyānumatergaccha tvam rāvaṇālayam ॥ 51॥
jānakyai sarvamākhyāhi rāvaṇasya vadhādikam ।
jānakyāḥ prativākyaṁ me śīghrameva nivedaya ॥ 52॥

51-52. Then Lord Sri Ram turned to Hanuman who was standing nearby with a very humble, prayerful and submissive posture, and said to him, 'Take the consent of Vibhishan and go to the palace of Ravana (rāvaṇālayam)¹ (51).

Convey to Janki (Sita) all the news about the death of Ravana and other events that have unfolded here, and then come back immediately to inform me what reply she gives' (52).

[Note—¹The word “rāvaṇālayam” in verse no. 51 refers to the palace of Ravana; literally the ‘place where Ravana lived’. A king's palace is naturally surrounded by

gardens, lawns and parks. So, Sri Ram did not mean the residential quarters of Ravana to find Sita, but the royal garden, called the 'Ashok Van', where Sita was imprisoned.]

एवमाज्ञापितो धीमान् रामेण पवनात्मजः ।
 प्रविवेश पुरीं लङ्कां पूज्यमानो निशाचरैः ॥ ५३॥
 प्रविश्य रावणगृहं शिंशपामूलमाश्रिताम् ।
 ददर्श जानकीं तत्र कृशां दीनामनिन्दिताम् ॥ ५४॥

evamājñāpito dhīmān rāmeṇa pavanātmajaḥ ।
 praviveśa purīm laṅkāṃ pūjyamāno niśācaraiḥ ॥ 53॥
 praviśya rāvaṇagrhaṃ śiṃśapāmūlamāśritām ।
 dadarśa jānakīm tatra kṛśāṃ dīnāmaninditām ॥ 54॥

53-54. Having got this instruction from Sri Ram, the most wise and intelligent son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) entered Lanka; he was worshipped and welcomed by the demon citizens¹ (53).

He proceeded ahead and entered the palace of Ravana, and saw Janki (Sita) sitting under the shelter of the Sinshapa (Sesame) tree. She was extremely emaciated, weak, miserable and distressed, but was nevertheless pure, faultless, and without blemishes or taints of any kind (54).

[Note—¹To wit, when Hanuman entered the city of Lanka this time, he entered not as a spy or an ambassador of an invading army, but like a victorious general representing the Lord whose army has just conquered the enemy.

So therefore, Hanuman was shown great respect by the citizens of Lanka who not only warmly welcomed him but also went out of their way to please him in whatever way they could do. When they learnt that he was going to meet Sita, they cleared the path for him and led the way.]

राक्षसीभिः परिवृतां ध्यायन्तीं राममेव हि ।
 विनयावनतो भूत्वा प्रणम्य पवनात्मजः ॥ ५५॥
 कृताञ्जलिपुटो भूत्वा प्रहो भक्त्याऽगूतः स्थितः ।
 तं दृष्ट्वा जानकी तूष्णीं स्थित्वा पूर्वस्मृतिं ययौ ॥ ५६॥

rākṣasībhiḥ parivṛtāṃ dhyāyantīm rāmameva hi ।
 vinayāvanato bhūtvā praṇamya pavanātmajaḥ ॥ 55॥
 kṛtāñjalipuṭo bhūtvā prahvo bhaktyā'grataḥ sthitaḥ ।
 taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā jānakī tūṣṇīm sthitvā pūrvasmṛtiṃ yayau ॥ 56॥

55-56. She (Sita) was surrounded by demonesses (eager to serve her); she was constantly thinking of Lord Sri Ram, and meditating upon the Lord's divine form, contemplating when the first chance would come when she would be able to see the Lord with her own eyes. The son of the wind god (Hanuman) bowed before her most respectfully, with palms joined together in a prayerful mode (55).

Then he politely stood in front of her reverentially. Seeing him, Janki (Sita) first remained silent, then she remembered the earlier occasion (when Hanuman had come in search of her, met her, delivered Sri Ram's signet ring, and had burnt Lanka)¹ (56).

[Note—¹Sita was so deeply submerged in her own thoughts that for some moments she did not even realize that someone was standing before her, but by-and-by she could perceive that someone was there, but it took her some more time to recognize that it was Hanuman after she had sieved through her memory and remembered that she had seen him earlier too when he had introduced himself as a messenger of Lord Ram.]

ज्ञात्वा तं रामदूतं सा हर्षात्सौम्यमुखी बभौ ।
 स तां सौम्यमुखीं दृष्ट्वा तस्यै पवननन्दनः ।
 रामस्य भाषितं सर्वमाख्यातुमुपचक्रमे ॥ ५७॥
 देवि रामः ससुग्रीवो विभीषणसहायवान् ।
 कुशली वानराणां च सैन्यैश्च सहलक्ष्मणः ॥ ५८॥
 रावणं ससुतं हत्वा सबलं सह मन्त्रिभिः ।
 त्वामाह कुशलं रामो राज्ये कृत्वा विभीषणम् ॥ ५९॥

jñātvā taṁ rāmadūtaṁ sā harṣātsaumyamukhī babhau ।
 sa tāṁ saumyamukhīm dṛṣṭvā tasyai pavananandanah ।
 rāmasya bhāṣitaṁ sarvamākhyātumupacakrame ॥ 57॥
 devi rāmaḥ sasugrīvo vibhīṣaṇasahāyavān ।
 kuśalī vānarāṇāṁ ca sainyaiśca sahalakṣmaṇah ॥ 58॥
 rāvaṇaṁ sasutaṁ hatvā sabalaṁ saha mantribhiḥ ।
 tvāmāha kuśalaṁ rāmo rājye kṛtvā vibhīṣaṇam ॥ 59॥

57-59. No sooner than she realized that he was the messenger of Sri Ram, that her face lit up with joy. Seeing her calm and cheerful face, the son of the wind god (Hanuman) began to tell her the message of Lord Sri Ram in full (57).

He said, 'Oh goddess (devi)! Lord Sri Ram, who has been immensely helped by Vibhishan, is very well and fine, as are Laxman, Sugriv and the army of monkeys and bears who accompany the Lord (58).

Ravana has been killed (in the war) along with his sons, army and ministers. Lord Sri Ram has sent me to you with the good tidings of his welfare, as well as with the news that Vibhishan has been anointed on the throne of Lanka as its new king.' (59).

श्रुत्वा भर्तुः प्रियं वाक्यं हर्षगद्गदया गिरा ।
 किं ते प्रियं करोम्यद्य न पश्यामि जगत्त्रये ॥ ६०॥
 समं ते प्रियवाक्यस्य स्तनान्याभरणानि च ।
 एवमुक्तस्तु वैदेह्या प्रत्युवाच प्लवङ्गमः ॥ ६१॥

śrutvā bhartuḥ priyaṃ vākyam harṣagadgadayā girā ।
 kiṃ te priyaṃ karomyadya na paśyāmi jagattraye ॥ 60॥
 samaṃ te priyavākyasya ratnānyābharaṇāni ca ।
 evamuktastu vaidehyā pratyuvāca plavaṅgamaḥ ॥ 61॥

60-61. Hearing this pleasant message of her husband, Sita was overwhelmed with delight and felt extremely exhilarated. She said, 'How can I please you (or what reward can I deem fit to give you for this good and happy news; how can I sufficiently bless you to recompense you for bringing this good tiding to sooth my ears)?

Forsooth, I cannot see in the three divisions of world¹ (60) any priceless gem or rare ornament, or any other thing for that matter, which is so valuable that it can be compared with the magnitude of the sweet, pleasant and endearing words that you have just said. [To wit, I cannot adequately reward you for these most auspicious and honey-like words that you have just spoken. Nothing in this world is as valuable for me as the good news that you have brought. I don't perceive how I can repay you for your service to me.]²

When Vaidehi (Sita) said so, the exalted monkey (Hanuman) replied (61)—

[Note—¹The three divisions of the world are the heaven, the earth, and the nether world.

²Sita was so overwhelmed with joy that she told Hanuman that there is no gift in the entire world that is so valuable that it may be worthy and suitable to be given as a reward for Hanuman's service to her. So therefore, she would prefer to simply bless him, as this is the rarest of rare boon that a divine goddess can grant someone with whom she is extremely pleased.]

रत्नौघाद्विविधाद्वापि देवराज्याद्विशिष्यते ।
 हतशत्रुं विजयिनं रामं पश्यामि सुस्थिरम् ॥ ६२॥
 तस्य तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा मैथिली प्राह मारुतिम् ।
 सर्वे सौम्या गुणा सौम्य त्वय्येव परिनिष्ठिताः ॥ ६३॥
 रामं द्रक्ष्यामि शीघ्रं मामाज्ञापयतु राघवः ।
 तथेति तां नमस्कृत्य ययौ द्रष्टुं रघूत्तमम् ॥ ६४॥

ratnaughādvividhādvāpi devarājyādvīṣyate ।
 hataśatruṃ vijayinaṃ rāmaṃ paśyāmi susthiram ॥ 62॥
 tasya tadvacanam śrutvā maithilī prāha mārutim ।
 sarve saumyā guṇā saumya tvayyeva pariniṣṭhitāḥ ॥ 63॥
 rāmaṃ drakṣyāmi śīghraṃ māmājñāpayatu rāghavaḥ ।
 tatheti tāṃ namaskṛty yayau draṣṭuṃ raghūttamam ॥ 64॥

62-64. 'More important and valuable than the combined treasure of all the gems and jewels of the world as well as the kingdom of Gods for me is the fact that I can see Lord Sri Ram victorious in the war against his enemy, having finally attained the

peace of his mind and feeling contented that he has attained success in eliminating the enemy and achieving his objective.' (62).

Hearing these words of Maruti (Hanuman) the daughter of Mithila (Sita) said to him, 'Oh Gracious One ("saumyā"; one who is polite, courteous, gentlemanly and good mannered)! All the auspicious qualities, characters, values and virtues that exist in the world (guṇā saumya) are present in you (63).

Now I shall be certainly able see Lord Sri Ram as soon as Raghav (Sri Ram) gives such orders for me.'

Hanuman said 'alright' to her, bowed before her, and then returned with all haste to meet the most exalted of the Raghus ("raghūttamam"; Sri Ram) to convey her message to him (64).

जानक्या भाषितं सर्वं रामस्याग्रे न्यवेदयत् ।
यन्निमित्तोऽयमारम्भः कर्मणां च फलोदयः ॥ ६५॥
तां देवीं शोकसन्तप्तां द्रष्टुमर्हसि मैथिलीम् ।
एवमुक्त्वा हनुमता रामो ज्ञानवतां वरः ॥ ६६॥
मायासीतां परित्यक्तुं जानकीमनले स्थिताम् ।
आदातुं मनसा ध्यात्वा रामः प्राह विभीषणम् ॥ ६७॥

jānakyā bhāṣitaṃ sarvaṃ rāmasyāgre nyavedayat ।
yannimitto'yamārambhaḥ karmaṇāṃ ca phalodayaḥ ॥ 65॥
tāṃ devīm śokasantaptāṃ draṣṭumarhasi maithilīm ।
evamukto hanumatā rāmo jñānavatāṃ varaḥ ॥ 66॥
māyāsītāṃ parityaktuṃ jānakīmanale sthitām ।
ādātuṃ manasā dhyātvā rāmaḥ prāha vibhīṣaṇam ॥ 67॥

65-67. He (Hanuman) told Lord Sri Ram verbatim whatever Sita had said. Then Hanuman exhorted Lord Ram to not waste any more time in calling Sita to him: 'For whom all these actions such as the war etc. were commenced, and who represents the fruit or the reward of all those strenuous efforts and hazardous actions (65)—now the time has come for you to see (or meet) that goddess named Maithili (Sita) who is much tormented and overcome by miseries, sorrows, anguish and grief.'

Hearing this advice of Hanuman, the most wise, sagacious, erudite and all-knowing Lord Sri Ram (rāmo jñānavatāṃ varaḥ) (66) decided to leave aside that form of Sita which was an illusionary, deceptive and shadowy form of hers, and instead to retrieve and accept Sita in her original form that had been entrusted by him earlier in the safe keeping of the fire god.

The Lord began to ponder how to bring this about; he contemplated on the device that must now be devised so as to make it happen.

After some thoughts he summoned Vibhishan and said to him (67)—

[Note—¹Lord Ram had placed Sita in the custody of the fire god for safe keeping as narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 1-3. Sita's original form was replaced by a shadow, and it was this false or illusionary Sita that was abducted by Ravana.]

गच्छ राजन् जनकजामानयाशु ममान्तिकम् ।
 रनातां विरजवस्त्राद्यां सर्वाभरणभूषिताम् ॥ ६८॥
 विभीषणोऽपि तच्छ्रुत्वा जगाम सहमारुतिः ।
 राक्षसीभिः सुवृद्धाभिः स्नापयित्वा तु मैथिलीम् ॥ ६९॥
 सर्वाभरणसम्पन्नमारोप्य शिबिकोत्तमे ।
 याष्टीकैर्बहुभिर्गुप्तां कञ्चुकोष्णीषिभिः शुभाम् ॥ ७०॥

gaccha rājan janakajāmānayāśu mamāntikam ।
 snātām virajavastrāḍhyām sarvābharaṇabhūṣitām ॥ 68॥
 vibhīṣaṇo'pi tacchrutvā jagāma sahamārutiḥ ।
 rākṣasibhiḥ suvṛddhābhiḥ snāpayitvā tu maithilīm ॥ 69॥
 sarvābharaṇasampannāmāropya śibikottame ।
 yāṣṭikairbahubhīrguṣṭāṃ kañcukosṇīṣibhiḥ śubhām ॥ 70॥

68-70. 'Oh King! You go immediately, get the daughter of Janak (Sita) bathed, clothe her in clean and fine clothes, adorn her fully with all types of ornaments befitting her stature, and then bring her to me with all respect and honour to her' (68).

Hearing this, Vibhishan took Maruti (Hanuman) along with him, and immediately set off. Deputing old and aged demonesses for the job, he got Maithili (Sita) bathed (69), decorated with various ornaments and adorned in magnificent robes, and then seated her in a beautiful palanquin¹. He appointed numerous well-dressed and turned-up guards, wearing jackets and head gear, and holding royal ceremonial batons, to protect the palanquin and escort the procession.

Leading the ceremonial procession, Vibhishan came to where Sri Ram waited for him (70).

[Note—¹A palanquin was a well appointed wooden carriage in which noble ladies, or lady guests of honour, were transported from one place to another in ancient times. It was carried on the shoulders of trained palanquin bearers with the help of long horizontal poles, usually made of bamboo. This carriage had curtains drawn up at the openings to guard the lady from inquisitive eyes. The ensemble was accompanied by armed guards for protection, as well as personal attendants of the lady in question who walked alongside.

In the present case, Sita was taken with all royal ceremony and pageantry in a grand procession befitting a queen.]

तां द्रष्टुमागताः सर्वे वानरा जनकात्मजाम् ।
 तान् वास्यन्तो बहवः सर्वतो वेत्तुपाणयः ॥ ७१॥
 कोलाहलं प्रकुर्वन्तो रामपार्श्वमुपाययुः ।
 दृष्ट्वा तां शिबिकारूढां दूरादथ स्मृतमः ॥ ७२॥

tām draṣṭumāgatāḥ sarve vānarā janakātmajām ।
 tān vārayanto bahavaḥ sarvato vetrapāṇayaḥ ॥ 71॥
 kolāhalaṃ prakurvanto rāmapārśvamupāyayuh ।

dr̥ṣṭvā tām śibikārūḍhām dūrādatha raghūttamaḥ ॥ 72॥

71-72. At that time, all the monkeys and bears came rushing forward to have a look at the daughter of Janak (Sita). Holding them at bay by their sticks and canes in all the directions, and amidst a lot of cacophony and tumult, the retinue of guards accompanying the procession finally brought her near Sri Ram.

Seeing Sita astride the palanquin from a distance, the best amongst the Raghus (“raghūttamaḥ”; Lord Sri Ram) said (71-72)—

विभीषण किमर्थं ते वानरान् वारयन्ति हि ।
पश्यन्तु वानराः सर्वे मैथिलीं मातरं यथा ॥ ७३॥
पादचारेण साऽऽयातु जानकी मम सन्निधिम् ।
श्रुत्वा तद्रामवचनं शिबिकादवरुह्य सा ॥ ७४॥

vibhīṣaṇa kimarthaṁ te vānarān vārayanti hi ।
paśyantu vānarāḥ sarve maithilīm mātaraṁ yathā ॥ 73॥
pādacāreṇa sā'yātu jānakī mama sannidhim ।
śrutvā tadrāmavacanaṁ śibikādaruhya sā ॥ 74॥

73-74. 'Oh Vibhishan! Why are they (the guards) preventing the monkeys and the bears from getting closer to Sita so that they can see her? Let all the monkeys and bears look at Maithili (Sita) as if she were their mother (73).

Not only that, let Janki (Sita) come to me on foot (i.e. let her walk down to me)¹.

Hearing the Lord's words, she (Sita) got down from the palanquin (74).

[Note—¹Obviously, Lord Ram was neither pleased nor amused by the sight of Sita coming to him astride a palanquin like a queen, instead of like the wife of a hermit that she was supposed to be at the time, because Lord Ram was attired as a hermit and lived an austere life of a hermit as promised by him to his father Dasrath at the time of coming to the forest. Sita violated this promise of the Lord by first allowing herself to be attired in royal costume and decorated in jewelry, and then coming in a royal procession astride a palanquin as if she was some queen, instead of like a hermitress which she was expected to be. This error on her part annoyed Lord Ram.]

पादचारेण शनकैरागता रामसन्निधिम् ।
रामोऽपि दृष्ट्वा तां मायासीतां कार्यार्थनिर्मिताम् ॥ ७५॥
अवाच्यवादान् बहुशः प्रह तां रघुनन्दनः ।
अमृष्यमाणा सा सीता वचनं राघवोदितम् ॥ ७६॥
लक्ष्मणं प्रह मे शीघ्रं प्रज्वालय हुताशनम् ।
विश्वासार्थं हि रामस्य लोकानां प्रत्ययाय च ॥ ७७॥

pādacāreṇa śanakairāgatā rāmasannidhim ।
rāmo'pi dr̥ṣṭvā tām māyāsītāṁ kāryārthanirmitām ॥ 75॥

avācyavādān bahuśaḥ prāha tām raghunandanah ।
 amr̥ṣyamāṇā sā sītā vacanaṃ rāghavoditam ॥ 76॥
 lakṣmaṇaṃ prāha me śīghraṃ prajvālaya hutāśanam ।
 viśvāsārthaṃ hi rāmasya lokānāṃ pratyayāya ca ॥ 77॥

75-77. Sita walked slowly on foot and came near Lord Sri Ram. Seeing the illusionary or shadowy Sita, who was created to accomplish certain tasks (i.e. to eliminate the demons) (75), Raghunandan (“raghunandanah”; Lord Sri Ram, the son of the illustrious family of king Raghu) said many insinuating and contemptible things regarding her which are not worthy to be repeated and mentioned again¹.

Sita was stunned and exasperated; she just could not stand (or tolerate) those caustic, taunting, insulting, unwarranted and uncalled-for words of Raghav (Sri Ram) (76).

So she said to Laxman, 'Oh Laxman! Please light a fire soon so that I can convince Sri Ram and make the world sure of my integrity, purity, honour and virtuousness, leaving no doubt about it' (77).

[Note—¹Lord Ram made many derogatory comments about her character, and cast aspersions on her sincerity, loyalty, chastity, purity, truthfulness, honesty, trustworthiness, integrity and honour, which raised questions about her eligibility for being accepted by him.]

राघवस्य मतं ज्ञात्वा लक्ष्मणोऽपि तदैव हि ।
 महाकाष्ठचयं कृत्वा ज्वालयित्वा हुताशनम् ॥ ७८॥
 रामपार्श्वमुपागम्य तस्थौ तूष्णीमरिन्दमः ।
 ततः सीता परिक्रम्य राघवं भक्तिसंयुता ॥ ७९॥

rāghavasya mataṃ jñātvā lakṣmaṇo'pi tadaiva hi ।
 mahākāṣṭhacayaṃ kṛtvā jvālayitvā hutāśanam ॥ 78॥
 rāmapārśvamupāgamyā tasthau tūṣṇīmarindamah ।
 tataḥ sītā parikramya rāghavaṃ bhaktisaṃyutā ॥ 79॥

78-79. Assuming that Raghav (Sri Ram) also wants this to happen (i.e. that Sita should prove her integrity by the fire test to satisfy the skeptical world), Laxman assembled a huge pile of fire wood and lit it (78).

Then Laxman, who was a vanquisher of enemies (tūṣṇīmarindamah), came and stood silently besides Lord Sri Ram.

After that, Sita reverentially circumambulated Raghav (Sri Ram) to pay her homage to the Lord and silently seek his blessings (79).

पश्यतां सर्वलोकानां देवराक्षसयोषिताम् ।
 पूणम्य देवताभ्यश्च ब्राह्मणेभ्यश्च मैथिली ॥ ८०॥
 बद्धाञ्जलिपुट्य चेदमुवाचाग्निसमीपगा ।
 यथा मे हृदयं नित्यं नापसर्पति राघवात् ॥ ८१॥

तथा लोकस्य साक्षी मां सर्वतः पातु पावकः ।
 एवमुक्त्वा तदा सीता परिक्रम्य हुताशनम् ॥ ८२॥
 विवेश ज्वलनं दीप्तं निर्भयेन हृदा सती ॥ ८३॥

paśyatām sarvalokānām devarākṣasayoṣitām ।
 praṇamya devatābhyaśca brāhmaṇebhyaśca maithilī ॥ 80॥
 baddhāñjalipuṭā cedamuvācāgnisamīpagā ।
 yathā me hr̥dayam nityam nāpasarpati rāghavāt ॥ 81॥
 tathā lokasya sākṣī mām sarvataḥ pātu pāvakaḥ ।
 evamuktvā tadā sītā parikramya hutāśanam ॥ 82॥
 viveśa jvalanam dīptam nirbhayena hr̥dā satī ॥ 83॥

80-83. Then the daughter of Mithila (Sita) bowed before the Gods and Brahmins, while the women folk of the Gods and demons, and all the rest of the world, watched the proceedings in stunned silence as everyone was overcome with awe and wonder (80).

She went to the fire and said to the fire god with palms of both the hands joined together in prayerful mode: 'On revered Fire God! If my heart never wanders anywhere except the thoughts of Raghav (Sri Ram)—i.e. if I harbour no other emotions in my heart except those of affection and reverence for Lord Ram, if I have never for once allowed my heart to wander anywhere else except the thoughts of Lord Ram (81) — then, oh the Fire God, who bears witness to all that is true and holy in this world, I pray to you and beseech you to grant me your protection from all the sides. [I beg you to secure me and help me prove my innocence by protecting me from being burnt, for if it happens then I will be deemed to be guilty of a crime that I haven't committed, as you know well.]'

Saying this, Sita circumambulated the fire (82) and entered the fiercely burning pile without any kind of fear in her heart as a true 'Sati' (an honourable woman who is chaste, pure and loyal to her husband; a woman of immaculate integrity who is very honest towards her husband; who worships her husband as a living god) (83).

दृष्ट्वा ततो भूतगणाः ससिद्धाः सीतां महावह्निगतां भृशार्ताः ।
 परस्परं प्राहुरहो स सीतां रामः श्रियं स्वां कथमत्यजज्ज्ञः ॥ ८४॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
 द्वादशः सर्गः ॥ १२॥

dr̥ṣṭvā tato bhūtagaṇāḥ sasiddhāḥ sītām mahāvahnigatām bhr̥śārtāḥ ।
 parasparam prāhuraho sa sītām rāmaḥ śriyam svām kathamatyajajñāḥ ॥ 84॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmaramāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
 dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 12॥

84. Seeing Sita enter the fiercely burning fire, all the Siddhas (mystics) and Spirits (here meaning sages and seers and other divine beings who were witnessing the development in a subtle form) became very agitated, anxious, worried and confounded.

They said to each other in utter dismay: 'Alas! In spite of knowing the truth of everything, how come that Lord Sri Ram has decided to forsake Sita who is like a personified form of goddess Laxmi for him?'¹ (84).

[Note—¹All those who watched the proceedings were stunned at Lord Ram's decision to let Sita undertake the fire test to prove her innocence and virtues, because no one doubted her, and everyone knew that she was beyond reproach.

But of course they did not know the real reason for Lord Ram's apparently harsh decision, for he had to retrieve the original Sita from the custody of the fire god, and in order to do it, it was obligatory to first invoke the fire god and request him to manifest himself in his dazzling, radiant and splendid form symbolized by the brilliant flames of a raging fire, then get rid of the shadowy Sita by burning it, and finally revealing the original Sita as she would emerge from the 'lap of the fire', which was a manifested form of the 'fire god', once the flames cooled down.

The reference to goddess Laxmi means that a person's wife is his best and most valuable asset for him, and she is worthy of respect and honour like goddess Laxmi who is the divine consort of Lord Vishnu.]

Thus ends Canto 12 of Uddha Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the conversation between Lord Shiva and Uma, his consort.

(ii) Sub-section 20.2.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Lanka Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 1-9; 19-22.

॥त्रयोदशः सर्गः ॥

श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।

ततः शक्रः सहस्राक्षो यमश्च वरुणस्तथा ।

कुबेरश्च महातेजाः पिनाकी वृषवाहनः ॥ १॥

ब्रह्मा ब्रह्मविदां श्रेष्ठो मुनिभिः सिद्धचारणैः ।

ऋषयः पितरः साध्या गन्धर्वाप्सरसोरगाः ॥ २॥

एते चान्ये विमानाढ्यैराजगम्यन्तु राघवः ।

अब्रुवन् परमात्मानं रामं पूजयन्तश्च ते ॥ ३॥

॥trayodaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca ।

tataḥ śakraḥ sahasrākṣo yamaśca varuṇastathā ।

kuberaśca mahātejāḥ pinākī vṛṣavāhanaḥ ॥ 1॥

brahmā brahmavidāṃ śreṣṭho munibhiḥ siddhacāraṇaiḥ ।

ṛṣayaḥ pitaraḥ sādhyā gandharvāpsarasoragāḥ ॥ 2॥

ete cānye vimānāgryairājagmuryatra rāghavaḥ ।
abruvan paramātmānaṃ rāmaṃ prāñjalayaśca te ॥ 3॥

1-3. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! About this time, a huge gathering of celestial beings assembled in the sky to pray to Lord Ram.

They included the thousand-eyed Indra (the king of gods), Yama (the god of death), Varuna (the god of water), Kuber (the treasurer of gods), Lord Pinaki (Lord Shiva, so called because the bow he held was known as 'Pinak'), the Lord who is most splendid and radiant with divine energy, and who rides a bull (1), Lord Brahma (the creator), who is the best amongst those who are enlightened and well-versed in the knowledge of the supreme Truth and the absolute Reality of creation, and who is very wise and exalted, the Siddhas and Chaarans (the mystics and celestial bards), sages and hermits, the ancestors in their spirit form, seekers of spiritualism, emancipation and salvation, Gandharvas and Apsaras (celestial musicians and damsels or courtesans of Indra's court) as well as the Serpents (the creatures of the subterranean kingdoms) (2), and many other exalted spirits, gods and demi-gods—all of them came in their respective aerial planes to the place where Lord Ram (Raghav) stood in the battle-field.

Each of them joined the palms of his hands as a gesture of reverence and submission before the Lord as all of them prayed together as follows (3)—

कर्ता त्वं सर्वलोकानां साक्षी विज्ञानविग्रहः ।
वसूनामष्टमोऽसि त्वं रुद्राणां शङ्करो भवान् ॥ ४॥
आदिकर्तासि लोकानां ब्रह्मा त्वं चतुराननः ।
अश्विनौ घृणभूतौ ते चक्षुषी चन्द्रभास्करौ ॥ ५॥

kartā tvam sarvalokānām sākṣī vijñānavigrahaḥ ।
vasūnāmaṣṭamo'si tvam rudrāṇām śaṅkaro bhavān ॥ 4॥
ādikartāsi lokānām brahmā tvam caturānanaḥ ।
aśvinau ghrāṇabhūtau te cakṣuṣī candrabhāskarau ॥ 5॥

4-5. 'Oh Lord! You are the one who does everything in this world, the doer as well as the driving force that gets things done; you are a witness for all; you are an embodiment of pure and truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment.

Indeed and in all sooth, amongst the Vasus you are a manifestation of the eighth Vasu (i.e. the best of the eight Vasus)¹; and amongst the Rudras you are like Lord Mahadev (the great god Lord Shiva, the best of the eleven Rudras)². (4)

Verily, you are indeed the Lord who had created this visible world in your manifestation as the four-headed Creator known as Brahma.

Similarly, the Ashwini Kumars³ are your nose; and the Sun and the Moon are your two eyes⁴. (5)

[Note—¹There are eight semi-gods called Vasus. The word Vasu refers to the eight most essential things or elements in the world without which life is not sustainable, and the cosmic forces of Nature that govern each of these eight elements are represented in the form of a 'God' who is named after the element or thing which he represents.

The 8 Vasus and their importance are mentioned in the following Upanishads:

(i) Atharva Veda's Atharva Shikha Upanishad, Kandika 1; Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 4, verse no. 16, Brahman 6, verse no. 12; Nrisingh Tapni Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 4/32; Devi Upanishad, verse no. 4.

(ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Ekakchar Upanishad, verse no. 7.

These Vasus are the various patron gods who preside over the essential elements of life. They are—Vishnu who is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 4/32 says that the Vasus are none but manifestations of Lord Ram who himself is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.

The eight Vasus are the gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation).

According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following—Dhruv, Dhar, Som/Soma (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som/Soma which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods; it is white in colour and is said to be stored in the moon), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush, and Prabhaas.

The Ekakchar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 7, says that these Vasus are manifestations of Brahm, the Supreme Being, in order to provide the creation with the necessities of life.

²Lord Shiva has eleven forms called Rudras, and the best of all these forms is called 'Mahadeva', the 'Great God', which is another name used for Lord Shiva himself.

Here it implies that Lord Ram is the best of all the forms that the Supreme Being has assumed in this creation.

³The Ashwini Kumars are twins, and sons of the Sun God. They are the medicine-men of the heavens and the gods. They are so great experts in the science related to medicinal herbs that they can select the right herb by merely smelling it.

⁴By referring to the Sun and the Moon as being Lord Ram's eyes, it is implied that the Lord's Supreme Macrocosmic Form is being invoked here.]

लूकानामादिरन्तोऽसि नित्य एकः सदोदितः ।
सदा शुद्धः सदा बुद्धः सदा मुक्तोऽगुणोऽद्वयः ॥ ६॥
त्वन्मायासंवृतानां त्वं भासि मानुषविग्रहः ।
त्वन्नाम स्मरतां राम सदा भासि चिदात्मकः ॥ ७॥

lūkānāmādiranto'si nitya ekaḥ sadoditaḥ ।
sadā śuddhaḥ sadā buddhaḥ sadā mukto'guṇo'dvayaḥ ॥ 6॥
tvanmāyāsaṁvṛtānāṁ tvaṁ bhāsi mānuṣavigrahaḥ ।
tvannāma smaratāṁ rāma sadā bhāsi cidātmakaḥ ॥ 7॥

6-7. You are the beginning and end of the creation; you are eternal, everlasting and unchanging; you have no birth or death; you are an image of eternal divine light; you are inherently pure, uncorrupt, without any blemishes and faults; you are always wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened; you are always free and liberated (from all the delusions, entrapments and all other snares so characteristic of this mundane, gross world); you are Nirguna (i.e. you are without attributes; you are neutral); and you are peerless, matchless, unique and without any parallel (6).

Oh divine Lord Sri Ram! For those who are surrounded (i.e. are under the influence of) your Maya (the Lord's cosmic powers that create delusions), you appear to be an ordinary man with a physical gross body, but those who are wise and enlightened always remember your divine cosmic form by invoking your holy name (as it neutralizes the effects of Maya). Such wise, erudite and sagacious souls realise that you are no one else but the Supreme Being himself, the Parmatma, the Lord who is known as Brahm, the Cosmic Soul that represents the pure cosmic Consciousness (7).

रावणेन हतं स्थानमस्माकं तेजसा सह ।
त्वयाद्य निहतो दुष्टः पुनः प्राप्तं पदं स्वकम् ॥ ८॥
एवं स्तुवत्सु देवेषु ब्रह्मा साक्षात्पितामहः ।
अब्रवीत्पूजतो भूत्वा रामं सत्यपथे स्थितम् ॥ ९॥

rāvaṇena hṛtaṁ sthānamasmākaṁ tejasā saha ।
tvayādya nihato duṣṭaḥ punaḥ prāptaṁ padaṁ svakam ॥ 8॥
evaṁ stuvatsu deveṣu brahmā sāksātpitāmahaḥ ।
abravitpraṇato bhūtvā rāmaṁ satyapathe sthitam ॥ 9॥

8-9. Ravana had snatched our powers, and had deprived us of our respect and status. Today, that wicked and evil fellow has died at your hands, and we have got back our lost position and honour¹.

When the gods had finished praying as described above, the grandfather Brahma himself prayed to Lord Sri Ram who is steady on the path of righteousness, truth, probity and propriety (9).

[Note—¹The gods were more concerned about their own position and status rather than sufferings of ordinary creatures due to the tyranny that Ravana had unleashed on them. This indicates that the gods are quite selfish in their outlook, and this characteristic of the gods has found resonance in a verse of Ram Charit Manas, the venerated Story of Lord Ram penned by the learned saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110, wherein he says: “the Gods are always very selfish but they speak words as if they are very benevolent and worried about the welfare of others”.]

श्रुत्वा स्तुतिं लोकगुरोर्विभावसुः स्वाङ्के समादाय विदेहपुत्रिकाम् ।
विभ्राजमानां विमलारुणद्युतिं रक्ताम्बरं दिव्यविभूषणान्विताम् ॥ १९॥
प्रोवाच साक्षी जगतां रघूत्तमं प्रपन्नसर्वार्तिहरं हुताशनः ।
गृहाण देवीं रघुनाथ जानकीं पुरा त्वया मय्यवरोपितां वने ॥ २०॥

śrutvā stutiṃ lokagurorvibhāvasuḥ svāṅke samādāya videhaputrikām ।
vibhrājamānāṃ vimalāruṇadyutiṃ raktāmbarāṃ divyavibhūṣaṇānvitām ॥ 19॥
provāca sākṣī jagatāṃ raghūttamaṃ prapannasarvārtiharamḥ hutāśanaḥ ।
grhāṇa devīmḥ raghunātha jānakīm purā tvayā mayyavaropitām vane ॥ 20॥

19-20. After Lord Brahma, the creator, had offered his prayers in honour of Lord Ram, the Fire God, who stands witness for the whole world, appeared on the site with the daughter of Videha (Sita) in his lap¹.

She was adorned in divine ornaments and attired in a red garment². Her glorious form was radiant with a reddish hue; she was surrounded by a halo of red splendorous light³.

The Fire God said to Lord Ram, the Lord who is a vanquisher of the sorrows and miseries of all those who seek refuge at his holy feet: ‘Oh Lord Raghubir! Please be gracious and kind to accept Janki (Sita) whom you had previously kept in my safe custody in the forest (at Panchvati)⁴ (19-20).

[Note—¹When Sita had entered the fire, she sat down on the pile of firewood in a meditative posture known as ‘Padmasan’, the lotus posture. It was in this posture she emerged when the flames cooled down, giving a visual impression that she was sitting in the lap of the Fire God.

In this episode Lord Ram has shown two aspects of the ‘fire’, one is its ‘elemental form’ which is characterised by its inherent nature of burning whatever is put into it, and the other is its ‘personified form’ as the Fire God who is calm and cool like all other Gods. The illusionary or shadowy form of Sita was burnt by the elemental form of the fire, whilst her real and truthful form was produced by the deity

who is responsible for controlling the fire element, i.e. the Fire God, who was calm and cool.

When king Dasrath of Ayodhya had performed the fire sacrifice to be blessed with sons, at that time too the Fire God had emerged from the sacrificial fire pit to give the king a pot of cool sweet porridge which he was to give to his queen so that she can bear a son—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-8.

This porridge was cool, not hot and boiling, which clearly indicates that the Fire God is cool like any other God or living entity in creation as compared to the element known as 'fire' which he represents.

²A married Hindu woman traditionally wears red coloured garments and ornaments as auspicious signs of her happy marriage. On the other hand, a widow is expected to shed all ornamentation and wear white clothes.

³This refers to the colour of the flames. Since she was in the lap of the Fire God, the red-coloured flames surrounded her. It is the colour of the setting sun, indicating that the flames of the fire were slowly cooling down.

The visualization is remarkable here. When Sita had entered the fire, it was burning fiercerly with leaping flames like a newly lit fire would. But soon the flames subsided, and Sita emerged from the fire like a golden idol that is red like ember and purified by the flames.

⁴Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 2-4.]

विधाय मायाजनकात्मजां हरे दशाननपूणविनाशनाय च ।
हतो दशास्यः सह पुत्रबान्धवैर्निराकृतोऽनेन भरो भुवः प्रभो ॥ २१॥
तिरोहिता सा प्रतिबिम्बरूपिणी कृता यदर्थं कृतकृत्यतां गता ।
ततोऽतिहृष्टां परिगृह्य जानकीं रामः प्रहृष्टः प्रतिपूज्य पावकम् ॥ २२॥

vidhāya māyājanakātmajāṃ hare daśānanaprāṇavināśanāya ca ।
hato daśāsyaḥ saha putrabāndhavairnirākṛto'nena bharo bhuvaḥ prabho ॥ 21॥
tirohitā sā pratibimbarūpiṇī kṛtā yadartham kṛtakṛtyatām gatā ।
tato'tihṛṣṭāṃ parigrhya jānakīm rāmaḥ prahrṣṭaḥ pratipūjya pāvakam ॥ 22॥

21-22. 'Oh Hari (Sri Ram)! You had created an illusionary, a shadowy Sita for the express purpose of eliminating Ravana along with his sons and other evil demons who accompanied him, who aided in his evil designs.

Oh Lord! By doing so, you have removed the burden of this earth (21).

The illusionary and shadowy form of Sita that was like an image of her real self, has now vanished after having accomplished the task for which it was created.'

Hearing these words of the Fire God, Sri Ram worshipped and honoured him with great delight and a joyful heart.

The Lord then gladly accepted Janki (Sita) who was extremely exhilarated and joyous at this happy turn of events (22).

[Note—So this is how Sita was reunited with Lord Ram at the end of the Epic War of Lanka.]

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Chapter 21

Epilogue

Lord Ram Embarks on His Journey Back Home to Ayodhya with His Companions onboard the Air-Plane called Pushpak; Lord Ram's Arrival in Ayodhya to a warm and tumultuous Welcome; Lord Ram's ascending the Throne of Ayodhya as a King and the Lord Emperor.

After Sita was reunited with Lord Ram, the Lord was worshipped and honoured by all the gods and others who had assembled in the sky to pay their homage and thanks to him. The Spirit of king Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, too appeared to bless him.

After these formal eulogies and praises were over, the Lord asked Indra to rain Amrit, the ambrosia of life, from heaven so that the monkey and bear warriors who were either seriously wounded or even dead could be revived back to life. Simultaneously, the souls of all the demon warriors were granted deliverance by the gracious Lord Ram; each one of them attained emancipation and salvation by the grace of the Lord.

Then Vibhishan expressed his thankful gratitude to the Lord by offering tributes in the form of an abundance of costly gifts, which the Lord asked him to give the monkeys and bears instead by riding his Pushpak plane and showering these gifts on the army from the sky so that the monkeys and bears could pick whatever they liked to have for themselves.

Finally the moment came for Lord Ram's departure from Lanka to go back to his kingdom of Ayodhya. He boarded the Pushpak plane with Sita and Laxman, and his close companions who had helped him during the campaign of Lanka too accompanied the Lord on his journey back home. The rest of the army was given a warm send off and asked to return to their respective homes in Kishkindha and other places from whence they had come.

The Lord's party arrived in Ayodhya to a rousing and emotional welcome. There were mass celebrations in the capital city. Soon thereafter, Lord Ram was crowned on the throne of Ayodhya as the renowned kingdom's great King-Emperor.

After the Lord's coronation festivities were over, his honoured guests from Kishkindha and Lanka, i.e. the chiefs of the monkey and bear race as well as Vibhishan and his companions, who had come to Ayodhya on the Pushpak plane, were given a warm send-off by Lord Ram, and they returned to their homes full of

praises for the Lord, with happy memories of their companionship with Lord Ram forever enshrined in their hearts.

Thus ends our most fascinating, marvellous, captivating and enthralling “Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka”.

For narrating these final episodes, we shall quote from:

(a) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 110 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 112 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 113—to Doha no. 114; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 121; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 12; (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 20.

(b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 40-60; Canto 14, verse nos. 1-100; and Canto 15, verse nos. 1-50, 70-75.

(c) Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 17-23.

Since we shall be reading from the aforementioned three classics, we shall divide this Chapter into three Sections as follows:

Section 21.1 (sub-section 21.1.1—21.1.6) Ram Charit Manas

Section 21.2 (sub-section 21.2.1—21.2.3) Adhyatma Ramayan

Section 21.3 Geetawali Ramayan

That said, let us now resume our narration.

Section 21.1: Ram Charit Manas

(i) Sub-section 21.1.1: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 110 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it:

चौ०. तब रघुपति अनुसासन पाई । मातलि चलेउ चरन सिरु नाई ॥ १ ॥

आए देव सदा स्वारथी । बचन कहहिं जनु परमारथी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba raghupati anusāsana pā'ī. māṭali calē'u carana siru nā'ī. 1.

ā'e dēva sadā svārathī. bacana kahahim janu paramārathī. 2.

Then, after receiving Lord Raghupati's (Lord Ram's) permission, Matali (the charioteer of Indra who was sent by the latter to help Lord Ram in the battle against Ravana) bowed his head most reverentially before the Lord and departed from there (to return to heaven). (1)

Meanwhile, the gods, who are by nature very self-centered and concerned only with their own interests¹, came there (to pay their homage to Lord Ram). They spoke words as if they were very selfless and sought the good of others like those who are seekers of spiritualism². (2)

[Note—¹Here, the poet-saint Tulsidas is alluding to the universal truth of this world, that everyone, even the high gods, are driven by selfishness; every living being, from the lowly to the most high as symbolized by the gods, mind their own interest first and foremost, and then think of anything else.

There are verses in Ram Charit Manas that aver to this universal principle of creation. If the gods, who are supposed to be spiritually evolved and stand on a high moral ground, being the leaders of the world and its guide, can be selfish, then there is no wonder that ordinary creatures are self-centered and selfish. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 295 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Even one's parents are not exempt from this universal principle which says that everyone in this world develops friendship with another person if it suits one's own self-interest, and no one thinks of the welfare of others if it does not fit in well with his own agenda—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 47.

²Only saintly persons would think in a selfless manner. One of the grand characteristic of saints is that they would not mind their own welfare if their suffering can help others in any way. This is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 38; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41.

Besides saints, it is only Lord Ram, the merciful, kind and compassionate Lord God, who would think of the welfare of others no matter what happens—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 47.]

दीन बंधु दयाल रघुराया । देव कीन्हि देवन्ह पर दाया ॥ ३ ॥

बिस्व द्रोह रत यह खल कामी । निज अघ गयउ कुमारगामी ॥ ४ ॥

dīna bandhu dayāla raghurāyā. dēva kīnhi dēvanha para dāyā. 3.
bisva drōha rata yaha khala kāmī. nija agha gaya'u kumāragāmī. 4.

The assembled gods paid their obeisance to Lord Ram and prayed as follows: 'Oh Lord of the Raghus (Lord Ram) who are a friend of the distressed, the meek and the miserable, and a Lord who is most merciful, gracious, kind and compassionate by nature!

Oh Lord, you have been very kind and merciful upon us, the gods. (3)

This fellow (Ravana) was inimical for the whole world; he was always engaged in hostility with all; he was a wicked creature who enjoyed pursuing his worldly passions relentlessly, without qualms.

He has gone the way his sinful ways naturally led him to; he has perished due to his own sins; he is responsible for his own undoing.

[To wit, he has died a horrifying death by having his body dismembered, and falling to the ground covered in dust and blood, as a result of his sinful deeds. He who once ruled the world now lies dead on the ground in such a humiliating manner because of the evil deeds that he did in his life, evil deeds that brought this evil fate to him.] (4)

तुम्ह समरूप ब्रह्म अबिनासी । सदा एकरस सहज उदासी ॥ ५ ॥

अकल अगुन अज अनघ अनामय । अजित अमोघसक्ति करुनामय ॥ ६ ॥

tumha samarūpa brahma abināsī. sadā ēkarasa sahaja udāsī. 5.
akala aguna aja anagha anāmaya. ajita amōghasakti karunāmaya. 6.

[Lauding the grand virtues of Lord Ram, the gods continued—] Oh Lord! You have equanimity and treat all alike (*samarūpa*). You are Brahm¹, the Supreme Being, who is eternal and imperishable (*brahma abināsī*); who remains unchanging and uniform (*sadā ēkarasa*); and who is by his nature dispassionate and impartial (*sahaja udāsī*)². (5)

You (as Brahm) are one of your own kind, having no parallel (*akala*); you are without any attributes and their associated characteristics (*aguna*); you are without any birth (because you are eternal and immutable, having no end or beginning) (*aja*); you are faultless and free from any taints and blemishes associated with this gross world (*anagha anāmaya*); you are invincible (*ajita*); your astounding powers are unfailing (*amōghasakti*); and you are an embodiment of mercy, compassion, kindness and benevolence (*karunāmaya*). (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram as Brahm personified: refer to Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 93; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116.

²If Lord Ram has equanimity and treats all alike, if he is dispassionate and impartial, then the question is ‘why did he kill Ravana’? The answer is provided by the gods themselves in the previous verse where they said that Ravana attained this fate due to his own sinful deeds.

This fact, that one reaps the harvest like the seed one has sown, is reiterated elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 219.

To wit, Ravana died an ignominious death as a result of the sort of sinful life he had lived. No one is to be held responsible for it. Lord Ram, being the Lord of this world, has a duty to be just to all, and therefore it was obligatory for the Lord to punish Ravana for the way he and his cruel demons had been tormenting the world; the Lord was morally bound to punish Ravana for his evilness and transgression of the laws of Dharma, the laws that govern good conduct in this creation. For if the Lord had not punished Ravana for his wickedness then he would be doing injustice to other humble creatures, which would not be acceptable. So therefore, the Lord had no choice.]

मीन कमठ सूकर नरहरी । बामन परसुराम बपु धरी ॥ ७ ॥
जब जब नाथ सुरन्ह दुखु पायो । नाना तनु धरि तुझई नसायो ॥ ८ ॥

mīna kamaṭha sūkara naraharī. bāmana parasurāma bapu dharī. 7.
jaba jaba nātha suranha dukhu pāyō. nānā tanu dhari tumha'īm nasāyō. 8.

It was you, in your primary form as Lord Vishnu, who had assumed the form of a Fish¹, a Tortoise², a Boar³, Lord Narhari⁴ (Nrisingh or Narsingh, the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu), Lord Vaaman⁵ (the legendary Dwarf), and sage Parashuram⁶ (the warrior sage with an axe as his trademark)*. (7)

Oh Lord! Whenever the gods were subjected to sufferings and felt distressed, it was you who had come to their help and eliminated the cause of their miseries by assuming various forms as occasioned by prevailing circumstances⁷. (8)

[Note--*These are the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Briefly, they are as follows:

¹Fish: Also known as 'Matsya'. This is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu. In this form, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah's Arc.

²Tortoise: Also known as 'Kurma'. It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

³Boar: Also known as 'Varaaha'. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

⁴Narsingh or Nrisingh: Lord *Nrisingh or Narsingh* is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. [Refer *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva

Veda, verse no. 8.] Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism,

power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

⁵Vaaman or the Dwarf: This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a 'Vaaman' or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali's own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali's head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called 'Trivikram'—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali's principles of keeping one's words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali's head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.

An episode is narrated in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' where Jamvant, the old bear chief, refers to this incarnation of Lord Vaaman and says that at that time he (Jamvant) was young and in his youthful days, and that he had performed seven rounds (clockwise circumambulations) of the colossus form of Lord Vaaman to pay his homage to the latter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

⁶Parashuram: This is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdaagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty

Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Shursena, the son of Kaartavirya-Arjuna, because the sage had refused to hand over the celestial cow known as Kapila to him. Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Kaartavirya-Arjuna.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

यह खल मलिन सदा सुरद्रोही । काम लोभ मद रत अति कोही ॥ ९ ॥
अधम सिरोमनि तव पद पावा । यह हमरें मन बिसमय आवा ॥ १० ॥

yaha khala malina sadā suradrōhī. kāma lōbha mada rata ati kōhī. 9.
adhama sirōmani tava pada pāvā. yaha hamarēṁ mana bisamaya āvā. 10.

This fellow (i.e. Ravana) was very wicked and evil, was always hostile to the gods, was very passionate and lustful, was highly greedy and rapacious, was engrossed in pursuit of his sensual pleasures, and was haughty, arrogant and angry by nature. (9)

He was an epitome of sins, vices and evil, yet he attained an exalted stature by attaining salvation and emancipation at the time of his death—this singular achievement by him has left us amazed and full of wonderment¹. (10)

[Note—¹To wit, we are astonished that such a sinful creature as Ravana seemed to be would be so fortunate and blessed that he would attain an abode so near to your holy feet that made him achieve an honourable and exalted stature that is equivalent to your own holy state of existence. Forsooth, this has perplexed us and left us wondering, as to how it came about, and how lucky and blessed Ravana indeed was.

This single development has shown us without doubt how exceptionally benevolent, forgiving, kind, gracious, magnanimous and compassionate you really are, that you would forgive Ravana for all his misdemeanours and mischief, and instead grant his soul the rare privilege of attaining deliverance, salvation and emancipation. It's a rare achievement for Ravana; it's an objective for which the greatest of sages, ascetics and hermits undertake the severest of spiritual practices, but rarely succeed in achieving. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and (ii) Doha no. 104 along with Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede it.]

हम देवता परम अधिकारी । स्वार्थ रत प्रभु भगति बिसारी ॥ ११ ॥

भव प्रबाहँ संतत हम परे । अब प्रभु पाहि सरन अनुसरे ॥ १२ ॥

hama dēvatā parama adhikārī. svāratha rata prabhu bhagati bisārī. 11.
bhava prabāhaṁ santata hama parē. aba prabhu pāhi sarana anusarē. 12.

We gods, though entitled to attain your holy abode and to be closest to you (i.e. attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation by reaching higher echelons of spiritual attainment rather than being contented with being a ‘god’), as we are deemed to superior to and more able than all others in this creation, yet it is so unfortunate a paradox that (due to the influence of Maya, or delusions) we miss this opportunity, as we are driven more by self-interests and less by spiritual objectives, which in its turn has led us astray by distracting us so much that we have neglected having full and exemplary level of devotion for your holy Self¹. (11)

Instead of attaining beatitude and eternal bliss, we remain trapped in the flow of the world by remaining engrossed in worldly affairs as its Regulatory Authorities.

Oh Lord! We seek the shelter of your holy feet and request you to grant us your grace so that we can be protected from falling in the trap of delusions like ordinary creatures do.², (12)

[Note—¹This goes to the credit of the gods that at least they acknowledged their shortcomings. From the perspective of the Upanishads, these gods are manifestations of the various aspects of creation and the forces that govern its functioning. From the macrocosmic point of view, these gods represent various aspects or facets of Nature and the forces that regulate their functioning in a proper and systematic way, while from the microcosmic perspective they represent the various aspects of an individual creature’s nature.

For instance, the Sun God is responsible for giving light and energy to this world at the macro level, and the same God is responsible for enabling a creature to see things as he is the patron god of sight at the individual’s level, the micro level of creation.

Another example is that of Indra. From the macrocosmic perspective, Indra is the King of heaven and of the gods, and he is a personified form of an Authority who drives all the cosmic forces that control the functioning of the world. However, from the microcosmic perspective, Indra derives his name from the word “indri”, meaning the sense organs of a living being which helps the individual to interact with the world. Therefore, Indra in the latter case would be a deity that controls all the senses and their respective organs in a living being’s body, and would reflect their natural habits and characters.

The ultimate spiritual goal of all living beings is to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation for their souls, which entitles a spiritual seeker to attain eternal peace, bliss, rest, beatitude and felicity. This state of existence is not the way gods live in heaven; the gods are busy in enjoying their privileges and guarding their realms of influence. If they fear someone is trying to overstep their domain, they get upset.

In short, the gods don’t enjoy spiritual bliss and peace though they live in heaven, in the way they could have done or are expected to do, by the virtue of being close to Divinity represented by Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

So in a way they are less privileged than Ravana who had attained deliverance, emancipation and salvation by having his soul merge with the Supreme Soul of this creation personified as Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

²The Gods prayed to Lord Ram that since they are simply obeying the Lord's command, which is to carry out their respective duties of regulating the different functions and aspects of this vast and varied creation, so they be excused if they make some mistakes and transgressions here and there during the course of their lives. The Lord should forgive them, and bless them with his grace and mercy.]

दो०. करि बिनती सुर सिद्ध सब रहे जहँ तहँ कर जोरि ।
अति सप्रेम तन पुलकि बिधि अस्तुति करत बहोरि ॥ ११० ॥
dōhā.

kari binatī sura sid'dha saba rahē jahaṁ tahaṁ kara jōri.
ati saprēma tana pulaki bidhi astuti karata bahōri. 110.

After the Gods and the Siddhas (mystics; the attained ones) had thus offered their prayers to Lord Ram, they stood aside where they were, each of them joining his palms as a gesture of respect and reverence for Lord Ram.

Then the creator Brahma came forward to offer his obeisance to Lord Ram by praying to him with a lot of affection and a thrilled body. (Doha no. 110)

(ii) Sub-section 21.1.2: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 112 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it:

After the Gods and the creator Brahma had said their respective prayers honouring Lord Ram and paying their obeisance to him, the late king Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram and the erstwhile king of Ayodhya, who had assumed a spirit form after his death, came to the battle-field to bless Lord Ram in the role of the latter being Dasrath's son, as well as to seek the Lord's blessings and grace for being the Supreme Being himself personified.

चौ०. तेहि अवसर दसरथ तहँ आए । तनय बिलोकि नयन जल छाए ॥ १ ॥
अनुज सहित प्रभु बंदन कीन्हा । आसिरबाद पिताँ तब दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

tēhi avasara dasaratha tahaṁ ā'ē. tanaya bilōki nayana jala chā'ē. 1.
anuja sahita prabhu bandana kīnhā. āsirabāda pitāṁ taba dīnhā. 2.

On that occasion, Dasrath (the erstwhile king of Ayodhya and Lord Ram's worldly father, who was now in a spirit form after his death), came there (at Lord Ram's camp on the fringes of the battle-field of Lanka).

When he beheld his son, his eyes were filled with tears (of excess of joy and delight, of overflowing love and affection)¹. (1)

Lord Ram, together with his younger brother (Laxman) and wife (Sita), paid their obeisance to their father, at which the latter blessed the three of them². (2)

[Note—¹It was a natural emotional reaction of a loving father to see his beloved son emerging victorious in a war, against all odds. At the time of his death, Dasrath had died longing to see Lord Ram after he left the city of Ayodhya for the forest; Dasrath had wailed and lamented most gravely, feeling guilty that he had been the of causing so much suffering to Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and his brother Laxman, by compelling them to go to the forest for 14 long years# just to honour a word that the king had given to his queen Kaikeyi some long time ago, and which she exploited for her self-interest, which was to make her own son Bharat the heir apparent and the regent of Ayodhya*, instead of Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers, who had the natural right to get the crown and ascend the throne of the kingdom.

{#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 33; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 34; Doha no. 38 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 155.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}

Dasrath was overwhelmed with delight and love. He had tears of joy that also indicated emotions of affection that overflowed in his heart.

²When late king Dasrath's spirit saw Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman bowing before it and paying their obeisance to their late father, it, i.e. the 'spirit of Dasrath', blessed them all.]

तात सकल तव पुन्य प्रभाऊ । जीत्यों अजय निसाचर राऊ ॥ ३ ॥

सुनि सुत बचन प्रीति अति बाढ़ी । नयन सलिल रोमावलि ठाढ़ी ॥ ४ ॥

tāta sakala tava pun'ya prabhā'ū. jītyōm ajaya nisācara rā'ū. 3.

sunī suta bacana prīti atī bāṛhī. nayana salila rōmāvali ṭhāṛhī. 4.

Lord Ram said to Dasrath, 'My dear father (tāta)! It is due to the good rewards accruing to you for the auspicious deeds that you had done in life that I, your son, have been blessed to be able to vanquish the king of the demon race who was otherwise invincible and difficult to overcome¹.' (3)

Hearing such polite and gracious words of his son (Lord Ram), words that showed no trace of anger or regret at all that had happened, Dasrath was overwhelmed with affections; his love and adoration for the Lord increased manifold times so much so that tears began flowing from his eyes and his body became thrilled². (4)

[Note—¹This is a polite and modest way of Lord Ram for honoring Dasrath. The Lord gives credit to his father's good deeds and their accrued rewards that stood in good stead for him during the war. The gracious Lord does not take any credit himself for

the victory over Ravana and the powerful demon army, but owes the victory to his father's blessings like a good and obedient son. Lord Ram's courteousness is exemplary here. He shows no rancour and ill-will towards his father for sending him to the forest for 14 years, for the Lord knew that Dasrath was bound by his words of honour that he had given to Kaikeyi, that he had lamented and repented for those words but couldn't help, and that he had done his best to stop the Lord from going to the forest even till the last moment, fainting repeatedly out of grief and shock.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 78; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 79; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 82.}

²This shows that Dasrath's "spirit" had assumed a visible form when it appeared before the Lord on the battle-field. Dasrath appeared alongside other gods, and he had a divine form like these gods. It is because at the time of his death, Dasrath had gone to heaven where the gods live—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.

He had watched the proceedings alongside the gods, and when they came to pray to Lord Ram he too accompanied them.]

रघुपति प्रथम प्रेम अनुमाना । चितइ पितहि दीन्हेउ दृढ़ ग्याना ॥ ५ ॥
ताते उमा मोच्छ नहिं पायो । दसरथ भेद भगति मन लायो ॥ ६ ॥
सगुनोपासक मोच्छ न लेहीं । तिन्ह कहूँ राम भगति निज देहीं ॥ ७ ॥
बार बार करि प्रभुहि प्रनामा । दसरथ हरषि गए सुरधामा ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati prathama prēma anumānā. cita'i pitahi dīnhē'u dṛṛha gyānā. 5.
tātē umā mōccha nahim pāyō. dasaratha bhēda bhagati mana lāyō. 6.
sagunōpāsaka mōccha na lēhīm. tinha kahuṁ rāma bhagati nija dēhīm. 7.
bāra bāra kari prabhuhi pranāmā. dasaratha haraṣi ga'ē suradhāmā. 8.

Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram) remembered his father's extreme level of love for him (and that it was due to this outstanding love that Dasrath had died in grief of separation when the Lord had left for the forest). He glanced at his father Dasrath very affectionately and graced the latter with sound 'Gyan (gyānā)'¹. (5)

[Lord Shiva, who was narrating this Story to goddess Uma, his divine consort, told her—] Uma, Dasrath did not attain Moksha (deliverance, emancipation and salvation; eternal beatitude and felicity, bliss and peace of the soul) because though he had unquestioned devotion for Lord Ram and loved him, it was because he treated the latter as 'his son' rather than as a 'personified form of the Supreme Being'. Dasrath had a deluded or a distorted view of devotion for Lord Ram, which prevented him from attaining final deliverance and beatitude for his soul².

[By providing 'Gyan', Lord Ram removed this delusion in the mind of Dasrath, entitling him to attain final peace for his soul. For a truly realized soul, there is no such thing as having 'tears in eyes and body being thrilled' for any cause whatsoever. Since Dasrath showed these signs, he was not enlightened enough before Lord Ram gave him the necessary wisdom.] (6)

Verily, those who worship the Lord in his visible form (*sagunōpāsaka*) find bliss in this form of devotion for the Lord, and therefore they have no desire to attain Moksha (*mōccha na lēhīm*; i.e. deliverance, emancipation and salvation; beatitude and felicity; merger of the individual's soul with the cosmic Supreme Soul).

To such devotees who prefer to worship and have devotion for the visible and known form of the Supreme Being, the Lord grants such devotees their wish by gracing them with the boon of having devotion for his visible form (rather than his cosmic invisible form)³. (7)

[Since Dasrath preferred to have devotion for the visible form of the Supreme Being, rather than for the Lord's cosmic and invisible form known as Brahm, the cosmic transcendental Consciousness that is formless and without attributes, Lord Ram fulfilled his father's wish by granting him an abode in the heaven where Lord Vishnu, the primary form of Lord Ram, lives.]

Dasrath repeatedly bowed his head before the Lord and cheerfully went to the heaven where exalted Gods live (*dasaratha haraṣi ga'e suradhāmā*).

[More specifically, Dasrath went to Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. It is because Lord Ram himself would go back to Vaikuntha after his obligations in this world were fulfilled. There, Dasrath hoped to meet his 'son' Lord Ram once again when the Lord resumes his primary form as Lord Vishnu. In this form, Dasrath wished to shower his love upon Lord Ram by way of worshipping and having devotion for Lord Vishnu.]⁴ (8)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram granted Dasrath spiritual knowledge that made the latter understand who the Lord was, that no one is anybody's son or father, that all such relationships are limited to the gross mortal world, that the soul has no relations, that love and affections, grief and joy etc. are matters of mortal world and not of the spiritual world, that every creature suffers or enjoys because of his own deeds, that dispassion and renunciation are the best virtues for a wise, enlightened and self-realised person. And therefore, Dasrath ought not to regret at all.

Lord Ram further enlightened Dasrath that life in heaven is not the final goal or destination of the soul; at best it may be a sort of a rest-house where the soul tarries for a while before moving ahead on its journey. So then what should be the goal that Dasrath should aim at? It is attainment of emancipation and salvation by merging the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation known as the Parmatma, a goal that grants eternal rest, peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity to the living being.

This final destination of the soul is called 'Moksha'—it is a destination for eternal rest, from where there is no return to the cycle of birth and death with its attendant miseries in this mundane gross world.

²To wit, Dasrath's devotion and love for Lord Ram was based on an erroneous premise from the perspective of spiritualism and metaphysics. Dasrath was deluded; he thought that Lord Ram was his 'son', and he loved and adored and died in grief of his 'son'. Had he been wise and enlightened as he should have been, he would have remained dispassionate towards and detached from the physical world, and would rather have devoted his time and efforts in meditating upon the divine form of Lord Ram, worshipping him and paying his homage to the Lord, feeling privileged to have the Supreme Being living so close to him. Dasrath would not have died weeping and wailing for his 'son Ram' because he would have understood that Lord Ram is not his

‘son’ but the ‘Supreme Being in the form of Ram’, that the Lord has come down to honour the wishes of the gods and mother earth to eliminate the evil demons, and therefore there was no reasonable cause to lament and weep when the Lord went to the forest as part of his divine mission.

This is what is meant by saying that Dasrath had a deluded or a distorted view of devotion for Lord Ram, which prevented him from attaining final deliverance of his soul; it prevented him from attaining emancipation, salvation, beatitude and eternity for his soul, and made him live in heaven instead.

³To wit, the bliss, beatitude and felicity that is attained by the soul on attaining emancipation and salvation when the individual’s soul merges and becomes one with the cosmic form of the Soul, the Supreme Soul or the Parmatma, which is known as attaining ‘Moksha of the soul’, because then the soul finds eternal peace and bliss as it does not have to return to the cycle of birth and death in this gross world, does not seem attractive to those who derive happiness and joy in worshipping the Lord’s physical and visible form. So the Lord too prefers not to insist in giving them knowledge of the form of devotion that relates to the invisible form of the Lord.

There are two types of devotees of Lord God—one who is called ‘Saguna Bhakta’, i.e. a devotee who worships the form of the Lord that has a describable and verifiable physical form, a form that is visible and has certain attributes; the other is the ‘Nirguna Bhakta’, i.e. a devotee who worships the cosmic form of the Lord that is invisible, all-pervading and without specific attributes.

The cosmic form of the Lord God is known as Brahm; it is nothing but pure cosmic Consciousness that has a universal existence; this is ‘Nirguna Brahm’. When the same cosmic Consciousness assumes a visible and known form at the micro level of creation, it is known as ‘Saguna Brahm’.

⁴Dasrath fell into the latter category, one who worshipped the Saguna form of Brahm as Lord Ram. So therefore, though Lord Ram first graced Dasrath with knowledge pertaining to Moksha of his soul, known as granting of ‘Gyan’, or granting of ‘truthful knowledge; gnosis’, Dasrath did not wish to have it. Hence, in deference to his father’s wishes, the Lord sent him to his own abode in the heaven, known as ‘Vaikuntha’, the abode of Lord Vishnu. There, Dasrath would have ample opportunity to fulfill his desire to shower abundance of love and affection on Lord Ram, to make up for its lack in this gross physical world because his desires were cut short by the fiat of fate and the cruel whip of destiny that brought about separation of Dasrath from his beloved son Lord Ram when the latter went to the forest. Dasrath wished that in the guise of loving his son Lord Ram, he would be actually worshipping and paying his obeisance to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world.

This opportunity was more appealing to Dasrath than attaining Moksha.]

दो०. अनुज जानकी सहित प्रभु कुसल कोसलाधीस ।

सोभा देखि हरषि मन अस्तुति कर सुर ईस ॥ ११२ ॥

dōhā.

anuja jānakī sahita prabhu kusala kōsalādhīsa.

sōbhā dēkhi haraṣi mana astuti kara sura īsa. 112.

Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya), looked adorable alongside his younger brother Laxman and wife Janki (Sita).

When the Lord (or the king) of the gods, i.e. Indra, observed that the three were safe and happy, he felt exhilarated in his heart and mind; lauding their charming forms and extolling Lord Ram's virtues and glories, he offered his prayers to the Lord. (Doha no. 112)

(iii) Sub-section 21.1.3: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 113—to Doha no. 114:

दो०. अब करि कृपा बिलोकि मोहि आयसु देहु कृपाल ।
काह करौं सुनि प्रिय बचन बोले दीनदयाल ॥ ११३ ॥
dōhā.

aba kari krpā bilōki mōhi āyasu dēhu krpāla.
kāha karaum suni priya bacana bōlē dīnadayāla. 113.

After saying his prayers, Indra said to Lord Ram: 'Lord, please glance at me gracefully for once, and then, oh merciful Lord, tell me what I should do.'

Hearing these pleasing words of Indra, the Lord, who is benevolent and compassionate towards those who are meek and miserable, said --- (Doha no. 113)

चौ०. सुनु सुरपति कपि भालु हमारे । परे भूमि निसिचरन्हि जे मारे ॥ १ ॥
मम हित लागि तजे इन्ह प्राणा । सकल जिआउ सुरेस सुजाना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sunu surapati kapi bhālu hamārē. parē bhūmi nisicaranhi jē mārē. 1.
mama hita lāgi tajē inha prānā. sakala ji'ā'u surēsa sujānā. 2.

Lord Ram requested Indra, the king of gods, as follows: 'Listen oh king of gods (sunu surapati)! Our monkey and bear warriors, who were killed by the demons, are lying on the ground in the battle-field. (1)

They had laid down their lives for my sake. So I request you, the able and wise king of gods (surēsa sujānā)¹, to make them come back to life once again.² (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram reminded Indra that he must remember that these monkeys and bears were not ordinary creatures, but off-springs of the gods, for the gods had decided to come down to earth and assume the forms of monkeys and bears to help Lord Vishnu when he manifests himself as Lord Ram in order to eliminate the cruel demons and their king Ravana on the request of these same gods as well as mother earth. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.}

So therefore, it was Indra's moral obligation to revive these monkeys and bears, as they had laid down their lives actually for the sake of the gods and mother earth, as much as it was of Lord Ram's because it was he who had been instrumental in leading the campaign of eliminating the demons by bringing these monkeys and bears to the battle-field of Lanka to give effect to the fulfillment of the wishes of the gods and mother earth.

²Indra, being the Lord of heaven and the gods, had access to Amrit, the elixir of life. He is also the 'god who controls rains'. Hence, what Lord Ram wanted Indra to do, and which Indra indeed did, was to rain Amrit on the battle-field so that the monkeys and bears, who lay as if dead on the ground, could be revived.

Indra had prayed to Lord Ram and asked him if he could do anything for the latter, at which the Lord asked him shower a rain of Amrit so that those warriors who had laid down their lives for his cause can be revived.

So what happened? Indra rained down Amrit from the sky, and all the wounded and dead monkeys and bears got up instantly as if nothing had happened to them. The result was that Lord Ram's army had the same number of monkeys and bears at the end of the war as it had at the start, which in turn means that when this colossus army returned to its home place in Kishkindha, no one amongst their kith and kin had any cause to grieve and lament at losing their dear ones in any war. The army returned victorious from a campaign that would make them legendary and famous in history, with the crown of gallantry and valour and courage and daring adorning their proud heads. Their marvelous and glorious exploits during the war of Lanka became fabled and legendary for their rare achievements; the individual warriors became objects of great adulation and honour throughout the kingdom of Kishkindha; they were lauded and applauded wherever they went; their families became singularly proud of them and did not tire asking them to recount the awe-inspiring events that unfolded in that far-away land across the ocean.

To wit, Lord Ram, the Lord who is graceful, compassionate, merciful and kind, as well as very prudent and wise, did not give anyone in Kishkindha a chance to complain and regret that one of their kith and kin had lost his life for the Lord in a war that did not concern them directly, for every single monkey and bear, who had left Kishkindha to join the army of Lord Ram, returned safe and sound to his homeland.

सुनु खगेस प्रभु कै यह बानी । अति अगाध जानहिं मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु सक त्रिभुअन मारि जिआई । केवल सक्रहि दीन्हि बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

sunu khagēsa prabhu kai yaha bānī. atī agādha jānahim muni gyānī. 3.
prabhu saka tribhu'ana māri ji'āī. kēvala sakrahi dīnhi barāī. 4.

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund, who was one of the other chief narrators of this wonderful Story of 'Ram Charit Manas' besides Lord Shiva, told his listener Garud, the celestial Eagle and the king of birds as well as the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the hermitage of the saint to hear this Story being told¹, as follows:-]

'Listen oh king of birds (sunu khagēsa)! These words of Lord Ram (asking Indra to revive the fallen monkeys and bears) were profoundly mysterious and intriguing.

Their true import and full of meaning is known only to enlightened and wise sages².
(3)

Lord Ram has the authority and the ability to make anyone live after he has died³, but he only wished to give some credit and honour to Indra (known also as ‘Sakra’) by asking him to revive the fallen monkeys and bears.’ (4)

[Note—¹The whole conversation betwixt Kaagbhusund and Garud form the subject matter of the second half of the seventh Canto of Ram Charit Manas, known as Uttar Kand. It is narrated in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 125.

²Why is Lord Ram’s request to Indra to revive the monkeys and bears so mysterious and intriguing that only a few selected sages would know its true meaning?

The answer is given by Kaagbhusund himself in the very next verse no. 4.

Ordinary people think that Lord Ram was a human being, and so he lacked the mystical ability needed to revive those who were dead, and so he asked Indra to do it for him. But wise sages understand why the Lord did not do it himself—it was because Lord Ram wished to play his role as a human being to perfection; he did not want raise eyebrows by doing something that can be called a miracle, especially openly when everyone was watching.

Besides this factor, Lord Ram wished to give Indra his due share of the glory, to thank him for sending his own chariot to help the Lord in the war against Ravana, and to honour Indra’s authority as the king of gods. By reviving the monkeys and bears Indra would be remembered in history for this noble deed, and his act would make him share the joy of helping Lord Vishnu to reinstate all those who had sacrificed their lives for a greater and nobler cause of the gods and mother earth, which was the elimination of the cruel demons and restoring the law of Dharma in this world.

Being all-able Lord of the world, it was a noble gesture for Lord Ram to let Indra get the credit of reviving the fallen heroes of this epic war; those who are great and exalted Lords do not hesitate to give credit to those who are junior or subordinate to them for doing some good deed that can grant the latter some sort of recognition and satisfaction of being helpful to their Lord.

Hence, Lord Ram wished to give Indra some sort of satisfaction of being helpful to him and contributing to fulfillment of the Lord’s wish by reviving the monkeys and bears, for the Lord himself had done a lot for the sake of the gods and mother earth, and Indra, being the king of gods, owed so much to Lord Ram.

³Lord Ram has himself reiterated this ability of his on two occasions. The first was when he asked Jatau, the vulture who had laid down his life trying to save Sita, that if he so wished, the Lord can grant him eternal life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31.

The second occasion was when he asked Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv and the king of Kishkindha, that if he wished to live then the Lord can grant him an eternal life—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

सुधा बरषि कपि भालु जिआए । हरषि उठे सब प्रभु पहि आए ॥ ५ ॥

सुधाबृष्टि भै दुहु दल ऊपर । जिए भालु कपि नहिं रजनीचर ॥ ६ ॥
 रामाकार भए तिन्ह के मन । मुक्त भए छूटे भव बंधन ॥ ७ ॥
 सुर अंसिक सब कपि अरु रीछा । जिए सकल रघुपति कीं ईछा ॥ ८ ॥

sudhā baraṣi kapi bhālu ji'ā'ē. haraṣi uṭhē saba prabhu pahim ā'ē. 5.
 sudhābrṣṭi bhai duhu dala ūpara. ji'ē bhālu kapi nahim rajanīcara. 6.
 rāmākāra bha'ē tinha kē mana. mukta bha'ē chūṭē bhava bandhana. 7.
 sura ansika saba kapi aru rīchā. ji'ē sakala raghupati kīm īchā. 8.

Indra rained down Amrit (the ambrosia of life) on the battle-field, thereby bringing to life the monkeys and bears. They got up instantly and cheered. Then all of them came to where Lord Ram was. (5)

The Amrit was showered all over the battle-field, over both the warring armies, but only the bears and monkeys were revived, and not the demons. (6)

The reason why the demons could not be revived was that their mind and heart had been so focused on Lord Ram (because they thought of nothing but the Lord all through the war) that they lost awareness of everything else, becoming exclusively focused on the Lord¹.

The spiritual benefit that naturally accrued to them as a result of this involuntary focusing of their mind and heart on Lord Ram was that they souls attained the fruit of deliverance from this world; they became entitled to obtain emancipation and salvation. Hence, all their worldly ties that would have otherwise attached their souls to this mortal world were snapped, as a result of which they found liberation from this world and attained eternal beatitude and felicity; they attained Mukti². (7)

The monkeys and bears were born from fractions of different gods, and so they could be allowed to die (as it would bereave the gods). Therefore, Lord Ram so wished that they be revived and brought back to life³. (8)

[Note—¹The demons on the one hand, and the monkeys and the bears on the other hand, had very opposite thoughts in their minds. While the monkeys and bears were always thinking and talking about their chief enemy Ravana, the demons on the other hand were thinking and talking of Lord Ram. This was very important from the perspective of spiritualism—because constant remembrance of Lord Ram was tantamount to doing contemplation and meditation on the Lord's divine form and name, which in its turn rewarded the demons with the benefit of deliverance of their souls. Hence, the fallen demon warriors had become entitled to attain emancipation and salvation by constantly thinking about Lord Ram because the Lord was a personified form of the Supreme Being.

We ought to note here that this is also the chief reason that Ravana too attained deliverance at the time of his death by having his soul merge with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.

On the other hand, the monkeys and bears missed this chance as they had focused their attention on their enemy Ravana. But there is a marvelous spin to this development—and it is this: since Ravana himself was so blessed and honoured that his soul was accepted by Lord Ram himself and given an abode right where the

Lord's own Soul was, some sort of reward became due to these poor monkeys and bears too for being focused on someone, in this case Ravana, whom Lord Ram had himself given such high honour.

The second reason for the monkeys and bears becoming entitled to some kind of reward was that they had laid down their lives serving Lord Ram and the noble cause for which this war was fought. Hence, Lord Ram rewarded them with a new life; the Lord entitled them to have glory and fame for winning a great war.

Thirdly, the Lord also did not want them to die because that would mean bereaving countless families in Kishkindha, something the merciful Lord couldn't bear to happen.

²It has been recorded earlier that Lord Ram had ensured that the demon commanders who came face to face with him were provided with the spiritual reward of attaining his heavenly abode—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45. It is clearly explained here “why Lord Ram granted them this exalted stature”: it is because these demons remembered the Lord and his holy name ‘Ram’ constantly, albeit not as a friend or a revered deity but as someone hostile to them, but nevertheless they did it, and this entitled them to receive its natural reward.

So when it came to deciding the fate of the fallen demon warriors in the battle-field, Lord Ram thought if he had been so gracious and kind as to grant an abode in heaven to the demon commanders, then he ought to extend this privilege to the ordinary demon soldiers too as they were merely following their duty of obeying their commanders, and had no personal animosity with the Lord. Not sending them to heaven would be tantamount to doing injustice to these poor fellows. Since Lord Ram was very mindful of his obligations to one and all, he decided that these ordinary demon warriors would go to his abode as well.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

This is another primary reason why Lord Ram wished that the monkeys and bears be brought back to life, besides the reasons cited herein above.]

राम सरिस को दीन हितकारी । कीन्हे मुकुत निसाचर झारी ॥ ९ ॥

खल मल धाम काम रत रावन । गति पाई जो मुनिबर पाव न ॥ १० ॥

rāma sarisa kō dīna hitakārī. kīnhē mukuta nisācara jhārī. 9.

khala mala dhāma kāma rata rāvana. gati pā'ī jō munibara pāva na. 10.

Verily indeed, for sooth and without any gainsay, who is so kind, gracious, benevolent and mindful of the welfare of those who are humble and lowly as Lord Ram is, for the Lord provided ‘Mukti’, i.e. liberation from sufferings that are part of life in this mortal gross world and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, to even the ordinary demons, not one or two or more selected ones from amongst the demon hordes, but all of them en masse! (9)

Not to mention the meek and humble ordinary demon warriors, the most kind and gracious Lord Ram took care of even the vilest of them, the demon king Ravana who

was very wicked, passionate and lustful, and epitomized all that can be categorized as being evil, vile and sins combined, by granting his soul access to a destination which even great sages, hermits and ascetics find it difficult to attain¹. (10)

[Note—¹Ravana was the leader and the king of the demons, and from the perspective of what cruelty he inflicted on the creatures of this world and the terror he unleashed on it, he can be called the ‘king of all that is categorized as sin, vile and evil’. But in spite of all these transgressions of the Law of Dharma, Lord Ram was so merciful as to forgive him and accept his soul within his own Self, which in meaningful terms translated into granting Ravana’s soul the rare privilege of achieving its merger with the cosmic supreme Soul of creation represented by Lord Ram himself, thereby providing a superior destination to Ravana befitting his stature as the ‘king of the demons’. This merger of Ravana’s soul with the cosmic Soul represented by Lord Ram ended forever the cycle of transmigration for him, and provided him with the spiritual reward of emancipation and salvation that granted him eternal beatitude and felicity and bliss. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.}

This privilege is rare even for the greatest of sages, hermits and ascetics to attain, and this is what they all aim for.]

दो०. सुमन बरषि सब सुर चले चढ़ि चढ़ि रुचिर बिमान ।
देखि सुअवसर प्रभु पहिं आयउ संभु सुजान ॥ ११४ (क) ॥
परम प्रीति कर जोरि जुग नलिन नयन भरि बारि ।
पुलकित तन गदगद गिराँ बिनय करत त्रिपुरारि ॥ ११४ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

sumana baraṣi saba sura calē caḍhi caḍhi rucira bimāna.
dēkhi su'avasara prabhu pahim āya'u sambhu sujāna. 114 (a).
parama prīti kara jōri juga nalina nayana bhari bāri.
pulakita tana gadagada girāṁ binaya karata tripurāri. 114 (b).

The assembled gods were elated and thrilled; they showered flowers upon the Lord from the sky. Then mounted their respective vehicles and went their way.

After the gods had gone their way, the wise and erudite Lord Shiva found that it was a good opportunity to approach Lord Ram; so Shiva came near the Lord (to offer his prayers to him)¹. (Doha no. 144-a)

He was overwhelmed with excess of affection for Lord Ram. Joining the palms of his hands, with tears filling his lotus-like eyes, body thrilled and the voice choked with emotions, Lord Tripurari (Shiva)² offered his obeisance and prayers to Lord Ram. (Doha no. 144-b)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva loved and adored Lord Ram and held the latter very dear to his heart; Shiva worshipped Lord Ram, revered him, treated the latter as his chosen deity, and used Lord Ram’s holy name ‘Ram’ as a Mantra (a divine spiritual formula) for the purpose of chanting and doing meditation with. In fact, the whole Story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ which we are currently reading, was conceived by Lord Shiva in

his Mana (heart and mind) during mediation and contemplation. There is no other God who reveres Lord Ram more and knows the secrets of the Lord as Shiva does.

{Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; (iii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iv) Doha no. 46 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.}

So, Lord Shiva wished to approach his beloved Lord Ram when the crowd of gods had gone away, so that he can keep his emotions secret from them all. Lord Shiva is a patron deity of ascetics; he did not wish to advertise his adoration and worship of Lord Ram, as he believed in keeping such relationships as that exist betwixt a devotee and his revered Lord something personal and free from prying eyes of the world, as broadcasting such private emotions would undermine their depth and sincerity. A true devotee does not seek praise or adulation for his spiritual efforts; he wishes to keep it to himself, a private affair.

We have read that the gods have been called ‘selfish’—apropos: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110. So therefore, if Lord Shiva had joined their ranks to offer his prayers and thanks to Lord Ram, he would have fallen in the trap of aligning himself with these ‘selfish gods’. Hence, Shiva, being ‘wise and erudite’, thought it prudent to wait till the other gods had gone away before he would come to pay his personal respects to his beloved Lord Ram. This would also give Shiva an opportunity to develop immediate rapport with the Lord he worships, and at the same time Lord Ram too would be able to share a private moment with his devotee Shiva.

Remember: There was a unique relationship between the two of them; Lord Ram too worshipped Shiva as much as Shiva worshipped the Lord. This is amply made clear by Lord Ram himself when he worshipped Shiva at the start of his campaign of Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.}

Hence, Lord Shiva wished to thank Lord Ram for this gracious gesture and declaration of the latter’s affection and respect for him by deciding to approach Lord Ram when the crowd of gods had gone away and the Lord would be alone.

²Lord Shiva is called ‘Tripurari’ for two primary reasons: One is that he had vanquished a demon named ‘Tripurasur’; and the second reason is it signifies that he is a vanquisher of all that is evil and sinful in ‘all the three divisions of the world, i.e. heaven, earth and the nether world, as well as its Lord’.]

(iv) Sub-section 21.1.4: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 121:

चौ०. करि बिनती जब संभु सिधाए । तब प्रभु निकट बिभीषनु आए ॥ १ ॥

नाइ चरन सिरु कह मृदु बानी । बिनय सुनहु प्रभु सारंगपानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kari binatī jaba sambhu sidhā'ē. taba prabhu nikaṭa bibhīṣanu ā'ē. 1.

nā'i carana siru kaha mṛdu bānī. binaya sunahu prabhu sārāṅgapānī. 2.

After Lord Shiva (sambhu) had offered his prayers and departed from the place, Vibhishan came to Lord Ram. (1)

He bowed his head before the holy feet of the Lord and said in a pleasing voice: 'Oh Lord who holds the Sarang Bow. Please listen to my humble request. (2)

सकुल सदल प्रभु रावन मार्यो । पावन जस त्रिभुवन बिस्तार्यो ॥ ३ ॥
दीन मलीन हीन मति जाती । मो पर कृपा कीन्हि बहु भाँती ॥ ४ ॥

sakula sadala prabhu rāvana māryō. pāvana jasa tribhuvana bistāryō. 3.
dīna malīna hīna mati jātī. mō para kṛpā kīnhi bahu bhāntī. 4.

Oh Lord, you have eliminated Ravana with his horde of demons, an act that helped to spread and establish your fame and glory in all the three divisions of the world (i.e. everywhere in this world). (3)

I was especially blessed with grace and kindness by your highness in all possible ways, inspite of my being most meek, humble and lowly, as well as being devoid of any goodness and virtues, and of a low birth as I am born in the demon race. (4)

अब जन गृह पुनीत प्रभु कीजे । मज्जनु करिअ समर श्रम छीजे ॥ ५ ॥
देखि कोस मंदिर संपदा । देहु कृपाल कपिन्ह कहूँ मुदा ॥ ६ ॥
सब बिधि नाथ मोहि अपनाइअ । पुनि मोहि सहित अवधपुर जाइअ ॥ ७ ॥
सुनत बचन मृदु दीनदयाला । सजल भए द्वौ नयन बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

aba jana gr̥ha punīta prabhu kījē. majjanu kari'a samara śrama chijē. 5.
dēkhi kōsa mandira sampadā. dēhu kṛpāla kapinha kahuṁ mudā. 6.
saba bidhi nātha mōhi apanā'i'a. puni mōhi sahita avadhapura jā'i'a. 7.
sunata bacana mṛdu dīnadayālā. sajala bha'ē dvau nayana bisālā. 8.

Now oh Lord, please bless my household and consecrate it by paying a visit to it. Have a bath and refresh yourself a little, as I feel you must be tired after this grueling war. (5)

Pay a visit to the treasury of our demon race; have a look at our homes and the rest of our properties.

[To wit, I invite you to come and visit the city of Lanka to personally grace it now. You have been gracious enough to make me its king, but I feel something is missing as till now you have not once visited Lanka. Now that this city has a friendly king in my person, it will be in fitness of things that you come there as an honoured guest of mine. So please Lord, oblige me by your gracious presence in the city of Lanka even for a short while. This will give me excess of pleasure, and it will also enable the citizen to pay their respects to you as well.]

After that, you can cheerfully (and without any bit of hesitation) give the monkeys (and bears) whatever you deem fit for them as a gift and reward for their effort and contribution. (6)

Oh Lord, I pray thee to please accept me unconditionally as one who is your very own, in all possible and imaginable ways. After that, proceed to Ayodhya, taking me along with you.¹ (7)

When Lord Ram heard these kind and gracious words of Vibhishan, he was very pleased; the Lord's two wide eyes (which were like petals of the lotus flower) welled up with tears. (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan wished to express his heartfelt gratitude to Lord Ram for not only extending his protection to him when his own brother Ravana was baying for his blood, but also making him the new king of Lanka. Usually it so happens that a conqueror appoints his own governor, which under normal circumstances Lord Ram could have easily done, and it was almost certain that the Lord would have chosen Sugriv, the king of the monkey race and the ruler of Kishkindha, for this role, because Sugriv's crucial help had made it possible for Lord Ram to assemble the army which aided him in the war against Ravana and defeating the mighty demon forces. So to reward Sugriv with the governorship of Lanka, if not outright its kingdom, was a foregone conclusion.

But Lord Ram desisted from doing it, and this refrain of the Lord of not appointing anyone else but Vibhishan as the new king of Lanka was not lost on the latter, and he recognized its significance. So therefore, Vibhishan wished to express his sincere thanks and highest gratitude to Lord Ram by inviting him to the city to grace it by his presence.

And to express his thanks to Sugriv, Angad, Hanuman, Jamvant, Nala, Neela and other as senior commanders of the Lord's army, as well as the rest of the monkeys and bears of the army who helped Lord Ram to win the war against Ravana, which in turn paved the way for Vibhishan being made the new king of the kingdom of Lanka, he requested Lord Ram to grant as much largesse as he wished to give as a reward to his friends in the monkey and bear army, from the rich treasury of Lanka.

This offer of Vibhishan also shows that the kingdom of the demons was so rich and prosperous that even after the ruinous war a handsome treasury still survived.

And there is another significant point worth noting: it is that after the final victory in the war, there was no plundering and looting and mad rampaging of Lanka by the conquerors—such was the exemplary discipline of Lord Ram, and such were the high principles of noble conduct followed during those ancient times! All aggressiveness and hostility and bitterness ended as soon as the war ended. All were friends once again.

Vibhishan even offered to accompany Lord Ram to Ayodhya so that their mutual friendship can be further cemented. Perhaps this paved the way for trade and military ties and cultural exchanges between the three mighty kingdoms of the time, i.e. Ayodhya in the north, Kishkindha in the south, and island of Lanka further down in the middle of the ocean.]

दो०. तोर कोस गृह मोर सब सत्य बचन सुनु भ्रात ।

भरत दसा सुमिरत मोहि निमिष कल्प सम जात ॥ ११६ (क) ॥

तापस बेष गात कृस जपत निरंतर मोहि ।

देखौं बेगि सो जतनु करु सखा निहोरउँ तोहि ॥ ११६ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

tōra kōsa gr̥ha mōra saba satya bacana sunu bhrāta.

bharata dasā sumirata mōhi nimīṣa kalpa sama jāta. 116 (a).

tāpasa bēṣa gāta kṛsa japata nirantara mōhi.

dēkhaum̐ bēgi sō jatanu karu sakhā nihōra'um̐ tōhi. 116 (b).

Lord Ram affectionately replied to Vibhishan: ‘Listen my dear brother (sunu bhrāta)! I say truthfully that your treasury, your home and the rest of the things that you possess can be deemed to belong to me (because I regard you as my dear friend and brother: sakhā, bhrāta).

But in the meanwhile, when I remember the (sad and miserable) condition of Bharat (my younger brother who lives in Ayodhya and grieves at my absence), even a fraction of a moment seems to be like an age for me. (Doha no. 116-a)

He lives in a hermit’s attire; his body has become emaciated; and he constantly remembers me¹.

So therefore, my dear friend (sakhā), I request you to make arrangements so that I can see him as soon as it is possible². (Doha no. 116-b)

[Note—¹How did Lord Ram know the condition of Bharat? Well, it was Hanuman who gave a graphic description of how Bharat lived when he returned to Lord Ram with the herb sought for the treatment of wounded Laxman in the battle-field of Lanka. Hanuman had met Bharat on his way back from the northern mountains where he had gone searching for the herb. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 55; (ii) Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 60.}

And how did Bharat live? This question is answered in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324—to Doha no. 326.

²Lord Ram deftly deflected Vibhishan’s request to visit the city of Lanka and bless his family and citizens. One reason which the Lord gives in avoiding going to the city within the fort was that time was running out for him as he must reach his own city Ayodhya expeditiously, because if he delays for even a day then his dear brother Bharat would end his life. It’s definitely true, because if the Lord had gone to the city then obviously there would be a grand royal ceremony and welcome formalities extended to him, which would consume precious time. Lord Ram wished to make haste to return, as is clear from his own words, and therefore expending time in things that could be avoided was a prudent way forward in the current exigency.

Besides this reason, there was one other, and this second reason was cited by the Lord himself when he declined to attend the ceremony to crown Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka, and instead deputed his brother Laxman to represent him. The reason was this: that he had to keep the words of honour that he had given his father Dasrath, that he would live like a hermit for full 14 years in the forest, and a hermit is not supposed to visit a populated place, such as a city or a town or a village, especially to attend some ceremony or feast, or to be honoured and praised for some deed done.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.}

Earlier too, during Sugriv's anointment on the throne of Kishkindha, Lord Ram declined to attend personally, and instead sent his younger brother Laxman to represent him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 11.}

At that time too the Lord had explained to Sugriv the reason for his inability to attend his coronation personally, because he was bound not to visit any city for 14 years while he lived in the forest. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12.}

The third probable reason for Lord Ram avoiding to enter the city of Lanka was that he did not want a show around himself; he wished to avoid limelight and pomp and pageantry; he did not want that he be raised on a ceremonial pedestal at the head of a victory procession like a conquering general walking triumphantly to his vanquished subjects, the chances of which were ripe should he agree to visit the city of Lanka, as it was quite certain that Vibhishan would go out of his way, and bend over backwards, to shower praises and royal honours on the Lord as a gesture of his thanksgiving to him. Remember: Lord Ram was very modest and unpretentious; so it would be extremely embarrassing for him if this happened.

And finally, it would be too embarrassing for Lord Ram, who was known for his virtues of upholding the laws of Dharma that deal with the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety, as well as for his gracefulness and equanimity, to enter a city the king of which he had just slayed and put his rival on the throne, as this unavoidable coincidence designed by Providence and a fiat of Fate had made Lord Ram highly uncomfortable with the development. It was certain that not everyone in the city of Lanka would appreciate Lord Ram's actions, and though they had no choice but to keep their mouths shut under the changed situation, the Lord himself did not wish to offend them any more by visiting Lanka in a victory procession.]

बीतें अवधि जाउँ जौं जिअत न पावउँ बीर ।

सुमिरत अनुज प्रीति प्रभु पुनि पुनि पुलक सरीर ॥ ११६ (ग) ॥

करेहु कल्प भरि राजु तुम्ह मोहि सुमिरेहु मन माहिं ।

पुनि मम धाम पाइहहु जहाँ संत सब जाहिं ॥ ११६ (घ) ॥

bītēṁ avadhi jā'uṁ jāuṁ ji'ata na pāva'uṁ bīra.

sumirata anuja prīti prabhu puni puni pulaka sarīra. 116 (c).

karēhu kalpa bhari rāju tumha mōhi sumirēhu mana māhiṁ.

puni mama dhāma pā'ihahu jahāṁ santa saba jāhiṁ. 116 (d).

If I go there after the expiry of the term of my forest sojourn (which is exactly 14 years) then it is certain that I won't find that brave one alive¹.

Lord Ram's body became thrilled with repeated waves of emotions which surged inside his heart when he remembered the exemplary level of affection his younger brother Bharat had for him. (Doha no. 116-c)

Vibhishan, be blessed with a happy rule over your kingdom till the end of this Kalpa (one complete cycle of 4 eras known as Sata Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwarpa Yuga and Kali Yuga), and always remember me.

At the end of this period, you will go to my abode in the heaven where all saintly souls go.' (Doha no. 116-d)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 313 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

How many days were left for this period of 14 years of forest living by Lord Ram to end? Answer: Only one day was left—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1.

This is why Lord Ram was in a hurry to return to Ayodhya.

And how did he manage to do it, to reach the far away Ayodhya within such a short span of time of one single day? Well, the Lord and his party reached Ayodhya in time as they rode the Pushpak Plane that Vibhishan inherited from Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 117; and Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 119; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4-a.]

चौ०. सुनत बिभीषन बचन राम के । हरषि गहे पद कृपाधाम के ॥ १ ॥

बानर भालु सकल हरषाने । गहि प्रभु पद गुन बिमल बखाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunata bibhīṣana bacana rāma kē. haraṣi gahē pada kṛpādhāma kē. 1.
bānara bhālu sakala haraṣānē. gahi prabhu pada guna bimala bakhānē. 2.

Hearing such gracious words of Lord Ram who was an embodiment of mercy and grace, Vibhishan felt exceedingly happy, and he fell down at the Lord's feet and clasped them affectionately. (1)

The monkeys and bears too felt very happy and exhilarated; they too fell down and clasped the feet of Lord Ram to express their joy, and to extol his glories and virtues. (2)

[Note—All those who heard Lord Ram explaining why he would not visit the city of Lanka were all praises for him; they felt so happy that the Lord was extremely gracious and modest and unpretentious that he would not like to be honoured and shown royal ceremony by visiting Lanka as a conquering general walking in a victory procession; that he was an upholder of the bond of brotherhood and recognized true worth of affection as was evident by his concern for Bharat, even though the latter was the apparent cause for the Lord's long sufferings and tribulations in the forest, because Bharat's mother Kaikeyi wanted that her son should become a king of Ayodhya instead of Lord Ram, and contrived a crooked means to have the Lord banished to the forest for 14 years so that Bharat could reinforce his grip over the affairs of the mighty kingdom during the Lord's absence. But it was so singularly noble and glorious for Lord Ram not to pay heed to the intrigues of Kaikeyi, and instead see the truthfulness and depth of Bharat's love for him.

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, all those present at the time celebrated and rejoiced that they have at last found in Lord Ram a true Lord and Friend for themselves!]

बहुरि बिभीषन भवन सिधायो । मनि गन बसन बिमान भरायो ॥ ३ ॥
 लै पुष्पक प्रभु आगें राखा । हँसि करि कृपासिंधु तब भाषा ॥ ४ ॥
 चढ़ि बिमान सुनु सखा बिभीषन । गगन जाइ बरषहु पट भूषन ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri bibhīṣana bhavana sidhāyō. mani gana basana bimāna bharāyō. 3.
 lai puṣpaka prabhu āgēm rākhā. haṁsi kari kṛpāsindhu taba bhāṣā. 4.
 caḍhi bimāna sunu sakhā bibhīṣana. gagana jā'i barāṣahu paṭa bhūṣana. 5.

After that (i.e. after expressing his joy and satisfaction by falling reverentially at the feet of Lord Ram and bowing before him), Vibhishan went to his palace. He got the air-plane (the Pushpak, which he had inherited from his brother Ravana), filled with precious gems and costly apparels. (3)

He came with all these things and placed the Pushpak plane before Lord Ram (as a token of his tribute and gift for the Lord).

Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of the virtues of kindness, grace, benevolence and magnanimity, politely laughed in an approving manner, and said --- (4)

‘My friend Vibhishan, ride on this plane and go up in the sky, and from there shower upon the ground all the gifts in the way of clothes and ornaments that you have brought here.’ (5)

नभ पर जाइ बिभीषन तबही । बरषि दिए मनि अंबर सबही ॥ ६ ॥
 जोड़ जोड़ मन भावइ सोइ लेहीं । मनि मुख मेलि डारि कपि देहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 हँसे रामु श्री अनुज समेता । परम कौतुकी कृपा निकेता ॥ ८ ॥

nabha para jā'i bibhīṣana tabahī. barāṣi di'ē mani ambara sabahī. 6.
 jō'i jō'i mana bhāva'i sō'i lēhīm. mani mukha mēli ḍāri kapi dēhīm. 7.
 haṁsē rāmu śrī anuja samētā. parama kautukī kṛpā nikētā. 8.

As soon as Vibhishan heard Lord Ram's instructions he went up into the sky aboard the plane, and from there he showered on the ground below every piece of gem and apparel that he had brought. (6)

The monkeys and bears who had been watching everything with amusement, marveled at this novel spectacle. They were filled with glee and merriment; they scrambled forward in joy and grabbed whatever they fancied for and could lay their hands on.

The innocent monkeys thought that the gems were some kind of eatables, so they would first put the pieces of priceless stones, falling from the sky like so many

fruits, into their mouths, but soon realizing that they weren't what they thought them to be, they immediately spat the gems out! (7)

It was a very entertaining scene which amused Lord Ram a lot. The Lord and his younger brother Laxman smiled (and cheered at the fascinated monkeys).

Verily indeed, the maverick Lord was inclined to play innocent tricks and harmless games that would amuse everyone around¹. (8)

[Note—¹It was a very charming sight indeed. But at the same time Lord Ram wished to send a subtle message to Vibhishan, and by extension to all of us. The Lord implied that what Vibhishan thought was so valuable and worthy, like the priceless gems, ornaments and clothes, was of no worth and consequence for others. To wit, what one person values, is of no value for another.

When extended and applied to this material world, the hidden spiritual and metaphysical meaning is stunningly clear—that what attracts a worldly man, something for which he would go to any length to acquire and then endeavour to retain at all costs, is worthless and pointless for a person who has renunciation and dispassion in his heart! How wonderful and fantastic is this grand spiritual message that Lord Ram conveyed for posterity by employing such a jovial means.]

दो०. मुनि जेहि ध्यान न पावहिं नेति नेति कह बेद ।

कृपासिंधु सोइ कपिन्ह सन करत अनेक बिनोद ॥ ११७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

muni jēhi dhyāna na pāvahiṁ nēti nēti kaha bēda.

krpāsindhu sō'i kapinha sana karata anēka binōda. 117 (a).

It is such a great wonder that the Lord who is difficult to attain even by exalted sages who do their best to focus their minds upon him, and who even the Vedas (primary scriptures) fail to comprehend when they say “not this, not this” in their attempt to explain who the Lord is and what are his visible forms—this same merciful and kind Supreme Lord Ram plays and jests with the humble monkeys and bears in order to entertain them and himself. (Doha no. 117-a)

उमा जोग जप दान तप नाना मख ब्रत नेम ।

राम कृपा नहिं करहिं तसि जसि निष्केवल प्रेम ॥ ११७ (ख) ॥

umā jōga japa dāna tapa nānā makha brata nēma.

rāma krpā nahim karahim tasi jasi niṣkēvala prēma. 117 (b).

[Lord Shiva tells his consort Uma who was listening to this wonderful Story—]

‘Oh Uma! Lord Ram does not show the extent of his full grace by trying to please him in the form of doing Japa (repetition of holy Mantras or spiritual formulas), Daan (making charity), Tapa (austerity and penance), and many other forms of spiritual practices such as Makha (fire sacrifices), Vrat and Nema (keeping a fast and

observing various religious vows)—as much as he does by having purest form of affection and love for him.¹ (Doha no. 117-b)

[Note—¹Put simply, Lord Shiva advises the creatures of this world that the easiest way to Lord Ram's heart is through the medium of love and affection for him. To this can be added the virtues of devotion, faith and trust, for all these virtues act together in helping a devotee to gain the Lord's favour.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 136 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it, where the same idea is affirmed.

Here we ought to note about the importance of simple gestures of love and affection as they are held more dear by Lord Ram in his heart than the finest recitals of the Vedas. We can cite examples from the Story of Ram Charit Manas itself to reiterate this fact. For instance, when the innocent people of the forest-dwelling tribes of Chitrakoot had paid their obeisance to Lord Ram in the simple ways they were accustomed to, and had shown excess of joy and pleasure in serving Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman for the brief period they stayed with them, the Lord had graciously reciprocated their kind gestures by showing them equal affection. The Lord had talked with them courteously; he had cheerfully accepted their humble offerings of food and hospitality, and blessed them. All this is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 337.

Even prior to the Lord meeting these humble people and showing his grace upon them, we read that he had extended a similar grace upon the countless village folks and travellers whom he had met while on his way to the forest from Ayodhya. Lord Ram's loving nature and gracious manners had overwhelmed each and everyone he met on the way so much that he left a trail of people who cherished their meeting with the Lord and enshrined him in their hearts for all times to come. Once again, all this is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112—to Doha no. 122.]

चौ०. भालु कपिन्ह पट भूषन पाए । पहिरि पहिरि रघुपति पहिं आए ॥ १ ॥

नाना जिनस देखि सब कीसा । पुनि पुनि हँसत कोसलाधीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhālu kapinha paṭa bhūṣana pā'ē. pahiri pahiri raghupati pahim ā'ē. 1.

nānā jinasa dēkhi saba kīsā. puni puni haṁsata kōsalādhīsā. 2.

When the monkeys and bears got the sort of apparel they had fancied, they wore them and came to Lord Ram to show him how they looked in these new clothes. (1)

Observing this funny spectacle, with so many monkeys and bears attired in a wide assortment of colourful clothes, some oddly fitting and others hanging loose on their bodies, Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya) smiled and laughed at this fascinating sight as he was highly amused with it¹. (2)

[Note—¹Imagine the scene. Like so many children who had never worn fine clothes in their lives were suddenly given multitudes of colourful dresses to choose from and wear them to suit their fancy, and then these overjoyed innocent children would dance

and hop with excess of joy at this marvelous opportunity as they put on whatever catches their fancy, after which they rush home to show their wonderstruck parents what they had got as gifts and how they looked in these fine new clothes, these humble monkeys and bears first adorned themselves as best as they could, though it was all awkward fittings for them, and then the whole group danced and sang its way to Lord Ram so that the overjoyed monkeys and bears could exhibit their newly acquired gifts to their beloved Lord, because for all of them Lord Ram was as dear and near as if he was their parent and loving friend.

Indeed, what a wonderful and heart-touching scene it must have been, my dear readers, just close your eyes and imagine! For remember, soon they will part with their beloved Lord and Friend, Lord Sri Ram, for in a few moments time the time of departure for Ayodhya would arrive, and though Lord Ram took along with him the senior monkeys and bears, he obviously could not take such a huge army back to Ayodhya for the practical reason that there wasn't sufficient space in the Pushpak plane to accommodate everyone. So in a way these were the moments of bidding farewell to all, and therefore it was all the more emotionally fulfilling for both the sides, the ever thankful Lord Ram on one side, and the equally thankful monkeys and bears on the other side. Lord Ram was thankful to them for their help in freeing Sita from the captivity of the demons, and the humble monkeys and bears were thankful to Lord Ram for showing such grace upon them and declaring them all as their friend without condition or distinction.

So therefore, like overjoyed children thronging their doting father when they are given some nice things to wear, the enthusiastic and overjoyed monkeys and bears crowded around Lord Ram affectionately, each vying with the other to draw the Lord's kind attention on himself. And sure enough, the gracious Lord Ram acknowledged them all by smiling at them and looking them with blessing in his glances.]

चितइ सबन्हि पर कीन्ही दाया । बोले मृदुल बचन रघुराया ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्हरे बल मैं रावनु मार्यो । तिलक बिभीषन कहँ पुनि सार्यो ॥ ४ ॥

निज निज गृह अब तुम्ह सब जाहू । सुमिरेहु मोहि डरपहु जनि काहू ॥ ५ ॥

cita'i sabanhi para kīnhī dāyā. bōlē mṛdula bacana raghurāyā. 3.
tumharēm bala mair̥m rāvanu māryō. tilaka bibhīṣana kahaṁ puni sāryō. 4.
nija nija gr̥ha aba tumha saba jāhū. sumirēhu mōhi ḍarapahu jani kāhū. 5.

The Lord looked at the assembled monkeys and bears in such a way that each individual thought that the Lord was looking at him and made an eye contact with him, and by this means the munificent Lord pleased and blessed them all with his kind grace and benevolence.

Then Lord of the Raghus, i.e. Lord Ram, addressed the assembly with sweet words that were pleasant to hear. He said: --- (3)

‘I have succeeded in slaying Ravana by relying on your matchless abilities and strength, and after that I was able to anoint Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka as its new king.

[To wit, I am very obliged to you, and I affirm that I owe all my achievements to you. Verily, it may be known that I can never forget you and the help you gave me when I needed it most. I have no sufficient words to properly express my thanks to you, for your selfless help and the kind of friendship that you all have extended to me. I will remember it all through my life, I promise.] (4)

Now, all of you go back to your respective homes, and remember me. Don't be afraid of anyone or anything (because I will be always there to help you, in thick and thin, no matter what happens).¹ (5)

[Note—¹The time of saying 'good bye' had arrived. It was a very poignant moment for both the sides, and surely everyone's heart was heavy. The monkeys and bears, by this time, had developed such a close bond with Lord Ram, and he with them, that to part with each other was something they wouldn't have liked to happen if it was avoidable. But it was not practically possible to do so. Yes, Lord Ram could have taken the whole army back to Ayodhya, but there was no space in the Pushpak plane to accommodate hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears. At best, their senior commanders and chiefs could be taken along, which Lord Ram actually did.

But the Lord promised them eternal bond of friendship and help. Ordinarily a king or a noble man would extend such privilege to those who are his equal in rank, but Lord Ram was such a magnanimous and kind Lord that he treated even the lowest in the rank of the army as his friend and companion, not distinguishing between any of them for their rank or title. Verily indeed, for Lord Ram the only eligibility that entitles one to receive his grace and blessings is having love, affection, devotion and faith in him, and the monkeys and bears, all of them without exception, qualified on this mark without a trace of doubt.

It's not written in any of the versions of the grand and magnificent Story of the Ramayana, but one can well imagine the emotional aspect of those moments when the time had come for departure of Lord Ram for Ayodhya, and his requesting the army of monkeys and bears to go back to their homeland. Everyone stood speechless, with tears in their eyes, with their throats choked, with their hearts heavy as lead, with their legs as if paralyzed, with their bodies thrilled, and their lips quivering as if they were just about to burst out crying.

But in this sad hour of parting, there was a silver lining to the gloomy cloud of separation: Lord Ram had promised every single individual monkey and bear of his friendship and affection for life; he has asked them not to forget him. But the latter request made by Lord Ram—that they must always remember him—was simply a formal one, for even if the Lord had not asked these humble monkeys and bears to do so, they would have nonetheless never ever had forgotten the Lord for the grace and kindness that they had got so much from him. They even owed their lives to Lord Ram—because the Lord had ensured that all the monkeys and bears who lay wounded or dead in the battle-field were brought back to life when he asked Indra to shower Amrit on all of them (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 5 that precede Doha no. 114).

The fact that the monkeys and bears would have liked to stay with Lord Ram for all times to come if that was at all feasible and practical, even if it meant to go to far-away kingdom of Ayodhya, or to bring Lord Ram to Kishkindha itself, and that they were not much inclined to return home, will be evident in the following verses.]

सुनत बचन प्रेमाकुल बानर । जोरि पानि बोले सब सादर ॥ ६ ॥
 प्रभु जोड़ कहहु तुम्हहि सब सोहा । हमरें होत बचन सुनि मोहा ॥ ७ ॥
 दीन जानि कपि किए सनाथा । तुम्ह त्रैलोक ईस रघुनाथा ॥ ८ ॥
 सुनि प्रभु बचन लाज हम मरहीं । मसक कहूँ खगपति हित करहीं ॥ ९ ॥
 देखि राम रुख बानर रीछा । प्रेम मगन नहिं गृह कै ईछा ॥ १० ॥

sunata bacana prēmākula bānara. jōri pāni bōlē saba sādara. 6.
 prabhu jō'i kahahu tumhahi saba sōhā. hamarēm hōta bacana suni mōhā. 7.
 dīna jāni kapi ki'ē sanāthā. tumha trailōka īsa raghunāthā. 8.
 suni prabhu bacana lāja hama marahīm. masaka kahūṁ khagapati hita
 karahīm. 9.
 dēkhi rāma rukha bānara rīchā. prēma magana nahīm gr̥ha kai īchā. 10.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram, the monkeys (and bears) became agitated as they were overwhelmed with emotions of affection for the Lord. They joined their palms and replied most respectfully (and in a manner that clearly showed their love for the Lord) --- (6)

‘Oh Lord! Whatever you say is well spoken and well becomes of you, but on our part we become mystified by them. (7)

We are humble and lowly creatures, while oh Lord Raghubar, you are the great and exalted Lord of the whole world and its three divisions (heaven, earth and nether world). So it was out of your excess of grace, kindness and mercy that you chose to grant us the opportunity to serve you, thereby making us feel honoured and privileged to be able to do so.

[So therefore, it is we who owe the greatest of thanks to you, and not you to us.] (8)

Oh kind and gracious Lord! When we hear your kind words (praising us for our valour and the help we gave you which enabled you to slay Ravana and make Vibhishan the new king of Lanka), we all feel as if buried in shyness (for we don't deserve such praise whatsoever).

Say, can a humble and lowly mosquito ever be so great as to help the mighty king of birds?

[To wit, oh Lord, we are simple and humble forest-dwelling beings, and you are a great Lord, the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world himself in a personified form. So just like a mosquito is in comparison to the mighty eagle, the king of the birds, there is no comparison between us and your exalted highness. So therefore, we feel humbled and shy when we hear you shower so much praise upon us. However, we are truly very grateful to you that inspite of being so high and exalted you still prefer to show honour to us and call us your friends. It is much more than we had ever expected in our lives, and for this gracious gesture of yours, we shall ever, forever indeed, remain indebted to you. Glory to our loving Lord! All hats off to our Lord and his loving nature!]' (9)

Lord Ram could easily perceive that they were all overwhelmed with surging waves of emotions of love and affection for him, and consequently had no desire to go back home¹. (10)

[Note—¹Refer to note appended to Chaupai line nos. 3-5 herein above.

Lord Ram discerned that the whole army was not inclined to leave his company; they would rather have him accompany them to Kishkindha if it was at all feasible and possible. But for obvious reasons it could not be that way. Lord Ram had to return to Ayodhya, and he would not do anything that would look like he was trying to impose himself on any other kingdom or infringe on the right of its king. So therefore, either to think of living in Lanka or in Kishkindha was out of the question. It was all the more unthinkable for Lord Ram because back in Ayodhya, Bharat was eagerly waiting for his arrival, and if he did not return in time then Bharat would die. Besides this, the Lord had promised the citizens of Ayodhya that he would come to them as soon as the period of 14 years expired. The people of Ayodhya loved him no less than the monkeys and bears, and since he was the prince of that kingdom, it was obligatory upon him to take that into consideration the emotions and needs of his subjects first and foremost, for the kingdom of Ayodhya needed his presence urgently as its throne was lying vacant as compared to kingdoms of Kishkindha and Lanka, because both of them had their respective kings, Sugriv and Vibhishan, to look after their interests.

So therefore, Lord Ram very politely, and with all the courteousness and civility he could muster, prevailed upon the monkeys and bears to return to their homelands, although both Lord Ram and the monkeys and bears felt very sad and sorry at this parting.]

दो०. प्रभु प्रेरित कपि भालु सब राम रूप उर राखि ।

हरष बिषाद सहित चले बिनय बिबिध बिधि भाषि ॥ ११८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

prabhu prērita kapi bhālu saba rāma rūpa ura rākhi.

haraṣa biṣāda sahita calē binaya bibidha bidhi bhāṣi. 118 (a).

Inspired by Lord Ram and in deference to his wishes (as the monkeys and bears were unable to disobey him and refuse to honour his commands), all the monkeys and bears enshrined the divine form (image) of Lord Ram inside their hearts (as one consecrates a deity in the sanctum of a shrine), and overwhelmed with grief and sadness (at parting with the Lord) on the one hand, and joy and happiness (at being able to serve the Lord and having had the privilege to be able to call the Lord as their everlasting friend and Lord) on the other hand, they offered their emotional prayers and heart-felt obeisance to the Lord in various ways (each one pouring out his heart in the best language and way he could do), and then started off on their journey back home¹. (Doha no. 118-a)

[Note—¹In this context we can recall Lord Ram's meeting with the villagers and travelers he met on the way to the forest, as well as the tribal people who came to meet him when he decided to stay in Chitrakoot. A very similar set of emotions are discovered there too. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 108—

to Doha no. 122; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137.}]

कपिपति नील रीछपति अंगद नल हनुमान ।
 सहित बिभीषन अपर जे जूथप कपि बलवान ॥ ११८ (ख) ॥
 कहि न सकहिं कछु प्रेम बस भरि भरि लोचन बारि ।
 सन्मुख चितवहिं राम तन नयन निमेष निवारि ॥ ११८ (ग) ॥

kapipati nīla rīchapati aṅgada nala hanumāna.
 sahita bibhīṣana apara jē jūthapa kapi balavāna. 118 (b).
 kahi na sakahiṁ kachu prēma basa bhari bhari lōcana bāri.
 sanmukha citavahiṁ rāma tana nayana nimēṣa nivāri. 118 (c).

Sugriv, the lord of the monkeys, Nila, Jamvant, the lord of the bears, Angad (the prince of the monkeys), Nala, Hanuman, along with Vibhishan and other senior commanders of both the armies (i.e. the monkey army of Sugriv, as well as the demon army that supported Vibhishan) who were strong and mighty warriors in their own rights, --- (Doha no. 118-b)

--- All of them stood speechless with tears in their eyes as they were so overwhelmed with emotions that words failed them and they did not know how to react. They stood motionless before Lord Ram with their prayerful eyes fixed on the Lord¹. (Doha no. 118-c)

[Note—¹These noblemen of both the sides, the monkeys and bears on one side, and the demons on the other side, did not know what to say or do; they were in a fix as they would not like to disobey the Lord who commanded everyone to return home, while at the same time they had a great desire to accompany the Lord to his kingdom and witness his ascension to the throne, as well as to forge a deeper and stronger formal bond of friendship that is usually made between great kings, a bond that would bear a stamp of authority and create eternal ties between their great kingdoms in a formal way.

They had all heard of the famed glories and the greatness of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and hence had a sincere wish to visit it.

Lord Ram observed them and knew intuitively what was in their minds. The gracious Lord did not wish to dishonour or neglect their wishes, especially when it was so sincere and came from selfless friends who had staked everything they had to serve the Lord and his cause. Lord Ram remembered that Vibhishan had already expressed his desire to go to Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 116.

So therefore, Lord Ram agreed to take them all along with him to Ayodhya.]

चौ०. अतिसय प्रीति देखि रघुआई । लीन्हे सकल बिमान चढ़ाई ॥ १ ॥
 मन महुँ बिप्र चरन सिरु नायो । उत्तर दिसिहि बिमान चलायो ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

atisaya prīti dēkhi raghurā'ī. līnhē sakala bimāna caṛhā'ī. 1.
mana mahum̐ bipra carana siru nāyō. utara disihi bimāna calāyō. 2.

Lord Ram (raghurā'ī), perceiving that all of them were overwhelmed with affection for him (and would like to accompany him back home to Ayodhya to witness his happy union with his subjects and appointment as the sovereign of the kingdom), he gave his consent and welcomed them all aboard the plane¹. (1)

Then the Lord mentally bowed his head at the feet of Vipras (elderly Brahmins) and ordered the plane to fly in northward direction². (2)

[Note—¹This plane, the Pushpak, was placed at Lord Ram's disposal by Vibhishan—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 117.

²One thing is to be noted here, and it is that this Pushpak plane was not an ordinary aircraft. It had two unique features—One, that it could be remote controlled; even a voice command could help to steer it. And two, that it could expand its capacity to accommodate passengers, though of course within certain limits. For example, it could grow large enough to, say, accommodate senior commanders of the two armies who were asked by Lord Ram to come aboard, but it would be practically impossible to adjust the whole army of monkeys and bears numbering into hundreds of thousands, for had it been possible then it is quite sure Lord Ram would have obliged all of them by taking them all to Ayodhya like he did with these few selected senior commanders.]

चलत बिमान कोलाहल होई । जय रघुबीर कहइ सबु कोई ॥ ३ ॥
सिंहासन अति उच्च मनोहर । श्री समेत प्रभु बैठे ता पर ॥ ४ ॥
राजत रामु सहित भामिनी । मेरु संगु जनु घन दामिनी ॥ ५ ॥

calata bimāna kōlāhala hō'ī. jaya raghubīra kaha'i sabu kō'ī. 3.
simhāsana ati ucca manōhara. śrī samēta prabhu baiṭhē tā para. 4.
rājata rāmu sahita bhāminī. mēru sṛṅga janu ghana dāminī. 5.

No sooner had the plane become airborne and headed northwards to Ayodhya, than there was a spontaneous expression of joy and exhilaration from all those on board who cheered and applauded loudly in chorus. They exclaimed thunderously: 'Glory to Lord Ram; Hail the Lord of the Raghus; Long live the Lord.' (3)

There was a raised platform on this plane in the form of a magnificent throne, and Lord Ram sat on it with his consort Sita by his side. (4)

Lord Ram looked most adorable and majestic as he sat on this wonderful throne; it was like the beautiful scene of dark clouds with streaks of lightening lighting them up as they crowned the summit and hovered on the top of the wonderful Sumeru mountain¹. (5)

[Note—¹Here in this imagery, Lord Ram's dark-complexioned body is compared to the dark clouds; the lightening represents Sita as she is fair complexioned; and the summit of Mt. Sumeru is symbolized by the magnificent throne on Pushpak plane as the throne is high and distinguished.]

रुचिर बिमान चलेउ अति आतुर । कीन्ही सुमन बृष्टि हरषे सुर ॥ ६ ॥
 परम सुखद चलि त्रिबिध बयारी । सागर सर सरि निर्मल बारी ॥ ७ ॥
 सगुन होहि सुंदर चहुँ पासा । मन प्रसन्न निर्मल नभ आसा ॥ ८ ॥

rucira bimāna calē'u ati ātura. kīnhī sumana br̥ṣṭi haraṣē sura. 6.
 parama sukhada cali tribidha bayārī. sāgara sara sari nirmala bārī. 7.
 saguna hōhim sundara cahum̐ pāsā. mana prasanna nirmala nabha āsā. 8.

The magnificent plane moved with speed across the sky even as the exhilarated gods showered an abundance of flowers on it. (6)

A very pleasant breeze blew; it had all the three qualities that are known to grant pleasantness to wind¹.

The ocean, the rivers and the lakes—all seemed to be filled with crystal clear and sweet water. (7)

All sorts of auspicious signs were visible in all the four directions. Everyone's mind and heart were filled with joy and happiness. The firmament and the directions—everywhere it seemed to be clear and bright². (8)

[Note—¹The three qualities that make the air pleasant are the following: it should be cool, it should be fragrant, and it should be blowing softly.

²To wit, it was a bright sunny day. The sky and the air were clear; one could see distinctly in the far away horizon. There was a soft, cool and fragrant breeze wafting across the land and caressing all aboard the plane. From high up in the sky where the Pushpak cruised, all water bodies down below on the earth looked clear and calm. And taken all in all, every thing seemed to have acquired an auspicious hue.]

कह रघुबीर देखु रन सीता । लछिमान इहाँ हत्यो इंद्रजीता ॥ ९ ॥
 हनूमान अंगद के मारे । रन महि परे निसाचर भारे ॥ १० ॥
 कुंभकरन रावन द्वौ भाई । इहाँ हते सुर मुनि दुखदाई ॥ ११ ॥

kaha raghubīra dēkhu rana sītā. lachimana ihāṁ hatyō im̐drajītā. 9.
 hanūmāna aṅgada kē mārē. rana mahi parē nisācara bhārē. 10.
 kumbhakarana rāvana dvau bhāī. ihāṁ hatē sura muni dukhadāī. 11.

[Meanwhile, Lord Ram pointed out to Sita some of the landmarks down on the ground below as the plane lifted and became airborne on its way to Ayodhya.]

‘Look Sita’, said Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) as he pointed out to her the different places of importance down below on the ground, ‘This is the place where Laxman had slayed Indrajeet (Meghand)¹. (9)

This below is the place where the two brothers Kumbhakaran² and Ravana³, who had been tormentors of pious sages, were eliminated. (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 76 along with Chaupai line nos. 14-16 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 71.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

दो०. इहाँ सेतु बाँध्यों अरु थापेउँ सिव सुख धाम ।
सीता सहित कृपानिधि संभुहि कीन्ह प्रनाम ॥ ११९ (क) ॥
जहँ जहँ कृपासिंधु बन कीन्ह बास बिश्राम ।
सकल देखाए जानकिहि कहे सबन्हि के नाम ॥ ११९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

ihāṁ sētu bāṁdhyōm aru thāpē'uṁ siva sukha dhāma.
sītā sahita kṛpānidhi sambhuhi kīnha pranāma. 119 (a).
jahāṁ jahāṁ kṛpāsindhu bana kīnha bāsa bisrāma.
sakala dēkhā'ē jānakihi kahē sabanhi kē nāma. 119 (b).

‘This is the site where I had got the bridge constructed to tame the ocean¹ and here below is where I consecrated Lord Shiva’s image and worshipped him².’

Seeing Lord Shiva’s holy Icon below, Lord Ram, who was like a treasury of the virtues of mercy, grace and kindness (kṛpānidhi), bowed his head along with Sita to pay his respects to Lord Shiva. (Doha no. 119-a)

As the plane crossed the ocean and moved northwards across the mainland, Lord Ram pointed to Sita and told her the names of all the different places he had visited and abided for some time during his long journey southwards from Panchavati from where she was abducted by Ravana³. (Doha no. 119-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 2.

³To wit, Lord Ram was retracing his steps as he pointed out to Sita all the places he had visited and stayed while searching for her.

First came to sight the city and the kingdom of Kishkindha, and the Prabarshan hill where he stayed for four months during the rainy season before the campaign to find Sita was launched. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 12.

Next came into view Mt. Rishyamook where Lord Ram had met Hanuman and Sugriv for the first time. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 44.

Now, as the plane cruised over Kishkindha, passing over the capital city, over the nearby Mt. Prabarshan and Mt. Rishyamook, Lord Ram's monkey and bear friends erupted in joy. Lord Ram ordered the plane to slow down and descend in height so that Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Neela etc. could have a bird's eye view of their homeland, the landscape of which looked so grand and majestic from the sky, what with its natural beauty and charming range of undulating hills and deep valleys, verdant forests and green meadows, crystal clear brooks and streams, and all other bounties of Mother Nature that this place was abundantly graced with. As the plane hovered overhead, the citizens of Kishkindha rushed out to marvel at this spectacle, whereat Sugriv and the rest waved at them enthusiastically from the sky while those on the ground cheered back in approval. It is quite possible that Sugriv and Angad and the rest of the monkey chieftains must have dropped some kind of message from the plane for their subjects standing on the ground below, telling them that everything was fine, that they are going to Ayodhya to join the celebrations marking Lord Ram's appointment as the king of that great kingdom, and that their kith and kin who had gone to Lanka as part of the mighty army are all on their way back, and will arrive very soon.

Sita too joined in these moments of joy and happiness as she remembered that it was at Rishyamook that she had seen some monkeys sitting on its summit, and that she had dropped some part of her torn clothes and ornaments to them from the chariot in which Ravana was taking her away to Lanka, so that should Lord Ram come that way these monkeys would show these things to the Lord, which in turn would convince the Lord that she was indeed taken in this direction. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 25 that precedes Doha no. 29; and Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 5.

After a brief pause over Kishkindha, the plane moved ahead northwards to reach the place where Lord Ram had met and given a brief discourse to sage Narad near a pleasant lake. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chanda line nos. 1-4 precede Doha no. 46.

Then, after passing over the pleasant forest north of this lake, the plane came to the place where Lord Ram had blessed Sabari. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37.

Further north came the place where Lord Ram had met the wounded vulture king Jatayu and provided him with deliverance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

And finally, the plane reached the sky above Panchavati, the hermitage from where Sita was abducted by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 28.]

चौ०. तुरत बिमान तहाँ चलि आवा । दंडक बन जहँ परम सुहावा ॥ १ ॥

कुंभजादि मुनिनायक नाना । गए रामु सब कें अस्थाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

turata bimāna tahāṁ cali āvā. daṇḍaka bana jahaṁ parama suhāvā. 1.
kumbhajādi munināyaka nānā. ga'ē rāmu saba kēṁ asthānā. 2.

The plane soon arrived over the pleasant Dandak forest¹. (1)

Lord Ram visited the hermitages of the many sages who lived here, such as sage Kumbhaj (sage Agastya) and others². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede Doha no. 12.

Besides sage Agastya, Lord Ram had met many other sages, such as Atri*1, Sarbhanga*2 and Sutikshan*3, during his outward journey to the forest, and so it was natural that during this visit when he was returning to Ayodhya he must have paid a visit to all these sages to seek their blessings.

{*1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3.

*2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7.

*3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 10 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-24 that precede it.}

One important thing that is to be noted here is that the Pushapk plane had landed on the ground, for otherwise it was not possible for Lord Ram to visit the hermitages of these sages.

Another point is that it must have been brief visits, as Lord Ram had but little time left in his hands to reach Ayodhya as he has himself told Vibhishan about it a little while earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116.]

सकल रिषिन्ह सन पाइ असीसा । चित्रकूट आए जगदीसा ॥ ३ ॥

तहँ करि मुनिन्ह केर संतोषा । चला बिमानु तहाँ ते चोखा ॥ ४ ॥

sakala riṣinha sana pā'i asīsā. citrakūṭa ā'ē jagadīsā. 3.
tahaṁ kari muninha kēra santōṣā. calā bimānu tahāṁ tē cōkhā. 4.

After receiving blessings and permission from all the sages, the Lord of the world ("jagadīsā"; Lord Ram) arrived at Chitrakoot¹. (3)

After the Lord met and provided satisfaction to the sages and hermits living there², the plane began its onwards journey from there. (4)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 134.]

It was at Chitrakoot that Bharat had come to try and take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 239—to Doha no. 319.}

It naturally follows that the sight of Chitrakoot filled Lord Ram's heart with sadness as he recalled those days when Bharat had come there to take him back to Ayodhya. It made him more eager to reach Ayodhya as soon as it was possible.

This is the reason why Lord Ram did not make a stopover at Chitrakoot, as he had done earlier at the Dandak forest where he met sage Agastya etc. (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein above), to meet the sages living there, such as sage Atri and his wife Anasuiya, but preferred to continue on his journey to Ayodhya. This is also the main reason why the Lord did not stop at sage Valmiki's hermitage beyond Chitrakoot, nor at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage at Prayag, but merely bowed his head, and made Sita and others to bow theirs too, from the sky as they beheld the two holy rivers Yamuna and Ganges at Triveni, while continuing with the onwards journey to Ayodhya, without stopping the plane or reducing its speed.

²Amongst the great sages who lived in the neighbourhood of Chitrakoot was the prominent sage Atri. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 132.}

When Lord Ram established his modest hut there to tarry a while before moving ahead on his journey to the deeper parts of the forest, and onwards to Lanka, all the sages, hermits and ascetics who abided in Chitrakoot to do Tapa (penances and other spiritual practices) had come to visit the Lord and pay their obeisance to him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 134 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

बहुरि राम जानकिहि देखाई । जमुना कलि मल हरनि सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥
पुनि देखी सुरसरी पुनीता । राम कहा प्रनाम करु सीता ॥ ६ ॥

bahuri rāma jānakihi dēkhā'ī. jamunā kali mala harani suhā'ī. 5.
puni dēkhī surasarī punītā. rāma kahā pranāma karu sītā. 6.

After that, Lord Ram showed Janki (Sita; the daughter of king Janak), the holy river Jamuna¹, which has the mystical ability to wash away all sorts of impurities associated with the age of Kaliyug (the present era of the four-era cycle of creation and destruction). (5)

Soon they saw the purifying holy river of the gods, known as Ganges². When this river came into view, Lord Ram asked Sita to bow her head to it to pay her obeisance to the holy river. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 322.]

When Bharat was going back to Ayodhya from Chitrakoot, this was the exact sequence of rivers that he had crossed. First he crossed Jamuna, and then Ganges. The

confluence of these two great rivers and a third one known as Saraswati is a great place for pilgrimage, and it is known as Triveni as well as Prayag. Sage Bharadwaj lived nearby.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 322.

So, the plane also passed over river Yamuna first, and Ganges next. To wit, the plane was now over Triveni—as we shall read in the next two verses.]

तीरथपति पुनि देखु प्रयागा । निरखत जन्म कोटि अघ भागा ॥ ७ ॥
देखु परम पावनि पुनि बेनी । हरनि सोक हरि लोक निसेनी ॥ ८ ॥
पुनि देखु अवधपुरी अति पावनि । त्रिबिध ताप भव रोग नसावनि ॥ ९ ॥

tīrathapati puni dēkhu prayāgā. nirakhata janma kōṭi agha bhāgā. 7.
dēkhu parama pāvani puni bēnī. harani sōka hari lōka nisēnī. 8.
puni dēkhu avadhapurī ati pāvani. tribidha tāpa bhava rōga nasāvani. 9.

[Lord Ram told Sita—] Now look at Prayag which is called a ‘king of holy places (tīrathapati)’. It is so holy that by merely looking at it all the sins and spiritual faults of a creature that has been accumulated over countless previous births simply run away¹. (7)

Look ahead; there you can see the confluence of the three holy rivers (Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) that is renowned as ‘Triveni’. It can eliminate and dispel all worldly sorrows and grief; it is also like a ladder that can transport a creature to heaven². (8)

Again, see there—you can behold the pleasant and sacred city of Ayodhya. It is able to eliminate the three types of agonies that torment a living being, as well as the pain and misery associated with the gross world of transmigration that the creature suffers from.³ (9)

[Note—¹Prayag is honoured by the epithet ‘King of all holy places’ because it can eliminate all spiritual faults of a creature, not only of the present birth but of many previous births combined.

²These repeated honours and laurels for this broad geographical area known Prayag, that consists of the confluence of the three great rivers and its adjoining areas where sages and hermit had their hermitages, is because it is regarded as a very holy place in Hinduism. Verse nos. 5-8 are devoted to this holy place.

Sage Bharadwaj had his hermitage here. Now the question is: Did Lord Ram visit the sage to pay his respects to the latter? Yes, he did; we shall read about it soon in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 121 herein below.

No mention is made in the Text regarding sage Valmiki’s hermitage which lay between sage Bharadwaj’s place in Prayag and Chitrakoot. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited the sage during their outward journey into the depth of the forest, and it was on Valmiki’s advice that the Lord stayed in Chitrakoot. {Refer: Ram Charit

Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 132.}

So it apparently looks like the Pushpak plane had skirted sage Valmiki's hermitage while on its way to Ayodhya; it is probably because it was situated at a location that was little way off from the straight-line aerial path that the plane was ordered to take to Ayodhya to save time.

³The three types of agonies are: 'Daihik'—that associated with the creature's own body; 'Daivik'—that associated with unfavourable Gods and Nature; and 'Bhautik'—that associated with the physical world outside.

Freedom from the cycle of birth and death, with torments and miseries associated with the latter, is obtained by the positive spiritual effects of the sacred city of Ayodhya by the virtue of its being the place where Lord Ram, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, took birth and lived.]

दो०. सीता सहित अवध कहूँ कीन्ह कृपाल प्रनाम ।

सजल नयन तन पुलकित पुनि पुनि हरषित राम ॥१२०(क)॥

dōhā.

sītā sahita avadha kahuṁ kīnha krpāla pranāma.

sajala nayana tana pulakita puni puni haraṣita rāma.120(a).

As soon as the holy city of Ayodhya hove into view, the merciful Lord Ram, along with Sita (and of course with Laxman and others who were accompanying him aboard the plane) bowed his head to this city.

The sight of Ayodhya overwhelmed Lord Ram so much so that his eyes welled up with tears and his body was repeatedly thrilled with a waves of affectionate emotions (as he remembered the past days and the love and affection that was bestowed upon him by every single resident of the city)¹. (Doha no. 120-a)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was overcome with nostalgia; he remembered his childhood days, his friends, his loving subjects who loved him so immensely that when he was leaving the city for the forest, the entire city had followed him on foot, vowing not to leave him and accompanying him to wherever he goes, declaring that they have nothing to do with a city, no matter how prosperous and comfortable it may have been, when their beloved Lord has decided to leave it behind. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Doha no. 86.}

It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram had bowed his head to Ayodhya even at the time when he was leaving the city for the forest (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 83).

Another point to note here is that it is mentioned everywhere that 'Lord Ram bowed at this place and that place himself and asked Sita to do as well', but no mention is made of others, such as his own brother Laxman, as well as his honoured guests who were on the plane. The answer is this: In Hinduism, a person is expected to perform all sacred deeds and rites with his wife if she happens to be with him on the occasion. In our case, Sita was with Lord Ram, and so it was obligatory for him to follow this rule. It does not mean that others did not accompany the Lord to bow their heads to Ayodhya here, or to the holy rivers Yamuna and Ganges earlier at Triveni, or

to the various sages the Lord had stopped his plane to meet and pay his obeisance to.

From a practical point of view, many things are understood by application of one's common sense, and it should not be expected from anyone, no matter how erudite and detailed a chronicler is, to list every person's name attending an event in his narration of it.]

पुनि प्रभु आइ त्रिबेनीं हरषित मज्जनु कीन्ह ।

कपिन्ह सहित बिप्रन्ह कहूँ दान बिबिध बिधि दीन्ह ॥ १२० (ख) ॥

puni prabhu ā'i tribēnīm haraṣita majjanu kīnha.

kapinha sahita bipranha kahuṁ dāna bibidha bidhi dīnha. 120 (b).

The Lord once again returned to Triveni (the confluence of rivers Yamuna, Ganges and Saraswati, at Prayag). He descended and took a bath at the place where the three rivers meet.

Lord Ram, along with his Kapi friends (the monkeys and bears), made charities here and gave donations to Brahmins in various ways (as ordained by religious scriptures)¹. (Doha no. 120-b)

[Note—¹An interesting question arises here: From where, and how, did Lord Ram and his companions make charities and manage to give donations to the Brahmins when apparently they had no wealth with them at that time, as they were coming directly from Lanka aboard a plane that too belonged to the kingdom of Lanka?

The answer is this: We have already read that Vibhishan had filled his Pushpak plane with priceless jewels and clothes and placed them before Lord Ram as a tribute to him, whereat the Lord had asked Vibhishan to go up in the sky and shower these things on the army so that the monkeys and bears could pick up what they fancied. So this is how the great monkey and bear commanders aboard the plane had access to some valuables that they would not donate to the Brahmins as expected from them.

As for Lord Ram, in all probability he made a promise to the alms seekers and the Brahmins at that time, that as soon as he is crowned on the throne of Ayodhya he would send them all that he has promised to them now. Well, everyone recognized the Lord, and surely they were willing to bless the Lord as profusely as if they had actually received their desired gifts. They all knew that Lord Ram had nothing with him then, and they could see that he was still attired like a hermit.

And as for Sita, we have already noted earlier, at the time of her 'fire test', that though Vibhishan had erred in adoring her with jewels and royal robes as a mark of respect, yet Lord Ram had made her shun all these things as they, Lord Ram as well as Sita, were still expected to live and attire as forest dwellers. And we have also noted that this was a primary reason which had made Lord Ram very angry at Sita. So therefore, she too didn't have anything with her to donate to these alms seekers.]

चौ०. प्रभु हनुमंतहि कहा बुझाई । धरि बटु रूप अवधपुर जाई ॥ १ ॥

भरतहि कुसल हमारि सुनाएहु । समाचार लै तुम्ह चलि आएहु ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu hanumantahi kahā bujhā'ī. dhari baṭu rūpa avadhapura jā'ī. 1.
bharatahi kusala hamāri sunā'ēhu. samācāra lai tumha cali ā'ēhu. 2.

Lord Ram called Hanuman and advised him as follows: 'Assume the form of a young Brahmin student (baṭu)¹ and go to the city of Ayodhya. (1)

Tell Bharat about our well-being, and come back to me with the news that you collect there.' (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram chose Hanuman for this work because of the following primary reasons:

One, the Lord knew that Hanuman could assume any form that he wished, especially as a Brahmin, because he had first met the Lord at the foot of Mt. Rishyamook in this form when Sugriv asked him to go and meet the Lord to find out who he was—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4 and 6 that precede Doha no. 1.

It was necessary to be disguised as a Brahmin, especially a young Brahmin student, as this form is shown respect by everyone, and it would therefore help Hanuman to have easy access to Ayodhya and meet Bharat to convey the Lord's message to him without arousing any alarm or suspicion in the mind of the guards who were appointed to secure the hermitage where Bharat abided in Nandigram on the outskirts of Ayodhya.

Two, Hanuman was able to cruise in the sky very swiftly as was proved on two prominent occasions earlier—once was when he had gone to the northern mountains to bring the herb needed to revive Laxman, and on another occasion when he had sailed over the mighty ocean to reach Lanka in search of Sita. Lord Ram needed someone who would silently and unnoticed sail through the sky very swiftly, and return back as swiftly after meeting Bharat and conveying the good news of the Lord's return from the forest.

Three, Lord Ram knew that Hanuman was highly intelligent and able to handle unexpected developments. The Lord wanted to find out if he was actually welcomed back in Ayodhya, of how Bharat would receive this news of his arrival—as is apparent in verse no. 2. Hanuman was clever enough to handle any difficult situation should it arise, and also wise enough to maneuver himself out of a sticky situation in case it unfortunately turned out that way. He was able in every respect—bodily he was strong and agile, mentally he was intelligent and wise, emotionally he was stable, was very polite and courteous in his mannerism, was basically warm at heart yet cold if dealing with a hostile correspondent, and in every way well qualified to be an excellent ambassador for his Lord.

Four, Hanuman had already met Bharat while bringing the herb to revive Laxman. So it would be very easy for him to go straight to the place where Bharat lived, as well as to recognize him. Besides this, Bharat too would easily recognize Hanuman after the latter formally introduces himself and reminds Bharat of their previous meeting by citing some part of its conversation in order to convince Bharat of his authenticity. No other member of the Lord's company had this benefit with him; none knew Bharat personally, nor did Bharat know any one of them.

Five, the Lord still had some time left in his hands before the exact time of 14 years of forest exile ended; a full day's time was still left (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1). Lord Ram wished

to use this time to visit sage Bharadwaj, as well as Nishad, his friend of the boatman community, which he did not do while heading straight to Ayodhya because he was in a hurry to reach it in case he missed the deadline of 14 years to the dot. By sending Hanuman to inform Bharat that the Lord had arrived, the fear of Bharat harming himself, should there be some delay while the Lord spent some time with sage Bharadwaj and Nishad, was dispelled. Once Hanuman tells Bharat that the Lord has actually arrived but has gone back to pay his respects to sage Bharadwaj and then meet Nishad before coming to Ayodhya, Bharat would not do anything reckless, for surely he would have no objection at the Lord going back for a while to meet his acquaintances and friends who stood him in good stead in the forest.

Six, the Lord's plane had approached the city of Ayodhya from the southern direction, roughly the same direction where Bharat had established his hermitage at a place known as Nandigram on the southern outskirts of the city, and had been abiding there for the last 14 years. As the Pushpak plane approached the city and hovered over the sky, Lord Ram could clearly perceive Bharat's place, as well as the fact that everything appeared to be quiet and normal on the ground within the city itself; there were no hectic activities, which in turn meant that there was no cause of alarm and hurry to descend. Since one day's time was still left in hand before the expiry of an exact period of 14 years, Lord Ram decided to use it more prudently by paying a visit to sage Bharadwaj and Nishad even as Hanuman goes to give an advance notice to Bharat of the Lord's arrival.]

तुरत पवनसुत गवनत भयऊ । तब प्रभु भरद्वाज पहिं गयऊ ॥ ३ ॥
 नाना बिधि मुनि पूजा कीन्ही । अस्तुति करि पुनि आसिष दीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥
 मुनि पद बंदि जुगल कर जोरी । चढ़ि बिमान प्रभु चले बहोरी ॥ ५ ॥

turata pavanasuta gavanata bhaya'ū. taba prabhu bharadvāja pahim̐ gaya'ū.
 3.

nānā bidhi muni pūjā kīnhī. astuti kari puni āsiṣa dīnhī. 4.
 muni pada bandi jugala kara jōrī. caḍhi bimāna prabhu calē bahōrī. 5.

No sooner had the Lord given him instructions then Hanuman went off on his mission.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram went to meet sage Bharadwaj¹. (3)

The sage worshipped Lord Ram in a variety of ways, offering his prayers and obeisance to the Lord, as well as blessing him². (4)

After their affectionate meeting, Lord Ram joined the palms of his hand in a gesture of reverence as he took his leave from the sage.

The Lord boarded the plane once again and headed to his next destination. (5)

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj's hermitage was situated at Prayag, the site of Triveni, the confluence of the three holy rivers Yamuna, Ganges and Saraswati. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 106; and (b) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44.}]

It means that after sending Hanuman on errand, Lord Ram ordered the plane to turn back and return to Prayag.

An interesting observation is to be made at this juncture: The Pushpak plane had not landed yet; it was still airborne. It follows that after Lord Ram had instructed Hanuman to go to Bharat and tell him the good news that the Lord has arrived, Hanuman had gone on his assignment directly from the sky. We are aware of his ability to 'fly' or 'cruise' or 'sail' in the air, as he has done it in the past on at least two prominent occasions: once when crossing the ocean to search Sita, and the second time when he had gone to the northern mountains to bring the herb to revive Laxman who lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka. This helped the Lord to order the plane to turn back mid-air, as it saved a lot of time, to fulfill his wishes to go and meet sage Bharadwaj and the chief of the boatman community, Nishad.

We have read that the Lord instructed Hanuman to disguise himself as a young Brahmin; so what Hanuman must have done was to land at some distant from Bharat's hermitage in Nandigram and transmute himself into a Brahmin before walking to the hermitage. If any guard stopped him and asked who he was, Hanuman would have told him that he has come to meet Bharat with an important message. Since he was in the physical form of a Brahmin, a form that is universally respected, no one would have questioned him further. It is in this way that Hanuman could have an easy access to Bharat. When they met, of course, Hanuman told Bharat who he actually was.

²Sage Bharadwaj offered his prayers and obeisance to Lord Ram as the latter was the 'Lord of the world', and he blessed the Lord because he was a very revered, a senior and an illustrious sage of great learning.

When Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited sage Bharadwaj on their way to the forest, at that time too the sage had done the same thing—he had worshipped the Lord, prayed to him, and blessed him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 106 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

इहाँ निषाद सुना प्रभु आए । नाव नाव कहँ लोग बोलाए ॥ ६ ॥
सुरसरि नाघि जान तब आयो । उतरेउ तट प्रभु आयसु पायो ॥ ७ ॥

ihāṁ niṣāda sunā prabhu ā'ē. nāva nāva kahaṁ lōga bōlā'ē. 6.
surasari nāghi jāna taba āyō. utarē'u taṭa prabhu āyasu pāyō. 7.

Here, when Nishad heard that Lord Ram is arriving, he immediately sent out a message to all the members of the boatman community (of which he was the chief) and summoned them to assemble on the banks of river Ganges. (6)

The plane crossed the river Ganges and arrived on this side (where Nishad was waiting for the Lord). The plane was then ordered by Lord Ram to land on the bank of the river. (7)

तब सीताँ पूजी सुरसरी । बहु प्रकार पुनि चरनन्हि परी ॥ ८ ॥
दीन्हि असीस हरषि मन गंगा । सुंदरि तव अहिवात अभंगा ॥ ९ ॥

taba sītāṃ pūjī surasarī. bahu prakāra puni carananhi parī. 8.
dīnhi asīsa haraṣi mana gaṅgā. sundari tava ahivāta abhaṅgā. 9.

Then Sita offered her worship to the holy river Ganges, the river of the gods (surasarī) in various ways, and then prostrated at the feet of the deity of the river to pay her obeisance¹. (8)

River Ganges, in a personified form, felt very happy, and blessed Sita profusely, saying: ‘Oh fair lady! May you be blessed with a happy married life for an eternal time.’ (9)

[Note—¹Sita had offered her worship to the deity of river Ganges on her way out to the forest and sought the deity’s blessings for protection and safety for herself, her husband Lord Ram, and her brother-in-law Laxman during their period of trial in the forest, promising the deity that she would come again to pay her respects to the latter on the return journey back to Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.}]

It was one main reason why Lord Ram decided to turn back from Ayodhya to go to the same place to enable Sita to keep her vows made to the holy river.]

सुनत गुहा धायउ प्रेमाकुल । आयउ निकट परम सुख संकुल ॥ १० ॥
प्रभुहि सहित बिलोकि बैदेही । परेउ अवनि तन सुधि नहिं तेही ॥ ११ ॥
प्रीति परम बिलोकि रघुराई । हरषि उठाइ लियो उर लाई ॥ १२ ॥

sunata guhā dhāya'u prēmākula. āya'u nikata parama sukha saṅkula. 10.
prabhuhi sahita bilōki baidēhī. parē'u avani tana sudhi nahim tēhī. 11.
prīti parama bilōki raghurāī. haraṣi uṭhā'i liyō ura lāī. 12.

As soon as Nishad (whose other name was “Guha”; “guhā”) heard that Lord Ram has landed, he rushed forward to meet and welcome the Lord. He went near the Lord with emotions of extreme joy and happiness overwhelming him. (10)

When he beheld Lord Ram along with Vaidehi (Sita), he felt so thrilled and exhilarated that he lost awareness of his body as he fell down on the ground before the Lord (to express his joy and show reverence for the Lord). (11)

When Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (raghurāī), observed Nishad’s immense affection for him, the Lord became very emotional even as he lifted Nishad up from the ground and embraced him most lovingly¹. (12)

[Note—¹A special bond of friendship and affection had developed between Lord Ram and Nishad. When the Lord was on his way to the forest, he reached Sringeripur where Nishad lived. There the two met, and Nishad, along with his entire family and friends, had offered his worship to the Lord, and given him sweet fruits and edible roots as refreshment. Nishad had kept vigil as Lord Ram and Sita slept under a tree during the night. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 92.}]

Though it is not clearly mentioned in the main Text of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ about till when Nishad accompanied Lord Ram into the forest, but in all probability it was till Chitrakoot. This would be evident on close analysis of the Text—for when we reach the point in the narrative of Lord Ram’s journey into the forest and his establishing a small hermitage at Chitrakoot, the Text says that Nishad returned home, and on the way he found Sumantra, the chief minister of Ayodhya who had brought Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in a chariot on the instructions of king Dasrath, still somewhere near the banks of river Ganges, grieving for the Lord. It was here that Sumantra was left by Lord Ram as he crossed the river on a boat to reach the other side and continue with his onwards journey. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 142.}

छं०. लियो हृदयँ लाइ कृपा निधान सुजान रायँ रमापती । १ ।
 बैठारि परम समीप बूझी कुसल सो कर बीनती ॥ २ ॥
 अब कुसल पद पंकज बिलोकि बिरंचि संकर सेव्य जे । ३ ।
 सुख धाम पूरनकाम राम नमामि राम नमामि ते ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

liyō hr̥dayaṁ lā'i kṛpā nidhāna sujāna rāyaṁ ramāpatī. 1.
 baiṭhāri parama samīpa būjhī kusala sō kara bīnatī. 2.
 aba kusala pada paṅkaja bilōki birañci saṅkara sēbya jē. 3.
 sukha dhāma pūranakāma rāma namāmi rāma namāmi tē. 4.

Lord Ram—who is a veritable treasury of the glorious virtues of grace, mercy, kindness and compassion (kṛpā nidhāna), who is an exemplary gentleman (sujāna), the Lord of the world (rāyaṁ), and Lord Vishnu, the divine husband of goddess Rama (also known as Laxmi; “ramāpatī”)—picked up and clasped Nishad affectionately to his bosom. (Chanda line no. 1)

Then the Lord made Nishad sit very close to him (signaling that the Lord treated Nishad as a dear friend), and asked the latter about his welfare. (Chanda line no. 2)

Nishad replied, ‘Oh Lord! Now that I have seen the lotus-like feet of yours, feet that are served and worshipped by the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, everything is fine with me. (Chanda line no. 3)

Oh Lord Ram who is an abode of joy, happiness and bliss (sukha dhāma), and who is a fulfiller of all wishes (pūranakāma)! I repeatedly bow my head before your majesty (rāma namāmi rāma namāmi tē). (Chanda line no. 4)

सब भाँति अधम निषाद सो हरि भरत ज्यों उर लाइयो । ५ ।
 मतिमंद तुलसीदास सो प्रभु मोह बस बिसराइयो ॥ ६ ॥
 यह रावनारि चरित्र पावन राम पद रतिप्रद सदा । ७ ।
 कामादिहर बिग्यानकर सुर सिद्ध मुनि गावहिं मुदा ॥ ८ ॥

saba bhāṁti adhama niṣāda sō hari bharata jyōm ura lā'iyō. 5.
 matimanda tulasīdāsa sō prabhu mōha basa bisarā'iyō. 6.
 yaha rāvanāri caritra pāvana rāma pada ratiprada sadā. 7.
 kāmādhara bigyānakara sura sid'dha muni gāvahim mudā. 8.

I am a lowly person by all accounts, but you are so gracious and kind that you have so affectionately embraced me as if I was like your own dear brother Bharat¹.’ (Chanda line no. 5)

[Goswami Tulsidas, the poet-saint who first penned the divine Story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ as we know of it today, addresses himself and says—]

“Oh Tulsidas! Say how stupid you are to have forgotten such a magnanimous and gracious Lord as Lord Ram (who had gone out of his way to show so much love for even a lowly person as a boatman, treating him as if he was very dear to him and elevating him to the same pedestal as his own brother Bharat).²” (Chanda line no. 6)

This Story relating the life of Lord Ram who had slayed Ravana is spiritually purifying and elevating for the soul of a living being, for it grants a person the benefit of having eternal devotion for the holy feet of the Lord who is no one else but a personified form of the Supreme Being. (Chanda line no. 7)

This divine Story helps to eliminate all worldly enemies such as Kaam (passions) etc. that torment a creature; it also blesses one with spiritual enlightenment and wisdom.

This is why illustrious sages, the exalted gods and great mystics sing it most enthusiastically. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹When Bharat had gone to Chitrakoot to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, Nishad had accompanied him. It was Nishad who had guided Bharat to the Lord’s hermitage. Nishad was also a witness of the most loving way Lord Ram had clasped Bharat to his bosom when the two brothers finally met. At that time, Lord Ram had embraced Nishad too.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 198; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 203; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 216; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 225; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 239; (vi) Doha no. 240 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede it; (vii) Doha no. 241.}

So, all this memory was fresh in Nishad’s mind; he became overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness when he realized that Lord Ram took a special detour just to come and meet him.

²Tulsidas warns himself never to forget Lord Ram, as he will never find any other Lord as gracious and kind as Lord Ram is.]

दो०. समर बिजय रघुबीर के चरित जे सुनहिं सुजान ।

बिजय बिबेक बिजूति नित तिन्हहि देहिं भगवान ॥ १२१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

samara bijaya raghubīra kē carita jē sunahim sujāna.
bijaya bibēka bibhūti nita tinahi dēhim bhagavāna. 121 (a).

Those wise gentlemen with good understanding and high intellect who hear this magnificent story of Lord Rughbir's victory in the epic war (of Lanka) are always blessed by the Lord (Sri Ram) with the boon of victory in all the endeavours in their lives, as well as by the virtues of wisdom and attainment of worldly prosperity¹. (Doha no. 121-a)

[Note—¹A similar idea is affirmed by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 120 while explaining the importance of the company of saints where the divine Story of Lord Ram is recited and discoursed upon.

The great rewards that accrue to a spiritual seeker by hearing Lord Ram's divine Story are elaborately enumerated in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places. Some of these are the following verses: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126; Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 53; and (b) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 33.]

यह कलिकाल मलायतन मन करि देखु बिचार ।
श्रीरघुनाथ नाम तजि नाहिन आन अधार ॥ १२१ (ख) ॥

yaha kalikāla malāyatana mana kari dēkhu bicāra.
śrīraghunātha nāma taji nāhina āna adhāra. 121 (b).

[In this verse, Tulsidas addresses his own self and says—]

‘Oh my Mana (my inner-self; my heart and sub-conscious mind)! Ponder over the matter wisely and patiently, and arrive at the unequivocal Truth yourself. The present age of Kaliyug is a veritable den of all sorts of sins, mischief, vices and other evil devices. In this spiritual quagmire, the only source of succour and solace for the trapped creature is to be found in the holy name of Lord Raghubir, which is “Ram” (pronounced as Raam; or ‘Rām’)¹, for in all sooth and without gainsay there is no other way.’ (Doha no. 121-b)

[Note—¹The great spiritual significance of the holy name of Lord Ram, i.e. the word “Rām”, especially with reference to Kaliyug, is detailed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 27 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede it and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; and Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 130.

Meanwhile, a whole set of verses in Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas are dedicated to extolling the glories of Lord Ram's holy name: apropos—from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

(v) Sub-section 21.1.5: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 12:

दो०. रहा एक दिन अवधि कर अति आरत पुर लोग ।
जहँ तहँ सोचहिं नारि नर कृस तन राम बियोग ॥ क ॥

dōhā.

rahā ēka dina avadhi kara ati ārata pura lōga.
jaham̐ taham̐ sōcahim̐ nāri nara kṛsa tana rāma biyōga. a .

One day was left before the exact period of 14 years (during which Lord Ram was to live in the forest in accordance to the word given by him to his late father king Dasrath) would finally come to end.

The anxious citizens of Ayodhya, both the males and the females, were extremely eager to see the Lord back home by that time. They had all been so overcome with grief and sorrows during the Lord's long absence that they had become weak in their bodies and fidgety in their minds, especially because there was apprehension as to what would happen now if the Lord did not return in time¹. (Doha-a)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram was on his way to the forest 14 years ago, the citizens had become overwhelmed with grief and sorrows at that time too. They had abandoned the prosperous city of Ayodhya and their own comfortable homesteads with a firm determination to follow the Lord and live wherever he decides to live in the forest. But since this was impractical, and it would cause a lot of problems to the citizens themselves, so Lord Ram was forced to, much against his will and with a heavy heart, devise a way to leave the grief-stricken citizens while they were sleeping during the night, and quietly move ahead into the forest on a path which they wouldn't be able to follow.

Remorse and pain of separation descended the subjects like a heavy mist of grief when they discovered in the morning that the Lord was nowhere to be found. Crestfallen, distraught, forlorn and broken in heart, the poor citizens had no option but to return to Ayodhya and somehow wait for the period of 14 years to end, for they were so sure of Lord's words that they knew for certain that even if the heaven and hell break loose from their moorings, Lord Ram can never rescind on his words that he would be back in Ayodhya just when the period of 14 years ended, which made them absolutely sure that the Lord would be with them after this period.

But this was a painfully long and a burdensome wait, and though the citizens had been left with no other choice but to go through the needs of routine life, yet they did it mechanically like someone dumb and deaf is yoked to a plough. The nearer the end of the period 14 years approached, the greater became their anxiety and eagerness and nervousness. The only talk was about Lord Ram's arrival; everyone was on the lookout for any news of the Lord. Bharat must have surely appointed spies all along the route which the Lord was in all probability to take, the same path which Bharat himself had traveled on his way to and back from Chitrakoot. But as of date, there was no news. This exacerbated the people's anxiety and made them very

apprehensive. No one could guess that Lord Ram was coming by the aerial route; there was no way they could have known it.

Surely then, when the news of the Lord's arrival was actually conveyed to Bharat by Hanuman, and then by Bharat to the citizens, there must have been a spontaneous and tumultuous applause, and a thunderous cry of joy that reverberated in all the directions.

Meanwhile, auspicious signs heralding good times were discernible, and those who were wise and sagacious in these matters could see that it meant positive tidings. They comforted the grieving people and assured them that Lord Ram was sure to come.]

सगुन होहिं सुंदर सकल मन प्रसन्न सब केर ।

प्रभु आगवन जनाव जनु नगर रञ्ज चहुं फेर ॥ ख ॥

saguna hōhim sundara sakala mana prasanna saba kēra.
prabhu āgavana janāva janu nagara ramya cahuñ phēra. b.

Auspicious signs and good omens appeared in abundance, portending lucky tidings¹. Seeing them filled the heart of everyone with joy and happiness.

These positive signs were very encouraging, and they were indicating to the citizens that Lord Ram was soon to arrive. The city of Ayodhya, which was hitherto gloomy and overcast with a thick mist of grief, too appeared to suddenly become pleasant and charming in all its directions (as if the sun of good hope had emerged from behind a bank of dark cloud symbolizing hopelessness and helplessness)². (Doha-b)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 7.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 3.]

कौसल्यादि मातु सब मन अनंद अस होइ ।

आयउ प्रभु श्री अनुज जुत कहन चहत अब कोइ ॥ ग ॥

kausalyādi mātu saba mana ananda asa hō'i.
āya'u prabhu śrī anuja juta kahana cahata aba kō'i. c.

Mother Kaushalya and others¹ felt extremely exhilarated in their hearts. They felt that anytime now some messenger would come to them with the good news that Lord Ram has arrived with his wife Sita and younger brother Laxman². (Doha-c)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had three queens; the chief was Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, and the other two were Sumitra, the mother of Laxman and Shatrughan, and Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat.

²A similar scene is narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 17-20.]

भरत नयन भुज दच्छिन फरकत बारहिं बार ।
जानि सगुन मन हरष अति लागे करन बिचार ॥ घ ॥

bharata nayana bhuja dacchina pharakata bārahim bāra.
jāni saguna mana haraṣa ati lāgē karana bicāra. d.

Meanwhile, the right arms and eyelid of Bharat began fluttering repeatedly¹. Realising that these were auspicious signs and lucky omens, Bharat felt joyful in his heart. He began thinking as to what it means. (Doha-d)

[Note—¹The fluttering of different parts of the body is regarded as good or bad sign depending on which part flutters. For men, the fluttering of right side of the body is considered auspicious and good, while for a woman the reverse is true, i.e. the fluttering of the left side of her body is regarded as good.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 231; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

चौ०. रहेउ एक दिन अवधि अधारा । समुझत मन दुख भयउ अपारा ॥ १ ॥
कारन कवन नाथ नहिं आयउ । जानि कुटिल किधौं मोहि बिसरायउ ॥ २ ॥
अहह धन्य लछिमन बड़भागी । राम पदारबिंदु अनुरागी ॥ ३ ॥
कपटी कुटिल मोहि प्रभु चीन्हा । ताते नाथ संग नहिं लीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

rahē'u ēka dina avadhi adhārā. samujhata mana dukha bhaya'u apārā. 1.
kāraṇa kavana nātha nahim āya'u. jāni kuṭila kidhaurm mōhi bisarāya'u. 2.
ahaha dhan'ya lachimana barabhāgī. rāma padārabindu anurāgī. 3.
kapaṭī kuṭila mōhi prabhu cīnhā. tāte nātha saṅga nahim līnhā. 4.

Realising that only one day was left for completion of 14 years, Bharat felt very sad; his heart and mind were overcome with extreme anxiety, worry and grief. (1)

He pondered poignantly: 'What is the reason why Lord Ram has yet not arrived? Is it possible that it because he perceived me to be wicked and scheming in my heart¹, and therefore the Lord decided to forsake me; has he decided to get me off his mind and memory, and just forget me altogether? (2)

Ah! How fortunate and lucky has Laxman been that he has had extreme affection for the lotus-like feet of the Lord². (3)

Surely the Lord discerned me to be wicked and evil in my heart, false and pervert, and this is the reason why the Lord did not take me along with him further on in his journey into the forest³. (4)

[Note—¹Bharat's deep sense of regret, grief and sadness are evident in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. Some of the verses that give a comprehensive picture of the intensity of his remorse and sense of guilt are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 160; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 164; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 168; (iv) Doha no. 177—to Doha no. 183.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 182; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 200 where Bharat is all praises for Laxman and his good fortune that he decided to discard everything else to serve Lord Ram selflessly.

³Bharat has said the same thing earlier too in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 205.

When Bharat had gone to Chitrakoot in an attempt to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, he had offered that if the Lord thinks it not wise to return as it would violate the words he had given to his late father, then let it be so. But Laxman was not bound by any such vows; so Bharat offered an option: why not send Laxman back home, and in his place Bharat would accompany the Lord for the remaining period in the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 268 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}

So therefore, Bharat laments woefully, with a lot of remorse in his grief-stricken heart: "I am sure that it is this reason why the Lord took Laxman along with him, and decided not to entertain my pleas when I requested him to come back to Ayodhya, or take me along with him on his onwards journey into the forest. The Lord knew that Laxman loved him and was dedicated to him more than I was; nay, the Lord realized that I was wicked and scheming in my heart. Is it not obvious—because was it not due to me that the Lord had to go to the forest in the first place, as my wicked mother Kaikeyi had devised this nasty plan all on her own, as I had nothing to do with it, so that I could ascend the throne and be a king of Ayodhya? Woe to me and my ill mother and my doomed fate! I can't and won't ever be able to convince the Lord that I am not guilty."

Bharat's sense of remorse, regret and guilt are expressed by him in explicit terms on previous occasions also, such as when he laments that he has no doubt that it is he who is at the center of all the misfortunes that have befallen on the kingdom and which culminated in Lord Ram being sent to the forest: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 5 that precede Doha no. 179.]

जौं करनी समुझै प्रभु मोरी । नहिं निस्तार कलप सत कोरी ॥ ५ ॥

जन अवगुन प्रभु मान न काऊ । दीन बंधु अति मृदुल सुभाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

jaum karanī samujhai prabhu mōrī. nahim nistāra kalapa sata kōrī. 5.

jana avaguna prabhu māna na kā'ū. dīna bandhu ati mṛdula subhā'ū. 6.

Should the Lord take into account my doings (and the horrible mischief perpetrated by my evil mother in the fallacious belief that she is furthering my imaginary interests), then there is no chance of my ever getting redemption even in countless cycles of my births and deaths (i.e. for eternity)¹. (5)

[But I am sure it is not that way, for I know very well the nature of my dear brother that—] The lord does not mind the faults and shortcomings of his devotees and servants; it is because he is extremely and absolutely kind, compassionate, benevolent, gracious and forgiving by his very nature. Verily indeed, without gainsay and in all sooth, he is also a dear friend of those who are meek and lowly because of inherent nature which is very kind and sweet². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 179 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede it.

To wit, Bharat says that if one were to decide his fate merely on physical developments, without considering whether or not he was guilty of any misdoings, what were his internal feelings towards Lord Ram, and how much he has lamented and grieved due to these developments to which he was not a party at all, and which he had tried to remedy in the best possible way he could think of though he could not undo the fiat of fate, then there is no doubt that he would be doomed and condemned forever.

But still there is hope for him, and this hope lies in the stellar nature of Lord Ram which he knew by experience to be most kind, gracious, compassionate, merciful, loving, benevolent, magnanimous, munificent, forgiving and tolerant. Bharat was certain that Lord Ram would embrace him and never abandon him, no matter what comes.

His confidence in this regard is clear when he tells Lord Ram in Chitrakoot that he knows how much the Lord loves him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 260. Here Bharat says that during their childhood days, the Lord would lose a game in order to make Bharat win it, as this win would make Bharat rejoice, and Bharat's cheerful countenance would in turn make Lord Ram himself rejoice! What more proof is needed of how much the Lord loved Bharat.

²A similar idea is expressed by Bharat himself in unequivocal terms earlier too—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 234; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 260; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 299.]

मोरे जियँ भरोस दूढ़ सोई । मिलिहहिं राम सगुन सुभ होई ॥ ७ ॥

बीतेँ अवधि रहहिं जौँ प्राणा । अधम कवन जग मोहि समाना ॥ ८ ॥

mōrē jiyam̐ bharōsa dūṛha sō'ī. milihahim̐ rāma saguna subha hō'ī. 7.
bītēm̐ avadhi rahahim̐ jaurm̐ prānā. adhama kavana jaga mōhi samānā. 8.

‘I am confident and absolutely certain that’, said Bharat to himself, ‘Lord Ram would meet me (or, conversely, I will meet him) as there are ample good omens and auspicious signs indicative of it¹. (7)

If I live beyond the time limit set for the Lord's return (which is exactly 14 years from the day he departed for the forest), then all the woes befall upon me, for then there would be no one as contemptible and despicable and sinful as me.² (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Doha line nos. b to d herein above.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 234.

²Bharat was overcome with surging waves of intense grief and insurmountable remorse. He was in such an emotional state of mind, and on edge, that he clung to all signs of hope that Lord Ram would return in time that he could think of. The good omens and auspicious signs which he perceived filled his heart with positive hope, but soon apprehension took the better hold of him and he began to think negatively.

It was a virtual roller-coaster emotional drive for Bharat: in one instant he was on the crest of a wave of joy because his long wait for the Lord's return was about to come to an end and there were ample signs of Nature that good news was in the offing, but soon he descended into a deep trough of sadness and depression when apprehension of something going unexpectedly wrong pulled him down and dashed his hopes.

This mental state of uncertainty is seen earlier also when Bharat was heading to meet Lord Ram at Chitrakoot. At one instant he would walk briskly towards Lord Ram's hermitage as he was certain that the Lord would come rushing to embrace him as soon as he hears that Bharat has come, and the next instant he felt gloomy and forlorn as he apprehended that when the Lord hears that Bharat was approaching his hermitage, he would immediately leave it and go somewhere else in order to avoid meeting Bharat.

This above emotional state of Bharat is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 233—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 234.]

दो०. राम बिरह सागर महँ भरत मगन मन होत ।

बिप्र रूप धरि पवन सुत आइ गयउ जनु पोत ॥ १ (क) ॥

बैठे देखि कुसासन जटा मुकुट कृस गात ।

राम राम रघुपति जपत स्रवत नयन जलजात ॥ १ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

rāma biraha sāgara maham̐ bharata magana mana hōta.

bipra rūpa dhari pavana suta ā'i gaya'u janu pōta. 1 (a).

baiṭhē dēkhi kusāsana jaṭā mukuṭa kṛsa gāta.

rāma rāma raghupati japata sravata nayana jalajāta. 1 (b).

In the symbolic ocean of grief and sorrows caused by separation from Lord Ram, Bharat's mind was violently wobbling, tossing and spinning around as if it was about to sink in it, when Hanuman, the son of the wind god, came to Bharat disguised as a young Brahmin student. His arrival was like a boat that comes to help a drowning man by the latter's good fortune, for it immediately provided succour and solace to the sinking spirits of Bharat. (Doha no. 1-a)

Hanuman found Bharat sitting on a mat of reeds; his matted hairs were coiled on the top of his head like a crown, and his body was emaciated. He (Bharat) was constantly

repeating the name of Lord Ram, muttering ‘Ram-Ram’ incessantly, and tears rolled down his eyes in an endless stream¹. (Doha no. 1-b)

[Note—¹A similar portrait of Bharat is described elaborately in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 326.]

चौ०. देखत हनूमान अति हरषेउ । पुलक गात लोचन जल बरषेउ ॥ १ ॥
मन महँ बहुत भाँति सुख मानी । बोलेउ श्रवन सुधा सम बानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

dēkhata hanūmāna ati haraṣē'u. pulaka gāta lōcana jala baraṣē'u. 1.
mana maham̐ bahuta bhāṁti sukha mānī. bōlē'u śravana sudhā sama bānī. 2.

When Hanuman saw Bharat, he was extremely delighted; his body became thrilled and tears of joy rolled down his eyes.*

[*This verse can be read in another way too as follows: “No sooner did Bharat see Hanuman than he felt extremely exhilarated; his body was thrilled and a stream of tears rolled down from his eyes.” But taking into consideration what follows next, this interpretation does not fit in well. So therefore, the interpretation in the main text herein above should be regarded as the correct one.] (1)

He (Hanuman) felt extremely delighted in his heart and mind (Mana), and spoke words that were very sweet and pleasant to hear as if they were soaked in ambrosia. (2)

जासु बिरहँ सोचहु दिन राती । रटहु निरंतर गुन गन पाँती ॥ ३ ॥
रघुकुल तिलक सुजन सुखदाता । आयउ कुसल देव मुनि त्राता ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu biraham̐ sōcahu dina rātī. raṭahu nirantara guna gana pām̐tī. 3.
raghukula tilaka sujana sukhadātā. āya'u kusala dēva muni trātā. 4.

Hanuman said to Bharat: ‘The Lord (Sri Ram) for whom you lament so much, whose glories and virtues you constantly remember, that Lord who is the most exalted in the line of illustrious kings descending from king Raghu (raghukula tilaka), and the Lord who dispels the torments and worries of gods as well as sages—verily indeed, he has come back safely, hale and hearty. (3-4)

रिपु रन जीति सुजस सुर गावत । सीता सहित अनुज प्रभु आवत ॥ ५ ॥
सुनत बचन बिसरे सब दूखा । तृषावंत जिमि पाइ पियूषा ॥ ६ ॥

ripu rana jīti sujasa sura gāvata. sītā sahita anuja prabhu āvata. 5.
sunata bacana bisarē saba dūkhā. tṛṣāvanta jimi pā'i piyūṣā. 6.

He has vanquished the enemy in the battle-field, and his resounding glories are being sung even by the gods. The Lord is coming along with Sita and his younger brother (Laxman).’ (5)

As soon as Bharat heard these pleasant and comforting words, all his grief and sadness vanished as if a thirsty person has found a fount of nectar. (6)

को तुम्ह तात कहाँ ते आए । मोहि परम प्रिय बचन सुनाए ॥ ७ ॥
मारुत सुत मैं कपि हनुमाना । नाम मोर सुनु कृपानिधाना ॥ ८ ॥
दीनबंधु रघुपति कर किंकर । सुनत भरत भेंटै उठि सादर ॥ ९ ॥

kō tumha tāta kahāñ tē ā'ē. mōhi parama priya bacana sunā'ē. 7.
māruta suta mair̥m kapi hanumānā. nāmu mōra sunu kṛpānidhānā. 8.
dīnabandhu raghupati kara kiñkara. sunata bharata bhēṇṭē'u uṭhi sādara. 9.

[When Bharat heard the news of Lord Ram's arrival safely back to Ayodhya, he was overjoyed; the words announcing these good tidings filled Bharat's heart with excess of delight. He asked the messenger who conveyed this good news to him to introduce himself.]

Bharat asked, 'My dear (tāta), say who art thou, and from whence hast thou comest? Verily indeed and without gainsay, the words which thou hast just said are exceptionally dear to me (and to hear which I hadst been longing for so long).’ (7)

Hanuman replied, 'Oh an embodiment of grace and kindness (kṛpānidhānā)! Listen, I am the son of the wind god (māruta suta), and my name is Hanuman, the Kapi (literally, a member of the monkey race; mair̥m kapi hanumānā). (8)

I am a humble servant (kiñkara) of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu race) who is a friend of the humble, the lowly, the miserable and the meek (dīnabandhu raghupati).’

As soon as Bharat heard these words, he got up instantly and met Hanuman very reverentially (with great affection in his overjoyed heart). (9)

मिलत प्रेम नहिं हृदयँ समाता । नयन स्रवत जल पुलकित गाता ॥ १० ॥
कपि तव दरस सकल दुख बीते । मिले आजु मोहि राम पिरीते ॥ ११ ॥
बार बार बूझी कुसलाता । तो कहूँ देउँ काह सुनु भ्राता ॥ १२ ॥
एहि संदेस सरिस जग माहीं । करि बिचार देखेउँ कछु नाहीं ॥ १३ ॥
नाहिन तात उरिन मैं तोही । अब प्रभु चरित सुनावहु मोही ॥ १४ ॥

milata prēma nahim̐ hr̥dayaṁ samātā. nayana sravata jala pulakita gātā. 10.
kapi tava darasa sakala dukha bitē. milē āju mōhi rāma pirītē. 11.
bāra bāra būjhī kusalātā. tō kahuṁ dē'uṁ kāha sunu bhrātā. 12.
ēhi sandēsa sarisa jaga māhīm̐. kari bicāra dēkhē'uṁ kachu nāhīm̐. 13.

nāhina tāta urina mair̥m tōhī. aba prabhu carita sunāvahu mōhī. 14.

Bharat met Hanuman very emotionally and embraced him; his heart overflowed with love and affection for the latter so much so that it seemed to fail to contain it, and this burst of spontaneous emotion revealed itself in a stream of tears of joy that ran out of Bharat's eyes as well as the thrill that spread over his entire body. (10)

Bharat said, 'Oh Kapi! By having the good fortune of seeing you all my woes, all my grief and miseries are dispelled forthwith. I am so lucky that I have met someone today who is as dear to Lord Ram as you are (milē āju mōhi rāma pirītē)¹.' (11)

As he said these words, Bharat was so highly overwhelmed with affection for Hanuman so much so that he repeatedly (embraced him and) asked him about his welfare, saying, 'Listen my dear brother (sunu bhrātā); tell me what can I give thee today in return of the good news that thou have brought hither to me? (12)

This message of Lord Ram's safe arrival is so great and welcome a news for me that while pondering over the matter I find myself at a loss to discover anything that is worthy of being given to you as a reward for bringing this glad tidings². [To wit, I don't know what to grant you as a memorable gift to express my deep sense of thanks to you, and how much I am obliged to you for bringing this good news of the Lord's safe arrival today.] (13)

My dear (tāta)! I will ever remain indebted to you². Now, I request you to tell me about the Lord and the various deeds that he has done. [Tell me about the developments that took place since our last meeting when you were going back to Lanka with the mountain containing the herb required to revive Laxman. Update me about all that had happened since then.]' (14)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3.

²Lord Ram too has expressed similar emotions for Hanuman in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32.]

तब हनुमंत नाइ पद माथा । कहे सकल रघुपति गुन गाथा ॥ १५ ॥

कहु कपि कबहुँ कृपाल गोसाई । सुमिरहिं मोहि दास की नाई ॥ १६ ॥

taba hanumanta nā'i pada māthā. kahē sakala raghupati guna gāthā. 15.

kahu kapi kabahuṁ kṛpāla gōsā'ir̥m. sumirahir̥m mōhi dāsa kī nā'ir̥m. 16.

Then Hanuman bowed his head reverentially at the feet of Bharat, and narrated all glorious and meritorious deeds done by Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)¹. (15)

After hearing out Hanuman, Bharat asked him: 'Say Kapi, did the merciful and gracious Lord was ever kind enough to remember me as a devoted and loyal servant of his?²' (16)

[Note—¹To wit, Hanuman narrated briefly how the war against Ravana was fought and won by Lord Ram, about the appointment of Vibhishan as the new king of Lanka, how Sita was reunited with the Lord, how the Lord boarded the Pushpak plane with his chief commanders of both the demon army and the monkey army as he flew back to Ayodhya, and how, after sending Hanuman to meet Bharat and convey the news of his arrival, the Lord has presently gone back for a while to meet some of his acquaintances in the forest that he missed while coming to Ayodhya in a hurry to meet the deadline of coming back after 14 years of forest exile.

²Sita has asked Hanuman a similar question when the latter had gone in search for her in Lanka; she enquired: “Tell me dear, whether Lord Ram ever remembered me kindly”? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

छं०. निज दास ज्यों रघुबंसभूषन कबहुँ मम सुमिरन कर्यो । १ ।
 सुनि भरत बचन बिनीत अति कपि पुलकि तन चरनन्हि पश्यो ॥ २ ॥
 रघुबीर निज मुख जासु गुन गन कहत अग जग नाथ जो । ३ ।
 काहे न होइ बिनीत परम पुनीत सदगुन सिंधु सो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija dāsa jyōm raghubansabhūṣana kabahuṁ mama sumirana karyō. 1.
 suni bharata bacana binīta ati kapi pulaki tana carananhi paryō. 2.
 raghubīra nija mukha jāsū guna gana kahata aga jaga nātha jō. 3.
 kāhē na hō'i binīta parama punīta sadaguna sindhu sō. 4.

[Bharat asked Hanuman once again—] ‘Did Lord Ram, who is like a jewel in the illustrious king Raghu’s family, ever remember me as being one of his own (loyal, faithful and devoted) servants?’ (Chaupai line no. 1)

Hearing such modest and humble words of Bharat, Hanuman was overcome with joy even as he fell at Bharat’s feet with a thrill spreading over his body. (Chaupai line no. 2)

Hanuman praised Bharat for his virtues and excellent nature when he thought to himself: ‘Indeed, he whose good nature and excellent virtues have been so lavishly praised by Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram), who is the Lord of the entire world, himself --- (Chaupai line no. 3)

--- What wonder is there then that Bharat would be so exceptionally modest, humble, gracious and courteous, as well as an embodiment of all the divine virtues, as he truly is?’ (Chaupai line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 233. In these verses, Lord Ram has praised Bharat and extolled his virtues, declaring that there is no one who is purer in his heart, who possesses better virtues and character, and who is more good natured than Bharat is in this world. Not only Lord Ram, even the gods

in the heaven had praised Bharat on this occasion and affirmed his holy nature by way of a unanimous declaration made by them in the form of a voice from the sky.

We read that in Chitrakoot, Lord Ram had praised Bharat and said that he was ready to do what Bharat wished, even if that meant breaking his own vows. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 259; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 263—to Doha no. 264.}

When we read further the Story of the Ram Charit Manas, we find that Bharat has been lavishly praised by everyone who came in contact with him according to the occasion. For instance, the citizens of Ayodhya, the mothers, the ministers, the sages and guru Vashistha—all had great respect for Bharat and praised him profusely. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 184; Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 185.}

Then we have the great sage Bharadwaj who had heaped great honours and praises on Bharat when they met while Bharat was on his way to Chitrakoot to try and persuade Lord Ram to return to Ayodhya. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 208—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.}

On the way to Chitrakoot, every one of the villagers and ordinary country folk had nothing but praise for Bharat. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 233 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1 and 6 that follow it.}

At Chitrakoot itself, we read that the illustrious sage Vasistha was bowled over by Bharat's devotion and affection for Lord Ram, as well as by Bharat's humility and excellent virtues. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 259.}

King Janak had also lauded the excellent character of Bharat when he was informed by messengers about the developments in Ayodhya, and that Bharat had gone to Chitrakoot to fetch Lord Ram. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 272.}

Once again at Chitrakoot itself, mother Kaushalya had extolled Bharat in glorious terms before king Janak's wife, queen Sunayana, the mother of Sita. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 283.}

When king Janak came to know in detail how Bharat had behaved and about his noble character, the king was overwhelmed with respect for Bharat and praised him profusely while discussing the matter with his wife, queen Sunayana. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290.}

To wit, every one who came in contact with Bharat on any occasion, had nothing but praise for him, so therefore there is no wonder here that Hanuman too would be overwhelmed by the holy and virtuous nature, and the excellent and noble character of Bharat.]

दो०. राम प्रान प्रिय नाथ तुम्ह सत्य बचन मम तात ।

पुनि पुनि मिलत भरत सुनि हरष न हृदयँ समात ॥ २ (क) ॥

dōhā.

rāma prāna priya nātha tumha satya bacana mama tāta.
puni puni milata bharata suni haraṣa na hṛdayaṁ samāta. 2 (a).

The overwhelmed Hanuman replied to Bharat: ‘Oh Lord (nātha), believe me that you are dear to Lord Ram as his own life. My dear (tāta), honestly I tell you that my words are nothing but the truth (satya bacana mama).’

When he heard these reassuring words that gave him great comfort, the exhilarated Bharat embraced Hanuman repeatedly even as his heart overflowed with emotions of joy and happiness that were so intense and profound by their nature that the heart failed to contain them (and it seemed that the tide of emotions swamped Bharat’s entire being)¹. (Doha no. 2-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 2 herein above.

Lord Ram was very eager to be reunited with Bharat at the end of the war of Lanka when he said that “the remembrance of Bharat and his miserable condition fills me with such sorrows that a moment that passes seems to be like an age for me”. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 116-a as well as Doha no. 116-c.}]

सो०. भरत चरन सिरु नाइ तुरित गयउ कपि राम पहिं ।

कही कुसल सब जाइ हरषि चलेउ प्रभु जान चढ़ि ॥ २ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

bharata carana siru nā'i turita gaya'u kapi rāma pahim.
kahī kusala saba jā'i haraṣi calē'u prabhu jāna caḍhi. 2 (b).

Hanuman (the Kapi) bowed his head reverentially at Bharat’s feet and immediately left the place to go back to Lord Ram.

Once there, he narrated all the good news to the Lord. As soon as the Lord heard that everything was fine, he immediately boarded the plane and cheerfully started towards his destination (Ayodhya)¹. (Sortha no. 2-b)

[Note—¹This verse clearly and unambiguously indicates that Lord Ram had not directly descended to land in Ayodhya earlier, but had preferred to send Hanuman instead while he took a turn to go back to meet sage Bharadwaj and Nishad, the chief of the boatman community, because the Lord wished to find out what the ground realities were like in Ayodhya.

Lord Ram wished to discern whether or not he was actually welcome in the city; and also to find out what was Bharat’s attitude towards him—did he still have the same degree of love and loyalty towards the Lord, or was there any change in him during the period that elapsed between his going to Chitrakoot and now that the time of the Lord’s arrival has actually arrived. Lord Ram wished to avoid any unpleasant situation; he did not want to offend Bharat in any way. So should it turn out that Bharat’s warmth and love for the Lord has cooled down, and there were some evil designs waiting for him on his return, then the Lord decided in his mind that he would find some excuse to remain away and let Bharat ascend the throne of Ayodhya.

There is no doubt about it for two obvious reasons. One, it was precisely this purpose for which Hanuman was sent by him as an emissary to Bharat (refer: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 121). And two, as soon as Hanuman brought the good news regarding Bharat—that he was very much the same Bharat as he was fourteen years ago and there is no change in his attitude at all, that his affection and devotion for the Lord had not diminished even a wee whit, and that he is eagerly awaiting Lord Ram’s arrival, and that the Lord ought naught to have any apprehensions of any kind whatsoever on his account—the Lord “immediately boarded the plane to go to his destination”, without wasting any more time.]

चौ०. हरषि भरत कोसलपुर आए । समाचार सब गुरहि सुनाए ॥ १ ॥
 पुनि मंदिर महँ बात जनाई । आवत नगर कुसल रघुराई ॥ २ ॥
 सुनत सकल जननीं उठि धाई । कहि प्रभु कुसल भरत समुझाई ॥ ३ ॥
 समाचार पुरबासिन्ह पाए । नर अरु नारि हरषि सब धाए ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

haraṣi bharata kōsalapura ā'ē. samācāra saba gurahi sunā'ē. 1.
 puni mandira maham̐ bāta janā'ī. āvata nagara kusala raghurā'ī. 2.
 sunata sakala jananiṁ uṭhi dhā'īm. kahi prabhu kusala bharata samujhā'īm. 3.
 samācāra purabāsinha pā'ē. nara aru nāri haraṣi saba dhā'ē. 4.

The jubilant Bharat came to the capital city of the kingdom of Ayodhya, known as ‘kōsalapura’, and conveyed the happy tidings to his guru, sage Vashitha. (1)

Then he sent a similar message to the palace, that Lord of the Raghus, Lord Ram, is coming back to the city safely. (2)

No sooner the mothers heard this good news, than they got up and rushed to meet Bharat and enquire as to the truth of it. Bharat personally explained everything to them about the Lord’s welfare¹. (3)

As soon as the citizens heard this excellent news that spread like wildfire in the city, everyone, the males as well as the females, got up immediately and sprinted out excitedly to confirm the happy tidings². (4)

[Note—¹When the eager mothers, Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, and Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, heard the good news, they rushed out of their palaces to meet Bharat and ask him details. Bharat told them about his meeting with Hanuman, and what the latter had told him about Lord Ram’s happy return. This good news, for which the mothers had been eagerly waiting to hear for the past so many years, filled them with utmost joy; their worried, sad and despondent countenances marked by a cloud of uncertainty and despair, suddenly changed their colour into that of delight, cheer and joy, as if the bright sunshine has made its rejuvenating appearance from behind a curtain of dark gloomy clouds.

²The good tidings of Lord Ram’s safe and happy arrival sent a wave of jubilation and cheer through the streets and avenues of the great capital city of Ayodhya as if some

life-saving drug has been injected into the veins of a very sick person, invigorating him and infusing a new dawn of hope in his heart that was stricken with the disease of hopelessness and helplessness just a while ago. The citizens rushed out of their homes and workplaces, leaving behind whatever they were engaged in, and in whatever condition they were in (apropos: verse no. 7 herein below). First they couldn't believe their ears and good fortune, but as the truth of the news sank in, there was a spontaneous eruption of applause, cheering and thanksgiving throughout the city. It appeared that after the grey and gloomy days of chill and snowy winter, spring has finally appeared with a splash of colours of all hues of the rainbow.]

दधि दुर्बा रोचन फल फूला । नव तुलसी दल मंगल मूला ॥ ५ ॥
 भरि भरि हेम थार भामिनी । गावत चलिं सिंधुरगामिनी ॥ ६ ॥
 जे जैसेहिं तैसेहिं उठि धावहिं । बाल बृद्ध कहँ संग न लावहिं ॥ ७ ॥
 एक एकन्ह कहँ बूझहिं भाई । तुम्ह देखे दयाल रघुराई ॥ ८ ॥

dadhi durbā rōcana phala phūlā. nava tulasī dala maṅgala mūlā. 5.
 bhari bhari hēma thāra bhāminī. gāvata calim sindhuragāminī. 6.
 jē jaisēhim taisēhim uṭhi dhāvahim. bāla br̥d'dha kahaṁ saṅga na lāvahim. 7.
 ēka ēkanha kahaṁ būjhahim bhāī. tumha dēkhē dayāla raghurāī. 8.

To mark the most auspicious news, there were widespread celebrations in the city. The honourable ladies of the city arranged auspicious articles in golden plates, things such as small pots filled with fresh curd, blades of green grass, the yellow pigment known as 'Gorochan'¹, fruits and flowers of various kinds, and freshly plucked leaves of the sacred Tulsi (basil) plant, and came out of their homes, walking majestically with a swaying gait like adult elephants (walking down avenues during a royal ceremony), singing auspicious songs befitting the happy occasion. (5-6)

These honourable ladies got up and proceeded forth from their homes immediately upon hearing the good news, in whatever manner they happened to be at that moment, leaving aside whatever chores they were engaged in at that time, and they were so overcome with delight that they sallied out alone spontaneously, shunning their children and old people of the household². (7)

Everyone asked his neighbour whom he or she met: 'My dear, hast thou seen Lord Ram anywhere?'³ (8)

[Note—¹The 'Gorochan' is a yellow coloured viscous liquid; it is basically bile that is secreted by a cow. It is collected and used as a pigment for religious ceremonies.

²Usually it is a practice in respectable households that whenever women folk venture out into the streets and market places, they are expected to be accompanied by their children or some senior member of the family. But such formalities and niceties were kept aside for the time being; the whole city erupted as a single mass of people overwhelmed with joy and engaged in rapturous celebration. Everyone became a kin of his neighbour; every child and senior citizen became a family member of the women folk singing merrily on the street. All distinctions were obliterated; all

differences of age and gender vanished; all greeted everyone else who he or she met anywhere as if they had known each other for ages.

Ayodhya was, at the time, one large family that was celebrating the welcome arrival of one of their dear members who had gone out on an adventure to an unknown land long time ago, and who has now returned safe, hale and hearty, triumphantly and victoriously, with a lot of merit and acclaim added to his already rich repertory of glory and fame.

³The news of Lord Ram's arrival had come, and that was enough to send the cheering people out into the streets. There was confusion as to where the Lord has actually arrived, or who has actually seen him. No one knew the exact answer in the tumult; so everyone asked everyone else if he or she has seen the Lord somewhere.

The glad tidings of Lord Ram's arrival punctured a hole in the pitcher of patience that the sad citizens had somehow held on to for fourteen long years, and now their patience ran out in a wild stream of impatience as they were all eager and anxious to see their beloved Lord standing right in their midst at the shortest possible time. The ecstasy and exuberance amongst the citizens of Ayodhya, ignited by the thought that finally they would meet their beloved Lord Ram once again, was so overwhelming and intense that the milling crowd created more confusion than give any clear answer to the question 'where actually Lord Ram was then?'.]

अवधपुरी प्रभु आवत जानी । भई सकल सोभा कै खानी ॥ ९ ॥

बहइ सुहावन त्रिबिध समीरा । भइ सरजू अति निर्मल नीरा ॥ १० ॥

avadhapurī prabhu āvata jānī. bha'ī sakala sōbhā kai khānī. 9.
baha'i suhāvana tribidha samīrā. bha'i sarajū ati nirmala nīrā. 10.

As soon as the news of Lord Ram's arrival reached the City of Ayodhya, deriving its name from the vast kingdom known as 'Avadha' (avadhapurī), it transformed into a most magnificent and pleasant city, an enchanting city that was like an embodiment of everything that is beautiful, pleasant and charming¹. (9)

A pleasant breeze having the three qualities of excellence² blew softly across it; and clear water flowed in the holy river Saryu that flanked the city on its north. (10)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram took birth, a similar transformation was seen in Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4, and 8 that precede Doha no. 194—to Doha no. 195.

²The three qualities that make a breeze pleasant are the following: it must be soft, it must be scented or have a sweet fragrance, and it must be cool.]

दो०. हरषित गुर परिजन अनुज भूसुर बृंद समेत ।

चले भरत मन प्रेम अति सन्मुख कृपानिकेत ॥ ३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

haraṣita gura parijana anuja bhūśura bṛnda samēta.
calē bharata mana prēma ati sanmukha kṛpānikēta. 3 (a).

Every single person was jubilant and ecstatic. Accompanied by the guru (sage Vasistha), kith and kin, all the subjects of the kingdom, the younger brother (i.e. Shatrughan), and all the sages and Brahmins living there, Bharat, whose heart was brimming over with affection, set off to meet and welcome the Lord (Sri Ram) who is an abode of grace, compassion and kindness. (Doha no. 3-a)

बहुतक चढ़ीं अटारिन्ह निरखहिं गगन बिमान ।
देखि मधुर सुर हरषित करहिं सुमंगल गान ॥ ३ (ख) ॥

bahutaka caṛhīm aṭārinha nirakhahīm gagana bimāna.
dēkhi madhura sura haraṣita karahīm sumaṅgala gāna. 3 (b).

Many of the women folk went up on the terraces of their homes and watched as the plane came into view in the sky.

As soon as they saw the plane approach, they spontaneously started singing in sweet voices melodious songs that were auspicious and suitable for such occasions. (Doha no. 3-b)

राका ससि रघुपति पुर सिंधु देखि हरषान ।
बढ़्यो कोलाहल करत जनु नारि तरंग समान ॥ ३ (ग) ॥

rākā sasi raghupati pura sindhu dēkhi haraṣāna.
baṛhyō kōlāhala karata janu nāri taraṅga samāna. 3 (c).

Verily indeed, on that occasion it appeared that Lord Ram was like a full moon, and Ayodhya was like an ocean.

Just as the ocean heaves and produces high tides when the full moon shines over it, Ayodhya exulted with waves of excitement that overwhelmed its ecstatic residents who surged ahead with bubbling enthusiasm as soon as Lord Ram was sighted overhead in the sky. In this surging crowd of jubilant citizens, the women folk were like the waves of the ocean that move forward as soon as it sights the moon above. (Doha no. 3-c)

[Note—In this imagery, Lord Ram is compared to the moon as presently he is seen aboard the plane that is airborne, just like the moon that is seen at its station in the sky. On the ground below, the huge crowd of cheering citizens surging forward to meet the Lord is compared to the ocean that has high tides when a full moon is overhead, and the waves move inland in a particular direction just as the excited citizens are moving in the direction where the plane seems to be headed to make a landing.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 1.]

चौ०. इहाँ भानुकुल कमल दिवाकर । कपिन्ह देखावत नगर मनोहर ॥ १ ॥

सुनु कपीस अंगद लंकेसा । पावन पुरी रुचिर यह देसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ihāṁ bhānukula kamala divākara. kapinha dēkhāvata nagara manōhara. 1.
sunu kapīsa aṅgada laṅkēsā. pāvana purī rucira yaha dēsā. 2.

[Meanwhile, when Hanuman conveyed the good news to Lord Ram that everything was fine with Bharat, and the Lord should have no hesitation in proceeding to Ayodhya forthwith as he would be affectionately and warmly received, the Lord immediately boarded the Pushpak plane and headed to his destination. As the plane neared Ayodhya, the Lord cheerfully pointed out the beauty of the sprawling city to his companions who were accompanying him on board the plane.]

Here, Lord Ram, who was like a Sun that made the lotus flower representing the Solar race bloom¹, showed his Kapi friends the charming city of Ayodhya that spread on the ground below. (1)

Lord Ram said: ‘Listen Sugriv (kapīsa), Angad and Vibhishan (laṅkēsā)! This city itself is holy, and it grants holiness to them who view it. The countryside surrounding it, as well as the country of which it is the capital city (i.e. the kingdom of ‘Ayodhya’), are as charming as the city itself². (2)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Lord Ram is likened to the ‘sun’, and the solar race that ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya and in which the Lord was born, to the ‘lotus flower’. The lotus flower is known to open its petals and bloom when the sun rises in the sky. So as soon as Lord Ram appeared in a plane over the city of Ayodhya just as the sun rises in the sky, the whole family of the Lord, as well as the city where they lived, felt happy and exuberant as if a lotus has opened its petals at the sight of the overhead sun.

²The Lord means that the capital city of Ayodhya, along with the surrounding countryside and the kingdom of which the city is the capital, and from which it derives its name ‘Ayodhya’ or ‘Avadh’ or ‘Kaushal Puri’, are all equally charming and wonderful to behold. The kingdom of Ayodhya was also known as Avadh or Kaushal, and hence its capital city had various names, such as ‘Ayodhya’, ‘Avadh’ or ‘Kaushal Puri’.]

जद्यपि सब बैकुंठ बखाना । बेद पुरान बिदित जगु जाना ॥ ३ ॥

अवधपुरी सम प्रिय नहिं सोऊ । यह प्रसंग जानइ कोउ कोऊ ॥ ४ ॥

jadyapi saba baikunṭha bakhānā. bēda purāna bidita jagu jānā. 3.
avadhapurī sama priya nahim sō'ū. yaha prasaṅga jāna'i kō'u kō'ū. 4.

Although everyone praises the glories of Vaikuntha (which is the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu)¹, and it is famed in the Vedas, the Purans as well as the rest of the world

[3], yet it is not dear to me as is the capital city of Ayodhya, known as 'Avadh-puri'². Very few are fortunate to realize this³. [4] (3-4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being who has his abode in Vaikuntha, that part of heaven where the Lord resides. Heaven has many divisions or sections or areas where different gods live. The part where Indra, the king of gods live, is called 'Indra-loka'. Similarly, there is 'Brahma-loka' where Brahma, the creator, has his abode; Mt. 'Kailash' or 'Shiva-loka' is where Lord Shiva lives, 'Gandharva-loka' where the Gandharvas live, and so on. The highest among these various heavenly abodes is 'Vaikuntha' where Lord Vishnu lives.

The word 'Vaikuntha' is derived from the words 'Kuntha' and 'Vai'. Kuntha means that which decays; and Vai means that which does not. Hence, the word Vaikuntha means 'that which does not decay'; or that which is 'eternal'. Thus, Vaikuntha is the eternal abode of the Supreme Being, or the abode of that Lord who is eternal.

²Ayodhya is dearer to Lord Ram than Vaikuntha because the Lord took birth for the welfare of his devotees in the former city, and since devotees are themselves very dear to the Lord, hence that city which hosted the Lord so that he could deliver countless devotees and provide them endless joy in this world would naturally be dearer to him than a place where the creature goes after his death. Whereas the Lord who lives in Vaikuntha is an invisible Being, and that abode known as Vaikuntha itself is too abstract to be understood by the common man, it is of little or no practical value for an ordinary living being who is toiling throughout his life in this mundane world, hoping to find some means of attaining peace of mind and bliss of the spirit. On the other hand there is Lord Ram who lived in Ayodhya, like an ordinary human being, himself undergoing all the problems associated with life in this mundane world, and yet acting as a beacon of hope and solace for the tormented soul of the creature, promising happiness and salvation to him, then surely the Lord and his abode known as Ayodhya become more practically relevant to the living being. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 75; (ii) Chaupai line no. 12 that precede Doha no. 114.

This is the primary reason why the Lord says that 'Ayodhya is dearer to me than Vaikuntha'.

Incidentally, the 'Tripaadvibhuti Mahanarayan Upanishad' describes the existence of seven Vaikunthas in its Canto nos. 6-7. These are the following: Paad-vibhuti Vaikuntha, Vishwaksen Vaikuntha, Brahma-Vidya Vaikuntha, Sri Tulsi Vaikuntha, Bodha-nanda Vaikuntha, Sudarshan Vaikuntha, and Advaitya Vaikuntha which is also known as Tripaadvibhuti Vaikuntha.

³The glories of Ayodhya has been lauded elsewhere too in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 16; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 74; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 120; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 97; Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 109.]

जन्मभूमि मम पुरी सुहावनि । उत्तर दिसि बह सरजू पावनि ॥ ५ ॥

जा मज्जन ते बिनहिं प्रयासा । मम समीप नर पावहिं बासा ॥ ६ ॥

janmabhūmi mama purī suhāvani. uttara disi baha sarajū pāvani. 5.
jā majjana tē binahim prayāsā. mama samīpa nara pāvahim bāsā. 6.

It (Ayodhya) is my birthplace, and it is a very charming and magnificent city. On its north flows the holy river Saryu [5], and taking a bath in it helps to purify the soul of my devotees and entitles them to have an abode near me¹ [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16; (ii) Doha no. 34 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

The idea here is that just like the holy river Ganges is said to provide purification to a person when he or she takes a bath in it, the river Saryu too provides a similar benefit to those who bathe in its holy waters.

Since the impurities clinging to the creature's inner-self are symbolically washed off by such bathing, he becomes eligible for attaining deliverance from this world. This translates into his attaining an abode near the Lord God in order to be able to serve him.

When we visit any holy place, such as a temple, it is expected from us that we have first taken a bath. Now, here the same principle applies when one bathes in the river Saryu to first clean himself before visiting the shrines in the pilgrim city of Ayodhya. Taking a physical bath to clean the body before visiting holy shrines is from the perspective of the gross world, but when it is extended to be applied to a higher level of existence, to a more subtle and sublime level, the same principle can be applied to the soul of a creature, meaning that one can attain deliverance, liberation, salvation and emancipation only if one has thoroughly cleaned his inner self.

It ought to be clearly understood here that this bath in the river Saryu, or for that matter even in river Ganges, is just a symbolic gesture to imply that the spiritual aspirant has cleaned his inner-self and is ready to enter the holy portal where the Lord God lives, to accept a communion with the Lord and embrace his goodness in a most sincere way; for mere physical cleaning of the body by just dipping in the river would serve no purpose worthwhile.]

अति प्रिय मोहि इहाँ के बासी । मम धामदा पुरी सुख रासी ॥ ७ ॥

हरषे सब कपि सुनि प्रभु बानी । धन्य अवध जो राम बखानी ॥ ८ ॥

ati priya mōhi ihāṁ kē bāsī. mama dhāmadā purī sukha rāsī. 7.
haraṣē saba kapi suni prabhu bānī. dhan'ya avadha jō rāma bakhānī. 8.

Those who live here are very dear to me. This city is like a storehouse of everything that is pleasant and a giver of comfort. It also blesses those who live here with an opportunity to attain my (heavenly) abode¹. (7)

Upon hearing such words of praise for Ayodhya as spoken by Lord Ram, all the Kapis felt very glad, and exclaimed: 'Glory to Ayodhya which Lord Ram refers to'. (8)

[Note—¹One must understand the text in the correct perspective and context, for mere literal reading is often misleading. The ‘Ayodhya’ that Lord Ram refers to is the city in which Lord Vishnu had taken birth in Treta Yuga. The people whom the Lord so lavishly praises were followers of the principles of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality), people who were saintly, pious and inherently holy, were devout followers of Lord God and practitioners of good virtues. The auspicious qualities of the residents of Ayodhya of Lord Ram’s time are clearly outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 22.

To wit, when Lord Ram says “the residents of Ayodhya are very dear to me”, obviously he refers to such virtuous and people of excellent character as described in the verses cited herein above, but surely the Lord could never mean the people of the Ayodhya as found in the time of Kali-Yuga, people who are no different from those who do not live here, for to tell the truth and to be honest, one would rarely descry in people of Ayodhya of today’s time any such excellent virtues as were present in the residents of Ayodhya of the Lord’s time whom he praises so much. And even if one would not deny that there are surely some virtuous ones still living here, but they are definitely miniscule in number and hard to come by.]

दो०. आवत देखि लोग सब कृपासिंधु भगवान ।
नगर निकट प्रभु प्रेरैउ उतरेउ भूमि बिमान ॥ ४ (क) ॥
उतरि कहेउ प्रभु पुष्पकहि तुम्ह कुबेर पहि जाहु ।
प्रेरित राम चलेउ सो हरषु बिरहु अति ताहु ॥ ४ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

āvata dēkhi lōga saba kṛpāsindhu bhagavāna.
nagara nikaṭa prabhu prērē'u utarē'u bhūmi bimāna. 4 (a).
utari kahē'u prabhu puṣpakahi tumha kubēra pahim jāhu.
prērīta rāma calē'u sō haraṣu birahu ati tāhu. 4 (b).

When Lord Ram, who was an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace (kṛpāsindhu bhagavāna), observed that the citizens were coming out in multitudes to welcome him¹, he ordered the Pushpak plane to land on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya. (Doha no. 4-a)

After disembarking from the plane along with all his companions, the Lord asked ‘Pushpak’² to go back to Kuber (the treasurer of the gods to whom this plane belonged)³.

Obedient to the Lord’s command, Pushpak departed from there; it was on the one hand very joyful for being able to return to his Master in the heavens, but on the other hand it was overwhelmed with grief and sadness too for being separated from the Lord⁴. (Doha no. 4-b)

[Note—¹As soon as the news had reached the city from the place where Hanuman met Bharat, which was on the outskirts, some distance away where Bharat had been living in self-imposed exile during the period of Lord Ram’s absence*, at a place that came to be known as ‘Nandigram’, the city erupted in a joyous tumult. Every single person

ran in the direction of Bharat's hermitage, excited and exhilarated as ever. From his plane high up in the sky, Lord Ram observed a huge tide of jubilant citizens pouring out of the city and heading speedily in the direction of Bharat's habitat, dancing, singing, waving frantically at the plane, and cheering all the way along, running as fast as their legs would carry them, so eager were the enthusiastic people that everyone wished to be the first one to reach the site of the Lord's landing and likewise be the first one to greet their beloved Lord and welcome him back home, that the road seemed to be chock-a-block with waves after waves of joyful citizens as if a gigantic Tsunami had broken all the dykes of gloom and despair and despondency to run headlong inland at full throttle, roaring and thundering all the way, excited with the energy of joy, and wondering at its good fortune.

This confirmed to the Lord what Hanuman had informed him about the sort of reception he can expect upon arrival—that he was welcome in Ayodhya with the greatest intensity of warmth and affection one can imagine, and this was beyond doubt now.

²One can conjecture at two possibilities here: One is that this word 'Pushpak' applies to the plane as well as its driver or pilot, and both were known by the same name of Pushpak. The other possibility is that the Pushpak plane was a wonder plane running on some sort of mechanism that worked on either the 'voice command' or the 'thought command', being a pilot-less air vehicle running on some sort of highly evolved application of science. It is easy for us to visualize this actually happening because in our modern world of advanced science we have machines working on Artificial Intelligence that respond exactly the same way, though till now such responses are limited to the 'voice command', but a day is not far off when the 'thought command' would also drive machines.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 179. We read here that Ravana had attacked heaven and snatched this remarkable plane from Kuber, the gods' treasurer.

⁴Pushpak felt 'joyful' because at last 'it'—or should we use the pronoun 'he', because we have just read herein above that the word could also refer to the plane's pilot—had found freedom to go back to heaven and join the service of its Master, Kuber.

But at the same time it was very 'sad' because it would miss the opportunity to witness and participate in Lord Ram's warm welcome in the city as well as the ceremony marking his anointment on the throne of Ayodhya as the kingdom's great King.

But Pushpak had no choice as he had to comply with the Lord's orders. So 'he' reluctantly went to heaven to present himself before Kuber.

A similar thing is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 14, verse nos. 98-99.]

चौ०. आएं भरत संग सब लोग । कृस तन श्रीरघुबीर बियोगा ॥ १ ॥

बामदेव बसिष्ठ मुनिनायक । देखे प्रभु महि धरि धनु सायक ॥ २ ॥

धाड़ धरे गुर चरन सरोरुह । अनुज सहित अति पुलक तनोरुह ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ā'ē bharata saṅga saba lōgā. kṛsa tana śrīraghubīra biyōgā. 1.
bāmadēva basiṣṭa munināyaka. dēkhē prabhu mahi dhari dhanu sāyaka. 2.
dhā'i dharē gura carana sarōruha. anuja sahita ati pulaka tanōruha. 3.

Bharat, accompanied by all the people, came to the place where the plane had landed; all of them had suffered so much in grief and sorrow over the years for being separated from their beloved Lord Ram that all looked emaciated and weak (as if stricken by some serious disease of the body and the mind)¹. (1)

When Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman descried the illustrious sages Vaamdeo and guru Vasistha amongst the many great sages who had come to receive them, the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) put their bows and quivers containing arrows on the ground and dashed forward to meet these sages. (2)

Lord Ram (and Laxman) ran to guru Vasistha and fell down at his feet, clasping them with both their hands (in a gesture of great respect for the family priest and preceptor). As the two brothers paid their respects to their guru, their bodies were filled with great thrill (as they felt very happy and thankful to their guru for his blessings and good wishes that had supported them in their times of adversity, and has finally made it possible for them to return safely back home). (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it—where we read that the citizens spent the time of Lord Ram's absence in observing austerities and doing penances of various kinds to atone for their sins that had brought such horrible misfortunes upon them that they had to be separated from their beloved Lord Ram, and praying that they could once again be united with him.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 158—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 159 we further read that when Bharat returned to Ayodhya upon being urgently summoned by the kingdom's priest, guru Vasistha, he discovered a gloomy city that appeared to be stricken by some grave misfortune, with all its citizens sullen and remorseful, their countenances dark and sunken, and their general demeanours indicating that all were suffering from some serious disease of the mind and the body.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 199 where a similar idea is expressed.

As far as Bharat is concerned, his pitiable condition has been summarized in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 325.]

भेंटि कुसल बूझी मुनिराया । हमरें कुसल तुम्हारिहिं दाया ॥ ४ ॥

सकल द्विजन्ह मिलि नायउ माथा । धर्म धुरंधर रघुकुलनाथा ॥ ५ ॥

bhēṇṭi kusala būjhī munirāyā. hamarēm kusala tumhārihiṁ dāyā. 4.
sakala dvijanha mili nāya'u māthā. dharma dhurandhara raghukulanāthā. 5.

The senior sage (Vasistha) asked them about their welfare, and the two brothers replied cheerfully, 'We are well and happy by your grace and blessings'. (4)

The Lord of the Raghus (Lord Ram), who is an expert in observing the principles of Dharma (proper conduct and righteous behaviour) thereafter met all the Brahmins who were present there, and bowed his head before each of them to pay his respects to them all¹. (5)

[Note—¹It would be highly wrong for the Lord to just bow his head before guru Vasistha and sage Vaamdeo, and to skip other Brahmins who were present there. So therefore, Lord Ram took care to pay his obeisance to every senior person of the Brahmin community who present on the occasion.

Lord Ram had always endorsed the view that Brahmins ought to be shown respect as is clear when he himself says so in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 45.]

गहे भरत पुनि प्रभु पद पंकज । नमत जिन्हहि सुर मुनि संकर अज ॥ ६ ॥
 परे भूमि नहिं उठत उठाए । बर करि कृपासिंधु उर लाए ॥ ७ ॥
 स्यामल गात रोम भए ठाढ़े । नव राजीव नयन जल बाढ़े ॥ ८ ॥

gahē bharata puni prabhu pada paṅkaja. namata jinhahi sura muni saṅkara
 aja. 6.

parē bhūmi nahim̐ uṭhata uṭhā'ē. bara kari kṛpāsindhu ura lā'ē. 7.
 syāmala gāta rōma bha'ē ṭhārḥē. nava rājīva nayana jala bārḥē. 8.

Thence, Bharat rushed to clasp the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, the holy feet before which even the great gods, the illustrious sages, hermits and ascetics, as well as Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma ('aja') too bow their heads in reverence. (6)

Bharat fell down on the ground before the Lord, and would not get up even after the Lord made several attempts to lift him.

Finally, Lord Ram, the Lord who is an ocean of compassion and kindness (kṛpāsindhu), lifted Bharat forcefully up from the ground where he lay prostrate, and tenderly clasped the latter to his own bosom with all the affection the Lord could muster. (7)

The dark complexioned bodies of both the brothers (Lord Ram and Bharat)¹ were so much exhilarated that they had goose bumps all over, even as streams of tears rolled down their eyes². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Bharat had dark complexions, whereas Laxman and Shatrughan had fair ones. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 311; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²When Lord Ram and Bharat met at Chitrakoot, a similar warmth had effused from them both as they rushed towards each other, as Bharat fell down prostrate before Lord Ram, and as the Lord lifted him and clasped him to his bosom. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 241.

A wonderfully similar scene of two dear brothers meeting each other after a long-long time is described in Miguel de Carvantes' classic tale of 'Don Quixote', in its Chapter XV of Book IV. It describes the meeting of the Judge named Juan Perez de Viedma and his elder brother Captain Ruy Perez de Viedma. When they first met each other after a long period of separation, and witnessed by their companions, "they rushed into each other's arms, with such affectionate feelings, with such abundance of tears rolling down their eyes that all the spectators sympathized in their loving passions." "The brothers spoke so feelingly, and their mutual affection was so moving, the surprise so wonderful, and their joy so transporting, that it must be left purely to one's imagination to conceive." "Now they tell one another the strange turns and mazes of their fortunes, then renew their caresses to the height of brotherly love and tenderness, --- so touched the whole company of gentlemen and ladies present there was that they all wept for excess of joy."

In the verses that follow herein below, we shall discover how the above portrait fits in well with Lord Ram-Bharat meeting.]

छं०. राजीव लोचन स्रवत जल तन ललित पुलकावलि बनी । १ ।
 अति प्रेम हृदयँ लगाइ अनुजहि मिले प्रभु त्रिभुवन धनी ॥ २ ॥
 प्रभु मिलत अनुजहि सोह मो पहिं जाति नहिं उपमा कही । ३ ।
 जानु प्रेम अरु सिंगार तनु धरि मिले बर सुषमा लही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

rājīva lōcana sraṇata jala tana lalita pulakāvali banī. 1.
 ati prēma hṛdayaṁ lagā'i anujahi milē prabhu tribhu'ana dhanī. 2.
 prabhu milata anujahi sōha mō pahim jāti nahim upamā kahī. 3.
 janu prēma aru siṅgāra tanu dhari milē bara suṣamā lahī. 4.

Tears of love and affection flow out in abundance from their lotus like eyes; their charming bodies were thrilled and covered with goose bumps caused with pleasant excitement and emotion of extreme joy. (Chanda line no. 1)

Lord Ram, the Lord of the three divisions of the world¹ (prabhu tribhu'ana dhanī), met and embraced his younger brother Bharat very affectionately, clasping him to his bosom very lovingly and with brotherly passion. (Chanda line no. 2)

The scene of Lord Ram meeting his younger brother Bharat was emotionally so wonderful and heart-touching to behold that I (the poet Tulsidas) cannot find an apt comparison to it, nor anything parallel with it so as to sufficiently illustrate the magnitude of their mutual affection for each other or the beauty of the scene. (Chanda line no. 3)

Nevertheless, let me venture to say that it was like two personified forms of the virtues of brotherly love and its inherent beauty of emotions meeting each other very affectionately². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The three divisions of the world are heaven, earth and the nether world.

²The poet Tulsidas says that though he cannot give a complete picture of the majesty and beauty of the scene of Lord Ram meeting Bharat, with its high emotional quotient of brotherly love, affection and trust, yet I can make a conjecture by way of making a rough comparison by citing the above two forms just to convey the idea of how wonderful the scene of the two brothers meeting might have been, leaving the rest to the imagination of the reader as everyone must have experienced, in the course of their own lives, such emotional moments of warmth of love, affection and passion sprouting forth from their hearts for those whom they love most dearly.]

बूझत कृपानिधि कुसल भरतहि बचन बेगि न आवई । ५ ।
 सुनु सिवा सो सुख बचन मन ते भिन्न जान जो पावई ॥ ६ ॥
 अब कुसल कौसलनाथ आरत जानि जन दरसन दियो । ७ ।
 बूझत बिरह बारीस कृपानिधान मोहि कर गहि लियो ॥ ८ ॥

būjhata kṛpānidhi kusala bharatahi bacana bēgi na āva'ī. 5.
 sunu sivā sō sukha bacana mana tē bhinna jāna jō pāva'ī. 6.
 aba kusala kausalanātha ārata jāni jana darasana diyō. 7.
 būrata biraha bārīsa kṛpānidhāna mōhi kara gahi liyō. 8.

Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of the virtues of kindness, mercy and compassion (kṛpānidhi), most affectionately asked Bharat about his welfare, but the latter was so overwhelmed with emotions that he could not utter a word in answer¹. (Chanda line no. 5)

[As an interjection, Lord Shiva, who was narrating this divine Story to his consort Uma, told her—]

“Listen Uma”, said Lord Shiva, “The sense of contentment, the feeling of extreme joy and profound bliss that swelled inside Bharat were of such high intensity, and had dimension so great, that it is beyond the scope of the mind and the faculty of speech to describe them. Verily indeed, only those who have had such feelings themselves in their lives, who have had experienced it personally some time in the course of their lives, can only understand how profound and stupendous it might have been; they alone can have an idea of its deep depth and soaring height.” (Chanda line no. 6)

Finally Bharat recovered his composure enough so as to be able to answer Lord Ram in most graceful terms. He said: ‘Oh gracious Lord of Kaushal! Everything is fine and fortunate now that you have been kind enough to realize that I am very humble and meek, thereby granting me the privilege of seeing you once again as you decided that I was eligible for such an honour. (Chanda line no. 7)

I was almost drowned in the ocean of grief caused by separation from you, but just at the right moment thine merciful Lordship hast caught me by thy arms and saved me from doom.’ (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹To wit, Bharat's throat was virtually choked as he was so overcome with emotions and had become so sentimental at that time that he could not speak anything in reply. Even if he had said something in reply, it was so muffled and subdued by the heavy weight of his emotions strangling his voice that it was not more than a whisper or a muttering or a sigh that was not heard by anyone. Remember: Bharat was weeping, and his sobs got so great a hold on him that even if he had tried to answer Lord Ram, he failed.

Similar ideas are expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, Vibhishan says this in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46; and Nishad in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

दो०. पुनि प्रभु हरषि सत्रुहन भेंटें हृदयँ लगाइ ।
लछिमन भरत मिले तब परम प्रेम दोउ भाइ ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

puni prabhu haraṣi satruhana bhēṇṭē hrdayaṁ lagā'i.
lachimana bharata milē taba parama prēma dō'u bhā'i. 5.

Then the Lord (Sri Ram) affectionately met Shatrughan (the youngest of the four brothers), and emotionally clasped him to his bosom¹.

Meanwhile, Bharat and Laxman cheerfully met each other, with both the brothers overwhelmed with mutual brotherly love and affection².* (Doha no. 5)

[Note—¹A very interesting observation can be made here. In neither of the two cases, i.e. Lord Ram meeting Shatrughan, and Bharat meeting Laxman, is there any mention of the younger brother falling at the feet of his elder sibling to pay his respects, as is the norm and tradition, and naturally expected from them. So what may have happened at that time can be imagined as follows:-

When Bharat fell down at the feet of Lord Ram (Chaupai nos. 6-7 that precede this Doha), it is very possible, and even quite natural, that Shatrughan would have accompanied his elder brother Bharat when the latter lay prostrate before Lord Ram. Lord Ram picked up Bharat and embraced him first because he was elder to Shatrughan, and then the Lord pulled Shatrughan close and clasped the latter to his bosom.

²In the case of Bharat and Laxman meeting each other, it can be visualized that as soon as Bharat was freed from Lord Ram's embrace, as the Lord turned towards Shatrughan to clasp him to his bosom, he dashed to Laxman standing close by. Laxman too ran towards Bharat with outstretched arms, and the two brothers fell into each other's arms very emotionally, each tightly embracing and caressing the other repeatedly.

*So here we have a wonderful scene of two pairs of loving brothers, Lord Ram and Shatrughan, and Laxman and Bharat, embracing and caressing each other very movingly, with their bodies thrilled and tears rolling down from their moist eyes.

The pairing is remarkable: Shatrughan and Laxman had similar complexions as both of them were fair, while Lord Ram and Bharat were dark in complexion.

Besides this, there is another significant point to be made here: Lord Ram expressed his gratitude to Shatrughan for taking care of the affairs of the kingdom during the 14 years of his absence, because Bharat had lived like a recluse in Nandigram and the routine administration of the kingdom was handled by Shatrughan. On the other hand, Bharat thanked Laxman profusely for serving Lord Ram in the forest and fighting alongside him in the war of Lanka on behalf of both Bharat and Shatrughan. That is why “the brothers repeatedly embraced and caressed each other”. They asked each other one question, was answered, and then asked another question, and with each reply and subsequent query there was renewed hugging and tapping of the shoulders.

In the verse that follows herein below, we shall read that after meeting Bharat, Laxman met Shatrughan too. In both the cases of Lord Ram and Laxman meeting their brothers Bharat and Shatrughan one after another, we observe that a particular order is followed. Both Lord Ram and Laxman first meet Bharat, and after that they meet Shatrughan. The reason is that Bharat was elder to Shatrughan, and so it was in order that the elder brother is embraced first, followed by the younger one.]

चौ०. भरतानुज लछिमन पुनि भेंटे । दुसह बिरह संभव दुख मेटे ॥ १ ॥

सीता चरन भरत सिरु नावा । अनुज समेत परम सुख पावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharatānuja lachimana puni bhēṇṭē. dusaha biraha sambhava dukha mēṭē. 1.
sītā carana bharata siru nāvā. anuja samēta parama sukha pāvā. 2.

Laxman subsequently met Bharat’s younger brother Shatrughan.

With this emotional meeting of all the four brothers, all possible causes of any sort of misgivings, sorrows, grief and remorse, that may have existed and secretly lurked somewhere, were dispelled for good¹. (1)

Then Bharat, along with his younger brother Shatrughan, bowed his head at the feet of Sita to pay respects to her, and this gesture gave both the brothers immense joy (as they felt comforted in their hearts)².* (2)

[Note—¹With the affectionate way the four brothers met and repeatedly embraced and caressed each other, with thrilled bodies and wet eyes, all traces of misunderstanding and remorse that may have lurked somewhere in their minds were completely eliminated. The effusing warmth and bonhomie of the way they met also sent out a strong and unequivocal signal to all the citizens observing them that all was well and fine with them once again, that their mutual love and trust had not changed a wee whit over the testing time of 14 long years, and that all the bitterness of the past, if they were any, have been buried and forgotten forever.

The meeting of the four brothers, Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, was marked by such tender feelings of brotherly love, and of mutual affection and respect for each other, that all those who observed them, i.e. the citizens of Ayodhya, the guests who had arrived on the plane with the Lord, as well as Lord Shiva who was narrating this divine Story of Lord Ram to his consort goddess Uma, were mesmerized by it, and it left in an ecstatic state of the mind and heart.

²Bharat and Shatrughan have simultaneously bowed their heads before Sita to seek her blessings. This helped them to feel comforted in their hearts because they had been suffering from excess of remorse and guilty ever since she had gone to the forest with Lord Ram. When they bowed their heads before Sita, she smiled and blessed them, thereby assuaging their sorrowful feelings and redeeming their conscience.

*When Bharat had gone to Chitrakoot earlier to meet Lord Ram and try to bring him back home, the meeting between the four brothers, as well as Bharat and Shatrughan paying their respect to Sita, followed the same pattern as has been described here. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 242.}

प्रभु बिलोकि हरषे पुरबासी । जनित बियोग बिपति सब नासी ॥ ३ ॥
 प्रेमातुर सब लोग निहारी । कौतुक कीन्ह कृपाल खरारी ॥ ४ ॥
 अमित रूप प्रगटे तेहि काला । जथाजोग मिले सबहि कृपाला ॥ ५ ॥

prabhu bilōki haraṣē purabāsī. janita biyōga bipati saba nāsī. 3.
 prēmātura saba lōga nihārī. kautuka kīnha kṛpāla kharārī. 4.
 amita rūpa pragaṭē tēhi kālā. jathājōga milē sabahi kṛpālā. 5.

The citizens of Ayodhya felt exuberant and exceedingly exhilarated when they saw (their beloved) Lord Ram; all their woes, miseries, grief and misfortunes arising out of separation from the Lord were now eliminated for good¹. (3)

When the compassionate Lord Ram observed that the people were so happy to see him back home, and also that they were very impatient to meet him personally and exchange greetings (if that was at all possible), the merciful, obliging and gracious Lord (kṛpāla), who had slayed the demon Khar (kharārī), performed a miracle of sorts. (4)

[What did he do?] The Lord instantly produced countless images in his own likeness, and met each person individually according to his wishes, and in an appropriate manner². (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Doha no. 86.

²People had different emotions with respect to Lord Ram. Some treated him as their Lord; some as their friend; some others as their brother; still someone else would like to call him a family member; some elderly loved him like a son, and so on. Hence, Lord Ram met everyone in accordance to his wishes: becoming a Lord for one, a brother for another, a friend for the third, a family member for someone, and a son for another, and so on.

A similar event had occurred in Janakpur where the citizens of this city had assembled to witness the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita. Each person viewed Lord Ram in accordance to his own preferences—apropos: Ram Charit

Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

Presently, Lord Ram embraced someone, he patted the shoulder of someone else; some he bowed at, some he smiled at; with some he shook hands warmly, with others he exchanged pleasant memories of their childhood days; with some he talked and with some he exchanged sweet glances; some the Lord clasped to his bosom while someone else clasped the Lord to his own; and so on and on went this mutual show of love and affection between the loving citizens on the one hand, and their equally loving Lord Ram on the other hand.

Every single individual thought that Lord Ram has met him personally, and he was so focused on this direct interaction with his beloved Lord that he did not bother about others, nor was he even aware that he was not the only one whom Lord Ram has met, but that the Lord was simultaneously meeting all the assembled citizens at once.]

कृपादृष्टि रघुबीर बिलोकी । किए सकल नर नारि बिसोकी ॥ ६ ॥
छन महि सबहि मिले भगवाना । उमा मरम यह काहुँ न जाना ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि सबहि सुखी करि रामा । आगे चले सील गुन धामा ॥ ८ ॥
कौसल्यादि मातु सब धाई । निरखि बच्छ जनु धेनु लवाई ॥ ९ ॥

krpādr̥ṣṭi raghubīra bilōkī. ki'ē sakala nara nāri bisōkī. 6.
chana mahir̥ sabahi milē bhagavānā. umā marama yaha kāhuṁ na jānā. 7.
ēhi bidhi sabahi sukhī kari rāmā. āgēm calē sīla guna dhāmā. 8.
kausalyādi mātu saba dhā'ī. nirakhi baccha janu dhēnu lavā'ī. 9.

Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) glanced at all the citizens, both the males and the females, with his gracious look full of compassion and mercy, and this sent cheers amongst the citizenry; everyone felt that all his or her sorrows and grief have vanished instantly. (6)

In this way, the Lord (bhagavānā) met each person in a very short time.

Lord Shiva told his consort Uma (who was listening to this divine Story of Lord Ram): “Uma, it was a mystical occurrence, a magical feat of such rarity that no one could know what actually had happened¹. (7)

In this way, after having pleased everyone present on the occasion, Lord Ram, who is an abode of the virtues of courteousness and all other excellent qualities, proceeded ahead (towards the city). (8)

Kaushalya and all other mothers (Sumitra and Kaikeyi²), rushed forward to meet the Lord even as a cow rushes to meet her calf as soon as she sees it coming from a distance³. (9)

[Note—¹Everyone thought that Lord Ram was meeting him or her personally, exchanging greetings and saying pleasantries; but the fact was that within a few moments the Lord had obliged a large crowd by assuming as many forms as there

were people, and meeting each person individually. It was a miraculous event, and at that point of time no one could fathom its significance. Everyone was contented that the Lord was so gracious that he went out of his way to personally meet him or her, without realizing that he did it with each person in the crowd that had come to welcome him home.

From a metaphysical perspective, this event was in accordance with the philosophy of the universality of the Lord, of the fact that the ‘Atma’, the cosmic Consciousness that the Lord represents, is omnipresent and all-pervading. The Lord is present everywhere and at all times, and he needs only purity of devotion and love to manifest himself before his devotee. To wit, one need not go anywhere to search for the Supreme Being; he is present here and now if a spiritual seeker has the requisite level of purity of devotion and love for the Lord in his heart, and if he is sincere in his quest for communion with the Lord.

Lord Shiva has himself endorsed this view in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 185—when he advises the gods and the creator Brahma as well as mother earth that they need not go in search for the Supreme Being anywhere, for the Lord would reveal himself right where they are standing at present if only they had the needed level of devotion and affection for him, coupled with an earnest desire to meet him.

²Yes, both Sumitra and Kaikayi, the mothers of Laxman and Bharat respectively, too had joined Kaushalya to go out to meet Lord Ram as will be clear shortly in Doha no. 6 herein below.

³Here, Lord Ram is the ‘calf’, and the mothers are like the ‘cow’. When the cow sees her young calf at the end of the day, she bolts towards her young one. Similarly, when Kaushalya and Sumitra, the mothers of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, had heard that their beloved sons have come back safely, they had rushed out of their palaces to reach the gates and wait there eagerly for their arrival. Soon the procession of jubilant citizens that accompanied Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman reached the city, and no sooner did the Lord come within sight of the mothers, than the latter abandoned all inhibitions and dashed out on the streets to meet their sons.]

छं०. जनु धेनु बालक बच्छ तजि गृहँ चरन बन परबस गई । १ ।
 दिन अंत पुर रुख स्रवत थन हुंकार करि धावत भई ॥ २ ॥
 अति प्रेम प्रभु सब मातु भेटिं बचन मृदु बहुबिधि कहे । ३ ।
 गइ बिषम बिपति बियोग भव तिन्ह हरष सुख अगनित लहे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

janu dhēnu bālaka baccha taji grhaṁ carana bana parabasa ga'īm. 1.
 dina anta pura rukha sravata thana huṁkāra kari dhāvata bha'īm. 2.
 ati prēma prabhu saba mātu bhēṭīṁ bacana mṛdu bahubidhi kahē. 3.
 ga'i biṣama bipati biyōga bhava tinha haraṣa sukha aganita lahē. 4.

The way the mothers rushed forward to meet Lord Ram and Laxman was reminiscent of the way a cow, that had recently delivered her calf, would eagerly rush towards the village or the cowshed where she had left her young one earlier in the day when she

was forced to go to the forest or a meadow to graze, or for some other reason, mooing lovingly and sprinting forward longingly, with milk oozing from her udders, so that she can be with her calf as quickly as possible. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

Lord Ram met all the mothers very lovingly and with great affection, speaking with them in a sweet voice and talking with them reassuringly in various ways¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

All kinds of misery, torment, grief and pain associated with their long separation from the Lord were dispelled for good now that they could see and meet their beloved son once again. All sense of despondency, dismay, sadness and perplexity was now replaced with that of excess of joy, happiness, cheer and bliss. (Chanda line no. 3)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram told the mothers that he and Sita and Laxman were fine; he asked them how they were, and exchanged other pleasantries in a general way. The Lord hugged the mothers who embraced him tightly in return, kissing him and caressing him repeatedly like a mother would to her son whom she meets after a very long time, especially when their parting was under a very unpleasant and sad situation, and uncertainty marked the chances of their reunion in the future.]

दो०. जेटेउ तनय सुमित्राँ राम चरन रति जानि ।
रामहि मिलत कैकई हृदयँ बहुत सकुचानि ॥ ६ (क) ॥
लछिमन सब मातन्ह मिलि हरषे आसिष पाइ ।
कैकइ कहँ पुनि पुनि मिले मन कर छोभु न जाइ ॥ ६ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

bhēṭē'u tanaya sumitrāṁ rāma carana rati jāni.
rāmahi milata kaika'ī hṛdayaṁ bahuta sakucāni. 6 (a).
lachimana saba mātanha mili haraṣē āsiṣa pā'i.
kaika'i kahaṁ puni puni milē mana kara chōbhū na jā'i. 6 (b).

Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, met her son very lovingly as she was pleased that he was very committed to serve the holy feet of Lord Ram¹.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram met Kaikeyi who was very remorseful and felt shy in meeting the Lord². (Doha no. 6-a)

Laxman too met all the mothers, and received their cheerful and heartfelt blessings.

Like Lord Ram, Laxman met Kaikeyi and paid his respects to her repeatedly, but his bitter feelings for her would not leave him³. (Doha no. 6-b)

[Note—¹At the time of Lord Ram's departure for the forest 14 years ago, Laxman had gone to his mother Sumitra to seek her permission to let him accompany the Lord to the forest. Sumitra was overwhelmed with sorrows, but she was very glad that her son had chosen to serve the Lord and to be by his side during such adverse time. She not only gladly permitted Laxman to go with Lord Ram but had also advised him to treat Lord Ram and Sita as his parents, and serve them accordingly. She had also said that a mother whose son has devotion and love for Lord Ram is a most fortunate mother.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 73—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75.}

So therefore, Sumitra was exceptionally happy that her son Laxman had fulfilled her wishes and had done what she expected from him. Remember: The epic “Ram Charit Manas” is a book that has a very high quotient of the virtues of devotion and love for Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, incorporated in its texture of its fabric in such an inseparable way that it forms the basic principle on which the entire edifice of the story stands, and this single factor also makes this book singularly valuable from the spiritual perspective. Hence, Sumitra’s appreciation of Laxman for his singular devotion for Lord Ram more than anything else fits in well with the general theme of this classic story.

²It was Kaikeyi who was responsible for sending Lord Ram to 14 years of forest living. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}

So naturally she was overcome with a grave sense of remorse and felt extremely shy while meeting Lord Ram upon his arrival home. It is because though she had been instrumental in sending Lord Ram to the forest and thought that she had played her game very expertly, but all subsequent developments had shown her the gravity of the mistake she has made, and that this mistake was so irreparable and the darkest stain on her life that she would be burdened with guilt and shamed with ignominy for the rest of her living days. She sincerely repented thereafter, but the damage was already done.

Nevertheless, Lord Ram had forgiven her from the very beginning—for the Lord knew that Kaikeyi had done what was necessary to be done, for she had actually helped Lord Ram to fulfill his mission of eliminating the scourge of the cruel demons led by their ferocious king Ravana by sending the Lord to the forest along with Sita and Laxman, so that this mission could be accomplished. Plainly speaking, Kaikeyi had served Lord Ram and had made the single greatest sacrifice amongst all the characters of the story by inviting a life-long burden of shame and ignominy in order to help Lord Ram fulfill his promise made to the gods and mother earth. It was a subtle wish of Lord Ram himself that things must be somehow maneuvered so that he can go to the forest. Taking a cue from Lord Ram, the gods then prevailed upon goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and speech, to arrange things in such a way that the Lord could go to the forest. So it was actually Saraswati who would, though very reluctantly, turn the mind of Kaikeyi’s maid Manthara, who in turn instigated her mistress Kaikeyi to bring about the Lord’s exit to the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 10; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Doha no. 12.}

The fact of the matter is that instead of harbouring any ill-will against Kaikeyi, Lord Ram was actually grateful to her, for had she not made this great sacrifice of her own reputation, and willingly accept a life of humiliation, scorn, ignominy and castigation by the society, as well as by her own son Bharat who is believed not to have talked with her for the rest of her life for being instrumental in sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest*, the demons would have continued to terrorise the world, and the very purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down to earth as Lord Ram would have been defeated. {*Apropos: Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.}

Earlier, when Bharat had gone to Chirakoot along with his whole family and a large retinue of citizens of Ayodhya as well as all the chief courtiers and a large army

in an attempt to plead with Lord Ram to bring him back to Ayodhya, it is to be noted that at that time too Lord Ram had met mother Kaikeyi first, before meeting other mothers, including Kaushalya and Sumitra. Lord Ram had fell at her feet and assuaged her feeling, telling her not to feel regretful and remorseful as everything is destined and governed by fate, for which no individual should be blamed. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 244.}

So now here, when Lord Ram met Kaikeyi he found that she was very ashamed of herself; so therefore the Lord took extra care to comfort her and assuage her sad heart by speaking lovingly to her, and telling her to cheer up as she had nothing to worry and regret for.

³Laxman could not forgive Kaikeyi, like Bharat, who too could not forgive her. Compare this with Lord Ram who had not only forgiven her but even tried his best to comfort her and make her feel happy.

The reason is that while Lord Ram knew how important and necessary a role Kaikeyi had played in helping him accomplish his mission of eliminating the demons, and the great sacrifice of her own reputation and mental peace that she had made while doing so, making the Lord become rather grateful to her and remain obliged for life, Laxman and Bharat on the other hand treated her with contempt and disdain for being instrumental in causing so much hardship to their dear brother Lord Ram whom they loved so much, and for whom they would do anything in the world to keep him happy.]

चौ०. सासुन्ह सबनि मिली बैदेही । चरनन्हि लागि हरषु अति तेही ॥ १ ॥

देहिं असीस बूझि कुसलाता । होइ अचल तुम्हार अहिवाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sāsunha sabani milī baidēhī. carananhi lāgi haraṣu ati tēhī. 1.

dēhim asīsa būjhi kusalātā. hō'i acala tumhāra ahivātā. 2.

Sita, the daughter of Videha (king Janak; “baidēhī”) met all her mothers-in-law and felt happy by touching their feet as a gesture of paying her respects to them (and the mothers-in-law too felt equally happy to meet Sita)¹. (1)

All the mothers-in-law enquired about her welfare, and profusely blessed her that her married life be forever happy. (2)

[Note—¹In a similar scene at Chitrakoot, Sita had met all the mothers-in-law, paid her respects to them, and received their blessings in return—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 246 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.]

सब रघुपति मुख कमल बिलोकहिं । मंगल जानि नयन जल रोकहिं ॥ ३ ॥

कनक थार आरती उतारहिं । बार बार प्रभु गात निहारहिं ॥ ४ ॥

नाना भाँति निछावरि करहीं । परमानंद हरष उर भरहीं ॥ ५ ॥

saba raghupati mukha kamala bilōkahīm. maṅgala jāni nayana jala rōkahīm.

3.

kanaka thāra āratī utārahīm. bāra bāra prabhu gāta nihārahīm. 4.

nānā bhāṁti nichāvari karahīm. paramānanda haraṣa ura bharahīm. 5.

All the mothers gazed at the lotus-like charming face of Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram), and considering it to be an auspicious moment (rather than a sorrowful one when one weeps, as was the case when Lord Ram had departed for the forest), they somehow tried to hold back their tears that were on the verge of dropping down from their wet eyes¹. (3)

The mothers held in their hands golden plates on which were arranged lighted lamps, and they waved these lights in front of Lord Ram (as well as Sita and Laxman who were standing by either side of the Lord) as an auspicious ritual to welcome them and mark their safe arrival back home². (4)

Then the mothers, who were ecstatic with joy and their hearts filled with jubilation, delighted in liberally giving away or scattering different kinds of gifts as alms to seekers and also by way of making charities (nichāvari karahīm)³ for the welfare of the three, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman. (5)

[Note—¹These were tears of joy and ecstasy, and not of sorrow or grief. The mothers had become very emotional and were so overwhelmed sentimentally that they had to try hard to hold back their tears that seemed to breach the bank of their eyelids and flow out in a stream. It was not a time to weep, at least openly in full public view; it was an auspicious moment of joy and cheer, for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had returned safely from a long absence in the forest. Shedding tears on this occasion would be odd and inauspicious, as tears are usually shed on unhappy and sad occasions, such as on separation from dear ones, but not on the occasion of being reunited with them. But excess of joy and ecstasy also bring out tears of happiness from the eyes as are moments of sorrow and grief. The mothers had a hard time in fighting back their tears which were building up on the margins of their eyes like a great flood ready to breach the bank of a river.

The facial expression of the mothers revealed all; while the pearls of tears dangled from the edges of their eyes, and perhaps some even rolled down unawares on their cheeks, the stiff muscles of their faces and the taut lips, the continuous movement of the muscles in their throats that indicated that they were trying to stifle sobs which they fought to suppress, and their hands holding the end of the scarves pressed against their mouths, showed clearly how emotionally moved all the mothers were.

²This ritual is called ‘Doing Aarti’ of a highly respected person. It is usually done when such a person comes to someone’s home. In a temple however, it is a routine ritual performed before the consecrated Deity to pay respects to the God that the installed idol represents.

Presently, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had come home after a very long time of 14 years. So the mothers perform the ritual of the ‘Aarti’ to welcome them in a ceremonious way, as well as to ward off any evil eye of the devil that may, by any misfortune, be lurking somewhere, ready to cast its malicious glance upon them.

A similar sight was also witnessed when Lord Ram and his other brothers returned to the city after their marriage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

³On auspicious occasions, people, in accordance with their abilities to give, make liberal charities and give alms to alms-seekers as a gesture of doing some meritorious deed, as it would help in accrual of some auspicious reward for them as well as for those for whom, or on whose behalf, such noble deeds are done. On this occasion, the mothers did it so that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman are blessed by those who receive such largesse.]

कौसल्या पुनि पुनि रघुबीरहि । चितवति कृपासिंधु रनधीरहि ॥ ६ ॥
हृदयं बिचारति बारहिं बारा । कवन भाँति लंकापति मारा ॥ ७ ॥
अति सुकुमार जुगल मेरे बारे । निसिचर सुभट महाबल भारे ॥ ८ ॥

kausalyā puni puni raghubīrahi. citavati kṛpāsindhu ranadhīrahi. 6.
hr̥dayaṁ bicāratī bārahīm bārā. kavana bhāṁti laṅkāpati mārā. 7.
ati sukumāra jugala mērē bārē. nīsicara subhaṭa mahābala bhārē. 8.

Mother Kaushalya repeatedly glanced, with a lot of affection and wonderment, at Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) who was an ocean of grace, compassion, mercy and kindness (kṛpāsindhu), and an invincible warrior in the battle-field (ranadhīrahi). (6)

She repeatedly contemplated in her heart and wondered in amazement: ‘How did my two sons (“jugala mērē bārē”; i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman)¹, who are still very young and tender (ati sukumāra), have been able to slay the Lord of Lanka (Ravana) and the demons who were all renowned for their ferociousness, bravery and strength of arms?’ (8)

[Note—¹It is to be noted that mother Kaushalya does not distinguish between her own son ‘Lord Ram’ and Laxman who was the son of Sumitra; she treats both the brothers as her own sons.

Not only Lord Ram and Laxman, mother Kaushalya had treated Bharat too with the same degree of affection, though it was for Bharat for whom his mother Kaikeyi had played the devil’s part in sending Lord Ram to the forest so that her son could ascend the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya unchallenged. This would be evident when we read the story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ where Bharat goes to meet Kaushalya after his return to Ayodhya and discovering all the misfortunes that had befallen upon the family and the city in the wake of the mischief created by his own mother Kaikeyi, which resulted in the death of his father king Dasrath, and Lord Ram going to the forest with Sita and Laxman. During this meeting, mother Kaushalya showered all the affections she could muster upon the saddened Bharat, comforting him and assuaging his distraught heart, and assuring him by all her gestures that neither she nor Lord Ram harbour any ill-will against him whatever. We also find here that Shatrughan, the younger sibling of Bharat, too was equally affected by the unfortunate events, and he too was shown the same affection by mother Kaushalya.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 163—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 169.]

Nowhere one would discern that Kaushalya has ever made a distinction between the four brothers, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan; she treated them all as her own sons. This was the singular greatness of her heart. Compare this remarkably noble attitude of Kaushalya, and the greatness of her heart, with that of Kaikeyi who was very selfish and cunning to the hilt, as she had slyly schemed to make her son Bharat the king of Ayodhya, while having no compunctions nor any guilty conscience in being instrumental in sending Lord Ram and Laxman to the forest so that all decks could be cleared for Bharat's ascension to the throne without any challenge. That her nefarious designs backfired and served her no gain is a different thing.]

दो०. लछिमन अरु सीता सहित प्रभुहि बिलोकति मातु ।

परमानंद मगन मन पुनि पुनि पुलकित गातु ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

lachimana aru sītā sahita prabhuhi bilōkati mātu.

paramānanda magana mana puni puni pulakita gātu. 7.

As mother Kaushalya gazed affectionately at Laxman as well as at Lord Ram standing alongside Sita, her heart brimmed over with joy and ecstasy as she was overwhelmed with extreme sense of felicity and happiness, even as repeated waves of thrill passed over her entire body. (Doha no. 7)

चौ०. लंकापति कपीस नल नीला । जामवंत अंगद सुभसीला ॥ १ ॥

हनुमदादि सब बानर बीरा । धरे मनोहर मनुज सरीरा ॥ २ ॥

भरत सनेह सील ब्रत नेमा । सादर सब बरनहिं अति प्रेमा ॥ ३ ॥

देखि नगरबासिन्ह कै रीती । सकल सराहहिं प्रभु पद प्रीती ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

laṅkāpati kapīsa nala nīlā. jāmavanta aṅgada subhasīlā. 1.

hanumadādi saba bānara bīrā. dharē manōhara manuja sarīrā. 2.

bharata sanēha sīla brata nēmā. sādara saba baranahim ati prēmā. 3.

dēkhi nagarabāsinha kai rītī. sakala sarāhahim prabhu pada prītī. 4.

The Lord of Lanka (i.e. Vibhishan), the Lord of the monkeys (i.e. Sugriv), Nala, Neela, Jamvant (the chief of the bear community), Angad (the crown prince of Kishkindha and the monkey race), Hanuman, and all other monkey warriors having virtuous characters and auspicious nature (who had accompanied Lord Ram on the Pushpak plane), had assumed human forms (when they landed in Ayodhya). (1-2)

As they observed Bharat and the nobility of his attitude and demeanours, they were all in praise of him and his excellent virtues; they lauded him and affectionately applauded him for the virtues of immaculate devotion and love that he had, for his

good manners, gracious nature, great civility and courteousness, for his adherence to auspicious vows and upholding his words of honour, and for all other strictness of austerities and penances that he had so diligently observed¹. (3)

Similarly, they also noted the auspicious ways of life, the nobility of attitude, the singularly excellent nature, and the virtuous character of the citizens of Ayodhya. They especially remarked and appreciated the love and devotion that these citizens had for Lord Ram². (4)

[Note—¹The great sage Bharadwaj was all praises for Bharat as is evident in the following selected verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

The deity of the holy pilgrim place known as Triveni had lauded Bharat in glowing terms in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram has himself praised Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Doha no. 232.

Gods too had praised Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 233.

Later on, when Bharat decided to live like a recluse on the outskirts of Ayodhya for the entire period that Lord Ram would live like a hermit in the forest, everyone had great praise for Bharat. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 325—to Doha no. 326.

²The excellent nature and characters of the citizens of Ayodhya, as well as of the city of Ayodhya itself, have been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 21; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 22; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 25; (iv) Doha no. 26 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 30.]

पुनि रघुपति सब सखा बोलाए । मुनि पद लागहु सकल सिखाए ॥ ५ ॥

गुर बसिष्ठ कुलपूज्य हमारे । इन्ह की कृपाँ दनुज रन मारे ॥ ६ ॥

ए सब सखा सुनहु मुनि मेरे । भए समर सागर कहँ बेरे ॥ ७ ॥

मम हित लागि जन्म इन्ह हारे । भरतहु ते मोहि अधिक पिआरे ॥ ८ ॥

सुनि प्रभु बचन मगन सब भए । निमिष निमिष उपजत सुख नए ॥ ९ ॥

puni raghupati saba sakhā bōlā'ē. muni pada lāgahu sakala sikhā'ē. 5.

gura basiṣṭha kulapūjya hamārē. inha kī kṛpāṁ danuja rana mārē. 6.

ē saba sakhā sunahu muni mērē. bha'ē samara sāgara kahaṁ bērē. 7.

mama hita lāgi janma inha hārē. bharatahu tē mōhi adhika pi'ārē. 8.

sunī prabhu bacana magana saba bha'ē. nimiṣa nimiṣa upajata sukha na'ē. 9.

Then Lord Raghupati (Lord Sri Ram) called all his friends and advised them to touch the feet of the sages assembled there. (5)

The Lord specially pointed out his royal priest, sage Vasistha, to them and said: ‘My friends, this is sage Vasistha, our revered family priest and moral preceptor. It is his blessings that we have been successful in slaying the demons in the battle-field.’ (6)

Then the Lord turned to sage Vasistha and introduced his friends to him, saying: ‘Listen my dear sage, all these are my dear friends. They have been like a bridge for me as they have enabled me to cross the symbolic ocean of war by helping me all through it and finally attain victory¹. (7)

They had staked their own lives for my sake. Truly, they are dearer to me than even Bharat is².’ (8)

Hearing such words of praise for themselves, all of them (the Lord’s friends from Lanka and Kishkindha) were overwhelmed with exhilaration and filled with great delight. Each passing moment made them ecstatic and overcome with joy³. (9)

[Note—¹To wit, I owe my victory to them; had it not been for their help it would not have been possible for me to win the war of Lanka and recover Sita. So therefore, just like a bridge that helps a person cross over from one side to the other side of a vast body of water that forms a formidable obstacle before him, blocking his path, almost breaking his spirits and hindering his progress, these friends of mine have made it possible for me to cross the vast ocean of misfortunes and hopelessness that were stacked high up against me, especially with the daunting prospect of winning a war against ferocious enemies such as the demons were and retrieving Sita against all odds. So I am extremely thankful and obliged of them.

²On the face it seems that Lord Ram’s words would have made Bharat feel embarrassed. But relations between the two loving brothers, Lord Ram and Bharat, were too deep and sound to be so easily affected by some causal remark made by Lord Ram just to emphasize the fact that he was very thankful and grateful to his friends from Lanka and Kishkindha who had helped him during severe times of adversity, when the Lord was all alone in an alien land, far away from his own country, family and friends, and faced with a grave situation. Everyone in Ayodhya acknowledged the great help these friends of Lanka and Kishkindha had extended to Lord Ram, and everyone, including Bharat himself, would have thanked them profusely for helping the Lord win the war of Lanka so that he could come back home to them in Ayodhya, safely and happily.

Bharat realized that this remark of Lord Ram was made just to please his friends and it was a gesture of goodwill for them, and nothing else. Bharat was sure that it was not meant to insult him by any means. On Lord Ram’s part, he had so much confidence in Bharat and so sure of his wisdom that the Lord had not a trace of doubt that Bharat would take umbrage at his remark and read it in the wrong light.

³Obviously they were all very thankful to Lord Ram for lavishly praising them for their efforts in full public view.]

दो०. कौसल्या के चरनन्हि पुनि तिन्ह नायउ माथ ।

आसिष दीन्हे हरषि तुम्ह प्रिय मम जिमि रघुनाथ ॥ ८ (क) ॥

सुमन बृष्टि नभ संकुल भवन चले सुखकंद ।
चढ़ी अटारिन्ह देखिंह नगर नारि नर बृंद ॥ ८ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

kausalyā kē carananhi puni tinha nāya'u mātha.
āṣiṣa dīnhē haraṣi tumha priya mama jimi raghunātha. 8 (a).
sumana br̥ṣṭi nabha saṅkula bhavana calē sukhakanda.
caṛhī aṭārinha dēkhahim nagara nāri nara br̥nda. 8 (b).

Next (i.e. after paying their respects to sage Vasistha and others), all of them (Vibhishan, Sugriv, Nala, Neela, Jamvant, Angad, Hanuman and the rest) bowed their heads before mother Kaushalya. She gladly blessed them, saying courteously: 'You are all as dear to me as his Lord Ram.' (Doha no. 8-a)

The whole sky was obscured by a rain of flowers¹ as Lord Ram, who was an embodiment of all that provides joy, happiness, felicity and bliss, wended his way to the royal palace within the city.

The male and female citizens of the city went up on the terraces and balconies of their homes from where they jubilantly observed the celebratory procession that accompanied Lord Ram as he walked slowly towards his home. (Doha no. 8-b)

[Note—¹The flowers were showered from the heavens by the gods, as well as by the citizens who had mounted on the terraces and balconies of their homes from where they showered flowers upon the Lord as he walked through the streets of the city towards the palace.]

चौ०. कंचन कलस बिचित्र सँवारे । सबहिं धरे सजि निज निज द्वारे ॥ १ ॥
बंदनवार पताका केतू । सबन्हि बनाए मंगल हेतू ॥ २ ॥
बीथीं सकल सुगंध सिंचाई । गजमनि रचि बहु चौक पुराई ॥ ३ ॥
नाना भाँति सुमंगल साजे । हरषि नगर निसान बहु बाजे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kañcana kalasa bicitra saṁvārē. sabahim dharē saji nija nija dvārē. 1.
bandanavāra patākā kētū. sabanhi banā'ē maṅgala hētū. 2.
bīthim sakala sugandha siñcā'im. gajamani raci bahu cauka purā'im. 3.
nānā bhāmti sumaṅgala sājē. haraṣi nagara nisāna bahu bājē. 4.

Every household of the city placed golden pots that were beautifully decorated and adorned with auspicious materials on the thresholds of their homes. (1)

Colourfully decorated festoons, buntings and flags were made and put up on the doorways of every home by the citizens to celebrate this happy occasion and also as a sign of auspiciousness. (2)

All the streets and lanes were sprinkled with scented water and perfumes. Colourful squares were painted on the ground, as well as those that existed at crossroads in the city, and were decorated with special types of pearl-beads known as ‘Gajmukta’¹. (3)

The whole city was artfully decorated with a variety of auspicious materials and colourful designs. Music began playing from kettle-drums.

To wit, the whole atmosphere was one of mass celebration, as if a large public fete or fair was being organized in the city to welcome Lord Ram back home². (4)

[Note—¹The “Gajmukta” is the dried secretion from the glands on the head of adult elephants. This viscous secretion dries up to form beads, and since they are rare they have a high value. The word “Gaja” means an elephant, and “Mukta” means pearl. Hence, the composite word “Gajmukta” means ‘pearls obtained from an elephant’.

In ancient times, kings had huge numbers of elephants that formed a major section of their armies. So there was no dearth of such Gajmuktas.

They can be compared to corals, and shells of oysters and conches that are obtained from seas and oceans, and used for decorative purposes.

²A similar sight of mass celebrations was seen in Ayodhya when Lord Ram and his three brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were born. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

It was also witnessed when Lord Ram and his brothers returned to the city after their marriage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 348.]

जहँ तहँ नारि निछावरि करहीं । देहिं असीस हरष उर भरहीं ॥ ५ ॥

कंचन थार आरतीं नाना । जुबतीं सजें करहिं सुभ गाना ॥ ६ ॥

करहिं आरती आरतिहर कें । रघुकुल कमल बिपिन दिनकर कें ॥ ७ ॥

jahaṁ tahaṁ nāri nichāvari karahīm. dēhīm asīsa haraṣa ura bharahīm. 5.
kañcana thāra āratīm nānā. jubatīm sajēm karahīm subha gānā. 6.
karahīm āratī āratihara kēm. raghukula kamala bipina dinakara kēm. 7.

Everywhere the ladies of the city were scattering gifts and making offerings to honour and bless Lord Ram as he slowly walked on the streets towards his home, and while doing so they felt very ecstatic in their hearts (that they could personally participate in the ceremony to mark their beloved Lord’s return home)¹. (5)

The ladies decorated golden plates with a variety of auspicious things and performed Aarti of the Lord while singing auspicious songs to mark the occasion². (6)

To wit, the exhilarated ladies were performing the Aarti of the Lord who is an eliminator of sorrows, miseries, torments and tribulations of everyone (āratihara), of the Lord who is like a sun (dinakara) for the garden of lotus flowers represented by the illustrious family of King Raghu of Ayodhya (raghukula kamala bipina)¹.

[Note—¹To wit, the ecstatic ladies of Ayodhya welcomed Lord Ram by liberally showering gifts of all manners upon him, while blessing the Lord and praying for his happiness. Meanwhile, the scattered gifts were immediately collected by others who were themselves scattering gifts of their own. Everyone participated in this ceremonial way of welcoming the Lord back home. Those who collected such scattered gifts did not do so because they lacked anything, but because they wished to keep them as a souvenir, a memento, a token by which to remember throughout their lives the happy moment of the Lord's arrival.

²When Lord returned to Ayodhya from Janakpur after his marriage, a similar sight is observed at that time too. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 348.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4 where a similar metaphor is used.]

पुर सोभा संपति कल्याणा । निगम सेष सारदा बखाना ॥ ८ ॥
तेउ यह चरित देखि ठगि रहहीं । उमा तासु गुन नर किमि कहहीं ॥ ९ ॥

pura sōbhā sampati kalyānā. nigama sēṣa sārādā bakhānā. 8.
tē'u yaha carita dēkhi ṭhagi rahahīm. umā tāsu guna nara kimi kahahīm. 9.

[Lord Shiva makes the following observation about Ayodhya to goddess Uma, his divine consort, who was listening to this narration—]

‘The singular beauty and the exemplary charm of the fascinatingly wonderful city of Ayodhya, its prosperity and wealth, and its all pervading aura of auspiciousness and all-round welfare, were so remarkable and marked that they were extolled and glorified in laudatory terms by the Vedas (Nigams), Lord Sheshnath (the celestial serpent with a thousand mouths) and goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of speech and knowledge).¹’ (8)

[Then Shiva asks her—] ‘Verily indeed, when even they (Vedas, Sheshnath and Saraswati) were so spell-bound by the grandeur and excellent qualities of Ayodhya that they stood mesmerized by it, then say Uma, how is it possible for a human being to describe it? [To wit, Ayodhya was so exceptionally charming that no one can describe how beautiful, grand and magnificent it was; how extraordinary it was at the time Lord Ram came back after 14 years of living in the forest.]²’ (9)

[Note—¹Refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 361.]

दो०. नारि कुमुदिनीं अवध सर रघुपति बिरह दिनेस ।
अस्त भाँ बिगसत भई निरखि राम राकेस ॥ ९ (क) ॥

होहिं सगुन सुभ बिबिधि बिधि बाजहिं गगन निसान ।
पुर नर नारि सनाथ करि भवन चले भगवान ॥ ९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

nāri kumudinīṁ avadha sara raghupati biraha dinēsa.
asta bha'eṁ bigasata bha'īm nirakhi rāma rākēsa. 9 (a).
hōhiṁ saguna subha bibidhi bidhi bājahiṁ gagana nisāna.
pura nara nāri sanātha kari bhavana calē bhagavāna. 9 (b).

The women-folk, who were like water-lilies growing in a pond symbolized by the city of Ayodhya, had been withered by the scorching sun represented by their separation from Lord Ram, bloomed once again when they saw that sun set and the full moon symbolized by the arrival of Lord Ram rise in the sky of the city. (Doha no. 9-a)

Different types of auspicious signs appeared everywhere on the ground, while various kinds of musical drums were being played in the sky (by the gods).

Spreading cheer and warmth in all the directions, and pleasing and obliging everyone, the male as well as the female citizens who had gathered to welcome him, Lord Ram (bhagavāna) moved towards his own palace in the city. (Doha no. 9-b)

चौ०. प्रभु जानी कैकई लजानी । प्रथम तासु गृह गए भवानी ॥ १ ॥
ताहि प्रबोधि बहुत सुख दीन्हा । पुनि निज भवन गवन हरि कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu jānī kaika'ī lajānī. prathama tāsu grha ga'e bhavānī. 1.
tāhi prabōdhi bahuta sukha dīnhā. puni nija bhavana gavana hari kīnhā. 2.

[Lord Shiva continued with his narration. He told goddess Bhavani, so-called as she was the consort of Bhava, another name of Lord Shiva, as follows:-]

'Listen Bhavani (bhavānī)! Lord Ram realized (by way of a hunch) that Kaikeyi (his step-mother) was feeling very remorseful and ashamed of herself. So the Lord decided to go to her first (as soon as he entered the palace grounds)¹. (1)

Lord Ram comforted her in different ways², and made her feel happy and assuaged. After that the Lord went to his own palace³. (2)

[Note—¹The reader would recollect that it was Kaikeyi who had been the cause behind Lord Ram being sent to the forest for fourteen years. {Refer specifically to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.}]

But once she realized the enormity of the mischief she had done, the eternal ignominy, disdain and universal condemnation she had wrought on her own self for no acceptable rhyme or reason, accompanied by the intensity and immensity of grief and pain and sorrows it had let loose on the entire kingdom as well as the illustrious family of king Dasrath, resulting in his sorrowful death caused by grief of separation from Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, with a thick pall of gloom descending like a heavy cloud of doom spreading upon the entire kingdom of Ayodhya, plunging what was a

prosperous and beautiful city into a place no better than a graveyard, with even her son Bharat, for whom she had plotted this evil scheme so that he could ascend the throne of Ayodhya without a challenge from Lord Ram and Laxman, scolding her viciously and vowing never to see her face for the rest of his life—Kaikeyi finally realized the horror she had created. This immense sense of shame and regret did not leave her for the rest of her life; remorse and sadness and depression stifled her forever.

But Lord Ram was extremely forgiving, kind and compassionate. Instead being annoyed or harbouring any ill-will against her, the Lord actually thanked Kaikeyi silently for being instrumental in sending him to the forest, for otherwise his divine mission of eliminating the tyranny of the cruel demons would never have been realized. Remember: Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and Vishnu had promised the gods and mother earth that he would personally ensure that Ravana and his cruel demon hordes would be eliminated so that the world can live in peace. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.}

To wit, amongst all the characters in the story of the Ramayana, if we were to consider all the aspects from all angles and make a judicious pronouncement, then we would arrive at an unanimous conclusion that Kaikeyi had served the cause of Lord Vishnu in the best possible way. She was bold enough to take a courageous step, and had sacrificed her entire reputation and name on the altar of serving Lord Vishnu in his form as Lord Ram. She accepted all-round scorn, castigation, condemnation, ridicule, spite and ignominy just to ensure that Lord Ram's wishes could be fulfilled.

It is true that the gods too had served Lord Ram in their forms as monkeys and bears as ordered by the creator Brahma to do (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188), but none of them did anything that would make a devil out of them as was the case with Kaikeyi (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 47).

The gods gained only praises and applause for their devotion and loyalty to Lord Ram and serving him in their forms as monkeys and bears, but surely not the sort of universal condemnation, extreme disdain and utter contempt that befell Kaikeyi as her share for serving the same Lord, events that scarred her life forever.

Lord Ram realized her grief and pain, as well as a sense of remorse, regret and sorrow that was burning her inner-self; the Lord felt immense pity for her and empathized with her.

So, therefore, the Lord went to meet her first in order to sooth her, to comfort her grieving and lamenting heart, to assuage her emotions by speaking to her courteously, and to tell her that he has the same affection and respect for her now as he had for her in the beginning, and that this affection and respect is not a fraction less than what he has for the other mothers, i.e. mother Kaushalya (his own mother) and mother Sumitra (Laxman's mother).

A similar event occurred earlier in Chitrakoot too—there also Lord Ram made it a point to meet Kaikeyi and pay his respects to her to comfort her first before meeting other mothers. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 244 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 244.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 348.]

कृपासिंधु जब मंदिर गए । पुर नर नारि सुखी सब भए ॥ ३ ॥
 गुर बसिष्ट द्विज लिए बुलाई । आजु सुघरी सुदिन समुदाई ॥ ४ ॥
 सब द्विज देहु हरषि अनुसासन । रामचंद्र बैठहिं सिंघासन ॥ ५ ॥
 मुनि बसिष्ट के बचन सुहाए । सुनत सकल बिग्रह अति भाए ॥ ६ ॥

krpāsindhu jaba mandira ga'ē. pura nara nāri sukhī saba bha'ē. 3.
 gura basiṣṭa dvija li'ē bulā'ī. āju sugharī sudina samudā'ī. 4.
 saba dvija dēhu haraṣi anusāsana. rāmacandra baiṭhahim siṅghāsana. 5.
 muni basiṣṭa kē bacana suhā'ē. sunata sakala bipranha ati bhā'ē. 6.

When Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of mercy, grace, kindness and compassion (krpāsindhu), entered his palace, the men-folk as well as the women-folk of the city felt very happy and contented. (3)

Thence, guru Vasistha called all the senior Brahmins and told them: 'Today is a very auspicious day, and all good stars have arranged themselves in such a way that they are in harmony with each other. (4)

So therefore, I request all of you Brahmins to cheerfully grant your permission so that Lord Ramchandra could sit on the throne of Ayodhya (and be anointed as its King).' (5)

The pleasant words of guru Vasistha were warmly welcomed by all the Brahmins. (6)

कहहिं बचन मृदु बिप्र अनेका । जग अभिराम राम अभिषेका ॥ ७ ॥
 अब मुनिबर बिलंब नहिं कीजै । महाराज कहँ तिलक करीजै ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim bacana mr̥du bipra anēkā. jaga abhirāma rāma abhiṣekā. 7.
 aba munibara bilamba nahim kijai. mahārāja kahañ tilaka karījai. 8.

A number of Brahmins spoke simultaneously, saying cheerfully and very courteously that they were all unanimously in favour of Lord Ram ascending the throne and anointed as the King. 'Verily indeed, the news of Lord Ram's ascension to the throne and being appointed as the King is a most welcome and auspicious news; there is nothing better one could hear. (7)

Oh great sage (Vasistha). Do not delay now; anoint Lord Ram as a King forthwith.¹ (8)

[Note—¹The elders wished to waste no time in crowning Lord Ram, for they have had a bitter experience earlier when a little delay caused by making elaborate arrangements, decorating the city and planning for celebrations had thrown a spanner in the whole affair when the crooked Fate got a window of opportunity and

maneuvered things maliciously in such, and so suddenly turned the tide, that Lord Ram had to go to the forest, and the day that was meant for rejoicing and festivities, when he would sit on the throne, was converted into a day of wailing and grief and lamentations. Devil is very cunning and has an evil nature inasmuch as it derives immense pleasure in spoiling things when least expected, and rejoices when others grieve.

So therefore, the Brahmins advised sage Vasistha, the royal priest, to make haste and anoint Lord Ram as a King-Emperor as quickly as possible, without wasting time on formalities.]

दो०. तब मुनि कहेउ सुमंत्र सन सुनत चलेउ हरषाइ ।
 रथ अनेक बहु बाजि गज तुरत सँवारे जाइ ॥ १० (क) ॥
 जहँ तहँ धावन पठइ पुनि मंगल द्रव्य मगाइ ।
 हरष समेत बसिष्ठ पद पुनि सिरु नायउ आइ ॥ १० (ख) ॥

dōhā.

taba muni kahē'u sumantra sana sunata calē'u haraṣā'i.
 ratha anēka bahu bāji gaja turata saṁvārē jā'i. 10 (a).
 jahaṁ tahaṁ dhāvana paṭha'i puni maṅgala drabya magā'i.
 haraṣa samēta basiṣṭa pada puni siru nāya'u ā'i. 10 (b).

After receiving an unanimous permission to go ahead with Lord Ram's crowning ceremony, guru Vasistha summoned the chief minister named Sumantra, and gave him necessary instructions.

As soon as Sumantra received his orders, he cheerfully proceeded to carry out his mandate. He went and readied a number of horses and chariots¹. (Doha no. 10-a)

Meanwhile, messengers and heralds were speedily dispatched in different directions with the errand to bring water from holy places as quickly as possible².

He then came back and bowed his head before guru Vasistha to report to him that all necessary arrangements were being made, and things are speedily being put in place for the Lord's crowning ceremony. (Doha no. 10-b)

[Note—¹The horses and chariots were readied to participate in the ceremonial royal procession that would mark the crowning of Lord Ram as the King of the kingdom of Ayodhya. Since Ayodhya was a vast kingdom with extensive territory, and its domain and sovereignty extended over other smaller principalities, it was no less than an empire, and hence Lord Ram assumed the role of an Emperor too.

²On close observations we conclude that the actual anointment ceremony must have been held a day or two later, because the messengers and heralds must have taken at least a day to come back with holy waters from places far off. No matter how swiftly they went, but they could not perform a magic by going thither and coming hither before the sun set that day.

Therefore, the earliest Lord Ram could have ascended the throne was on the day that followed the day of his arrival; it could also have been two days from the day

of his arrival, if not more, if we take into account the necessity of making elaborate arrangements for a royal ascension ceremony of a great kingdom.]

चौ०. अवधपुरी अति रुचिर बनाई । देवन्ह सुमन बृष्टि झरि लाई ॥ १ ॥
 राम कहा सेवकन्ह बुलाई । प्रथम सखन्ह अन्हवावहु जाई ॥ २ ॥
 सुनत बचन जहँ तहँ जन धाए । सुग्रीवादि तुरत अन्हवाए ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

avadhapurī ati rucira banāī. dēvanha sumana br̥ṣṭi jhari lāī. 1.
 rāma kahā sēvakanha bulāī. prathama sakhanha anhavāvahu jāī. 2.
 sunata bacana jhaṁ̃ tahaṁ̃ jana dhā'ē. sugrīvādi turata anhavā'ē. 3.

The capital city of the kingdom of Ayodhya, known as 'Avadh-Puri', was decked up magnificently, in all the best of finery (like a bride) so much that it inspired the gods to shower a rain of an abundance of flowers (of all hues and shapes) on it¹. (1)

Lord Ram called his attendants and instructed them: 'First of all (i.e. on priority basis) go and get all my friends (who had disembarked from the plane with the Lord) to have their baths.'² (2)

Upon receiving the Lord's instructions, the servitors immediately went here and there³ to carry out these orders. They arranged for getting Sugriv and others bathed. (3)

[Note—¹This is the third occasion when Ayodhya is decorated magnificently, in all finery, rendering an exceptional beauty to it, which so much fascinated the gods that they rained down an abundance of flowers of all colours and shapes to express their joy. The first occasion was when Lord Ram and his three brothers were born—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 194; Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195.

The second occasion is when Lord Ram and his brothers returned to Ayodhya with their brides after their marriage ceremony in Janakpur—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345; Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 347.

²Now, these 'friends' from Lanka were Lord Ram's guests of honour. The Lord was extending his warmest hospitality to them, and therefore he first ensured that they were properly lodged and all necessary arrangements were made for them; none of them should ever feel neglected even in the slightest.

³The friends of Lord Ram, Vibhishan, Sugriv, Angad, Jamvant, Nala, Neela, Hanuman etc. (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 8) were so excited and fascinated by the charming city of Ayodhya, and were so overwhelmed by the warmth with which they were received by its citizens, that they had gone here and there to have a view of the fine city, and even visited homes of the citizens who enthusiastically invited them to come in and have some refreshments.

Nay, the citizens not only opened their homes for these special guests but even vied with each other to have one of them visit their homes, as it would bring them

honour and give them a lot of pleasure to serve them. Those of the guests who preferred to go around the city for sight-seeing were accompanied by enthusiastic crowds of people, young and old, who gladly showed them around, pointing out to them the landmarks of this famous city and cheerfully acting as expert guides to lead the honourable guests across the streets and squares.

Here and there and everywhere, crowds of joyous citizens thronged them; some trying to shake hands with them or simply to touch them, some trying to hug them, some wishing to talk with them, some asking their names, some offering flowers and fruits and sweet drinks, some cajoling them to step inside their homes and have a little chat, rest and a bite of refreshment, and so on and so forth the infectious warmth of welcome spread, so much so that the guests were virtually swept off their feet and borne aloft in the tidal wave of warmth and affection that swamped them.

So by the time Lord Ram's attendants went out to carry out their orders, they couldn't find these guests at the place the plane had landed, because in the meantime all of them had already spread across the large city—some visiting homes, and others roaming around for sight-seeing, surrounded by a huge jubilant crowd wherever they went.

To wit, these messengers had a tough time to first locate them, and then to push back the zealous citizens so that the guests could be brought to their respective lodging places and advised to take a bath as requested by the Lord.]

पुनि करुनानिधि भरतु हँकारे । निज कर राम जटा निरुआरे ॥ ४ ॥

अन्हवाए प्रभु तीनिउ भाई । भगत बछल कृपाल रघुराई ॥ ५ ॥

भरत भाग्य प्रभु कोमलताई । सेष कोटि सत सकहिं न गाई ॥ ६ ॥

puni karunānidhi bharatu haṁkāre. nija kara rāma jaṭā niru'ārē. 4.
anhavā'ē prabhu tīni'u bhā'ī. bhagata bachala kṛpāla raghurā'ī. 5.
bharata bhāgya prabhu kōmalatā'ī. sēṣa kōṭi sata sakahim na gā'ī. 6.

Then Lord Ram, who was like an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (karunānidhi) called in Bharat, and with his own hands the Lord disentangled (or unwound; un-girdled; unlocked) his matted lock of hairs¹. (4)

Thence, Lord Ram, the Lord who is extremely gracious and merciful towards his devotees (bhagata bachala) and is the illustrious Lord in the race of King Raghu (raghurā'ī), advised all his three brothers (Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) to have their baths. (5)

Verily indeed, even countless Seshnaths (who have thousands of mouths with which they could speak simultaneously) would not be competent enough to praise the good fortunes and glory of Bharat (bharata bhāgya)², and the immensity of Lord Ram's tenderness of heart and softness of feelings (prabhu kōmalatā'ī) in a sufficient way. (6)

[Note—¹After his return from Chitrakoot, Bharat had lived like a hermit on the outskirts of Ayodhya. He had attired himself as a recluse, and this included keeping his lock of hairs matted as a crown on his head* in the same fashion as he had seen

Lord Ram wearing it when the two brothers met in Chitrakoot. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 324.}

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205—where Bharat is praised by the deity of Triveni, the holy pilgrim site of the confluence of three holy rivers; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210—where sage Bharadwaj praises Bharat; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 259—where Lord Ram himself praises Bharat; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 326—where the citizens of Ayodhya praise Bharat.]

पुनि निज जटा राम बिबराए । गुर अनुसासन मागि नहाए ॥ ७ ॥
करि मज्जन प्रभु भूषन साजे । अंग अनंग देखि सत लाजे ॥ ८ ॥

puni nija jaṭā rāma bibarā'ē. gura anusāsana māgi nahā'ē. 7.
kari majjana prabhu bhūṣana sājē. aṅga anaṅga dēkhi sata lājē. 8.

After that (i.e. after unlocking the hairs of Bharat and getting all the brothers bathed) Lord Ram un-girdled or unlocked his own lock of matted hairs. Then, having obtained permission of his guru (sage Vasistha), the Lord took a bath (and washed his unlocked hairs). (7)

After taking a bath, the Lord attired himself in royal robes and ornaments. The Lord's form looked so exceptionally beauteous and bewitchingly charming that it shamed countless Kamdeos (the patron god of beauty and charm)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Kamdeo is said to have the most charming body amongst the pantheon of gods. This verse simply means that Lord Ram looked so magnificently handsome and charming in his clothes and ornaments that all the pride that Kamdeo might have had regarding his attractive form was crushed, putting him to shame for all his boast and pretensions.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243. All these verses express identical views.]

दो०. सासुन्ह सादर जानकिहि मज्जन तुरत कराइ ।
दिव्य बसन बर भूषन अँग अँग सजे बनाइ ॥ ११ (क) ॥
राम बाम दिसि सोभति रमा रूप गुन खानि ।
देखि मातु सब हरषीं जन्म सुफल निज जानि ॥ ११ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

sāsunha sādara jānakihi majjana turata karā'i.
dibya basana bara bhūṣana aṅga aṅga sajē banā'i. 11 (a).
rāma bāma disi sōbhati ramā rūpa guna khāni.
dēkhi mātu saba haraṣīṁ janma suphala nija jāni. 11 (b).

Inside the palace, the mothers-in-law first got Janki (Sita) bathed, and then adorned her with beautiful clothes and magnificent ornaments that covered her entire body. (Doha no. 11-a)

Janki, who was an embodiment of beauty and virtues, and a personified form of Rama (goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu), looked glorious as she stood to the left of Lord Ram¹.

When the mothers beheld this charming sight, they felt exhilarated, and considered their life fully rewarded². (Doha no. 11-b)

[Note—¹According to established Hindu tradition, a married woman always stands or sits on the left of her husband.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109.

The heavenly beauty and charm of Sita was legendary. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323.

Similarly, the sight of Lord Ram and Sita was exceptionally bewitching—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 325.

²At the time of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita, king Dasrath, the father of the Lord, too had the same feeling. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 325.]

सुनु खगेस तेहि अवसर ब्रह्मा सिव मुनि बृन्द ।
चढ़ि बिमान आए सब सुर देखन सुखकंद ॥ ११ (ग) ॥

sunu khagēsa tēhi avasara brahmā siva muni bṛnda.
caḍhi bimāna ā'ē saba sura dēkhana sukhakanda. 11 (c).

[The saintly crow named Kaagbhusund, one of the primary narrators of this divine Story, told his listener Garud, the heavenly Bird who is also a mount of Lord Vishnu, as follows:-]

‘Listen oh king of birds (khagēsa)! At that time, Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, all the great sages and seers, as well as the gods who arrived in their planes—all of them assembled there to have a heavenly view of Lord Ram, who is indeed an embodiment of bliss and happiness¹. (Doha no. 11-c)

[Note—¹The Gods, Brahma, Shiva and the sages—all came to witness Lord Ram's coronation ceremony and bless him. Earlier too, on every happy occasion they had assembled to see the Lord and bless him—whether it was the occasion of the Lord's birth*, his marriage# or his victory in the war of Lanka\$.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196.

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 262; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; Doha no. 324; Doha no. 353 etc.

\$Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103; Doha no. 109.]

चौ०. प्रभु बिलोकि मुनि मन अनुरागा । तुरत दिव्य सिंघासन मागा ॥ १ ॥
 रबि सम तेज सो बरनि न जाई । बैठे राम द्विजन्ह सिरु नाई ॥ २ ॥
 जनकसुता समेत रघुराई । पेखि प्रहरषे मुनि समुदाई ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

prabhu bilōki muni mana anurāgā. turata dibya siṅghāsana māgā. 1.
 rabi sama tēja sō barani na jāī. baiṭhē rāma dvijanha siru nāī. 2.
 janakasutā samēta raghurāī. pēkhi praharaṣē muni samudāī. 3.

Seeing Lord Ram, the sage's (i.e. Vasistha's) heart brimmed over with affection for him. The exhilarated sage immediately asked for a heavenly throne (which was provided to him instantly). (1)

This magnificent throne was as splendid and radiant as the sun, and it defied all descriptions¹. Lord Ram bowed his head reverentially before the assembled Brahmins and sat down on it. (2)

Observing this beautiful sight of Lord Ram sitting on the throne (of the great kingdom of Ayodhya), with the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita) by his side, the exalted assembly of illustrious sages and learned elders felt extremely exhilarated. (3)

[Note—¹The throne was made of pure gold, and it was studded with priceless gems that glittered. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 11.]

बेद मंत्र तब द्विजन्ह उचारे । नभ सुर मुनि जय जयति पुकारे ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रथम तिलक बसिष्ट मुनि कीन्हा । पुनि सब बिप्रन्ह आयसु दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

bēda mantra taba dvijanha ucārē. nabha sura muni jaya jayati pukārē. 4.
 prathama tilaka basiṣṭa muni kīnhā. puni saba bipranha āyasu dīnhā. 5.

Then the Brahmins recited the sacred Mantras from the Vedas (scriptures), while the gods in the sky (heavens) and the sages (on the ground) raised their hands to applaud and bless the Lord, cheering in unison: 'Glory to the Lord; Hail the Lord and Victory be to him'. (4)

As the rituals for the anointment of Lord Ram as the King-Emperor began, it was sage Vasistha who formally started the process by making a 'Tilak Mark' on the Lord's forehead first¹, which was followed by a loud chorus of blessings from all the assembled Brahmins (and elders). (5)

[Note—¹The 'Tilak' is a sacred mark made on the forehead of a newly appointed King as a token of his formal appointment on the throne of the kingdom, and the

acceptance of his sovereignty by the subjects of that kingdom during the coronation ceremony.

This ‘Tilak Mark’ is made by using a paste of auspicious ingredients, and the ritual is accompanied by chanting of Veda Mantras and blessings from all the assembled elders of the kingdom.

Sage Vasistha was the chief priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and so he would obviously be the one to carry out this ritual.]

सुत बिलोकि हरषीं महतारी । बार बार आरती उत्तारी ॥ ६ ॥

बिप्रन्ह दान बिबिधि बिधि दीन्हे । जाचक सकल अजाचक कीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥

सिंघासन पर त्रिभुअन साईं । देखि सुरन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाई ॥ ८ ॥

suta bilōki haraṣīm mahatārī. bāra bāra āratī utārī. 6.

bipranha dāna bibidhi bidhi dīnhē. jācaka sakala ajācaka kīnhē. 7.

siṅghāsana para tribhu'ana sālīm. dēkhi suranha dundubhīm bajāīm. 8.

Beholding their son (Lord Ram sitting on the throne of Ayodhya), all the mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) were thrilled and exhilarated¹. They repeatedly performed his ‘Arti’² (i.e. they waved a plate decorated with lighted earthen lamps before him as a token of blessing, for inviting good omen, and deflecting or warding off evil spirits that may perchance think of casting an inauspicious eye on the Lord). (6)

On this auspicious occasion, different types of charities were made and alms given to Brahmins and alms-seekers so liberally that those who received these largesse themselves gave them away to others³. (7)

The Lord of the three worlds (i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world; the entire creation; “tribhu'ana sālīm”) was sitting on the Throne⁴. Seeing this most wonderful sight, the gods became ecstatic and played their musical drums and trumpets in the sky. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 11-b.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7. Here we read that the plate used to wave auspicious lighted earthen lamps before Lord Ram by the mothers was made of gold. The occasion was the Lord’s arrival in Ayodhya after fourteen years in the forest.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 7. After performing the Lord’s Arti to welcome him back home, liberal charities were distributed by the delighted mothers.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194. The occasion here was the celebration marking the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers in the household of the King of Ayodhya, king Dasrath. We observe here too that the receivers of various gifts gave them to others in their turn, for it was an occasion of celebration, and the gifts were meant to mark it. Whoever

accepted such gifts kept some of the items with them as a memento for future generations, but they cheerfully gave the rest to others who could not make it to the palace to receive gifts themselves due to the huge crowd that had assembled and packed the palace courtyard chock-a-block. Such citizens were obliged by others who were lucky to go inside and receive the gifts, and the latter willingly shared the gifts with their fellow citizens.

Remember: Ayodhya was a wealthy and prosperous kingdom, and no one had dearth or shortage of anything that he or she would run away with free gifts and hoard them inside their homes.

⁴Till now, Lord Ram was not officially appointed as a 'King'. Now that happy occasion had arrived. The symbolism is obvious: A King is the protector, a well-wisher, a provider of all needs, and like a father to his subjects.

So therefore, when the gods saw that Lord Ram was sitting on the Throne after being appointed a King, they were extremely delighted as now they themselves, as well as the world they are obliged to take care of, could look forward to the Lord's protection; now they had a formal King, their well-wisher and care-taker. The other reason for their joy was that Lord Ram was not an ordinary king of a worldly kingdom, but he was the Supreme Lord of the whole world. Besides this, Lord Ram was exceptionally merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind, forgiving, judicious, benevolent, munificent, courteous and noble in heart.

With such a King at the helm of affairs, what more would the subjects want? Hence, it was indeed a matter for rejoicing and an occasion for celebrations for one and all—which the gods marked by playing their musical instruments.]

छं०. नभ दुंदुभीं बाजहिं बिपुल गंधर्व किंनर गावहीं । १ ।
नाचहिं अपछरा बृंद परमानंद सुर मुनि पावहीं ॥ २ ॥
भरतादि अनुज बिभीषणांगद हनुमदादि समेत ते । ३ ।
गहें छत्र चामर व्यजन धनु असि चर्म सक्ति बिराजते ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nabha dundubhīm bājahim bipula gandharba kinnara gāvahīm. 1.
nācahīm apacharā br̥nda paramānanda sura muni pāvahīm. 2.
bharatādi anuja bibhīṣanāṅgada hanumadādi samēta tē. 3.
gahēm chatra cāmara byajana dhanu asi carma sakti birājatē. 4.

A large number of kettle-drums sounded in the sky (as the gods beat them enthusiastically), while Gandharvas and Kinnars¹ sang merrily to the tune of this music. (Chanda line no. 1)

Meanwhile, a large crowd of Apsaras (female dancers of heaven) formed groups and danced in merry abundance to accompany the singing by their male counterparts.

To wit, the whole atmosphere was one of blissfulness, of excess of joy and happiness; so all the gods and the sages thoroughly enjoyed it and felt ecstatic. (Chanda line no. 2)

Lord Ram's younger brothers such as Bharat etc. (i.e. Laxman and Shatrughan too), and the Lord's friends such as Vibhishan, Angad, Hanuman etc. (i.e. Sugriv too), stood around the Lord on the dais, holding ceremonial umbrella, whisk, fan, bow, sword, shield, and lancet etc. in their hands². (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹The Ghandharvas and Kinnars are demi-gods; they are the musicians, dancers and singers of heaven.

²The three brothers and the close friends of Lord Ram stood around the throne on the dais, each holding some kind of a ceremonial paraphernalia in his hand, as a sign that that they were very close to the Lord and his close confidantes. When a formal ceremony, such as coronation of a king or the swearing-in of a head of government takes place, only a limited number of selected persons are allowed to go on the dais. These persons are persons of honour, close relatives or special guests of the newly anointed king or the newly appointed head of the government. To stand on the dais on such special occasions is a matter of great privilege and prestige.]

श्री सहित दिनकर बंस भूषन काम बहु छबि सोहई । ५ ।

नव अंबुधर बर गात अंबर पीत सुर मन मोहई ॥ ६ ॥

मुकुटांगदादि बिचित्र भूषन अंग अंगन्हि प्रति सजे । ७ ।

अंभोज नयन बिसाल उर भुज धन्य नर निरखंति जे ॥ ८ ॥

śrī sahita dinakara bansa bhūṣana kāma bahu chabi sōha'ī. 5.
nava ambudhara bara gāta ambara pīta sura mana mōha'ī. 6.
mukutāṅgadādi bicitra bhūṣana aṅga aṅganhi prati sajē. 7.
ambhōja nayana bisāla ura bhuja dhan'ya nara nirakhanti jē. 8.

Lord Ram, who was like a jewel of the Solar race (dinakara bansa bhūṣana), along with Sita, who was a personified form of goddess Laxmi and represented everything that is auspicious and has the quality of richness in it (śrī)—looked so exquisite, majestic and adorable as if he was a personified form of countless Kamdeos (the patron god of beauty and charm). (Chanda line no. 5)

The yellow coloured 'Pitambar' (a length of silk cloth that is wrapped around the body; the garment worn by Lord Vishnu) that was wrapped around the body of Lord Ram, which was dark-complexioned like a newly formed rain-bearing bank of dark clouds (seen during the rainy season), looked so magnificent that it mightily enthralled the gods, and charmed their minds and hearts exceedingly. (Chanda line no. 6)

A crown with a tiara or a diadem, armlets, and other magnificent ornaments adorned every part of the Lord's form. (Chanda line no. 7)

Lord Ram had eyes as large and beautiful as lotus flowers; he had a broad chest and long muscular arms.

Most lucky and privileged were those who had an auspicious view of this divine sight of the Lord's heavenly form. (Chanda line no. 8)

दो०. वह सोभा समाज सुख कहत न बनइ खगेस ।
 बरनहिं सारद सेष श्रुति सो रस जान महेस ॥ १२ (क) ॥
 भिन्न भिन्न अस्तुति करि गए सुर निज निज धाम ।
 बंदी बेष बेद तब आए जहँ श्रीराम ॥ १२ (ज) ॥
 प्रभु सर्बग्य कीन्ह अति आदर कृपानिधान ।
 लखेउ न काहूँ मरम कछु लगे करन गुन गान ॥ १२ (ग) ॥

dōhā.

vaha sōbhā samāja sukha kahata na bana'i khagēsa.
 baranahim sārada sēṣa śruti sō rasa jāna mahēsa. 12 (a).
 bhinna bhinna astuti kari ga'e sura nija nija dhāma.
 bandī bēṣa bēda taba ā'e jahañ śrīrāma. 12 (b).
 prabhu sarbagya kīnha ati ādara kṛpānidhāna.
 lakhē'u na kāhūñ marama kachu lagē karana gāna. 12 (c).

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund told Garud, his listener—]

‘Oh the king of birds (khagēsa)! The magnificence, the charm, the euphoria and the joy that prevailed and permeated everywhere at that time, was so stupendous and overriding that it defies all description.

Goddess Saraswati, Lord Sheshnath and the Vedas have made attempts to narrate and give a description of those eclectic moments as best as they could, but failed to do so as they could not completely comprehend the depth of its spiritual significance, for the spiritual bliss and ecstasy that it provided is known only to Lord Shiva¹. (Doha no. 12-a)

All the gods offered their prayers to Lord Ram, individually as well as in unison, and then went to their respective abodes in the heaven.

Then came the Vedas disguised as Bards or Minstrels at the place where Lord Ram was (i.e. at the venue of the coronation ceremony). (Doha no. 12-b)

Lord Ram, who is all-knowing and omniscient, immediately recognized them (that they were a personified form of the Vedas)²; so therefore the Lord welcomed them with great respect.

Everyone present there saw them (the Bards; the Minstrels), but none could recognize who they actually were (i.e. no one could understand that they were Vedas).

Meanwhile, these Bards or Minstrels sang the majestic glories of the Lord in laudatory terms. (Doha no. 12-c)

[Note—¹To wit, goddess Saraswati and Lord Sheshnath could only describe the physical beauty and grandeur of the occasion of Lord Ram's coronation, but the real spiritual bliss and ecstasy that it provided could be realized and known only by Lord Shiva.

⁵An important question can be asked here. How many Bards or Minstrels had come to honour Lord Ram with their prayers? The answer is simple: they were five of them. Why? Because the Vedas are five in number as follows: Rig Veda, Shukla Yajur Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda, Sam Veda and Atharva Veda.]

(vi) Sub-section 21.1.6: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 20:

After the Lord's coronation festivities were over, his honoured guests from Kishkindha and Lanka, i.e. the chiefs of the monkey and bear race as well as Vibhishan and his companions, who had come to Ayodhya on the Pushpak plane, were given a warm send-off by Lord Ram, and they returned to their homes full of praises for the Lord, with happy memories of their companionship with Lord Ram forever enshrined in their hearts.

चौ०. सुनु खगपति यह कथा पावनी । त्रिबिध ताप भव भय दावनी ॥ १ ॥
महाराज कर सुभ अभिषेका । सुनत लहहिं नर बिरति बिबेका ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sunu khagapati yaha kathā pāvanī. tribidha tāpa bhava bhaya dāvanī. 1.
mahārāja kara subha abhiṣēkā. sunata lahaḥim nara birati bibēkā. 2.

[Continuing with the narration, the saintly crow Kaagbhusund told his listener Garud, the king of birds, as follows—]

‘Listen oh king of birds (sunu khagapati)¹. This Story (of Lord Ram) is very purifying, holy and auspicious (kathā pāvanī). It has the potential to eliminate all the torments associated with this mundane gross world as well as the three great fears associated with it (tribidha tāpa bhava bhaya dāvanī)². (1)

When a person listens to the episode that describes the coronation of Lord Ram, he or she is freed from all such fears and apprehensions³. Such persons get true wisdom and develop renunciation⁴. (2)

[Note—¹The reader must have noticed by now that there are two primary narrators and two primary listeners of this glorious Story. One such narrator and listener is Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati, who is also known by the name of Uma; and the other narrator and listener is the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu.

Presently, it is the latter two who are being cited in this verse. The episode that describes the conversation betwixt Kaagbhusund and Garud, wherein the Story of the Ramayana was narrated, is to be found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68.

²The three great fears associated with this mundane world of transmigration, fears that cause misery to all living beings, are the following: Adhibhautik = fears and problems related to the physical world and its creatures; Adhidaivik = fears and problems created by adverse gods and malignant stars; and Adhyamik = fears related to one's spiritual well-being.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 32.

³When the king of a kingdom is benevolent, kind and merciful, if he is concerned about the welfare of his subjects and ensures that no one in his realm suffers unnecessarily, when the king is known for his gracious and compassionate nature, it is sure then that the people within his domain live a happy and contented life.

This analogy is used here to mean that when the devotee sees Lord Ram as his Lord and Protector, there would be nothing from which he or she would be worried in this world. Lord Ram's coronation as the Sovereign implies that the devotee has a friend in power and authority; a friend who would go out of his way and employ his abilities and resources to ensure that all his other friends are happy and contented, that no one troubles them. So this means that the people of the world can live happily when they put themselves in the safe custody of Lord Ram.

Remember: We are not talking about some great worldly prince or king of any worldly kingdom, but of the Supreme Lord of the world, of the Lord God. Hence, if one relies on the Lord Ram with the firm conviction and faith that he is none but the Supreme Being himself, the Lord God himself, then say what fear can he or she ever have?

⁴With the firm faith that Lord Ram is ready to take care of all the needs in one's life, both worldly as well as spiritual, what is the necessity and the purpose served by hankering after worldly acquisitions or trying to appease gods and stars? With this realization comes renunciation, and this is true spiritual wisdom.]

जे सकाम नर सुनहिं जे गावहिं । सुख संपति नाना बिधि पावहिं ॥ ३ ॥
सुर दुर्लभ सुख करि जग माहीं । अंतकाल रघुपति पुर जाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

jē sakāma nara sunahim jē gāvahim. sukha sampati nānā bidhi pāvahim. 3.
sura durlabha sukha kari jaga māhīm. antakāla raghupati pura jāhīm. 4.

Those who hear and sing or recite this divine Story with some desire in mind, they are blessed with all sorts and different types of happiness and prosperity. [To wit, all their worldly desires are taken care of.] (3)

While alive they live a life of heavenly comfort and happiness that is envy of the gods. And when they die, they attain deliverance and their soul attains the heavenly abode of Lord Raghupati himself. [To wit, upon death, such persons go to heaven.] (4)

[Note—These two lines elaborate on what has been said previously. By relying upon Lord Ram, one is able to live happily in this world, and upon death one goes to heaven. To wit, all worldly as well as spiritual well-being and welfare are taken care of simultaneously.]

सुनहिं बिमुक्त बिरत अरु बिषई । लहहिं भगति गति संपति नई ॥ ५ ॥
 खगपति राम कथा मैं बरनी । स्वमति बिलास त्रास दुख हरनी ॥ ६ ॥
 बिरति बिबेक भगति दूढ़ करनी । मोह नदी कहँ सुंदर तरनी ॥ ७ ॥

sunahim bimukta birata aru biṣa'ī. lahahim bhagati gati sampati na'ī. 5.
 khagapati rāma kathā main baranī. svamati bilāsa trāsa dukha haranī. 6.
 birati bibēka bhagati dūṛha karanī. mōha nadī kahaṁ sundara taranī. 7.

Hearing of this glorious Story grants desired fruits to the listener depending on his attitude, aptitude, subtle inclinations, and mental bearing.

Verily, if this divine Story is heard by those who free from all worldly attachments as well as by those who practice renunciation and dispassion, they are blessed with the fruit of Bhakti (i.e. devotion for Lord God) and Gati (i.e. they find salvation; their souls find deliverance and emancipation).

On the other hand, if it is heard by those who are enamoured by the world and its material things, then they too find their wishes fulfilled by getting newer successes and gains in this material world. (5)

Oh king of birds (khagapati)! I have narrated the divine and glorious Story of Ram (rāma kathā) in accordance with my understanding and knowledge¹. It not only gives immense comfort but also eliminates all torments and tribulations associated with life in this mortal and gross world. (6)

This blessed Story reinforces the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion that a person has in his heart; it further fortifies wisdom and judicious thinking; and it firms up the virtues of devotion and submission to the Lord God that is already present in the heart of a devotee. Forsooth, these grand qualities are made more robust and abiding if a person hears this Story attentively, and with immense faith (as to its mystical powers to grant spiritual rewards as well as fulfillment of wishes).

Verily indeed and without gainsay, this Story of Lord Ram is like a wonderful boat (sundara taranī) that can help a person to easily cross the river of Maya (i.e. the river symbolized by delusions and all its associated problems) without any hassles. (7)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68.]

नित नव मंगल कौसलपुरी । हरषित रहहिं लोग सब कुरी ॥ ८ ॥
 नित नइ प्रीति राम पद पंकज । सब कें जिन्हहि नमत सिव मुनि अज ॥ ९ ॥
 मंगन बहु प्रकार पहिराए । द्विजन्ह दान नाना बिधि पाए ॥ १० ॥

nita nava maṅgala kausalapurī. haraṣita rahahim lōga saba kurī. 8.
nita na'i prīti rāma pada paṅkaja. saba kēm jinhahi namata siva muni aja. 9.
maṅgana bahu prakāra pahirā'ē. dvijanha dāna nānā bidhi pā'ē. 10.

Meanwhile, there were daily festivities and many kinds of celebrations in Ayodhya (to mark the coronation of Lord Ram, as well as to mark his return from the forest and the success in the epic War of Lanka).

Everyone in the realm, of all castes and denominations, was very happy and exhilarated. (8)

Everyone had great affection and reverence for the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram; everyone adored and paid obeisance to the holy feet of the Lord before which even Lord Shiva, the great sages, as well as the creator Brahma bow their heads. (9)

Alms seekers received liberal gifts of different kinds; Brahmins too received grants and largesse of various sorts. (10)

दो०. ब्रह्मानंद मगन कपि सब कें प्रभु पद प्रीति ।
जात न जाने दिवस तिन्ह गए मास षट बीति ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

brahmānanda magana kapi saba kēm prabhu pada prīti.
jāta na jānē divasa tinha ga'ē māsa ṣaṭa bīti. 15.

All the Kapis (i.e. the monkeys as well as the bears who had come with Lord Ram aboard the plane from the battle-field of Lanka, as his guests and friends) were so much charmed, so enthralled and so captivated by the mass celebrations and extended festivities that marked Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya and his coronation that they virtually lost track of time and forgot who they were—so much so that almost six months passed without them knowing how long it was¹. (Doha no. 15)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that when Lord Ram and his brothers were born, a similar thing had happened at that time too—one month passed in festivities and celebrations without anyone realizing how long it had been. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

चौ०. बिसरे गृह सपनेहुँ सुधि नाहीं । जिमि परद्रोह संत मन माहीं ॥ १ ॥
तब रघुपति सब सखा बोलाए । आइ सबन्हि सादर सिरु नाए ॥ २ ॥
परम प्रीति समीप बैठारे । भगत सुखद मृदु बचन उचारे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bisarē gr̥ha sapanēhuṁ sudhi nāhīm. jimi paradrōha santa mana māhīm. 1.
taba raghupati saba sakhā bōlā'ē. ā'i sabanhi sādara siru nā'ē. 2.

parama prīti samīpa baiṭhārē. bhagata sukhada mṛdu bacana ucārē. 3.

All of them (i.e. the ‘Kapis’) forgot everything about their own homes so much so that they didn’t even dream of either their own families back home or about returning back—in the same way as saints do not harbour in their hearts and minds any kind of ill-will or animosity towards their adversaries, nor do they remember any harm or offence anyone has done to them. (1)

By-and-by, one day Lord Ram called all his friends for a meeting. All came and bowed their heads reverentially before the Lord. (2)

He made them sit down close to him most affectionately.

Once they were all seated around him, the Lord spoke very polite words that would be pleasant for his devotees to hear¹. (3)

[Note—¹The Kapis were so loyal and faithful to Lord Ram that besides being the Lord’s close friends and companions they were also his ‘devotees’. That is why it is said here that the Lord spoke so sweetly that his friends and devotees, i.e. the Kapis, felt very happy.]

तुम्ह अति कीन्हि मोरि सेवकाई । मुख पर केहि बिधि करौं बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥
ताते मोहि तुम्ह अति प्रिय लागे । मम हित लागि भवन सुख त्यागे ॥ ५ ॥

tumha ati kīnhi mōri sēvakā’i. mukha para kēhi bidhi karaum barā’i. 4.
tātē mōhi tumha ati priya lāgē. mama hita lāgi bhavana sukha tyāgē. 5.

You have done great service to me for which I am so highly obliged to you that I can’t find words to express my gratitude in sufficient manner, nor do I know how to praise you all for the services you have rendered me. (4)

I have developed so much affection and a close bond of kinship with you because you have sacrificed your home and hearth, as well as your personal comfort and safety, for my sake¹. [To wit, this voluntary sacrifice of yours that you have done for my sake has endeared you to me for all times to come.] (5)

[Note—¹Here Lord Ram gives immense thanks to the Kapis and gratefully acknowledges their help in the search for Sita and then the war of Lanka. In the course of these developments it goes without saying that the monkeys and bears suffered themselves a lot; so the Lord now expresses his gratitude to them—telling them that these developments have had a positive effect inasmuch as that now he has an abiding friendship with them and has developed affection for them, which he shall cherish in his heart for eternity.]

अनुज राज संपति बैदेही । देह गेह परिवार सनेही ॥ ६ ॥
सब मम प्रिय नहिं तुम्हहि समाना । मृषा न कहउँ मोर यह बाना ॥ ७ ॥
सब कें प्रिय सेवक यह नीती । मोरें अधिक दास पर प्रीती ॥ ८ ॥

anuja rāja sampati baidēhī. dēha gēha parivāra sanēhī. 6.
 saba mama priya nahim tumhahi samānā. mṛṣā na kaha'um̐ mōra yaha bānā.
 7.
 saba kēm priya sēvaka yaha nītī. mōrēm adhika dāsa para prītī. 8.

[Elaborating further and highlighting how much he cherishes their friendship and acquaintance in his heart, Lord Ram stresses—]

My brothers, my kingdom, my wealth, and my wife Sita (Vaidehi), nay, even my own body, my home, my whole family, my kith and kin – (6)

-- Verily I love them all, but truly not more than you! I don't speak a lie, and this is my affirmation¹. (7)

It is an established principle that a faithful, loyal and diligent servant (who would do everything within his might to serve his lord, and that too selflessly) is always loved by his master; but I go a step further in upholding this maxim—because I am all the more inclined to have greater affection for all those who serve me and follow me; I love them and am favourably inclined to them (and go out of my way to take care of them) far more than what I am expected to do². (8)

[Note—¹It is not that Lord Ram did not love all those he has mentioned here; the only point he wished to stress is that he loves his friends from Kishkindha much more than he loves anyone else. The reason is simple and obvious—during the testing times of his life when he was facing the wrath of a malicious Fate, when he was forlorn, almost lost and desperate, when it was a swing between life and death, when everything seemed to be lost for him after his wife Sita was stolen by the ferocious demon king Ravana, defeating whom was well nigh impossible, then at that time it were the Kapis of Kishkindha who had come to his aid, and no one else. How can he forget it?

²Lord Ram says: “Though it is normal that a master would naturally have special affection for a servant who serves him faithfully and diligently, but in my case this affection is exceptional; it is steady, abiding, and of the highest degree. The ordinary master may get angry at his favourite servant in a situation where the servant might fail to serve him on any occasion for any reason whatsoever, but I never ever get angry at my devotees, no matter what happens or what the provocation is.”

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 260; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1 (where Bharat endorses this view).]

दो०. अब गृह जाहु सखा सब भजेहु मोहि दृढ़ नेम ।
 सदा सर्वगत सर्वहित जानि करेहु अति प्रेम ॥ १६ ॥
 dōhā.

aba gr̥ha jāhu sakhā saba bhajēhu mōhi dr̥ṣha nēma.
sadā sarbagata sarbahita jāni karēhu ati prēma. 16.

Now my dear friend, go home. Remember me; have an abiding affection and devotion for me by remembering that I am always present everywhere (to help you), that I am always ready to look after the welfare of all, and that I always think good of others.' (Doha no. 16)

चौ०. सुनि प्रभु बचन मगन सब भए । को हम कहाँ बिसरि तन गए ॥ १ ॥
एकटक रहे जोरि कर आगे । सकहिं न कछु कहि अति अनुरागे ॥ २ ॥
परम प्रेम तिन्ह कर प्रभु देखा । कहा बिबिधि बिधि ग्यान बिसेषा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunī prabhu bacana magana saba bha'e. kō hama kahāñ bisari tana ga'e. 1.
ēkaṭaka rahē jōri kara āgē. sakahiñ na kachu kahi ati anurāgē. 2.
parama prēma tinha kara prabhu dēkhā. kahā bibidhi bidhi gyāna bisēṣā. 3.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram, all the Kapis were overwhelmed; they became so overcome with emotions that for sometime they lost awareness of themselves and their surroundings—of who they were, where they were, from whence they had come and whither they are expected to go. (1)

They stood stunned and dumbfounded with their joined palms before the Lord, looking at him transfixed. They were so overcome with emotions of affection and love for the Lord that they were rendered speechless¹. (2)

When the Lord observed the intensity of their love and affection (as well as devotion) for him, he assuaged their feelings and comforted them in various ways by enlightening them about the realities of this world and practical aspects of life². (3)

[Note—¹Love is such an intense emotional feeling that when someone you love dearly asks you to go away, then for sometime you would not know what to say and how to respond. The time of separation had come, and it was un-nerving for Lord Ram's dear friends. They had wished to live with him more; they did not want to go back. The Lord had shown them so much favour and attention and affection that they would rather prefer to spend the rest of their lives in Ayodhya, serving him, than going back home. They wished to settle down in Ayodhya and make it their new home.

So, when Lord Ram asked them to go back to their respective homes in Kishkindha, it came as a shock to them all.

²Lord Ram acknowledged their devotion and love for him. Then he explained to them many practical things of life, such as the necessity of attending to their obligations and responsibilities that they had towards their own families and people back home. The Lord enlightened them about what true relationship and true love are, that physical distance matters not if one has true love for anyone in his heart, that the strength of relationship is proved when two loving people live apart from one another

rather than together, because distance helps to test this strength, to test whether the bond is fragile or strong.

The Lord also explained to them that it is a maxim that when two persons live close to each other, no matter how dear and fond they are of each other, but a day comes when some sort of friction or misunderstanding between the two is sure to raise its ugly head, souring their otherwise sweet relationship. This mishap is taken care of by living apart.

There were many other such small and big issues of life that the Lord explained to them in an effort to comfort them and persuade them to return home.]

प्रभु सन्मुख कछु कहन न पारहिं । पुनि पुनि चरन सरोज निहारहिं ॥ ४ ॥
तब प्रभु भूषन बसन मगाए । नाना रंग अनूप सुहाए ॥ ५ ॥

prabhu sanmukha kachu kahana na pārahim̐. puni puni carana sarōja
nihārahim̐. 4.

taba prabhu bhūṣana basana magā'ē. nānā raṅga anūpa suhā'ē. 5.

None of them could muster courage to say anything before the Lord; they could not even utter a word. [To wit, all the guests of Lord Ram, the 'Kapis', stood silently before him as they were so overwhelmed with emotions that they could not decide what to say, and how to ask the Lord not to tell them to go back home. They kept quiet in deference to the Lord's presence and majesty, because answering the Lord would be impolite and bad in terms of observation of decorum. They could not even tell the Lord that they would rather prefer to settle down in Ayodhya permanently, and continue to serve him for the rest of their lives.]

They repeatedly glanced at the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram (as a subtle sign to indicate what they intended to say but dared not speak and let known in an articulate language—that they would prefer to serve the holy feet of Lord Ram instead of going back home)¹. (4)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram called for beautiful ornaments and clothes (ceremonial robes of honour) of different colours and designs (which he would give as gifts to his friends before saying good bye to them). (5)

[Note—¹The Kapis stood silently because they were in a dilemma. To speak before the Lord and say that they don't wish to go back would be tantamount to disobedience and in-courteous behaviour. But at the same time they sincerely wished that Lord Ram would allow them to stay in Ayodhya and serve him. So they repeatedly glanced at the feet of the Lord to convey a silent message that they would rather stay, and that they wished to serve him.

²But since it was not feasible and practical to allow them to stay in Ayodhya as discussed earlier, the Lord got gifts of clothes and ornaments brought in so that a clear hint is given to them that they must go back to their homes.]

सुग्रीवहि प्रथमहिं पहिराए । बसन भरत निज हाथ बनाए ॥ ६ ॥
 प्रभु प्रेरित लछिमन पहिराए । लंकापति रघुपति मन भाए ॥ ७ ॥
 अंगद बैठ रहा नहिं डोला । प्रीति देखि प्रभु ताहि न बोला ॥ ८ ॥

sugrīvahi prathamahim pahirā'ē. basana bharata nija hātha banā'ē. 6.
 prabhu prērita lachimana pahirā'ē. laṅkāpati raghupati mana bhā'ē. 7.
 aṅgada baiṭha rahā nahim ḍolā. prīti dēkhi prabhu tāhi na bōlā. 8.

Lord Ram adorned Sugriv with robes of honour first (because the latter was the king of the monkey race and the senior-most amongst the Lord's guests). These ceremonial robes were tailored by Bharat with his own hands (during the time of the 14 years of self-imposed isolation that he spent while Lord Ram was in the forest). (6)

At the same time (as Lord Ram made Sugriv wear robes of honour), Laxman, on behest of Lord Ram, adorned Vibhishan, the king of Lanka, with matching robes of honour; this pleased the Lord much¹. (7)

Meanwhile, Angad (the crown prince of Kishkindha and Sugriv's nephew, being the son of the latter's elder brother Baali) kept on sitting; he did not move. Lord Ram observed it closely, and realizing the exemplarily high level of Angad's loyalty and devotion for him, the Lord did not ask him to come forward to accept the ceremonial robes². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram, being the sovereign of Ayodhya, adorned Sugriv, who was also a sovereign of Kishkindha and the senior-most in the rank of commanders, while at the same time Laxman, the second in rank, adorned Vibhishan, who was a notch junior to Sugriv in the hierarchy of things. Why? It is simple: Sugriv led the conquering army as its king and commander, while Vibhishan got his throne after victory of this army. So although both were presently kings in their own rights, but Sugriv obviously had a more right of way as compared to Vibhishan, entitling him to get honour first.

²Lord Ram perceived that Angad was unwilling to leave him and go back. The Lord could see the sadness in Angad's face and plea for exemption from going back by the looks of his eyes. So the Lord kept quiet and did not ask Angad to step forward to be honoured along with Sugriv and Vibhishan.]

दो०. जामवंत नीलादि सब पहिराए रघुनाथ ।
 हियँ धरि राम रूप सब चले नाइ पद माथ ॥ १७ (क) ॥
 dōhā.

jāmavanta nīlādi saba pahirā'ē raghunātha.
 hiyaṁ dhari rāma rūpa saba calē nā'i pada mātha. 17 (a).

Lord Ram himself clothed Jamvant (the chief of the bears), Neela (one of the chief commanders of the Lord's army from Kishkindha), and all the others (who had come with Lord Ram aboard the plane from Lanka) with robes of honour.

Then all of them bowed their heads reverentially at Lord Ram's feet, and enshrining the Lord's image in their hearts, they departed for their homeland. (Doha no. 17-a)

तब अंगद उठि नाइ सिरु सजल नयन कर जोरि ।
अति बिनीत बोलेउ बचन मनहुँ प्रेम रस बोरि ॥ १७ (ख) ॥

taba aṅgada uṭhi nā'i siru sajala nayana kara jōri.
ati binīta bōlē'u bacana manahum̐ prēma rasa bōri. 17 (b).

When everybody else had departed, Angad got up and bowed his head before Lord Ram with his eyes filled with tears and the palms of his hands joined together in a prayerful mode.

Angad spoke most politely and humbly, beseeching the Lord by using words that seemed to be soaked in emotions of love and affection for the Lord¹. (Doha no. 17-b)

[Note—¹Angad kept sitting quietly while all others were being honoured by Lord Ram by offering ceremonial robes to them and then given a warm send-off.

We have read earlier (in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha) that when it had become evident that Lord Ram intended to send his guests back from Ayodhya to their respective homes in Kishkindha and Lanka, Angad did not like the idea of going back. So he kept sitting quietly and did not join others to receive gifts and robes of honour from Lord Ram as parting gifts before departure.

Now when he found Lord Ram alone, he got up to plead his case, with tears in his eyes, most humble looks, and prayerful words infused with devotion and love for the Lord in as best a manner as he possibly could.]

चौ०. सुनु सर्वग्य कृपा सुख सिंधो । दीन दयाकर आरत बंधो ॥ १ ॥
मरती बेर नाथ मोहि बाली । गयउ तुम्हारेहि कोछें घाली ॥ २ ॥
असरन सरन बिरदु संभारी । मोहि जनि तजहु भगत हितकारी ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

sunu sarbagya kṛpā sukha sindhō. dīna dayākara ārata bandhō. 1.
maratī bēra nātha mōhi bālī. gaya'u tumhārēhi kōñchēm̐ ghālī. 2.
asarana sarana biradu sambhārī. mōhi jani tajahu bhagata hitakārī. 3.

[Angad submitted most humbly and pleadingly—]

'Listen oh Lord who is all-knowing (sarbagya) as well as an ocean of happiness, grace, compassion and mercy (kṛpā sukha sindhō).

You show mercy to the lowly and the humble (dīna dayākara), and are a friend of those who are distressed and looking for solace and succour (ārata bandhō). (1)

At the time of his death, Baali (my father) had put me in your care and safe custody¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

At the time of his death, Baali had prayed to Lord Ram to take care of his son Angad, requesting the Lord to hold him by his arm and look after his welfare by treating Angad as his own servant and dependant. Angad now invokes that request to ask Lord Ram to keep his father's last wishes and let him stay in Ayodhya to serve the Lord.

It ought to be noted carefully here that at that time Lord Ram had kept quiet; the Lord had not expressly accepted Baali's request asking him "to keep Angad as his servant". The word used by Baali was "*dāsa*"—which literally means a servant, but by extension it also means someone who depends upon his lord.

What Baali actually wished from Lord Ram was to protect Angad after his death. Baali was apprehensive of Angad's safety and future because Sugriv, Baali's younger brother and Angad's uncle, would be probably tormenting Angad and may even go further to kill him on some pretext as he would see the orphaned Angad as a rival claimant to the throne of Kishkindha. Lord Ram recognized this possibility, that Sugriv would usurp the hereditary right of Angad over the crown of Kishkindha which he was lawfully entitled to by the virtue of being the son of Baali.

To pre-empt Sugriv from completely disenfranchising Angad and throwing him out of the kingdom of Kishkindha, Lord Ram had declared Angad as the heir-apparent and a crown prince of Kishkindha at the time of Sugriv's own appointment as the king in place of his dead brother Baali.

Not only this, Lord Ram had always shown a soft corner for Angad, and treated him as one of his most trusted lieutenants, at par with Hanuman. We must have observed presently that while others were being given a send-off by Lord Ram, the Lord did not insist on Angad too leaving with them. Surely, all others who went away must have noticed this crucial point. Privately Sugriv must have felt very happy, thinking of Angad staying back as good riddance. But at the same time, all must have realized that Lord Ram surely loved Angad more as the Lord did not insist his going back with others.

We shall soon read that, by-and-by, Lord Ram prevailed upon Angad to return home to Kishkindha, although the Lord could have as well accepted his plea to remain in Ayodhya. The reason for the Lord's decision to send Angad back to his kingdom is this: The Lord had to keep his promise made to his father Baali that he would take care of Angad and ensure he lives a honourable life—and that is why Angad was made the heir-apparent and a crown prince of Kishkindha. Now, if Angad was allowed to stay back in Ayodhya to serve the Lord, then he would have forfeited this right and privilege. Besides this, it would have given a chance to Sugriv to fill the vacancy by appointing someone of his own choice. Should this actually happen, Angad would permanently lose his right.

Angad was a 'prince' of a great kingdom of Kishkindha; keeping a 'prince' as a servant, or a courtier or any junior functionary in the kingdom of Ayodhya would be absolutely wrong for Lord Ram; it would have not only been insulting for Angad but would have surely lowered the Lord's own image and reputation in the world. And it would have given Sugriv a fodder to spread bad words for the Lord behind his back—that Lord Ram has kept Angad with him in order to symbolically subjugate the monkey race because Angad was not an ordinary member of this race but their 'prince

and an heir-apparent to the throne, who would one day become the king of Kishkindha'.

To wit, Lord Ram's keeping Angad in Ayodhya to serve him would be a humiliating thing for the entire monkey race, because he was their prince and a rightful claimant to the throne of their kingdom, which in turn would not go down well in terms of long-time friendship.

Many such factors came into play when Lord Ram decided to send Angad back home instead of accepting his request to allow him to stay in Ayodhya.

As for Angad, besides his love for Lord Ram, there were other considerations why he did not wish to go back. His uncle Sugriv had killed his father Baali to grab the crown, so Angad was sure he would be ill-treated if he went to Kishkindha. But this fear of Angad was taken care when Lord Ram showed special treatment to him by allowing him to stay back for sometime after all others have left.

Eventually, when Angad did return to Kishkindha after some time, everyone was sure that Lord Ram has sent him as his own ambassador in disguise, so all those who might harbour ill design against him must be ware of severe repercussions should Lord Ram get a hint that Angad is in danger.

It was not hidden from anyone that Angad shared a special bond of affection with Lord Ram, that he was dear to the Lord and close to his heart, that there was an affinity between the two. This meant that everyone in Kishkindha treated Angad kindly and with great respect. Sugriv, even if he had some secret agenda against Angad in the beginning, had by now decided to forget it and treat him with affection.]

मोरें तुम्ह प्रभु गुर पितु माता । जाउँ कहाँ तजि पद जलजाता ॥ ४ ॥

तुम्हहि बिचारि कहहु नरनाहा । प्रभु तजि भवन काज मम काहा ॥ ५ ॥

बालक ग्यान बुद्धि बल हीना । राखहु सरन नाथ जन दीना ॥ ६ ॥

mōrēm tumha prabhu gura pitu mātā. jā'uṁ kahāṁ taji pada jalajātā. 4.
tumhahi bicāri kahahu naranāhā. prabhu taji bhavana kāja mama kāhā. 5.
bālaka gyāna bud'dhi bala hīnā. rākhahu sarana nātha jana dīnā. 6.

Oh dear Lord; for me you are my guru (revered teacher and guide) as well as my parent, my father and mother, and protector.

Tell me Lord, this being the truthful case, where can I go except your lotus-like feet? [To wit, I have no place to go; I have no other destination; I have no home where I can find rest, peace, solace and succour except you and your holy feet.] (4)

Oh Lord; think yourself and tell me what work do I have at home if I leave (serving) you? [Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, I have no work anywhere else, I have nothing to do at home. If I leave you, I will be lost and lonely; I have no kith and kin except you.] (5)

Treat me as a child who is humble, innocent, lowly, and devoid of all skills and intelligence (making him unfit for the world, useless, not liked by anyone, and who has to taken special care by his parent because of his shortcomings and inabilities).

Oh gracious and merciful Lord! Considering me to be humble and lowly, and one who is utterly distressed and overcome with grief, please be kind to keep me as

your refugee, and let me stay with you. [Truly Lord, I don't want to go home; I wish to stay with you.] (6)

नीचि टहल गृह कै सब करिहउँ । पद पंकज बिलोकि भव तरिहउँ ॥ ७ ॥
अस कहि चरन परेउ प्रभु पाही । अब जनि नाथ कहहु गृह जाही ॥ ८ ॥

nīci ṭahala gr̥ha kai saba kariha'uṁ. pada paṅkaja bilōki bhava tariha'uṁ. 7.
asa kahi carana parē'u prabhu pāhī. aba jani nātha kahahu gr̥ha jāhī. 8.

[I will not be a burden or problem for either you or anyone else in your household, because—] I will serve you like an ordinary servant, and do all the most humble of menial jobs of your household that you assign me to do.

While doing so, I shall always be privileged to see and serve your holy lotus-like feet, which in turn will help me obtain liberation and deliverance from this mundane existence in this gross world, and thereby attain emancipation and salvation for my soul.' (7)

Saying this and pleading most earnestly to Lord Ram, Angad fell down at the feet of the Lord and prayed: 'Oh my dear and merciful Lord; please don't tell me again to go back home.' (8)

दो०. अंगद बचन बिनीत सुनि रघुपति करुना सींव ।
प्रभु उठाइ उर लायउ सजल नयन राजीव ॥ १८ (क) ॥
निज उर माल बसन मनि बालितनय पहिराइ ।
बिदा कीन्हि भगवान तब बहु प्रकार समुझाइ ॥ १८ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

aṅgada bacana binīta suni raghupati karunā sīnva.
prabhu uṭhā'i ura lāya'u sajala nayana rājīva. 18 (a).
nija ura māla basana mani bālitanaya pahirā'i.
bidā kīnhi bhagavāna taba bahu prakāra samujhā'i. 18 (b).

Hearing Angad's pitiful prayer, Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram), who is an embodiment of mercy and compassion, was overwhelmed with love and affection for him.

The Lord picked him up and clasped him to his bosom, with tears welling up in his lotus-like eyes. (Doha no. 18-a)

Lord Ram took his own garland that hung over his chest and put it around Angad's neck. The Lord also adorned Angad, the son of Baali (bālitanaya), with clothes and jewels that he himself wore¹.

Then the Lord (bhagavāna) reassured him in a variety of ways, explaining the pros and cons of the situation, the necessity of his going back, the practical reasons of the Lord's decision to send him back to Kishkindha instead of keeping him

in Ayodhya, and then blessing him profusely, the Lord send him off with a heavy heart². (Doha no. 18-b)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here all others too were given clothes, ornaments and other gifts, but the difference is that Lord Ram gave Angad his personal items of clothes and ornaments, and even the garland that he wore himself.

This was surely a very special gesture and had a special meaning: these gift items would make Angad feel like touching the Lord personally whenever he touched them when at home. They were the personal things of Lord Ram, and therefore they would remind Angad that the Lord held him very close and dear to his heart.

When someone gives another person any item of his personal use as a token of remembrance at the time of seeing him off, it obviously means that the latter is shown special treatment by the former, to remind the latter that he is very close to the former and has a special place in his heart.

When Angad returned to Kishkindha, everyone could see that he has been shown special treatment and honour by Lord Ram, that Angad is closer to the Lord than anyone of them.

²We have already discussed in the note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede this Doha why Lord Ram was compelled to send Angad back inspite of the latter's so earnest a request to let him stay in Ayodhya to serve the Lord. So when Lord Ram explained to Angad the situation from different angles, the necessity and the prudence of his going back home, Angad finally agreed, though he did so most reluctantly and with a heavy and sad heart.

Now, let us briefly see why Lord Ram insisted that Angad ought to go back home to Kishkindha.

(a) At the time of appointing Sugriv, uncle of Angad, as a king of Kishkindha, Lord Ram had anointed Angad as the heir-apparent, the crown prince, and the next in line to the throne. The Lord ensured by this step that after Sugriv's stepping down from kingdom of Kishkindha for any reason whatsoever, Angad would rightfully become the next king, and not Sugriv's son or anyone selected by him. This choice of Angad as the next king was definitely correct, as Angad was the son of Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv, whom the latter got killed due to some personal feud. Had Baali lived, it was normal that after him his son Angad would have ascended the throne, and not Sugriv. Hence, Lord Ram did nothing else but restore this traditional right to Angad.

But surely Sugriv must have been jealous of Angad, seeing him as a contender to the throne, and therefore he didn't like Angad. Angad understood this sticky situation and had explicitly said so to his companions on the shore of the ocean in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 26. Angad had a serious apprehension that Sugriv would have him killed on one excuse or another. His only safety was in the hands of Lord Ram, for Sugriv dared not oppose the Lord.

This was the primary reason why Angad wished to stay with Lord Ram in Ayodhya instead of going back to Kishkindha.

But this fear of Angad was taken well care of by the Lord. When Lord Ram adorned him with personal royal clothes, ornaments and garland, it was a clear-as-daylight sign to one and all that Angad was very close to the Lord, and nobody ever dare raise an evil eye against him.

When Angad went back to Kishkindha attired in such fine regalia, unique to Lord Ram, and bearing the signature royal emblems, motifs, signs, and court-of-arms of the kingdom of Ayodhya, he represented Lord Ram in Kishkindha; he was the Lord's ambassador, his emissary, his representative.

So, this served many purposes: One, it kept Sugriv under leash; he knew that if he committed any mischief on any front, Angad would report back to Lord Ram, and then Sugriv would be punished. Second, it ensured that Angad got respect and honour due to him as a crown prince and heir apparent of the kingdom; he would not have to live at Sugriv's mercy. Third, Lord Ram could monitor things in Kishkindha.

(b) Lord Ram was a most gracious, compassionate, kind, magnanimous and courteous king the world had and has ever known. The Lord had made Sugriv, who was the king of Kishkindha, as one of his friends, and Angad as the crown prince of the same kingdom. This being the case, it would seem very bad if Lord Ram kept Angad as his courtier; the world would say that the Lord has made Kishkindha a vassal state by allowing its crown prince to serve him as an ordinary courtier. It would undermine the Lord's immaculate reputation and scar his glory.

Those in Kishkindha would have special reason to feel affected negatively, because all loved Angad as he was an orphan, and a nice person, almost similar to Hanuman in his nature.

(c) If Angad was allowed to stay in Ayodhya, Sugriv would get what he wanted without any trouble, for if the crown prince was absent for a long time, he would find an excuse to appoint his son or anyone else on that post, saying he needed help in running the day-to-day administration affairs of the kingdom. And once someone was appointed, Angad would be disinherited forever, and most importantly, the blame for this unfortunate development would fall squarely at Lord Ram's door.

(e) Further, Lord Ram was apprehensive of Sugriv. He feared that in the future there were good chances that Sugriv might eye the territory of Lanka, and use his powerful army to launch a military campaign on Lanka to usurp the throne from Vibhishan on one pretext or another. Lord Ram had given his personal word of honour to Vibhishan that he would always protect him as his devotee and friend; so what would happen then?

Even if Sugriv did not think in these terms, who can say Vibhishan won't? Couldn't Vibhishan launch a vicious attack on Kishkindha to settle old scores against Sugriv, for the sack of Lanka was done by the army of Kishkindha led by Sugriv?

By keeping Angad in Kishkindha, the Lord felt that both these unfortunate developments could be pre-empted and avoided, because Angad would step in and rein the warring parties in straight away, before the situation went out of hand.

(f) The Lord had decided to keep Hanuman with him. If he kept Angad too, there were chances that in due course of time these two would start quarreling amongst themselves over petty matters, causing unnecessary intrigue and ill-will. So it was prudent and wiser to keep them separate.

Lord Ram decided that since Hanuman and Angad were close friends, had good affinity with each other, and had always stayed together during the war too, it would be easier for the Lord to keep the communication channels with Kishkindha open and well-oiled by employing their services. Since both of them were loyal to the Lord, the matter would be so much the easier and information reliable.

(g) Angad had not observed rules of protocol: for it was, and still is, an established custom that when two states or kingdoms or countries are on friendly terms, such as Ayodhya and Kishkindha in our present case, and a citizen of one country wishes to go and live in the other, then he must first obtain permission from the king or governing authority of his own country before applying to stay in the other country. Angad ought to have first taken Sugriv, the king of his native country as well as his uncle, into confidence, telling him that he wished to stay for a while with Lord Ram before approaching the Lord with this request. It is obvious Sugriv wouldn't have denied this permission, and then all decks would have been clear for Angad, because after he had formally obtained Sugriv's permission, it would have been a lot difficult for even Lord Ram to deny it to him; Lord Ram couldn't have insisted that Angad go back to his home country as that would have seemed defying Sugriv himself whose permission Angad had already obtained. In that eventuality, if Lord Ram sent Angad back, it would have soured relationships between two good friends, Lord Ram and Sugriv, both of whom were, at that point of time, independent Kings in their own rights.

But then, why didn't Angad request Sugriv's permission, and instead approached Lord Ram directly? What may have been the probable reason? Well, the answer is this: Angad both feared and hated Sugriv. Why? Angad feared that his uncle would deny him this permission to stay in Ayodhya under Lord Ram's protection because he would prefer that Angad remains within his reach so that one day or the other he would surely kill him*¹, on one pretext or another, to get him out of the way, for Angad thought that his uncle, who had killed his father Baali to grab the crown, will see Angad as a contender to the throne of Kishkindha, especially when Lord Ram had himself got Angad appointed as the heir-apparent and the crown prince*². Angad hated Sugriv obviously because the latter taken the help of Lord Ram to have his father Baali killed*³.

So Angad did not wish to see Sugriv's face and talk with him. On the other hand, he saw in Lord Ram his only succour, guardian and protector in this world, and he has expressly mentioned this fact to the Lord while pleading with him to let him stay in Ayodhya*⁴ as a sort of insurance against his uncle.

{*¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 26.

*²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 11.

*³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 26 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Doha no. 8.

*⁴Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.}

Lord Ram had to take many such factors, small and big, into consideration while deciding on Angad's plea, and everything weighed in favour of the decision to send him back home, though it meant an extremely painful parting for both, Lord Ram as well as Angad.

So the Lord took him aside and explained everything to him in detail, telling him: "Look son! Thou art very dear to me, but we have to take many things into view as both of us are responsible persons; we can't behave like a naïve child. Look: you are always, anytime and in any situation, welcome here; you need no permission from either me or anyone else for it. Listen: thou art not going back to Kishkindha out of thine free will, but on my express orders. Hence, even whilst being there, thou art

carrying out my wishes just as thou wouldst have done it if thou hadst lived here. Suppose I command thee to go to some place on an errand, tell me, wouldst thou not go? So take it this way—thou art going to Kishkindha on my command. So be cheerful and happy; don't feel hard at all. Thou art mine, and so wilt thou ever remain for eternity!”

As far as Angad was concerned, after all it would have been wrong on his part to defy the Lord and go against his wishes; being a true devotee and a loyal follower of Lord Ram, it was obligatory on Angad, and expected of him as well, that he would pay heed to the Lord and keep his wishes before his own.

So therefore, since Lord Ram desired that Angad should go back, the latter had no choice but to obey.]

चौ०. भरत अनुज सौमित्रि समेता । पठवन चले भगत कृत चेता ॥ १ ॥

अंगद हृदयं प्रेम नहिं थोरा । फिरि फिरि चितव राम कीं ओरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharata anuja saumitri samētā. paṭhavana calē bhagata kṛta cētā. 1.

aṅgada hṛdayaṁ prēma nahim thōrā. phiri phiri citava rāma kīm ōrā. 2.

Lord Ram, who always keeps the good of his devotees in view¹, went out of his way to give an emotional and warm send-off to Angad by taking along with him all his three younger brothers, Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman (bharata anuja saumitri samētā). (1)

Angad's heart lacked no affection for Lord Ram; in fact it overwhelmed him and overflowed from his heart as was evident when he repeatedly looked back at the Lord (with tears in his sad eyes and pain in his grief-stricken heart)². (2)

[Note—¹This fact, that “Lord Ram always keeps the good of his devotees in view” vis-à-vis Angad, has been explained in detail in the notes appended to previous verses.

²Angad was torn between emotions. He sobbed and sighed silently; he glanced back over his shoulders; he stopped in his path and turned around to directly look back as if expecting that the Lord would call him back at the last moment (as will be clear in the next verse), to have a last glimpse of his dear Lord whose sight he would be dearly missing for a long time to come, a prospect that grieved him more than anything else.

Angad did not know what to do and what not to; should he defy the Lord and turn back at all costs, or should he proceed to his destination; should he go to the forest and become a recluse somewhere near Ayodhya. Poor Angad felt forlorn, pensive, lonely and extremely sad. He literally dragged his legs that felt heavy-as-lead to move forward, but he had no choice: he could not disobey the Lord. He could see that Lord Ram's face was as sad as his own; they too had tears in their eyes as his did; the Lord took deep breaths and stood forlorn and lonely and grieving in the same way as Angad felt.

This reassured Angad that Lord Ram truly loved him, perhaps more than he imagines; to some extent he felt comforted, realizing that the Lord would miss him as

much as he would miss the Lord. He thought that perhaps the Lord thought it was in Angad's own interest to go back, and so in spite of the emotional sufferings the Lord insisted on it.]

बार बार कर दंड प्रनामा । मन अस रहन कहहिं मोहि रामा ॥ ३ ॥
राम बिलोकनि बोलनि चलनी । सुमिरि सुमिरि सोचत हँसि मिलनी ॥ ४ ॥

bāra bāra kara daṇḍa pranāmā. mana asa rahana kahahim mōhi rāmā. 3.
rāma bilōkani bōlani calanī. sumiri sumiri sōcata haṁsi milanī. 4.

He (Angad) turned back and repeatedly fell down prostrate on the ground in the direction of Lord Ram, to pay his homage to the Lord, expecting that may be at the last moment the Lord would ask him to stay back. (3)

Angad remembered all those pleasant moments of the past that recalled to his memory how Lord Ram used to look at him, how the Lord talked with him, how the Lord walked alongside with him, how the Lord would smile and laugh at his little deeds and naughty acts! These memories filled his mind and buffeted his emotions relentlessly; they overwhelmed him and overpowered him with grief and sadness¹. (4)

[Note—¹Indeed it was a very sad and heart-breaking parting. To speak the truth, the author of the current Book has himself wept bitterly while typing out this episode on the computer, as well as the one where Angad takes his leave from Hanuman a little while later.]

प्रभु रुख देखि बिनय बहु भाषी । चलेउ हृदयँ पद पंकज राखी ॥ ५ ॥
अति आदर सब कपि पहुँचाए । भाइन्ह सहित भरत पुनि आए ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu rukha dēkhi binaya bahu bhāṣī. calē'u hṛdayaṁ pada paṅkaja rākhi. 5.
ati ādara saba kapi pahuṁcā'ē. bhā'inha sahita bharata puni ā'ē. 6.

But Angad by-and-by realized that it was Lord Ram's desire that he should go back to his home in Kishkindha.

So finally he prayed to Lord Ram most humbly and politely, and enshrining the Lord's lotus-like holy feet in his heart, Angad departed from there. (5)

[Other Kapis were waiting at a distance. Angad went and joined them.]

All the Kapis (who had collected outside the gates of the royal palace) were respectfully taken to the borders of the city of Ayodhya, from where they were given an affectionate and ceremonial send-off. After this, Bharat and his other brothers returned back¹. (6)

[Note—¹It is to be carefully noted here that it is 'Bharat' who is mentioned in the verse as having returned back with his brothers after the departure of the Kapis, and Lord Ram isn't mentioned.

It clearly means that Lord Ram, being the sovereign, desisted from going much further away from the gates of the fort or palace ground beyond a certain limit to maintain decorum and dignity of the Crown. On his behalf he deputed his three brothers, led by Bharat, to accompany his Kapi friends till the borders of the city and send them off from there.

Perhaps Lord Ram would have gone himself, but he was surely so emotionally upset at the sight of the sad Angad departing with pain on his face and deep sadness reflecting from his demeanours that the Lord thought that he would not be able to restrain his own emotions if he saw Angad lamenting in the same way again, for it was too unbearable a sight for the merciful Lord Ram to cope with. So it was prudent and wise for the Lord to stay away and allow his brothers to go with his friends to the periphery of the city to see them off and bid them farewell from there.

Remember: Lord Ram was not alone; he was a King, and therefore a large retinue of courtiers and citizens were there to watch the proceedings. Then there were his Kapi friends. Imagine what a delicate and sensitive and piquant situation would arise in case Angad started wailing and weeping and falling at the Lord's feet in front of everyone's eyes just prior to departure, pleading with the Lord to let him stay back? It would be a doleful scene and an extremely painful situation that had to be avoided at all costs.]

तब सुग्रीव चरन गहि नाना । भाँति बिनय कीन्हे हनुमाना ॥ ७ ॥
 दिन दस करि रघुपति पद सेवा । पुनि तव चरन देखिहउँ देवा ॥ ८ ॥
 पुन्य पुंज तुम्ह पवनकुमारा । सेवहु जाइ कृपा आगारा ॥ ९ ॥
 अस कहि कपि सब चले तुरन्ता । अंगद कहइ सुनहु हनुमन्ता ॥ १० ॥

taba sugrīva carana gahi nānā. bhāṁti binaya kīnhē hanumānā. 7.
 dina dasa kari raghupati pada sēvā. puni tava carana dēkhiha'uṁ dēvā. 8.
 pun'ya puñja tumha pavanakumārā. sēvahu jā'i krpā āgārā. 9.
 asa kahi kapi saba calē turantā. aṅgada kaha'i sunahu hanumantā. 10.

Then (when final good-byes were being said on the borders of Ayodhya), Hanuman approached Sugriv and fell at his feet, praying to him in different ways (so that his request is accepted)¹. (7)

Hanuman pleaded before Sugriv, 'Oh Lord! Let me serve Lord Ram's feet for some ten days more (i.e. for some more time), and then oh Lord, I shall come back to you see your feet (and serve you)².' (8)

Sugriv (and all others present there^{3*}) lauded Hanuman's initiative. They said: 'Oh Hanuman, the son of the wind god (pavanakumārā)! Indeed and in all sooth, you are a fountainhead of everything that is considered meritorious and auspicious (pun'ya puñja tumha). Blessed are you truly. Go, cheerfully go, and serve the Lord (Ram) who is an abode of, an embodiment of grace, compassion, kindness, mercy and magnanimity (krpā āgārā)!' (9)

Blessing Hanuman in this way, all the Kapis^{3*}, immediately departed from there on their journey back home.

Angad, however, fell back from the rest of the group, and pulled Hanuman aside to have a last minute chat with him. He said, ‘Listen Hanuman. ---- (10)

[Note—¹A remarkable thing has happened here. While Angad was pleading his case before Lord Ram, Hanuman stood quietly and observed. He was also there when Lord Ram explained to Angad the various reasons why he could not allow him to stay back in Ayodhya, and amongst them one was that it was against norms to allow a citizen of a friendly country to live in one’s own country without his having obtained a prior permission from the ruler of his native country, which Angad had not done.

Wise and intelligent as he was, Hanuman caught the point straight on, and so he decided to approach Sugriv first, because the latter was the king of Hanuman’s native country Kishkindha. Hanuman had rightly guessed that it would be impossible for Sugriv to deny this permission to him—because of the simple fact that Sugriv and Lord Ram were fast friends, and it would be a courteous gesture for Sugriv to allow one of his fellow citizens to remain in Ayodhya for some time more, especially when that citizen himself requests for such a permission. To deny it would be un-courteous and offending for the friendly king.

So when it is said in these verses that Hanuman prayed to Sugriv in different ways, it is simply meant that he explained to Sugriv the pros and cons of the matter while persuading the latter to accept his request and grant him the desired permission.

²What could have Sugriv possibly said when Hanuman made his request? Sugriv replied: “Well my dear Hanuman, thou art indeed very fortunate to have this privilege; I am with thee, and bless thee. Yes, definitely, thou hast my full permission without any reservations. Listen mine dear: ‘Ten days’ thou sayest—well, what are the numbers of days that matter; it’s a rare honour to be able to serve Lord Ram. So therefore, stay and serve the Lord as long as thou wish. I canst ever have a trace of an objection in it; rather I wilt be the gladdest soul alive and the happiest one if one of my countrymen is able to offer his services to Lord Ram. Look dear, hark to my advice: carry out Lord Ram’s command dutifully, diligently, faithfully, honestly, and loyally. Don’t let down the Lord ever; I don’t want to hear, mind thee, that whilst Hanuman was in the service of Lord Ram, the Lord had to face this or that problem. Thou art able in all respects; thine virtues art legendary; no one in our race is as fortunate as thou art. So put this opportunity to good use in the service of our common Lord. It will bring glory to all of us. Remember: through thee, I, on my own behalf as well as on the behalf of our entire race, wilt be serving the Lord himself! So, Go and fulfill thine wishes. Glory be to thee; all praises and honours be thine; thou art indeed the jewel of the Kapi race without doubt!”

Armed with permission from Sugriv, Hanuman returned to Lord Ram to offer himself and his services. Lord Ram must have surely smiled at Hanuman’s clever wisdom, for now the Lord was left with no choice but to allow him to remain in Ayodhya and keep serving him. Any refusal would be insulting to Sugriv, something surely Lord Ram would never wish.

³*The place and time where Hanuman prayed to Sugriv to allow him to serve Lord Ram for a few days more was just at the time of the departure of the group. Everyone was present there; it could not have been a private meeting between the two. Hence, whatever Hanuman said to Sugriv, and whatever Sugriv replied, was heard and endorsed by all the Kapis as is explicitly clear in verse no. 10.

Therefore, the permission which Hanuman got to remain in Lord Ram's service was an unanimous decision taken by all the Kapi chiefs, and not only Sugriv.

And the whole scene was witnessed by Lord Ram's three brothers who had come to bid goodbye to the guests—i.e. Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. So, when Hanuman returned triumphantly to present himself in the service of the Lord, the Lord glanced at his three brothers to have their opinion. And obviously all of them smiled and nodded assent, saying that Hanuman has the permission of not only Sugriv but the whole group, and so the Lord must keep him in his service.

Wonderful and remarkable! What Angad could not get directly from Lord Ram, Hanuman got the same thing with wit and wisdom!]

दो०. कहेहु दंडवत प्रभु सैं तुम्हहि कहउँ कर जोरि ।
 बार बार रघुनायकहि सुरति कराएहु मोरि ॥ १९ (क) ॥
 अस कहि चलेउ बालिसुत फिरि आयउ हनुमंत ।
 तासु प्रीति प्रभु सन कही मगन भए भगवंत ॥ १९ (ख) ॥
 कुलिसहु चाहि कठोर अति कोमल कुसुमहु चाहि ।
 चित खगेस राम कर समुझि परइ कहु काहि ॥ १९ (ग) ॥

dōhā.

kahehu daṇḍavata prabhu saim tumhahi kaha'um kara jōri.
 bāra bāra raghunāyakahi surati karā'ēhu mōri. 19 (a).
 asa kahi calē'u bālisuta phiri āya'u hanumanta.
 tāsu prīti prabhu sana kahī magana bha'ē bhagavanta. 19 (b).
 kulisahu cāhi kaṭhōra ati kōmala kusumahu cāhi.
 citta khagēsa rāma kara samujhi para'i kahu kāhi. 19 (c).

Angad pleaded with Hanuman, 'I join the palms of my hands to request you most earnestly and humbly (oh Hanuman) that when you go back to Lord Ram, tell him that I have bowed before him by prostrating myself at his feet (in a symbolic way from a distance).

My dear, remind Lord Ram of me repeatedly, over and over again (now, as well as later on, whenever you get an opportunity to do so).¹' (Doha no. 19-a)

Saying this, Angad, the son of Baali (bālisuta) departed for his journey home, while Hanuman returned back (to Ayodhya).

On his return, Hanuman went straight to the Lord and told him about Angad's deep love and intensity of affection for him, which deeply moved the Lord and affected him so much that he lost awareness of himself and became ecstatic in delight (magana bha'ē bhagavanta)#.

[#This is an extremely heart-wrenching Doha. Angad's final moments with Hanuman, who was his closest buddy, before he departed for home were extremely sorrowful, poignant and painful. Now, let us pause for a while to visualize the heart-touching scene of those few moments in the eyes of our mind as follows:

“Saying this (as narrated in Doha no. 19-a), and embracing Hanuman for one last time, Angad firmed himself for the final parting: he bit his lips, clenched his fists

to collect courage, took a deep breath, and tearing himself away from his dear friend, Angad turned abruptly to go away on his long journey back home to Kishkindha, with a heavy heart, numbed mind, wet eyes, drooping head, sagging shoulders that shook intermittently as he sobbed, and virtually dragging his un-cooperating legs behind him. He didn't look back again as Hanuman stood dumb and numb, gazing at the fading image of Angad lumbering away and gradually vanishing into the distant horizon.

After standing motionless for quite a while and feeling crestfallen, Hanuman slowly turned back himself to go back to Ayodhya and report to Lord Ram. Once back, he went straight to the Lord and told him about Angad's deep love and intensity of affection for him, recounting Angad's last words and the state of his mind, his anguished countenance and sorrowful demeanours, his final parting with him (Hanuman) and his painful departure, all of which so deeply moved the Lord and affected him so intensely that he lost awareness of himself and became benumbed as he heard the narrative, even though a subtle sense of ecstasy filled the Lord's mind because he felt delighted in the reaffirmation of his belief that Angad's devotion and love for him was deep-rooted and abiding, and not something superficial (*magana bha'ē bhagavanta*)."]² (Doha no. 19-b)

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund, who was narrating this Story to Garud, the king of birds, told him—] 'Oh king of birds (*khagēsa*)! Indeed it is true that Lord Ram's heart shows two contradictory virtues which are mysterious enough for anyone to comprehend—for on one instance the Lord's emotions (or his heart) can turn as strong, rigid and uncompromising as Bajra (which literally is the weapon of Indra, but generally applied to anything which is extremely hard and un-malleable—such as diamond or rock) (*kulisahu cāhi kaṭhōra ati*), and on another occasion it can transform into something as soft as a flower (*ati kōmala kusumahu cāhi*)³.' (Doha no. 19-c)

[Note—¹Hanuman and Angad were fast friends. When Angad observed how Hanuman managed things and got his wishes—to serve Lord Ram—fulfilled, he was all praises for the latter. Now Angad must have realized his error; he regretted that he didn't do what his friend had done—i.e. to seek permission from their king Sugriv. But it was too late now to make amends.

The two close friends came together to bid each other good-bye. Angad was choked in his throat; his eyes were misty with tears; he was doing his best to suppress his sobs; he could barely speak. He took Hanuman's hands in his own, pressed them affectionately, looked deep into his friend's eyes, and breathing heavily he said a few words over his sobs as follows:-

"My dearest Pal! Glory be to thee! How lucky art thou indeed! I suffer doubly from the pangs of separation—first it is from my beloved Lord Ram, and then it is from my beloved friend Hanuman. Today I feel that I am deserted and orphaned, am the most cursed of creatures in the Creator's creation. Anyhow, be it may as it is because no one can go against the fiat of fate. However, will thou do me a favour? Promise me? Just convey to Lord Ram my last obeisance to him; tell him that—'Angad fell down on the ground and imagined that you were standing before him; he clasped your feet and wept bitterly. Then he quietly got up, turned, and went his way sobbing.'

[Angad continued—] My dear Hanuman; later on, whenever you find Lord Ram free and alone, quietly remind him of me. You are intelligent, so find an excuse

to do so. Perhaps you could start some conversation pertaining to Kishkindha or Lanka, and then mention my name innocuously. I am confident that you will observe that the Lord would become sad and pensive as he remembers me. Should this happen, I will consider myself well-born. Thank you and good-bye. Take care of yourself; remain cheerful and happy. Remember: In case you need to come to me, you are welcome warmly in Kishkindha, anytime and any day.”

²When Hanuman returned to Lord Ram, he presented a fate accompli to him, i.e. he told the Lord that he has been permitted, or rather mandated, by all the Kapis that he should stay back to serve the Lord. Now, Lord Ram had no option but to accept Hanuman and allow him to stay as long as he wished. Hanuman even told the Lord that in case he doubted him, then he could verify his claim from his three brothers who had gone to the borders to see-off the Lord’s guests from Kishkindha and Lanka, and hence were sure to have witnessed his falling at the feet of Sugriv and then all his companions unanimously telling him to keep serving the Lord. {Apropos: Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 19.}

The twin developments—of Hanuman remaining in the service of Lord Ram, and Angad being sent back to Kishkindha—had great diplomatic and political import. It meant that both the kingdoms had exchanged ambassadors: Hanuman was Sugriv’s representative in Ayodhya, and Angad was Lord Ram’s in Kishkindha. Remember: Lord Ram had adorned Angad with his personal royal robes, ornaments and garland. {Apropos: Doha no. 18-b.} This implied that Angad would be the Lord’s representative in the court of Sugriv.

Another interesting and pertinent thing to note is this: Lord Ram was too happy to keep Hanuman with him because the Lord was well aware of his abilities. Hanuman was exceptionally intelligent, wise and prudent in his mind; he was astoundingly agile, strong, powerful, bold, valiant and courageous physically; he could fly; he could, should the situation so demand, deal with an enemy single-handedly, and not only that, he could even lift his entire camp and bring it to Ayodhya.

In the same vein, Angad would be bound to remain loyal to Lord Ram as he knew that his life-time safety and security and honour were ensured only till the time the Lord had his hand over his head, for his uncle Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, could never be his well-wisher as, first, he was the one who got his father Baali killed, and second, he was sure to harbour a secret jealousy for Angad as he saw the latter as a contender to the throne of the kingdom by the virtue of Angad being appointed a crown prince by Lord Ram.

³We have noted two opposing natures of Lord Ram which seem to contradict each other. First we notice that the Lord acts as if he is of a very stern heart when he refuses to yield to Angad’s pitiful prayers to allow him to stay in Ayodhya. Then we have also noticed how the Lord had been deeply moved and emotionally affected by Angad’s sadness and distress at not being allowed to do so. Angad’s devotion and love for Lord Ram was exemplary and deep; no one else in the whole Story of the Ramayan has wept so much when he was told that he will have to go away from the Lord. Perhaps the only other two characters that can be said to equal Angad in exhibiting their emotions for Lord Ram when told of the prospect of their separation from the Lord are Laxman and Bharat, the Lord’s two brothers.

When Lord Ram was going to the forest, Laxman had staked his life and said that he can’t live without the Lord if he is not allowed to accompany him. Similarly,

Bharat too was thoroughly devastated on learning that the Lord had gone to the forest. He not only sternly abused his own mother Kaikeyi for being an instrument in this development, but had refused to accept the crown, had even gone to the forest in an effort to bring the Lord back, and finally lived like a recluse for the entire period of 14 long years that Lord Ram spent in the forest attired as a hermit.

When we read the Story of the Ramayana we discover that inspite of all the most humble and pitiful prayers of Bharat asking Lord Ram to return home from the forest, the Lord did not oblige him, like he has not obliged Angad in the present case. And like Angad's case, there were sound reasons why Lord Ram did not oblige Bharat, though the reasons were different and the context was different. Like Lord Ram explaining all the aspects to Angad when he prevailed upon the latter to return to Kishkindha, he had also explained all the many aspects to his brother Bharat when he prevailed upon him to return to Ayodhya without him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 313—to Doha no. 316.}

To wit, Lord Ram is inherently extremely loving, affectionate, soft-hearted, kind, compassionate, merciful, gracious, forgiving, magnanimous, benevolent and sweet by nature, but there are situations when he has to hold his ground, because being the Supreme Lord of the world, he has to act wisely and with prudence, and not driven by crude emotions, for he has to consider many more numbers of factors before arriving at a decision, than those who have a limited view of the world and try to judge him by his single act.

To wit, at one time Lord Ram seems to be of a stern heart, and at other times extremely affable and loving.]

चौ०. पुनि कृपाल लियो बोलि निषादा । दीन्हे भूषन बसन प्रसादा ॥ १ ॥
 जाहु भवन मम सुमिरन करेहू । मन क्रम बचन धर्म अनुसरेहू ॥ २ ॥
 तुम्ह मम सखा भरत सम भ्राता । सदा रहेहु पुर आवत जाता ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

puni krpāla liyō bōli niṣādā. dīnhē bhūṣana basana prasādā. 1.
 jāhu bhavana mama sumirana karēhū. mana krama bacana dharma
 anusarēhū. 2.
 tumha mama sakhā bharata sama bhrātā. sadā rahēhu pura āvata jātā. 3.

After the guests from Kishkindha and Lanka had left for their respective homes, Lord Ram called Nishad (the chief of the boatman community who was also one of the Lord's friends). The Lord gave him ornaments, robes and food items. (1)

Then Lord Ram said to Nishad, 'Now please go home and remember me. Live an honourable and good life in accordance with the laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, and nobility in conduct and thought) by all your means, such as by employing your mind, your deeds, as well as your words that would help you to comply with such norms. (2)

My dear, you are my friend as well as a brother like Bharat is¹. Keep visiting us as and when it is convenient to you². ' (3)

[Note—¹This verse can be read in another way as follows: “My dear friend! You are like a brother to me in the same way as Bharat is. So don’t hesitate to come here any time you wish.”

²This is very interesting. Nishad lived near the outer fringes of the kingdom of Ayodhya, on the banks of river Ganges. Lord Ram had met him and befriended him on his way to the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87—to Doha no. 88.}

At that time, Nishad had shown warm hospitality to the Lord, and had accompanied the Lord all the way to Chitrakoot. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 142.}

He had also accompanied Bharat when he was going to meet Lord Ram there. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 193—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195; (ii) Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (iii) Doha no. 241 to cite some of the specific verses.}

To wit, Nishad had, by this time, established a great rapport with the whole family of Lord Ram; nay, he was like a family member. Being close to the capital city of Ayodhya, he could easily come and go. So Lord Ram invited him to pay frequent visits.

On the other hand, Lord Ram’s other friends, from Kishkindha and Lanka, lived far away. Sugriv and Vibhishan were both great kings of great kingdoms, and normally kings don’t pay visits to other kings unless it is absolutely essential; they send their ambassadors instead. Hence, it was not practically feasible to expect them to pay visits too often to Ayodhya as Nishad could do because he lived nearby, and also because he was not a king of any large kingdom but a mere chieftain of the boatman community. Therefore, there was not much of a problem in Nishad’s frequent visits to Ayodhya as compared to Sugriv and Vibhishan.]

बचन सुनत उपजा सुख भारी । परेउ चरन भरि लोचन बारी ॥ ४ ॥

चरन नलिन उर धरि गृह आवा । प्रभु सुभाउ परिजनन्हि सुनावा ॥ ५ ॥

रघुपति चरित देखि पुरबासी । पुनि पुनि कहहिं धन्य सुखरासी ॥ ६ ॥

bacana sunata upajā sukha bhārī. parē'u carana bhari lōcana bārī. 4.
carana nalina ura dhari gr̥ha āvā. prabhu subhā'u parijananhi sunāvā. 5.
raghupati carita dēkhi purabāsī. puni puni kahahim̐ dhan'ya sukhārāsī. 6.

Hearing these pleasant words of Lord Ram, Nishad felt very delighted in his heart. He fell down at the feet of the Lord with tears filling his eyes. (4)

Then, enshrining the Lord’s lotus-like feet in his heart, Nishad came back home. He narrated all the events to his kith and kin who listened to him very affectionately. (5)

When the inhabitants of his place (i.e. the members of the boatman community of which he was the chief) heard of what Nishad had to narrate, and when they perceived the nature of Lord Ram (as being extremely graceful, compassionate, kind, merciful, loving and friendly), they repeatedly praised the Lord and affirmed that he is indeed

an embodiment of all joy and happiness, someone who grants joy, delight and happiness to everyone around him. (6)

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Section 21.2: Adhyatma Ramayan

Now, in accordance with the format we have been following in our narration, let us read this episode—of what happened immediately after Lord Ram’s victory in the War of Lanka, and Sita being reunited with him. We shall be reading in this Section no. 21.2 about the revival of all the dead monkey warriors, and the Lord’s return home to Ayodhya aboard the Puspak Plane along with his friends, the warm welcome he was accorded in the city, and his ascension to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya with all ceremony—as narrated in sage Veda Vyas’ classic ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’.

For this purpose, we shall divide this Section no. 21.2 into the following Sub-sections:

- (i) Sub-section 21.2.1: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 37-60.
- (ii) Sub-section 21.2.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 14, verse nos. 1-20, 36-100.
- (iii) Sub-section 21.2.3: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 15, verse nos. 1-50, 70-75.

Now, let us commence our narrative as follows:

(i) Sub-section 21.2.1: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 13, verse nos. 37-60:

रामोऽपि देवराजं तं दृष्ट्वा प्राह कृताञ्जलिम् ॥ ३७॥
 मत्कृते निहतान् सङ्ख्ये वानरान् पतितान् भुवि ।
 जीवयाशु सुधावृष्ट्या सहस्राक्ष ममाज्ञया ॥ ३८॥

rāmo'pi devarājaṃ taṃ dr̥ṣṭvā prāha kṛtāñjalim ॥ 37॥
 matkṛte nihatān saṅkhye vānarān patitān bhuvi ।
 jīvayāśu sudhāvṛṣṭyā sahasrākṣa mamājñayā ॥ 38॥

[After Sita was reunited with Lord Ram, he saw that Indra, the king of gods, was standing there with the palms of his hands touching each others as a token of showing respect to the Lord, and silently asking the Lord to give him a chance to serve him in some way (37).

Lord Sri Ram said to Indra 'Oh the one with a thousand eyes'¹ (सहस्राक्ष)! By my orders, you must rain Amrit (elixir of life) from the heaven so that all the monkeys

and bears who have laid down their lives for my sake and are lying unconscious on the ground are brought back to life.' (38).

[Note—¹Indra was cursed by sage Gautam to have his entire body covered by holes, resembling chicken pox, because of some mischief he had done with the sage's wife Ahilya.

²Indra is also the god of rain; so he is asked by the Lord to shower Amrit from the sky so that the fallen warriors who had laid down their lives for him are immediately revived.]

तथेत्यमृतवृष्ट्या तान् जीवयामास वानरान् ।
 ये ये मृता मृधे पूर्वं ते ते सुप्तोत्थिता इव ।
 पूर्ववद्बालिनो हृष्टा रामपार्श्वमुपाययुः ॥ ३९॥
 नोत्थिता रक्षसास्तत्र पीयूषस्पर्शनादपि ।
 विभीषणस्तु साष्टाङ्गं प्रणिपत्याब्रवीद्वचः ॥ ४०॥

tathetyamṛtavṛṣṭyā tān jīvayāmāsa vānarān ।
 ye ye mṛtā mṛdhe pūrvaṃ te te suptotthitā iva ।
 pūrvavadbalino hrṣṭā rāmapārśvamupāyayuh ॥ 39॥
 notthitā rākṣasāstatra pīyūṣasparśanādapi ।
 vibhīṣaṇastu sāṣṭāṅgaṃ praṇipatyābravīdvacaḥ ॥ 40॥

39-40. Hearing this command from Sri Ram, Indra said 'alright' and poured Amrit as rain from the sky to revive all the monkeys and bears back to life.

All the monkey and bear warriors who had either been killed in the battle, or were lying wounded and unconscious, were brought back to life as if they had just woken up from deep sleep. They were as strong and fresh, and as happy and jubilant as they had been prior to the commencement of the war.

Then they all came to where Sri Ram was (39), but the demons who had fallen to the ground on being killed in the war were not revived back inspite of coming in contact with the Amrit. About that time, Vibhishan prostrated himself before Lord Ram and said prayerfully (40)—

[Note :- A very interesting thing has happened here. The rain of Amrit fell on both the monkeys and the bears, as well as the demons. While the former were brought back to life, the latter weren't. Why? Well, the demons died at the hands of Sri Ram, Laxman, Angad and Hanuman etc., whereas the monkeys died at the hands of demons Ravana, Kumbhakarn, Meghnad etc. Having been slayed by the Lord himself or by his devotees, the demons had attained emancipation and salvation for their souls; they had crossed the world-like ocean of birth and death. There was no coming back for them. From the spiritual point of view, they had attained Moksha.

In this context, the author of this current Book would submit that the demons were more lucky and privileged than the monkeys and bears in this aspect. Even Ravana was thousand times luckier than Vibhishan for he had attained oneness with the Lord at the time of his physical death when his soul or spirit emerged from his gross mortal body to go straight and enter the holy and divine body of Lord Ram who

personified the Supreme Being, the cosmic Soul. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 11, verse nos. 78-82.}

It is a great privilege and a rare opportunity to die facing the Lord himself or his true devotees, thinking of the Lord during the last days and moments of one's life. Ravana was indeed very fortunate and had a powerful soul that forced even the Supreme Being to come down from his exalted abode in the heavens right up to his doorstep to grant deliverance to him.

On the other hand, the monkeys and bears could not attain the same destiny of emancipation and salvation because they had been killed by the demons. So when Amrit rained down on the battle-field, only the monkeys and bears were revived, but the demons weren't because the latter had already attained emancipation and salvation, and had gone to the heaven from where there is no return.]

देव मामनुगृहीष्व मयि भक्तिर्यदा तव ।
मङ्गलस्नानमद्य त्वं कुरु सीतासमन्वितः ॥ ४१॥
अलङ्कृत्य सह भ्रात्रा श्वो गमिष्यामहे वयम् ।
विभीषणवचः श्रुत्वा प्रत्युवाच रघूत्तमः ॥ ४२॥

deva māmanugrṇīṣva mayi bhaktiryadā tava ।
maṅgalasnānamadya tvaṃ kuru sītāsamanvitaḥ ॥ 41॥
alaṅkṛtya saha bhrātrā śvo gamiṣyāmahe vayam ।
vibhīṣaṇavacaḥ śrutvā pratyuvāca raghūttamaḥ ॥ 42॥

41-42. 'Oh Lord! You are very benevolent, graceful, kind and munificent towards me. Now, I pray to you most respectfully to have a formal bath yourself (to wash and refresh yourself) and ask Sita too to have it (41).

Then tomorrow, you must adorn yourself along with your brother (Laxman) with the best of clothes, robes and ornaments that I can offer you. After that, we shall all proceed to Ayodhya'. Hearing these kind words of Vibhishan, the best amongst the Raghus (Sri Ram) replied (42)—

सुकुमारोऽतिभक्तो मे भरतो मामवेक्षते ।
जटावल्कलधारी स शब्दब्रह्मसमाहितः ॥ ४३॥
कथं तेन विना स्नानमलङ्कारादिकं मम ।
अतः सुग्रीवमुख्यांस्त्वं पूजयाशु विशेषतः ॥ ४४॥

sukumāro'tibhakto me bharato māmavekṣate ।
jaṭāvalkaladhārī sa śabdabrahmasamāhitaḥ ॥ 43॥
kathaṃ tena vinā snānamalaṅkāradikaṃ mama ।
ataḥ sugrīvamukhyāṁstvāṃ pūjayāśu viśeṣataḥ ॥ 44॥

43-44. 'My brother Bharat, who is very gentle and tender at heart, as well as my ardent devotee and follower, must be eagerly waiting for me. He has been wearing clothes made of bark of the birch tree, and has his hairs matted on the head, all the

while engaged in remembering me and chanting my name which he uses as Mantra (a divine formula with which to do meditation on the Supreme Being) (43).

Say, how can I bathe or adorn myself with rich clothes and ornaments without first meeting him? Hence, you should show special respect and honour to Sugriv and other chief monkeys and bears if you do wish to express your thanks to me (44).

[Note—Bharat had been remembering Lord Ram and repeating his name as a sort of Mantra that a recluse would use during his meditative practices. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya, Canto 9, verse nos. 70-75.]

पूजितेषु कपीन्द्रेषु पूजितोऽहं न संशयः ।
इत्युक्तो राघवेणाशु स्वर्णरत्नाम्बराणि च ॥ ४५॥
ववर्ष राक्षसश्रेष्ठो यथाकामं यथारुचि ।
ततस्तान् पूजितान् दृष्ट्वा रामो रत्नैश्च यूथपान् ॥ ४६॥

pūjiteṣu kapīndreṣu pūjito'haṃ na saṃśayaḥ ।
ityukto rāghaveṇāśu svarṇaratnāmbarāṇi ca ॥ 45॥
vavarṣa rākṣasaśreṣṭho yathākāmaṃ yathāruci ।
tatastān pūjitān drṣṭvā rāmo ratnaiśca yūthapān ॥ 46॥

45-46. Honour and respect shown to those monkey and bear warriors will be equivalent to showing honour and respect to me; there is no doubt about it'.

When Raghav (Sri Ram) had said so, a lot of gems, jewels, clothes and ornaments (45) were liberally given to the monkeys and bears Vibhishan, the illustrious member of the demon race, according to their desires, choices and tastes.

Lord Sri Ram (felt very satisfied and contented) when he saw that the monkey and bear warriors, and their chief commanders, were being duly honoured and rewarded by liberal gifts in the form of priceless gems, jewels, clothes etc. (and the Lord could discern from their facial expression that they too were happy) (46).

अभिनन्द्य यथान्यायं विससर्ज हरीश्वरान् ।
विभीषणसमानीतं पुष्पकं सूर्यवर्चसम् ॥ ४७॥
आरुरोह ततो रामस्तद्विमानमनुत्तमम् ।
अङ्के निधाय वैदेहीं लज्जमानां यशस्विनीम् ॥ ४८॥

abhinandya yathānyāyaṃ visasarja harīśvarān ।
vibhīṣaṇasamānītaṃ puṣpakam sūryavarcaśam ॥ 47॥
āruroha tato rāmastadvimānamanuttamam ।
aṅke nidhāya vaidehīm lajjamānāṃ yaśasvinīm ॥ 48॥

47-48. He (Sri Ram) praised the chief commanders of the monkeys and bears by showing them all respect and credit that was due to them. He then told them to go home, back to Kishkindha.

Then Vibhishan brought an airplane called Pushpak which was glowing brilliantly like the sun (47).

He (Sri Ram) boarded that plane which was most excellent in every respect (i.e. was the best aerial vehicle available at the time). The Lord was accompanied by the celebrated and virtuous Vaidehi (the daughter of king of Videha; i.e. his wife Sita) who sat shyly by the side of her husband, Lord Sri Ram, in the plane (48).

लक्ष्मणेन सह भ्रात्रा विक्रान्तेन धनुष्मता ।
अब्रवीत्त्व विमानस्थः श्रीरामः सर्ववानरान् ॥ ४९॥
सुग्रीवं हरिराजं च अङ्गदं च विभीषणम् ।
मित्रकार्यं कृतं सर्वं भवद्भिः सह वानरैः ॥ ५०॥

lakṣmaṇena saha bhrātrā vikrāntena dhanuṣmatā ।
abravicca vimānasthaḥ śrīrāmaḥ sarvavānarān ॥ 49॥
sugrīvaṃ harirājaṃ ca aṅgadaṃ ca vibhīṣaṇam ।
mitrakāryaṃ kṛtaṃ sarvaṃ bhavadbhiḥ saha vānaraiḥ ॥ 50॥

49-50. The Lord was joined on the plane by his brother Laxman who was an expert in the use of the bow, a great archer, most valorous, valiant, brave, courageous and strong.

Once seated on the plane, Sri Ram addressed all the monkeys and bears and said (49), 'Oh Sugriv, the king of monkeys, Angad and Vibhishan! All of you, along with all other monkeys, have well lived up to the reputation of a good friend, and all of you have done your duty as a trusted friend (and I am grateful to all of you) (50).

अनुज्ञाता मया सर्वे यथेष्टं गन्तुमर्हथ ।
सुग्रीव प्रतियाह्याशु किष्किन्धां सर्वसैनिकैः ॥ ५१॥
स्वराज्ये वस लङ्कायां मम भक्तो विभीषण ।
न त्वां धर्षयितुं शक्ताः सेन्द्रा अपि दिवौकसः ॥ ५२॥

anujñātā mayā sarve yatheṣṭaṃ gantumarhatha ।
sugrīva pratiyāhyāśu kiṣkindhāṃ sarvasainikaiḥ ॥ 51॥
svarājye vasa laṅkāyāṃ mama bhakto vibhīṣaṇa ।
na tvāṃ dharṣayitum śaktāḥ sendrā api divaukaśaḥ ॥ 52॥

51-52. Now by my orders, all of you must go back to the places you wish to go. Sugriv, you should go back to Kishkindha soon with all your soldiers (51).

Vibhishan, be devoted towards me (and continue to be friendly and faithful to me) and stay in your kingdom here at Lanka.

Now (I bless you that) even Indra or any other Gods would never harm you in any way¹ (52).

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram have to make a special mention of this protection for Vibhishan? The Lord feared the nature of the gods; he was apprehensive that after he was gone from Lanka, these selfish gods would take turns to torment Vibhishan to take revenge for what his brother Ravana had done to these gods.

Lord Ram could perceive distinct fear in the countenance of Vibhishan, because once he was gone the latter would be all alone, open to revolt or a secret plan to take revenge against him from amongst his own countrymen who were loyal to Ravana, as well as the gods who would vent all their ire on him to avenge for the horrors his brother Ravana had subjected them to earlier.

So, in order to prevent any such thing happening, the Lord publicly declared that Vibhishan has his promise of protection, telling the malicious gods as well as the demons to be careful of their actions, telling them effectively:

“Don’t try your dirty tricks on this friend of mine whom I have granted refuge and bond of friendship. Mind all of you; I know your malicious nature more than anybody else. So beware. Listen, if I can win this war while fighting it on foot, and with no support from any well-trained army except the monkey and bear friends of mine, who themselves fought with primitive weapons, think what would be your fate when the mighty and valorous army of the kingdom of Ayodhya comes to intercede in favour of my friend Vibhishan. So please keep your hands off him!”]

अयोध्यां गन्तुमिच्छामि राजधानीं पितुर्मम ।
 एवमुक्तास्तु रामेण वानरास्ते महाबलाः ॥ ५३॥
 ऊचुः प्रान्जलयः सर्वे राक्षसश्च विभीषणः ।
 अयोध्यां गन्तुमिच्छामस्त्वया सह स्यूतम् ॥ ५४॥

ayodhyāṃ gantumicchāmi rājadhānīṃ piturmama ।
 evamuktāstu rāmeṇa vānarāste mahābalāḥ ॥ 53॥
 ūcuḥ prāñjalayaḥ sarve rākṣasaśca vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
 ayodhyāṃ gantumicchāmastvayā saha raghūttama ॥ 54॥

53-54. Now, I want to proceed to the capital of my father at Ayodhya'.

When Sri Ram had said so, all those brave monkey warriors (53), and the demon king Vibhishan, said in unison as each of them brought together his hands and joined the palms: 'Oh the most exalted of the Raghus (Sri Ram)! All of us want to accompany you to Ayodhya (and as this is our prayerful request, so please grant it to us if you really call us your friends) (54).

दृष्ट्वा त्वामभिषिक्तं तु कौसल्यामभिवाद्य च ।
 पश्चाद्दृणीमहे राज्यमनुज्ञां देहि नः प्रभो ॥ ५५॥
 रामस्तथेति सुग्रीव वानरैः सविभीषणः ।
 पुष्पकं सहनूमांश्च शीघ्रमारोह साम्प्रतम् ॥ ५६॥

dr̥ṣṭvā tvāmabhiṣiktaṃ tu kausalyāmabhivādya ca ।
 paścādvṛṇīmahe rājyamanujñāṃ dehi naḥ prabho ॥ 55॥
 rāmastatheti sugrīva vānaraiḥ savibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
 puṣpakaṃ sahanūmāṃśca śīghramāroha sāmpratam ॥ 56॥

55-56. Oh Lord! We shall first see you crowned on the throne of Ayodhya as a great King, pay our obeisance and respects to mother Kaushalya, and only thereafter shall accept our own kingdoms. So please permit us to accompany you' (55).

Then Sri Ram said, 'Alright. Sugriv, get aboard this plane quickly with your monkeys. Vibhishan and Hanuman too should come aboard.' (56).

ततस्तु पुष्पकं दिव्यं सुग्रीवः सह सेनया ।
विभीषणश्च सामात्यः सर्वे चारुरुहर्दुतम् ॥ ५७॥
तेष्वारूढेषु सर्वेषु कौबेरं परमासनम् ।
राघवेणाभ्यनुज्ञातमुत्पपात विहायसा ॥ ५८॥
बभौ तेन विमानेन हंसयुक्तेन भास्वता ।
प्रहृष्टश्च तदा रामश्चतुर्मुख इवापरः ॥ ५९॥

tatastu puṣpakam divyam sugrīvaḥ saha senayā ।
vibhīṣaṇaśca sāmātyaḥ sarve cārururhurdutam ॥ 57॥
teṣvārūḍheṣu sarveṣu kauberam paramāsanam ।
rāghavenābhyanujñātamutpapāta vihāyasā ॥ 58॥
babhau tena vimānena haṁsayuktena bhāsvatā ।
prahrṣṭaśca tadā rāmaścaturmukha ivāparaḥ ॥ 59॥

57-59. On getting his permission, Sugriv along with the chief commanders of his army¹, and Vibhishan with his ministers, hastily boarded the magnificent Pushpak plane (57).

When all of them had boarded that plane belonging to Kuber, it became airborne on the instructions of Raghav (Sri Ram) (58).

Sri Ram was most exhilarated; he felt happy and contented as he flew towards his native city on that elegant and majestic plane. The Lord, at that time, resembled the 4-headed Lord Brahma, the creator, flying away majestically on his Swan² (59).

[Note—¹A very important observation is to be made here. Only the name of Sugriv is mentioned here, but Tulsidas has clearly listed other names as well—viz. Angad, Nala, Neela, Hanuman and Jamvant (the chief of the bears). {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 118-b.}

Why is it so? Well, the answer is this: Sugriv was the king of the monkey race, and all others were his subordinates. So when Sugriv has been named, it was deemed that all who were his senior ministers and commanders too had joined him in boarding the plane.

²The mount of Lord Brahma is a divine Swan. By invoking this imagery, the wise sage Veda Vyas wishes to convey the basic idea about the beauty and grandeur of the Pushpak plane: like a swan, which is considered the most beautiful of birds, this plane too was one of the most magnificent aerial vehicle in existence at that time.]

ततो बभौ भास्करबिम्बतुल्यं कुबेरानं तपसानुलब्धम् ।
रामेण शोभां नितरां प्रपेदे सीतासमेतेन सहानुजेन ॥ ६०॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
त्रयोदशः सर्गः ॥ १३॥

tato babhau bhāskarabimbatulyaṃ kuberayānaṃ tapasānulabdham ।
rāmeṇa śobhāṃ nitarāṃ prapede sītāsametena sahānujena ॥ 60॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṃvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
trayodaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 13॥

60. At that time, the plane—which was acquired by Kuber after doing severe austerities and penances—imitated/mimicked the sun (i.e. it looked like or resembled a splendorous and dazzling image of the sun itself); it appeared all the more elegant, glamorous, stupendous and magnificent with Lord Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman sitting in it (60).

Thus ends Canto 13 of Adhyatma Ramayan that describes the discourse that Lord Shiva gave for the benefit of goddess Uma, his divine consort.

(ii) Sub-section 21.2.2: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 14, verse nos. 1-20, 36-100:

॥चतुर्दशः सर्गः ॥
श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।
पातयित्वा ततश्चक्षुः सर्वतो रघुनन्दनः ।
अब्रवीन्मैथिलीं सीतां रामः शशिनिभाननाम् ॥ १॥
त्रिकूटशिखराग्रस्थां पश्य लङ्कां महाप्रभाम् ।
एतां रणभुवं पश्य मांसकर्दमपङ्क्तिलाम् ॥ २॥

॥caturdaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥
śrīmahādeva uvāca ।
pātayitvā tataścakṣuḥ sarvato raghunandanaḥ ।
abravīnmaithilīm sītāṃ rāmaḥ śāsinibhānanām ॥ 1॥
trikūṭaśikharāgrasthāṃ paśya laṅkāṃ mahāprabhām ।
etāṃ raṇabhuvam paśya māṃsakardamapaṅkilām ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Glancing around from the air, Raghunandan (Sri Ram) said to the princes of Mithila, the moon-faced Sita (1), 'Oh dear! Look at this glorious and famed city of Lanka which is established on the summit of mount Trikoot. And look here at the battle-field which is rendered into a thick pasty slush of flesh and blood (of those killed or wounded in the war) (2).

असुराणां प्लवङ्गानामत्र वैशसनं महत् ।
 अत्र मे निहतः शेते रावणो राक्षसेश्वरः ॥ ३॥
 कुम्भकर्णेन्द्रजिन्मुख्याः सर्वे चात्र निपातिताः ।
 एष सेतुर्मया बद्धः सागरे सलिलाशये ॥ ४॥

asurāṇaṃ plavaṅgānāmatra vaiśasanaṃ mahat ।
 atra me nihataḥ śete rāvaṇo rākṣaseśvaraḥ ॥ 3॥
 kumbhakarṇendrajinmukhyāḥ sarve cātra nipātītāḥ ।
 eṣa seturmayā baddhaḥ sāgare salilāśaye ॥ 4॥

3-4. Here, there has been a frighteningly horrifying massacre of demons and monkeys. It was here that the king of demons Ravana fell dead at my hands (3).

And it was here that Kumbhakarn, Indrjeet (Ravana's son Meghanad) and other great demon warriors were killed.

Look down there; this is the bridge that I got constructed over the vast ocean that is full to the brim with water.

[It is not an ordinary calm body of water as it seems from high up here in the sky, but the ocean we faced on the ground roared and heaved violently, it splashed, swirled and whirled so wildly that it would have sent those with meeker hearts cowering for cover. We braved its ferocity and violence first at the time when the bridge was being built across it, and then again at the time when we actually crossed it.] (4)

एतच्च दृश्यते तीर्थं सागरस्य महात्मनः ।
 सेतुबन्धमिति ख्यातं त्रैलोक्येन च पूजितम् ॥ ५॥
 एतत्पवित्त्वं परमं दर्शनात्पातकापहम् ।
 अत्र रामेश्वरो देवो मया शम्भुः प्रतिष्ठितः ॥ ६॥

etacca dṛśyate tīrthaṃ sāgarasya mahātmanah ।
 setubandhamiti khyātaṃ trailokyena ca pūjitam ॥ 5॥
 etatpavitraṃ paramaṃ darśanātpātakāpaham ।
 atra rāmeśvaro devo mayā śambhuḥ pratiṣṭhitaḥ ॥ 6॥

5-6. Look, this famous pilgrim sight called 'Setubandh' (literally the spot where the ocean was stopped, bound or tamed; here meaning the place where the construction of the bridge was commenced). It is to be revered and worshipped by all in the three divisions of the world¹ (5).

It is a very holy and divine place, and it has the mystical potential to destroy all the sins and evils of those who come for pilgrimage here. I have established (consecrated) Lord Shiva here in the form of Rameshwar Mahadev² (6).

[Note—¹The three divisions of the world mean the heaven, the earth, and the nether world.

²The word "rāmeśvaro devo" means the "Lord of Ram"; "the Lord whom Ram worships". It also means "The Lord who worships Ram". It refers to Lord Shiva. The

consecrated image of Shiva that Lord Ram established there is in the form of a ‘Shiva Lingam’, the universal icon of Shiva.]

अत्र मां शरणं प्राप्तो मन्त्रिभिश्च विभीषणः ।
 एषा सुग्रीवनगरी किष्किन्धा चित्रकानना ॥ ७॥
 तत्र रामाज्ञया ताराप्रमुखा हरियोषितः ।
 आनयामास सुग्रीवः सीतायाः प्रियकाम्यया ॥ ८॥

atra mām śaraṇaṁ prāpto mantribhiśca vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
 eṣā sugrīvanagarī kiṣkindhā citrakānanā ॥ 7॥
 tatra rāmājñayā tārapramukhā hariyoṣitaḥ ।
 ānayāmāsa sugrīvaḥ sitāyāḥ priyakāmyayā ॥ 8॥

7-8. This is the place where Vibhishan had come with his ministers to seek refuge with me.

And look, that marvellous place down there is called Kishkindha; it consists of beautiful gardens and mini forests, and it is the capital of Sugriv (the king of the monkey race)' (7).

On reaching Kishkindha, on the instructions of Sri Ram, Sugriv brought his women-folk, led by Tara (the widow of his brother Baali), to meet Sita; this meeting made Sita feel very happy¹ (8).

[Note—¹This shows that the Pushpak plane had come down to stop for a while at Kishkindha before proceeding further on its journey towards Ayodhya. It is in stark contrast with Tulsidas' version in 'Ram Charit Manas' where the plane had made no stop-over at Kishkindha.

Lord Ram made this a way of courtesy call so that his wife Sita could meet the ladies of his friend Sugriv's household. Since the Lord has openly declared his friendship with Sugriv, it is quite normal that he would want his wife to meet and get acquainted with her counterparts in the family of her husband's friend.]

ताभिः सहोत्थितं शीघ्रं विमानं प्रेक्ष्य राघवः ।
 प्राह चाद्रिमृष्यमूकं पश्य वात्यत्र मे हतः ॥ ९॥
 एषा पञ्चवटी नाम राक्षसा यत्र मे हताः ।
 अगस्त्यस्य सुतीक्ष्णस्य पश्याश्रमपदे शुभे ॥ १०॥

tābhiḥ sahotthitaṁ śīghraṁ vimānaṁ prekṣya rāghavaḥ ।
 prāha cādrimṛṣyamūkaṁ paśya vālyatra me hataḥ ॥ 9॥
 eṣā pañcavaṭī nāma rākṣasā yatra me hatāḥ ।
 agastyasya sutīkṣṇasya paśyāśramapade śubhe ॥ 10॥

9-10. After this brief stop-over, the plane became air-borne once again. Then Lord Ram resumed his narrative, pointing out to Sita the important places that he had visited and even stayed for a while during his journey to Lanka. The Lord told Sita: 'This is the Rishymook mountain where I had slayed Baali'¹ (9).

Here, this is Panchvati where I had killed the demons (Khar, Dushan and others)². There, down there, are the most pure, auspicious and venerable hermitages of sages Agastya and Sutikshan³ (10).

[Note—¹Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-70.

²Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 32-35.

¹Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, (i) Canto 2, verse nos. 25-41 (sage Sutikshan); and (ii) Canto 3, verse nos. 2-16.]

एते ते तापसाः सर्वे दृश्यन्ते वरवर्णिनि ।
असौ शैलवरो देवि चित्रकूटः प्रकाशते ॥ ११॥
अत्र मां कैकयीपुत्रः प्रसादयितुमागतः ।
भरद्वाजाश्रमं पश्य दृश्यते यमुनातटे ॥ १२॥

ete te tāpasāḥ sarve dr̥śyante varavarṇini ।
asau śailavaro devi citrakūṭaḥ prakāśate ॥ 11॥
atra māṃ kaikayīputraḥ prasādayitumāgataḥ ।
bharadvājāśramaṃ paśya dr̥śyate yamunātaṭe ॥ 12॥

11-12. Oh charming lady with a beautiful form (i.e. Sita)! Look, those are the different hermits and ascetics that are visible everywhere, and oh goddess, this is Chitrakoot which is the best among the hills¹ (11).

It is here that Kaikeyi's son (Bharat) had come to plead with me (to go back to Ayodhya)².

Look down there; it is the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj³ visible on the banks of river Yamuna (12).

[Note—¹Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 89-92 (Lord Ram started living in a thatched hut in Chitrakoot).

²Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 60-66 (Bharat's arrival at Chitrakoot).

³Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 28-33 (arrival of Lord Ram in sage Bharadwaj's hermitage).]

एषा भगीरथी गङ्गा दृश्यते लोकपावनी ।
एषा सा दृश्यते सीते सरयूपमालिनी ॥ १३॥
एषा सा दृश्यतेऽयोध्या प्रणामं कुरु भामिनि ।
एवं क्रमेण सम्प्राप्तो भरद्वाजाश्रमं हरिः ॥ १४॥

eṣā bhāgīrathī gaṅgā dr̥śyate lokapāvanī ।
eṣā sā dr̥śyate sīte sarayūyūpamālīnī ॥ 13॥

eṣā sā dr̥śyate'yodhyā praṇāmaṃ kuru bhāmini ।
 evaṃ krameṇa samprāpto bharadvājāśramaṃ hariḥ ॥ 14॥

13-14. The river Ganges—which is the purifier of the three divisions of the world¹—is visible there. And, oh Sita, there we can see Saryu which has pillars placed in it during the various fire sacrifices (done by the great kings of Raghu's race) (13).

Oh graceful lady! Look, there is Ayodhya visible from here. Bow before it to show respect to the revered city.'

In this way, having reached the periphery of the city, Sri Ram (Hari) then turned the plane back and reached the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj² (14).

[Note—¹The three divisions of the world are: heaven, earth and the nether world.

²Lord Ram wished to make sure that he reached Ayodhya punctually, just before the 14 years marked for his living in the forest expired. Now as it turned out, he still had some time in his hands, and so he decided to use the extra time judiciously by paying a courtesy visit to sage Bharadwaj who lived in Prayag, a pilgrim city not very far away from Ayodhya. Travelling by air, it was possible to go to Prayag and return to Ayodhya within a short span of time. Hence, the Lord decided to pay his respects to sage Bharadwaj before actually landing in Ayodhya.]

पूर्णे चतुर्दशे वर्षे पञ्चम्यां रघुनन्दनः ।
 भरद्वाजं मुनिं दृष्ट्वा ववन्दे सानुजः प्रभुः ॥ १५॥
 पप्रच्छ मुनिमासीनं विनयेन रघूत्तमः ।
 शृणोषि कच्चिद्भरतः कुशल्यास्ते सहानुजः ॥ १६॥

pūrṇe caturdaśe varṣe pañcamyāṃ raghunandanah ।
 bharadvājaṃ muniṃ dr̥ṣṭvā vavande sānujaḥ prabhuḥ ॥ 15॥
 papraccha munimāsīnaṃ vinayena raghūttamaḥ ।
 śr̥ṇoṣi kaccidbharataḥ kuśalyāste sahānujaḥ ॥ 16॥

15-16. At the end of 14 years, on the 5th day of the new lunar fortnight (pūrṇe caturdaśe varṣe pañcamyāṃ)¹, Raghunandan (Sri Ram) met sage Bharadwaj and bowed before him with his younger brother (Laxman) (15).

Then the most exalted of the Raghus (Sri Ram) said to the sage, with great respect and most politely, 'Oh sage! Do you have any news; is Bharat well with his younger brother (Shatrughan)²? (16).

[Note—¹From this verse we can infer that the day Lord Ram went to the forest—which was exactly 14 years ago—was also the 5th day of the new lunar fortnight.

²This explains why the Lord decided to turn the plane and go back to meet sage Bharadwaj—he wished to ascertain that everything was okay in Ayodhya before actually going there. Should there be any bad news, such as some hint of a conspiracy or political coup being planned against him by Bharat or someone else, the Lord would quietly go to live somewhere else. Sage Bharadwaj was sure to tell him the truth about the ground realities in Ayodhya and Bharat's attitude. The Lord wished to

avoid an unsavoury situation that would be embarrassing for him in front of his foreign guests.]

सुभिक्षा वर्ततेऽयोध्या जीवन्ति च हि मातरः ।
 श्रुत्वा रामस्य वचनं भरद्वाजः प्रहृष्टधीः ॥ १७॥
 प्राह सर्वे कुशलिनो भरतस्तु महामनाः ।
 फलमूलकृताहारो जटावल्कलधारकः ॥ १८॥

subhikṣā vartate'yodhyā jīvanti ca hi mātaraḥ ।
 śrutvā rāmasya vacanam̐ bharadvājaḥ prahr̥ṣṭadhīḥ ॥ 17॥
 prāha sarve kuśalino bharatastu mahāmanāḥ ।
 phalamūlakṛtāhāro jaṭāvalkaladhārakaḥ ॥ 18॥

17-18. Is everything fine and in order in Ayodhya? Are our mothers all alive now?' Hearing these words of Lord Sri Ram seeking information about the welfare of his beloved city and well-being of his kith and kin, sage Bharadwaj replied cheerfully (17), 'Everything is fine at your place. Bharat, who is a thorough gentleman and noble in heart, has sustained himself and survived these long years by eating fruits and edible roots (like you had done in the forest), wears a crown of matted hairs on his head, and wraps his body by clothes made from the bark of the birch tree¹ (18).

[Note—¹Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 70-73.]

पादुके सकलं न्यस्य राज्यं त्वां सुप्रीक्षते ।
 यद्यत्कृतं त्वया कर्म दण्डके रघुनन्दन ॥ १९॥
 राक्षसानां विनाशं च सीताहरणपूर्वकम् ।
 सर्वं ज्ञातं मया राम तपसा ते प्रसादतः ॥ २०॥

pāduke sakalam̐ nyasya rājyam̐ tvām̐ supratīkṣate ।
 yadyatkṛtam̐ tvayā karma daṇḍake raghunandana ॥ 19॥
 rākṣasānām̐ vināśam̐ ca sītāharaṇapūrvakam̐ ।
 sarvam̐ jñātam̐ mayā rāma tapasā te prasādataḥ ॥ 20॥

19-20. He has put the burden of the day to day administration of the kingdom on your sandals (which he has respectfully consecrated as the virtual ruler of Ayodhya during the period of your physical absence), and himself he is waiting eagerly and anxiously for your auspicious and most welcome arrival.

Oh Raghunandan (Sri Ram)! All the deeds that you had done in the Dandakaranya forest (such as the slaying of demons, meeting with sages and providing them with fearlessness and liberation from this mundane world), as well as the way you have killed the great demons after Sita was abducted (this refers to the epic war at Lanka)—I have come to know all about it with the powers that I have acquired by doing austerities, penances and spiritual practices, but these powers that I possess are due to your grace (19-20).

प्रार्थयामि जगन्नाथ पवित्रं कुरु मे गृहम् ।
 स्थित्वाद्य भुक्त्वा सबलः श्वो गमिष्यसि पत्तनम् ॥ ३६॥
 तथेति राघवोऽतिष्ठतस्मिन्नाश्रम उत्तमे ।
 ससैन्यः पूजितस्तेन सीतया लक्ष्मणेन च ॥ ३७॥

prārthayāmi jagannātha pavitraṁ kuru me gr̥ham ।
 sthityādya bhuktvā sabalaḥ śvo gamiṣyasi pattanam ॥ 36॥
 tatheti rāghavo'tiṣṭhattasminnāśrama uttame ।
 sasainyaḥ pūjitastena sītayā lakṣmaṇena ca ॥ 37॥

36-37. Oh the Lord of the world (jagannātha)! It is my prayer and an earnest request that you make a stopover here (in my hermitage) with your army (i.e. the large number of your warrior friends you have come with you from Lanka), have your meals here, and in this manner purify my hermitage (by giving me the chance to serve you and your friends). Then (after a night's halt here, you can proceed ahead and go to your capital tomorrow (morning) (36).

Then Raghav (Sri Ram) replied 'alright sage, let it be as you wish', and accepted his invitation. Lord Sri Ram made a night's halt in sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, which was an excellent one, along with his army (warrior friends from Lanka and Kishkindha), Sita and Laxman after he was formally welcomed, honoured and worshipped by the sage¹ (37).

[Note—¹Sage Bharadwaj had some excellent mystical powers in his possession, whereby he could lavishly entertain and provide the best of food, refreshments and lodging even for a large army. This ability of his is clearly on display when he had entertained Bharat while he was going to Chitrakoot in an effort to make reconciliation with Lord Ram and prevail upon him to return to Ayodhya. This marvelous magical feat has been described in (a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 54-58; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215.]

ततो रामश्चिन्तयित्वा मुहूर्तं प्राह मारुतिम् ।
 इतो गच्छ हनूमंस्त्वमयोध्यां प्रति सत्वरः ॥ ३८॥
 जानीहि कुशली कच्चिज्जनो नृपतिमन्दिरे ।
 शृङ्गवेरपुरं गत्वा ब्रूहि मित्रं गुहं मम ॥ ३९॥

tato rāmaścintayitvā muhūrtaṁ prāha mārutim ।
 ito gaccha hanūmaṁstvamayodhyāṁ prati satvaraḥ ॥ 38॥
 jānihi kuśalī kaccijjano nr̥patimandire ।
 śṛṅgaverapuraṁ gatvā brūhi mitraṁ guhaṁ mama ॥ 39॥

38-39. Sri Ram thought for a Muhurt (i.e. he pondered over the matter of 'what to do next' for a short while; precisely 48 minutes, but in practice it means for roughly three-quarters of an hour) and then said to Maruti (son of the wind god), 'Oh Hanuman! Listen; from here you first go straight to Ayodhya (38). Find out if

everything is in order in the royal household. Then proceed to Srīngverpur and talk with my friend Guha (the head of the boatman community) (39).

जानकीलक्ष्मणोपेतमागतं मां निवेदय ।
नन्दिग्रामं ततो गत्वा भ्रातरं भरतं मम ॥ ४०॥
दृष्ट्वा ब्रूहि सभार्यस्य सभ्रातुः कुशलं मम ।
सीतापहरणादीनि रावणस्य वधादिकम् ॥ ४१॥

jānakīlakṣmaṇopetamāgataṁ mām nivedaya ।
nandigrāmaṁ tato gatvā bhrātaraṁ bharataṁ mama ॥ 40॥
drṣṭvā brūhi sabhāryasya sabhrātuḥ kuśalaṁ mama ।
sītāpaharaṇādīni rāvaṇasya vadhādikam ॥ 41॥

40-41. Inform him (Guha) about my arrival along with Janki (Sita) and Laxman.

After that, go to Nandigram and meet my brother Bharat (40).

Tell him about my well-being along with that of my wife and brother. Brief him about all the events from the abduction of Sita right up to the slaying of Ravana and her liberation. [Mention also that after victory in the war of Lanka, I had boarded a plane along with Sita and Laxman that is bringing us home. Tell him also that my friends who had helped me in winning this ferocious war, the friendly demons of Lanka headed by Vibhishan, and the monkey and bears of Kishkindha lead by Sugriv, are also accompanying me on the Pushpak plane which is bringing me back to Ayodhya. Tell him that currently I am spending the night at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, shall meet Guha tomorrow, and then head straight to Ayodhya.]¹ (41).

[Note—¹After everyone retired for the day and went to rest, Lord Ram sat alone to plan for what to do next. This is why it is said that “the Lord pondered over the matter for a Muhurt” in verse nos. 38-39 herein above.

He decided to inform Bharat in advance about his arrival. The Lord wished to ascertain whether his arrival in Ayodhya was welcome or not; he wished to know how Bharat took this news. Though Lord Ram was confident of Bharat's integrity and good nature, yet the lure of kingdom of a prosperous kingdom may have corrupted Bharat's mind during the long period of Lord's absence when he was the de-facto ruler of the kingdom. So, Lord Ram wanted to be certain.

He knew that Hanuman was exceptionally intelligent and skilled in such matters as were at hand; he would immediately pick up the subtlest signs of any adverse reaction from Bharat to the news of the Lord's arrival, and then convey it faithfully and honestly to the Lord, without distorting facts, thereby enabling him to decide the next course of action. If it turned out that he was not welcomed, then the Lord decided to quietly go away to some other place and live there for the rest of his life, sparing Bharat the embarrassment of having to rely on some kind of dirty scheme to grab the crown of Ayodhya if he intends to actually do it. In case it is not so—and the Lord sincerely did hope that his apprehensions are proved wrong, thanks God—then an advance information would give Bharat ample time to make preparations to welcome the Lord and his party in a proper way.

Lord Ram wanted to inform Bharat of his arrival by plane also because it was a most unexpected and a dramatic way to return home from the forest for the Lord. He

had gone on foot, and no one could expect a sudden arrival by the path of the sky, aboard a magnificent plane. It would be such a sight that no one would believe it to be true, thinking it to be some kind of delusion created by some magician to mislead the citizens of Ayodhya. Advance information would therefore alert Bharat, who would not then be caught unawares and think that some enemy has come to attack him and the kingdom from the air. There were good chances of this misjudgment actually happening, because the Lord was accompanied by a large number of strangers from Lanka and Kishkindha, with whom none in Ayodhya was acquainted. This wrong perception may precipitate into a battle, if by some mischance Bharat should think it was an alien invasion, and it would create a hilarious situation which might spin quickly out of control.]

ब्रूहि क्रमेण मे भ्रातुः सर्वं तत् विचेष्टितम् ।
 हत्वा शत्रुगणान् सर्वान् सभार्यः सहलक्ष्मणः ॥ ४२॥
 उपयाति समृद्धार्थः सह ऋक्षहरीश्वरैः ।
 इत्युक्त्वा तत् वृत्तान्तं भरतस्य विचेष्टितम् ॥ ४३॥
 सर्वं ज्ञात्वा पुनः शीघ्रमागच्छ मम सन्निधिम् ।
 तथेति हनुमांस्तत् मानुषं वपुरास्थितः ॥ ४४॥
 नन्दिग्रामं ययौ तूर्णं वायुवेगेन मारुतिः ।
 गरुत्मानिव वेगेन जिघृक्षन् भुजगोत्तमम् ॥ ४५॥

brūhi krameṇa me bhrātuḥ sarvaṃ tatra viceṣṭitam ।
 hatvā śatrugaṇān sarvān sabhāryaḥ sahalakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 42॥
 upayāti samṛddhārthaḥ saha ṛkṣaharīśvaraiḥ ।
 ityuktvā tatra vṛttāntaṃ bharatasya viceṣṭitam ॥ 43॥
 sarvaṃ jñātvā punaḥ śīghramāgaccha mama sannidhim ।
 tatheti hanumāṃstatra mānuṣaṃ vapurāsthitaḥ ॥ 44॥
 nandigrāmaṃ yayau tūrṇaṃ vāyuvegena mārutiḥ ।
 garutmāniva vegena jighr̥kṣan bhujagottamam ॥ 45॥

42-45. Tell my brother (Bharat) everything in a chronological order, and tell him that having successfully killed (or having vanquished) all his enemies, Sri Ram is coming here with his wife (Sita), Laxman, bears and monkeys. Tell him all this and find out his response. [To wit, observe how these bits of information are received by him, which will help you to understand his inner feelings and attitude. Carefully observe his face and body language for some subtle hint, both negative and positive ones. In brief, you have to judge whether or not we should go to Ayodhya.]

After that, come back to me here as soon as you can'.

Then Hanuman said 'alright Lord', and assumed a human form (42-44).

He proceeded to Nandigram with the speed of wind (i.e. he went there swiftly). At that time, Maruti (Hanuman) resembled Garuda (the Eagle—the mount of Vishnu) who was swooping down from the sky to catch hold of a snake. [To wit, Hanuman flew with great speed and stealth to reach Nandigram where Bharat dwelt. Once there, he descended very quickly and approached the hermitage of Bharat.] (45).

[Note—Hanuman had assumed a human form, most probably of a Brahmin, when he went to meet Bharat. Remember: At that time Lord Ram was in Prayag, which was situated at a distance from Ayodhya, and it was night time. Hanuman had to go to Srīngverpur to meet Guha first, and then proceed to Nandigram to meet Bharat. He had then to return to Prayag to report to Lord Ram before day break. It is not possible for a human being to walk this distance in such a short span of time; but Hanuman accomplished this miraculous feat.

How did he do it? Because he knew how to fly, being the ‘son of the wind god’. So, Hanuman used this skill to fly like the wind, that he had inherited from his father, the wind god, to reach his two destinations, first Srīngverpur to meet Guha, and then to Ayodhya to meet Bharat, by the aerial route like a bird would fly. Once he reached there, he descended on the ground and assumed a human form to meet Guha and Bharat respectively.]

शृङ्गवेरपुरं प्राप्य गुहमासाद्य मारुतिः ।
 उवाचा मधुरं वाक्यं प्रहृष्टेनान्तरात्मना ॥ ४६॥
 रामो दाशरथिः श्रीमान् सखा ते सह सीतया ।
 सलक्ष्मणस्त्वां धर्मात्मा क्षेमी कुशलमब्रवीत् ॥ ४७॥
 अनुज्ञातोऽद्य मुनिना भरद्वाजेन राघवः ।
 आगमिष्यति तं देवं द्रक्ष्यसि त्वं रघूत्तमम् ॥ ४८॥

śṛṅgaverapuram prāpya guhamāsādyā mārutiḥ ।
 uvācā madhuraṁ vākyaṁ prahr̥ṣṭenāntarātmanā ॥ 46॥
 rāmo dāśarathiḥ śrīmān sakhā te saha sītayā ।
 salakṣmaṇastvām dharmātmā kṣemī kuśalamabravīt ॥ 47॥
 anujñāto'dya muninā bharadvājaena rāghavaḥ ।
 āgamiṣyati taṁ devaṁ drakṣyasi tvaṁ raghūttamam ॥ 48॥

46-48. When he reached Srīngverpur, Maruti (Hanuman) went to Guha and said most cheerfully, in a friendly manner and a sweet voice (46), 'Your friend Sri Ram—who is most righteous and noble, one who protects and takes care of all, and who is a son of king Dasrath—has conveyed to you about his own well-being, as well as that of his wife Sita and brother Laxman (47).

Today Raghav (Sri Ram) will take permission from sage Bharadwaj and come here to meet you. Then you shall have the privilege to have a Darshan (august sight; divine viewing) of the most exalted of the Raghus.' (48).

एवमुक्त्वा महातेजाः सम्प्रहृष्टतनूरुहम् ।
 उत्पपात महावेगो वायुवेगेन मारुतिः ॥ ४९॥
 सोऽपश्यद्रामतीर्थं च सरयूं च महानदीम् ।
 तामतिक्रम्य हनुमान्नन्दिग्रामं ययौ मुदा ॥ ५०॥

evamuktvā mahātejāḥ samprahr̥ṣṭatanūruham ।
 utpapāta mahāvego vāyuvegena mārutiḥ ॥ 49॥

so'paśyadrāmatīrthaṃ ca sarayūṃ ca mahānadīm ।
tāmatikramya hanumānnandigrāmaṃ yayau mudā ॥ 50॥

49-50. Having said this to Guha, who was very thrilled to hear this pleasant and exhilarating news, the most glorious Maruti (Hanuman) proceeded ahead, flying in the sky with the speed of wind¹ (49).

After some time, he sighted 'Ram Tirtha' (literally, a pilgrim site associated with Sri Ram; here it means the holy city of Ayodhya), and the great river Saryu (that flanked it on the northern side). He crossed them and proceeded straight to Nandigram with a most cheerful mind (50).

[Note—¹Hanuman did not waste any time with Guha; after informing him of Lord Ram's arrival, he immediately departed from there and headed straight to Ayodhya. From the air he could see the river Saryu; he crossed it and headed to a village called Nandigram on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya where Bharat had his hermitage.]

क्रोशमात्रे त्वयोध्यायाश्चीरकृष्णाजिनाम्बरम् ।
ददर्श भरतं दीनं कृशमाश्रमवासिनम् ॥ ५१॥
मलपङ्कविदिग्धाङ्गं जटिलं वल्कलाम्बरम् ।
फलमूलकृताहारं रामचिन्तापरायणम् ॥ ५२॥
पादुके ते पुरस्कृत्य शासयन्तं वसुन्धराम् ।
मन्त्रिभिः पौरमुख्यैश्च काषायाम्बरधारिभिः ॥ ५३॥
वृत्तदेहं मूर्तिमन्तं साक्षाद्धर्ममिव स्थितम् ।
उवाच प्राञ्जलिर्वाक्यं हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः ॥ ५४॥

krośamātre tvayodhyāyāścīrakṛṣṇājīnāmbaram ।
dadarśa bharataṃ dīnaṃ kṛśamāśramavāsinam ॥ 51॥
malapaṅkavidigdhāṅgaṃ jaṭilaṃ valkalāmbaram ।
phalamūlakṛtāhāraṃ rāmacintāparāyaṇam ॥ 52॥
pāduke te puraskṛtya śāsayantaṃ vasundharām ।
mantribhiḥ pauramukhyaiśca kāṣāyāmbaradhāribhiḥ ॥ 53॥
vṛtadehaṃ mūrtimantaṃ sākṣāddharmamiva sthitam ।
uvāca prāñjalirvākyaṃ hanūmānmārutātmajaḥ ॥ 54॥

51-54. At a distance of approximately 1 Kosa from Ayodhya (which means roughly at a distance of 2 miles from the limits of the city), he saw Bharat attired in clothes made from bark of the birch tree, and wearing a dark deer skin. He was very distressed, miserable, lean and emaciated while living a life of a recluse in that hermitage (at Nandigram) (51).

He had smeared ash on his body, had matted hairs on his head, wore clothes made of bark of trees, ate (and survived on) fruits and edible roots, and was constantly thinking of Sri Ram (52).

He kept the two sandals (of Sri Ram, that he had brought with him from Chitrakoot) in the front (as a token of the Lord's physical presence), and worshipped

it most reverentially and with great honour. In this way, he ruled over the land on behalf of Lord Ram.

[To wit, Bharat presided over the functioning and day to day administration of the kingdom on behalf of Lord Sri Ram, but only as a caretaker and not as the de-facto king. Placing Sri Ram's footwear on the throne was a symbolic gesture to tell everyone that the Lord was the real King of Ayodhya, and Bharat was merely a caretaker who governs the kingdom on behalf of the King who has gone out on some mission, but will soon return.]

He was surrounded by ministers wearing orange clothes, and also by other chief citizens of the city (53).

Bharat appeared to be a personified form of Dharma (principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality; of noble and virtuous conduct). Seeing him in this state, the son of the wind god, Hanuman, stood before Bharat with the palms of his hands touching each other as a sign of offering his obeisance to Bharat. Hanuman spoke reverentially as follows (54)—

[Note—The above description of Bharat shows that he had led a very simple, austere and humble life like that of a hermit and a recluse living in the forest. It was to the eternal credit of Bharat that he lived a life of penance and austerity inspite of being the ruler of a kingdom renowned for its prosperity and wealth. Had Bharat wanted, he could have lived a life of comfort and pleasure without committing anything wrong in doing so, but no, he was a different sort of man, and the ‘life of austerity and penance that he led inspite of being eligible for all kingly comforts and pleasures’ is what set him apart from others, making him so famous, so honourable, so glorious, so praiseworthy and so immortal in the annals of history. Bharat became a legend, a hero who exemplified remarkable good virtues and most excellent characters that are so much lauded and applauded in folklore.]

यं त्वं चिन्तयसे रामं तापसं दण्डके स्थितम् ।
 अनुशोचसि काकुत्स्थः स त्वां कुशलमब्रवीत् ॥ ५५॥
 प्रियमाख्यामि ते देव शोकं त्यज सुदारुणम् ।
 अस्मिन्मुहूर्ते भ्रात्रा त्वं रामेण सह सङ्गतः ॥ ५६॥
 समरे रावणं हत्वा रामः सीतामवाप्य च ।
 उपयाति समृद्धार्थः ससीतः सहलक्ष्मणः ॥ ५७॥

yaṃ tvam cintayase rāmaṃ tāpasam daṇḍake sthitam ।
 anuśocasi kākutsthaḥ sa tvāṃ kuśalamabravīt ॥ 55॥
 priyamākhyāmi te deva śokaṃ tyaja sudāruṇam ।
 asminmuhūrte bhrātrā tvam rāmeṇa saha saṅgataḥ ॥ 56॥
 samare rāvaṇaṃ hatvā rāmaḥ sītā mavāpya ca ।
 upayāti samṛddhārthaḥ sasītaḥ sahalakṣmaṇaḥ ॥ 57॥

55-57. (Hanuman said to Bharat—) 'Sri Ram, whose image as a hermit residing in the Dandakaranya forest, is being constantly remembered by you, for whom you have suffered so much hardship, mental agonies, regret, contrition and remorse, and who is

a son in the illustrious family of Kukustha, has sent the word of his welfare and well-being to you (55).

Oh Lord, leave this greatly contrite, sorrowful and remorseful mood of yours. I shall tell you very pleasing news. You shall meet your beloved brother Sri Ram during this Muhurt itself (i.e. within a short span of time; within the next few hours, before the number of the day changes in the calendar) (56).

Listen carefully. Lord Sri Ram has killed Ravana in the war of Lanka; he has retrieved Sita from the clutches of Ravana, and being successful in his endeavours (of fulfilling the words of his father to stay in exile in the forest for 14 years), the Lord is coming back home with Sita and Laxman.' (57).

एवमुक्तो महातेजा भरतो हर्षमूर्च्छितः ।
पपात भुवि चास्वस्थः कैकयीप्रियनन्दनः ॥ ५८॥
आलिङ्ग्य भरतः शीघ्रं मारुतिं प्रियवादिनम् ।
आनन्दजैरश्रुजलैः सिषेच भरतः कपिम् ॥ ५९॥

evamukto mahātejā bharato harṣamūrcchitaḥ ।
papāta bhuvi cāsvasthaḥ kaikayīpriyanandanah ॥ 58॥
āliṅgya bharataḥ śīghraṁ mārutiṁ priyavādinam ।
ānandajairāśrujalaiḥ siṣeca bharataḥ kapim ॥ 59॥

58-59. When he (Hanuman) had said so, the most glorious and radiant Bharat, who was the dear son of Kaikeyi, became so ecstatic and overcome with joy that he became unconscious with excess of happiness, and fell to the ground (58).

When Bharat had recovered himself, he stood up and embraced Maruti (Hanuman) who had said these most pleasing and endearing words to him, and drenched the latter with tears of delight and extreme joy (59).

देवो वा मानुषो वा त्वमनुक्रीशादिहागतः ।
प्रियाख्यानस्य ते सौम्य ददामि ब्रुवतः प्रियम् ॥ ६०॥
गवां शतसहस्रं च ग्रामाणां च शतं वरम् ।
सर्वाभरणसम्पन्ना मुग्धाः कन्यास्तु षोडश ॥ ६१॥

devo vā mānuṣo vā tvamanukrośādihāgataḥ ।
priyākhyānasya te saumya dadāmi bruvataḥ priyam ॥ 60॥
gavāṁ śatasahasraṁ ca grāmāṇāṁ ca śataṁ varam ।
sarvābharaṇasampannā mugdhāḥ kanyāstu ṣoḍaśa ॥ 61॥

60-61. (Bharat said—) 'Are you some god or some extraordinary man who has shown his grace upon me by coming here with this excellent news that I had so long been eager to hear? Oh the polite, courteous, sober and pleasant soul (saumya)! In return for the most welcome, most endearing and the most pleasing news which you have conveyed to me (60), I am giving you (i.e. gifting you as a reward) one lakh cows (gavāṁ śatasahasraṁ), one-hundred good villages (grāmāṇāṁ ca śataṁ varam),

and sixteen beautiful maidens fully decorated with all possible ornaments (sarvābharaṇasampannā mugdhāḥ kanyāstu ṣoḍaśa).' (61).

एवमुक्त्वा पुनः प्राह भरतो मारुतात्मजम् ।
 बहूनीमानि वर्षाणि गतस्य सुमहद्वनम् ॥ ६२॥
 शृणोम्यहं प्रीतिकरं मम नाथस्य कीर्तनम् ।
 कल्याणी बत गाथेयं लौकिकी प्रतिभाति मे ॥ ६३॥
 एति जीवन्तमानन्दो नरं वर्षशतादपि ।
 राघवस्य हरीणां च कथमासीत्समागमः ॥ ६४॥

evamuktvā punaḥ prāha bharato mārutātmajam ।
 bahūnīmāni varṣāṇi gatasya sumahadvanam ॥ 62॥
 śṛṇomyaḥam prītikaram mama nāthasya kīrtanam ।
 kalyāṇī bata gātheyaṁ laukikī pratibhāti me ॥ 63॥
 eti jīvantamānando naraṁ varṣaśatādapi ।
 rāghavasya harīṇāṁ ca kathamāsītsamāgamah ॥ 64॥

62-64. Saying this, Bharat paused for a moment and once again said to the son of the wind-god (Hanuman), 'After so many long years since he (Lord Sri Ram) had gone to the formidable and wild forest (62), I have at last heard the good news of my dearest Lord whom I have been constantly remembering for all this long. Today it appears that the popular adage providing hope and light to those in despair, to those who are hapless and helpless (63), that 'if one stays alive, then there are chances that one might get happiness some day, even if it may be in a hundred years' is true. Tell me, how did Raghav (Sri Ram) come in contact with you and befriended the monkeys? (64).

तत्त्वमाख्याहि भद्रं ते विश्वसेयं वचस्तव ।
 एवमुक्तोऽथ हनुमान् भरतेन महात्मना ॥ ६५॥
 आचक्षेऽथ रामस्य चरितं कृत्स्नशः क्रमात् ।
 श्रुत्वा तु परमानन्दं भरतो मारुतात्मजात् ॥ ६६॥

tattvamākhyāhi bhadraṁ te viśvaseyaṁ vacastava ।
 evamukto'tha hanumān bharatena mahātmanā ॥ 65॥
 ācacakṣe'tha rāmasya caritaṁ kṛtsnaśaḥ kramāt ।
 śrutvā tu paramānandaṁ bharato mārutātmajāt ॥ 66॥

65-66. Gentleman (bhadraṁ)! Tell me the truth so that I can believe your words.'

When the noble and great Bharat said so, Hanuman narrated to him the entire story of Lord Sri Ram in a chronological order. Hearing this narration from the son of the wind-god (Hanuman), Bharat felt extremely exhilarant and glad¹ (65-66).

[Note—¹When Hanuman narrated the details of the life and time of Lord Ram in the forest, especially after Bharat had met him in Chitrakoot, answered Bharat's query

about how the Lord met Hanuman and befriended the monkeys. The rest of the Lord's account, from Sita's abduction by Ravana till her deliverance after victory of Lord Ram over the demons, filled Bharat with excess of joy and astonishment. He listened to the story very attentively, and was overjoyed to hear that the Lord was hale and hearty after the tribulations and troubles he had to face in the forest.]

आज्ञापयच्छत्रुहणं मुदा युक्तं मुदान्वितः ।
 दैवतानि च यावन्ति नगरे रघुनन्दन ॥ ६७॥
 नानोपहारबलिभिः पूजयन्तु महाधियः ।
 सूता वैतालिकाश्चैव वन्दिनः स्तुतिपाठकाः ॥ ६८॥
 वारमुख्याश्च शतशो निर्यान्त्वद्यैव सङ्घशः ।
 राजदारस्तथामात्याः सेना हस्त्यश्वपत्तयः ॥ ६९॥
 ब्राह्मणाश्च तथा पौरा राजानो ये समागताः ।
 निर्यान्तु राघवस्याद्य द्रष्टुं शशिनिभाननम् ॥ ७०॥

ājñāpayacchatruhaṇaṁ mudā yuktaṁ mudānvitaḥ ।
 daivatāni ca yāvanti nagare raghunandana ॥ 67॥
 nānopahārabalibhiḥ pūjayantu mahādhiyaḥ ।
 sūtā vaiṭālikāścaiva vandinaḥ stutipāṭhakāḥ ॥ 68॥
 vāramukhyāśca śataśo niryāntvadyaiva saṅghaśaḥ ।
 rājadārāstathāmātyāḥ senā hastyāśvapattayaḥ ॥ 69॥
 brāhmaṇāśca tathā paura rājāno ye samāgatāḥ ।
 niryāntu rāghavasyādya draṣṭuṁ śaśinibhānanam ॥ 70॥

67-70. He (Bharat) cheerfully ordered the delighted Shatrughan (his younger brother), 'Oh Raghunandan (a son in the family of king Raghu)! Let the wise Pandits (expert Brahmins) worship all the Gods and patron Deities of the city with different types and varieties of offerings and make sacrifices to them. Suts (professional singers), Vaitaliks (those minstrels who wake up the king early in the morning by singing devotional hymns), Bandijans (royal bards who chant hymns) (67-68), and chief Varangnayyas (professional royal courtesans) should come out of the city in groups of hundreds (i.e. in large numbers) and assemble at the gate of the city to welcome Sri Ram. Besides them, royal household women-folk, ministers, the three wings of the army, consisting of elephants, horses and foot soldiers (69), Brahmins, citizens, and all other kings, knights and subordinate rulers and vassals who are present here at the moment, should also come out of the city to have a glimpse of the moon-like (i.e. attractive, charming, soothing, most sought after, pleasing, pleasantly welcome and auspicious looking) face of Raghav (Sri Ram).' (70).

[Note—Shatrughan had been looking after the day-to-day administrative affairs of the kingdom on behalf of Bharat. While Bharat lived in Nandigram, Shatrughan held court in the city itself. So therefore, Bharat called his younger brother and instructed him to make arrangements to accord a warm welcome to Lord Ram, who was about to arrive back home, at the gates of the city.]

भरतस्य वचः श्रुत्वा शत्रुघ्नपरिचोदिताः ।
 अलञ्चकुश्व नगरिं मुक्तारत्नमयोज्ज्वलैः ॥ ७१॥
 तोरणैश्च पताकाभिर्विचित्राभिरनेकधा ।
 अलङ्कुर्वन्ति वेश्मानि नानाबलिविचक्षणाः ॥ ७२॥

bharatasya vacaḥ śrutvā śatrughnaparicoditāḥ ।
 alañcakruśca nagarīm muktāratnamayojjvalaiḥ ॥ 71॥
 toraṇaiśca patākābhirvicitrābhiranekadhā ।
 alaṅkurvanti veśmāni nānābalivicakṣaṇāḥ ॥ 72॥

71-72. Hearing the words of Bharat, and on instructions of Shatrughan, all the denizens of the city who were experts in beautification and organising decorations, festivities and celebrations of various kinds, got down to their task. They decked up the city elegantly with festoons and buntings studded with bright pearls, gems and jewels, as well as colourful of flags and banners of all kinds. These decorations made the city bear a festive look, and most magnificent to behold (71-72).

निर्यान्ति वृन्दशः सर्वे रामदर्शनलालसाः ।
 हयानां शतसाहस्रं गजानामयुतं तथा ॥ ७३॥
 रथानां दशसाहस्रं स्वर्णसूत्रविभूषितम् ।
 पारमेष्ठीन्युपादाय द्रव्याण्युत्त्वावचानि च ॥ ७४॥

niryānti vṛndaśaḥ sarve rāmadarśanalālasāḥ ।
 hayānām śatasāhasraṁ gajānāmayutaṁ tathā ॥ 73॥
 rathānām daśasāhasraṁ svarṇasūtravibhūṣitam ।
 pārameṣṭhīnyupādāya dravyāṇyuccāvacāni ca ॥ 74॥

73-74. Then all the people began coming out of the city in hordes and assembling on its outskirts with a desire to have a glimpse of Lord Ram as he arrives in the city. They brought with them one lakh horses, ten thousand elephants, and an equal number of chariots decorated with golden reins and harnesses, as well as many other accouterments and paraphernalia indicating that all was fine in the city, and its people were happy and prosperous during the time of the Lord's absence¹ (73-74).

[Note—¹The people turned up in large numbers, in their finest of dresses and brought with them things that would tell Lord Ram that everything was fine in the city as well as its citizens. It was a gesture to accord a warm welcome to the beloved Lord of the people of Ayodhya, to make the Lord feel glad that his subjects are happy and well cared for while he was away. It is like the case when the whole family assembles to greet and welcome a son who had gone out to a foreign country on some work long ago; the welcoming ceremony is arranged as a grand affair to signal to the returning member that not only he is welcome but that everyone is happy at his return.

The pomp and ceremony of the reception accorded to Lord Ram and his companions was not done to show-off the wealth of the city—it is absurd, incredulous and incongruous to even think so because Sri Ram was not an outsider or a guest on a visit, but the King of Ayodhya and the dearest Lord of its citizens. He was not an

outsider king who needed to be impressed by the wealth and prosperity of the city and its inhabitants. It was a token or a symbolic gesture to tell Sri Ram that the city was well-off and did not have to suffer any calamitous event during the period of his absence, and that everything was fine there.

Imagine how sad and heart-broken a king would feel if he returns to his kingdom after a long absence on a campaign to find it gloomy and depressed, with signs that his beloved capital was uncared for during his absence, its citizens poor and deprived of happiness, and the city and the kingdom which he had left so prosperous and booming was now under a cloud of depression and crisis.

Bharat, Shatrughan and the rest of the citizens of Ayodhya made all-out efforts to ensure that the impression which Lord Ram gets upon arrival would be such as to cheer his heart and lift his spirits. Lord Sri Ram must have been worried about Ayodhya, its people, and how they had fared under Bharat. By seeing all those signs from high up in the sky from his Pushpak plane in which he was arriving, these signs of prosperity, jubilation and happiness that accompanied the ceremonial welcome arranged for him must have been most reassuring and heart-warming for the Lord. It was necessary to do this—because Bharat feared that any hint to the contrary might make Sri Ram change his mind, and he might not land in the city at all but go back from the sky itself to some other destination of his choice if he thought that he was not welcome in Ayodhya. If that happened, Bharat would be helplessly watching the plane turn around, and there was nothing that he could do to stop it, and then it would be impossible to know where the Lord goes. Should this unfortunate thing happen, then it would be most disastrous for the kingdom of Aydhya. So therefore, all preparations were made in such a way that the Lord would get a positive signal when he looks down from his plane.

The signs of well-being, prosperity, pomp, circumstance, grandeur and majesty indicating a flourishing and prosperous city which has come out to welcome its monarch with a warm heart and bubbling enthusiasm would ensure that Lord Ram descends to the ground and does not turn away.]

ततस्तु शिबिकारूढा निर्ययू राजयोषितः ।
भरतः पादुके न्यस्य शिरस्येव कृताञ्जलिः ॥ ७५॥
शत्रुघ्नसहितो रामं पादचारेण निर्ययौ ।
तदैव दृश्यते दूरद्विमानं चन्द्रसन्निभम् ॥ ७६॥
पुष्पकं सूर्यसङ्काशं मनसा ब्रह्मनिर्मितम् ।
एतस्मिन् भ्रातरौ वीरौ वैदेह्या रामलक्ष्मणौ ॥ ७७॥
सुग्रीवश्च कपिश्रेष्ठो मन्त्रिभिश्च विभीषणः ।
दृश्यते पश्यत जना इत्याह पवनात्मजः ॥ ७८॥

tatastu śibikārūḍhā nirayayū rājayoṣitaḥ ।
bharataḥ pāduke nyasya śirasyeva kṛtāñjaliḥ ॥ 75॥
śatrughnasahito rāmaṃ pādacāreṇa nirayau ।
tadaiva drśyate dūrādvimānaṃ candrasannibham ॥ 76॥
puṣpakam sūryasaṅkāśaṃ manasā brahmanirmitam ।
etasmin bhrātarau vīrau vaidehyā rāmalakṣmaṇau ॥ 77॥
sugrīvaśca kapiśreṣṭho mantribhiśca vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।

drśyate paśyata janā ityāha pavanātmajah ॥ 78॥

75-78. Behind the citizens followed the ladies of the royal household on palanquins (shoulder carried carriage); then followed Bharat with Sri Ram's sandals placed on his head and the palms of his hands touching each other (in humility and prayerful mode) (75).

Bharat was accompanied by Shatrughan. They went barefoot to meet and welcome Sri Ram. Just about that time, from far away and shining like a full moon (76), the Pushpak plane was sighted in the sky; it dazzled in the sky and resembled a sun in all its splendour. The magnificent Pushpak plane was the brainchild of Brahma, the creator. Seeing it, the son of the wind-god (Hanuman) said, 'Oh look! The two brave brothers Sri Ram and Laxman, along with Vaidehi (Sita), Sugriv, who is the best among the monkeys, and Vibhishan along with his ministers, are seen aboard that plane!' (77-78).

ततो हर्षसमुद्भूतो निःस्वनो दिवमस्पृशत् ।
 स्त्रीबालयुववृद्धानां रामोऽयमिति कीर्तनात् ॥ ७९॥
 रथकुञ्जरवाजिस्था अवतीर्य महीं गताः ।
 ददृशुस्ते विमानस्थं जनाः सोममिवाम्बरे ॥ ८०॥

tato harṣasamudbhūto niḥsvano divamasprśat ।
 strībālayuvavṛddhānāṃ rāmo'yamiti kīrtanāt ॥ 79॥
 rathakuñjaravājisthā avatīrya mahīm gatāḥ ।
 dadṛśuste vimānasthaṃ janāḥ somamivāmbare ॥ 80॥

79-80. Once the plane was sighted in the sky, there was such a thunderous outburst of spontaneous emotions of joy and ecstasy, with everyone, women, children, youths and elderly, shouting euphorically 'this is Sri Ram' all at once in all the directions that the sky reverberated with tumultuous exclamations of applause (79).

Those who were astride chariots, elephants and horses got down and stood on the ground. All of them watched him (Sri Ram) seated in the plane as if they were watching the full moon in the sky, gazing at the Lord, awestruck and enthralled (80).

[Note—Verse nos. 67-80 describe the arrangements made to welcome Lord Ram warmly and enthusiastically in the fields outside the gates of the city of Ayodhya.]

प्राञ्जलिर्भरतो भूत्वा प्रहृष्टो राघवोन्मुखः ।
 ततो विमानाग्रगतं भरतो राघवं मुदा ॥ ८१॥
 ववन्दे प्राणतो रामं मेरुस्थमिव भास्करम् ।
 ततो रामाभ्यनुज्ञातं विमानमपतद्भुवि ॥ ८२॥

prāñjalirbharato bhūtvā prahr̥ṣṭo rāghavonmukhaḥ ।
 tato vimānāgragataṃ bharato rāghavaṃ mudā ॥ 81॥
 vavande praṇato rāmaṃ merusthamiva bhāskaram ।

tato rāmābhyanuññātaṃ vimānamapatadbhuvi ॥ 82॥

81-82. Then Bharat looked up at Raghav (Sri Ram) sitting in the plane, and with an exhilarant and cheerful heart, he bowed to the latter by bringing his hands together so that the palms touched each other as if paying his obeisance to the rising sun on the Sumeru mountain. When Sri Ram observed all this development from the sky, he ordered the plane to land on the ground¹ (81-82).

[Note—¹With reference to verse no. 44 in which Sri Ram had instructed Hanuman to find out how Bharat responds to the news of his arrival, the meaning of verse nos. 81-82 will be clear. Sri Ram stayed up in the sky till the moment Bharat showed clear physical signs of his warmth and readiness to welcome the Lord cheerfully—by bowing his head and holding his hands together so that their palms touch each other. For, if there would have been any hint to the contrary, Sri Ram would have turned away from the sky itself. See note to verse nos. 73-74.

Again, Lord Ram's subtle apprehensions and doubts about the type of reception he would get by Bharat and the citizens of Ayodhya were quite dispelled when sage Bharadwaj had assured him that everything was fine in Ayodhya—apropos: verse nos. 15-19.

Further, it must be noted that though Sri Ram had instructed Hanuman to quickly come back with the news of developments at Ayodhya, the latter was still on the ground with Bharat as is evident from verse nos. 77-78. Perhaps Sri Ram was himself so eager and anxious to meet Bharat and the citizens of Ayodhya that he could not wait till the time Hanuman went back to him at Bharadwaj's hermitage.

From high up in the sky, Lord Ram looked at Hanuman for a signal if everything was okay. Hanuman waved and signaled back to the Lord that there is no cause of any fear or doubt, that there was nothing amiss, and that the Lord should land immediately. As soon as the decks were cleared by Hanuman, and the Lord himself could clearly see that everyone on the ground was cheerfully awaiting his arrival, the Lord instructed the Pushpak plane to descend and land in the field where the citizens had assembled to receive him.]

आरोपितो विमानं तद्भरतः सानुजस्तदा ।

राममासाद्य मुदितः पुनरेवाभ्यवादयत् ॥ ८३॥

समुत्थाय चिराद्दृष्टं भरतं रघुनन्दनः ।

भ्रातरं स्वाङ्कमारोप्य मुदा तं परिष्वजे ॥ ८४॥

āropito vimānaṃ tadbharataḥ sānujastadā ।

rāmamāsādyā muditaḥ punarevābhyavādayat ॥ 83॥

samutthāya cirāddṛṣṭaṃ bharataṃ raghunandanaḥ ।

bhrātaraṃ svāṅkamāropya mudā taṃ pariśvasvaje ॥ 84॥

83-84. Thence, Sri Ram invited both Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) to come on board the plane. Once near Sri Ram, Bharat once again bowed reverentially before him (83).

Seeing Bharat after a long time, Raghunandan (Sri Ram) picked him up in his arms most cheerfully, and embraced him most affectionately (84).

ततो लक्ष्मणमासाद्य वैदेहीं नाम कीर्तयन् ।
 अभ्यवादयत प्रीतो भरतः प्रेमविह्वलः ॥ ८५॥
 सुग्रीवं जाम्बवन्तं च युवराजं तथाङ्गदम् ।
 मैन्दद्विविदनीलांश्च ऋषभं चैव सस्वजे ॥ ८६॥
 सुषेणं च नलं चैव गवाक्षं गन्धमादनम् ।
 शरभं पनसं चैव भरतः परिषस्वजे ॥ ८७॥

tato lakṣmaṇamāsādyā vaidehīm nāma kīrtayan ।
 abhyavādayata prīto bharataḥ premavihvalaḥ ॥ 85॥
 sugrīvaṃ jāmbavantaṃ ca yuvarājaṃ tathāṅgadam ।
 maindadividanīlāṃśca ṛṣabhaṃ caiva sasvaje ॥ 86॥
 suṣeṇaṃ ca nalaṃ caiva gavākṣaṃ gandhamādanam ।
 śarabhaṃ panasaṃ caiva bharataḥ pariśasvaje ॥ 87॥

85-87. Then Bharat—who was overcome and overwhelmed with surging emotions associated with reunion with those who were dearest to his heart, emotions of affection, endearment and love—met Laxman, and then bowed affectionately before Sita while pronouncing his name as a gesture to draw her attention towards him and also to tell her that he is personally welcoming all of them back home (85).

After that, Bharat embraced all those who came with Sri Ram on the plane, such as Sugriv, Jamvant, prince Angad, Maind, Dwivid, Neel, Rishav (86), Sushen, Nal, Gawaksha, Gandhamadan, Sharabh and Panas (87).

[Note—This fact that Bharat had to announce to Sita who he was shows that she was not looking directly at him. More than Sri Ram, it was she who had to suffer such a lot because of him. She also did not look at him because it was an honoured tradition amongst the higher echelons of noble society that chaste ladies kept their eyes low in public. Being surrounded by tens of thousands of eager eyes riveted on the couple, Sita was feeling very shy and bashful under the glare of attention. She was also reluctant and uncertain about Bharat's internal feelings and secret aspects of his mind—she wasn't sure whether he really welcomed them or was he just pretending to be courteous outwardly while being sly and mischievous internally.

Take note that if Sri Ram was even suspicious and wanted to be certain about Bharat's real intentions—as is very obvious from the fact that he invited Bharat on the plane instead of stepping down from it on the ground—then she was after all Bharat's sister-in-law, who would be doubly suspicious of him and his intentions.]

सर्वे ते मानुषं रूपं कृत्वा भरतमाहताः ।
 पप्रच्छुः कुशलं सौम्याः प्रहृष्टाश्च प्लवङ्गमाः ॥ ८८॥
 ततः सुग्रीवमालिङ्ग्य भरतः प्रह भक्तिः ।
 त्वत्सहायेन रामस्य जयोऽभूद्भावणो हतः ॥ ८९॥

sarve te mānuṣaṃ rūpaṃ kṛtvā bharatamāhṛtāḥ ।

papracchuḥ kuśalaṃ saumyāḥ prahr̥ṣṭāśca plavaṅgamāḥ ॥ 88॥
 tataḥ sugrīvamāliṅgya bharataḥ prāha bhaktitaḥ ।
 tvatsahāyena rāmasya jayo'bhūdrāvaṇo hataḥ ॥ 89॥

88-89. All the monkeys had assumed a gentlemanly human form. When they were duly honoured and welcomed by Bharat, they asked about his welfare (88).

Then Bharat embraced Sugriv once again and said to him most thankfully, gratefully and affectionately, 'It is because of your help that Sri Ram has attained victory (in the war) and could get rid of Ravana (89).

त्वमस्माकं चतुर्णां तु भ्राता सुग्रीव पञ्चमः ।
 शत्रुघ्नश्च तदा राममभिवाद्य सलक्ष्मणम् ॥ ९०॥
 सीतायाश्चरणौ पश्चाद्वन्दे विनयान्वितः ।
 रामो मातरमासाद्य विवर्णां शोकविह्वलाम् ॥ ९१॥
 जग्राह पूणतः पादौ मनो मातुः पूसादयन् ।
 कैकेयीं च सुमित्रां च ननामेतरमातरौ ॥ ९२॥

tvamasmākaṃ caturṇāṃ tu bhrātā sugrīva pañcamah ।
 śatrughnaśca tadā rāmamabhivādyā salakṣmaṇam ॥ 90॥
 sītāyāścaraṇau paścādvavande vinayānvitaḥ ।
 rāmo mātaramāsādyā vivarṇāṃ śokavihvalām ॥ 91॥
 jagrāha praṇataḥ pādaū mano mātūḥ prasādayan ।
 kaikeyīṃ ca sumitrāṃ ca nanāmetaramātarau ॥ 92॥

90-92. Hence, you are the fifth brother of the four of us (and I don't have words to thank you enough for your kindness)'.
 After that, Shatrughan bowed before Sri Ram and Laxman (90), and then paid his homage with the greatest of humility and politeness at the feet of Sita.

Then Sri Ram (stepped down from the plane and) went to mother Kaushalya who was very weak, emaciated and confounded due to sorrows, anguish and distress (of separation from the Lord for a long period of fourteen years) (91).

He touched her feet with great humility and politeness which pleased her heart (i.e. the Lord's gestures provided comfort to her tormented heart and mind).

He also bowed before his step mothers Kaikeyi (mother of Bharat) and Sumitra (mother of Laxman) (92).

भरतः पादुके ते तु राघवस्य सुपूजिते ।
 योजयामास रामस्य पादयोर्भक्तिसंयुतः ॥ ९३॥
 राज्यमेतन्न्यासभूतं मया निर्यातितं तव ।
 अद्य मे सफलं जन्म फलितो मे मनोरथः ॥ ९४॥
 यत्पश्यामि समायातमयोध्यां त्वामहं पूजो ।
 कोष्ठागारं बलं कोशं कृतं दशगुणं मया ॥ ९५॥

bharataḥ pāduke te tu rāghavasya supūjite ।
 yojayāmāsa rāmasya pādayorbhaktisaṃyutaḥ ॥ 93॥
 rājyametanñyāsabhūtaṃ mayā niryātitaṃ tava ।
 adya me saphalaṃ janma phalito me manorathaḥ ॥ 94॥
 yatpāśyāmi samāyātamayodhyāṃ tvāmahaṃ prabho ।
 koṣṭhāgāraṃ balaṃ kośaṃ kṛtaṃ daśaguṇaṃ mayā ॥ 95॥

93-95. After that, Bharat returned those sandals, which had been duly worshipped by him (all along these 14 years of exile), back to Sri Ram with the greatest of devotion, respect, honour and humility, and put them back on the Lord's feet (93).

(Then Bharat submitted before Sri Ram—) 'I am handing back to you your kingdom which you had kept with me for safe keeping. I feel that my birth has been successful, and all my desires and wishes have borne fruits.

[To wit, I am glad that I have been successful in living up to my reputation of a good and virtuous brother; I am also happy that I have looked after the kingdom well during your long absence. I am fortunate that no misfortunes befell us, and that no mischance occurred to derail my noble intentions. I thank my Stars and the Creator that they stood by me during the testing times of my life, and I could stand up and welcome you back home with a proud and cheerful face.] (94).

Oh Lord, during your absence from Ayodhya, by your grace, glory and majesty, I have been able to increase by ten times the stock of food-grains, the army, and the treasury¹ (95).

[Note—¹Bharat told Lord Ram that he has lived up to his expectations by taking good care of the kingdom. Here he is briefing the Lord about the overall good picture of the kingdom's economy and defense preparedness.]

त्वत्तेजसा जगन्नाथ पालयस्व पुरं स्वकम् ।
 इति ब्रुवाणं भरतं दृष्ट्वा सर्वे कपीश्वराः ॥ ९६॥
 मुमुचुर्नेत्रजं तोयं प्रशंसुर्मुदान्विताः ।
 ततो रामः प्रहृष्टात्मा भरतं स्वाङ्कगं मुदा ॥ ९७॥
 ययौ तेन विमानेन भरतस्याश्रमं तदा ।
 अवरुह्य तदा रामो विमानाग्र्यान्महीतलम् ॥ ९८॥
 अब्रवीत्पुष्पकं देवो गच्छ वैश्रवणं वह ।
 अनुगच्छानुजानामि कुबेरं धनपालकम् ॥ ९९॥

tvattejasā jagannātha pālayasva puram svakam ।
 iti bruvāṇaṃ bharataṃ dr̥ṣṭvā sarve kapīśvarāḥ ॥ 96॥
 mumucurnetrajam toyam praśaśamsurmudānvitāḥ ।
 tato rāmaḥ prahr̥ṣṭātmā bharataṃ svāṅkagaṃ mudā ॥ 97॥
 yayau tena vimānena bharatasyāśramaṃ tadā ।
 avaruhya tadā rāmo vimānāgr̥yānmahītalam ॥ 98॥
 abravītpuṣpakam devo gaccha vaiśravaṇaṃ vaha ।
 anugacchānujānāmi kuberaṃ dhanapālakam ॥ 99॥

96-99. Oh Lord of the world (*jagannātha*)! Now take care of your city yourself (and relieve me of my responsibilities).'

When the chief amongst the monkeys heard and saw Bharat say this (96), they praised him with tears of joy rolling down their eyes¹.

Then Sri Ram, most cheerfully and with a delighted heart, seated Bharat on his lap (i.e. by his side) (97), and went to his hermitage (at Nandigram) in the plane. There, he got down from Pushpak which was the best amongst the aerial vehicles (98).

Then he said to Pushpak, 'Go, I order you, go back to your master Kuber, the patron god of wealth (and the treasurer of the god's treasury), and resume your duties to him by being his vehicle. Now onwards, you must follow his instructions.'² (99).

[Note—¹One just needs to close one's eyes and imagine the touching scene of that moment to properly enjoy the heart warming moments of reunion between two loving, affectionate and inseparable brothers whose affections for each other stood unscarred against the acid test of time that was imposed upon them by the merciless nature of fate. It was such a poignant moment soaked in love and affection brimming over from the heart of Bharat that it made all the companions of Lord Ram weep and become overwhelmed with emotions.

²The Pushpak plane had first landed in the field where the citizens had assembled to welcome the Lord. Then Lord Ram took Bharat and Shatrughan on board and instructed the plane to go to Nandigram, the place a little away from the gates of the city, where Bharat had established his hermitage. It was here that the Lord ordered Pushpak to retire home to Kuber.

The obvious implication of this is that Lord Ram and his party would enter Ayodhya on foot, albeit on chariots and horses, in a formal ceremonial procession leading out from Nandigram. This was a gesture by Lord Ram to retrace the footsteps of his dear brother Bharat from his symbolic exile there, and accompany him home walking together, literally hand-in-hand.]

रामो वसिष्ठस्य गुरोः पदाम्बुजं नत्वा यथा देवगुरोः शतक्रतुः ।
दत्त्वा महार्हासनमुत्तमं गुरोरुपाविवेशाथ गुरोः समीपतः ॥ १००॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
चतुर्दशः सर्गः ॥ १४॥

rāmo vasiṣṭhasya guroḥ padāmbujam natvā yathā devaguroḥ śatakratuḥ ।
dattvā mahārḥāsanamuttamaṁ gurorupāviveśātha guroḥ samīpataḥ ॥ 100॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmaramāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
caturdaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 14॥

100. Lord Sri Ram bowed his head at the lotus-like feet of his Guru, sage Vashistha, just like Indra does to the Guru of Gods (Brihaspati). He offered the Guru a most excellent seat (that was reserved for senior moral preceptor of the royal family, a seat

which was better than that reserved for the king himself), and himself sat besides him (100).

Thus ends Canto 14 of Yuddha Kand, narrating the discourse Lord Shiva gave to his divine consort goddess Uma.

(iii) Sub-section 21.2.3: Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yudha Kand, Canto 15, verse nos. 1-50, 70-75:

॥पञ्चदशः सर्गः ॥
 श्रीमहादेव उवाच ।
 ततस्तु कैकयीपुत्रो भरतो भक्तिसंयुतः ।
 शिरस्यञ्जलिमाधाय ज्येष्ठं भ्रातरमब्रवीत् ॥ १॥
 माता मे सत्कृता राम दत्तं राज्यं त्वया मम ।
 ददामि तत्ते च पुनर्यथा त्वमददा मम ॥ २॥

॥pañcadaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥
 śrīmahādeva uvāca ।
 tatastu kaikayīputro bharato bhaktisaṃyutaḥ ।
 śirasyañjalimādhāya jyeṣṭhaṃ bhrātaramabravīt ॥ 1॥
 mātā me satkṛtā rāma dattaṃ rājyaṃ tvayā mama ।
 dadāmi tatte ca punaryathā tvamadadā mama ॥ 2॥

1-2. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! Then Kaikeyi's son Bharat said submissively and most respectfully, with a bowed head and palms of the hands touching each other, to his elder brother (Sri Ram): 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! By giving the reign of the kingdom to me, the word of my mother has been honoured by you (i.e. her wishes have been fulfilled inasmuch as you have made me rule the kingdom for so long as its de-facto king).

Now, the way you had given it to me, I am giving it back to you with the same honour.' (2).

इत्युक्त्वा पादयोर्भक्त्या साष्टाङ्गं प्रणिपत्य च ।
 बहुधा प्रार्थयामास कैकेय्या गुरुणा सह ॥ ३॥
 तथेति प्रतिजग्राह भरताद्राज्यमीश्वरः ।
 मायामाश्रित्य सकलां नरचेष्टामुपागतः ॥ ४॥

ityuktvā pādayorbhaktyā sāṣṭāṅgaṃ praṇipatya ca ।
 bahudhā prārthayāmāsa kaikeyyā guruṇā saha ॥ 3॥
 tatheti pratijagrāha bharatādrājyamiśvaraḥ ।
 māyāmāśritya sakalāṃ naraceṣṭāmupāgataḥ ॥ 4॥

3-4. Saying this, Bharat showed respects to Sri Ram by prostrating himself before the latter's feet and pleaded before him (or requested him again and again), accompanied by Kaikeyi¹ and his Guru (Vashistha), to accept the crown (3).

Then, saying 'alright', he (Sri Ram) accepted the kingdom from Bharat in order to live up to the role of a good human being, a form which he had willingly assumed using the medium (or tool) of his Maya (i.e. the powers of creating delusions that the Supreme Being possesses)¹ (4).

[Note—¹Verse no. 3 clearly shows that Kaikeyi had joined her son to request Sri Ram to accept the crown, thereby formally removing any doubts and misgivings in his mind.

²The idea here is that though the primary purpose of eliminating the scourge of the evil demons had been achieved, Lord Ram, the Supreme Being in a human form, decided however to continue to act in his role of a good human being by accepting the crown of Ayodhya and staying back on earth for some more time till death would help him to wind up his acts as a human being in the normal course of time, and in accordance with the Laws of Nature. The Lord did not show any haste in making his exit from the mortal gross world once his main objective was accomplished, which he could have done if he had so wished.]

स्वाराज्यानुभवो यस्य सुखज्ञानैकरूपिणः ।
निरस्तातिशयानन्दरूपिणः परमात्मनः ॥ ५॥
मानुषेण तु राज्येन किं तस्य जगदीशितुः ।
यस्य भ्रूभङ्गमात्रेण त्रिलोकी नश्यति क्षणात् ॥ ६॥

svārājyānubhavo yasya sukhajñānaikarūpiṇaḥ ।
nirastātīśayānandarūpiṇaḥ paramātmanaḥ ॥ 5॥
mānuṣeṇa tu rājyena kiṃ tasya jagadīśituḥ ।
yasya bhrūbhaṅgamātreṇa trilokī naśyati kṣaṇāt ॥ 6॥

5-6. He (Sri Ram as the supreme Brahman) enjoys the eternal kingdom of the heavens; he is an embodiment of bliss, peace and tranquility as well as of enlightenment, wisdom and pure and truthful knowledge; he is free from any having any sort of desire or yearning for pleasure pertaining to the gratification of the sense organs and of the materialistic world; he is an image of supreme bliss, happiness, joy, contentedness, peace and tranquility; he is the supreme Soul (the all-pervading, macrocosmic Soul and pure cosmic Consciousness) personified (5); and he is the Lord of the entire creation.

This said, what has he to do with an ordinary kingdom in this gross and perishable world when he is the Lord of the heaven and the whole creation? The Lord whose mere glance can destroy all the three divisions of the world (such as heavens or the celestial world, the terrestrial or the mundane gross world on earth, and the nether world)—indeed it is a matter of great wonder that the same Lord would willingly consent to accept to rule a humble kingdom of mortal creatures (i.e. the kingdom of Ayodhya)! (6).

यस्यानुग्रहमात्रेण भवन्त्याखण्डलाश्रियः ।
 लीलासृष्टमहासृष्टेः कियदेतद्रमापतेः ॥ ७॥
 तथापि भजतां नित्यं कामपूरविधित्सया ।
 लीलामानुषदेहेन सर्वमप्यनुवर्तते ॥ ८॥

yasyānugrahamātreṇa bhavantyākhaṇḍalaśriyaḥ ।
 līlāsṛṣṭamahāsrṣṭeḥ kiyadetadramāpateḥ ॥ 7॥
 tathāpi bhajatām nityam kāmāpūravīdhitsayā ।
 līlāmānuṣadehena sarvamāpyanuvartate ॥ 8॥

7-8. The king of Gods (Indra) acquires and retains his control over wealth, fame, majesty, grandeur and glory of the whole world by virtue of his (the Lord Sri Ram's) grace, benevolence, beneficence, benediction and munificence. He (Sri Ram) has created this massive and marvellous creation as if it were a game, i.e. without any trouble, any exertion or any effort, almost playful as if it was for the sake of his enjoyment by using his cosmic powers to create massive delusions and creativity.

This being the case, what importance does this worldly kingdom of Ayodhya has for him (that he would long to rule it by becoming its king)? (7).

Still, just to satisfy or fulfill the desires and wishes of his ardent devotees and to do their tasks for them (which they are unable to do themselves—such as killing their tormentor demons), he acts like an ordinary human being by assuming an illusionary form of a man (which is not his real form, for his real form is that of the Cosmic Consciousness that is revealed in the form of the Supreme Being) (8).

[Note—The main idea of these two verses is to stress that Lord Ram accepted the crown of the kingdom of Ayodhya not because he liked to become a king and enjoy all the privileges and pleasures that accompany it, for he was the Supreme Lord of the whole world, the ruler of the Cosmos, yet he decided to accept it in order to satisfy the wishes of his devotees who liked him to stay amongst them for some time more before going back to his kingdom in the heaven.

Remember: Lord Ram was a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the heavens. All the gods were junior to him. Compared to the majestic kingdom of heaven, the worldly kingdom of Ayodhya was nothing but a speck of sand on the beach of the vast ocean symbolizing this creation.]

ततः शत्रुघ्नवचनान्निपुणः श्मश्रुकृन्तकः
 सम्भाराश्चाभिषेकार्थमानीता राघवस्य हि ॥ ९॥
 पूर्वं तु भरते स्नाते लक्ष्मणे च महात्मनि ।
 सुग्रीवे वानरेन्द्रे च राक्षसेन्द्रे विभीषणे ॥ १०॥

tataḥ śatrughnavacanānnipuṇaḥ śmaśrukṛntakaḥ
 sambhārāścābhiṣekārthamānītā rāghavasya hi ॥ 9॥
 pūrvaṁ tu bharate snāte lakṣmaṇe ca mahātmani ।
 sugrīve vānarendre ca rākṣasendre vibhīṣaṇe ॥ 10॥

9-10. Then, on the instructions of Shatrughan, an expert barber was summoned, and all the required paraphernalia and accoutrements needed for Raghav's (Sri Ram's) coronation were collected (9).

First Bharat and then the great soul Laxman had a bath, followed by the king of monkeys, Sugriv, and king of demons, Vibhishan (10).

विशोधितजटः स्नातश्चित्माल्यानुलेपनः ।
महार्हवसनोपेतस्तस्थौ तत्र श्रिया ज्वलन् ॥ ११॥
प्रतिकर्म च रामस्य लक्ष्मणश्च महामतिः ।
काश्यामास भरतः सीताया राजयोषितः ॥ १२॥

viśodhitajaṭaḥ snātaścitraṁmālyānulepanaḥ ।
mahārhasanopetastasthau tatra śriyā jvalan ॥ 11॥
pratikarma ca rāmasya lakṣmaṇaśca mahāmatih ।
kārayāmāsa bharataḥ sītāyā rājayoṣitaḥ ॥ 12॥

11-12. When his matted hairs were cut and trimmed, he (Lord Sri Ram) took his formal bath and adorned himself with multi-coloured garlands and necklaces; he smeared his body with fragrances and scented ointments, and put on excellent garments and ceremonial robes. [To wit, Lord Ram prepared himself for the ceremony to anoint him as the King of Ayodhya by taking a bath, applying fragrances on his body, and adorning himself with necessary garments and jewelry that are suitable for such occasions of state.]

He presented a most magnificent view, a sight that was glorious, elegant and majestic, marked by his divine beauty, his matchless glamour and his enchanting presence (that effused radiance and splendour no less than that of a sun) (11).

The great Laxman and Bharat helped Sri Ram deck himself up, while the royal women of the household helped Sita to decorate herself (12).

महार्हवस्तूभरणैरलञ्चकुः सुमध्यमाम् ।
ततो वानरपत्नीनां सर्वासामेव शोभना ॥ १३॥
अकाशयत कौसल्या प्रहृष्टा पुत्रवत्सला ।
ततः स्यन्दनमादाय शत्रुघ्नवचनात्सुधीः ॥ १४॥
सुमन्त्रः सूर्यसङ्काशं योजयित्वाग्रतः स्थितः ।
आरुरोह रथं रामः सत्यधर्मपरायणः ॥ १५॥

mahārhasastrābharaṇairalañcakruḥ sumadhyamām ।
tato vānarapatnīnāṁ sarvāsāmeva śobhanā ॥ 13॥
akārayata kausalyā prahrṣṭā putravatsalā ।
tataḥ syandanamādāya śatrughnavacanātsudhīḥ ॥ 14॥
sumantraḥ sūryasaṅkāśaṁ yojayitvāgrataḥ sthitaḥ ।
āruroha rathaṁ rāmaḥ satyadharmaparāyaṇaḥ ॥ 15॥

13-15. They decorated that auspicious and charming lady (Sita) with different types of priceless and magnificent clothes and royal robes, as well as ornaments studded with gems and jewels of all kinds.

After that, the cheerfully delighted Kaushalya (mother of Lord Ram), who was affectionate and fond of her son, decorated and honoured all the wives of the monkeys (who had come with their husbands in the plane)¹.

Just about that time, at the instructions of Shatrughan, a wonderful royal chariot (13-14), which was as dazzling, spectacular and splendid as the sun, was harnessed and brought by the most wise Sumantra (the chief minister of the kingdom) and placed in front of them. The most honourable, truthful, righteous and virtuous Lord Sri Ram got onto it (15).

[Note—¹This statement clearly means that when the Pushpak plane made a brief stopover at Kishkindha, Lord Ram allowed Sugriv to take on board some selected ladies of his royal household—apropos: verse no. 8 of Canto 14. These female monkeys were the wives of those chief commanders of the monkey army who were already on the plane, and their names have been mentioned in verse nos. 86-86 of Canto 14 hereinbefore.]

सुग्रीवो युवराजश्च हनुमांश्च विभीषणः ।
स्नात्वा दिव्याम्बरधरा दिव्याभरणभूषिताः ॥ १६॥
राममन्वीयुरग्रे च रथाश्वगजवाहनाः ।
सुग्रीवपत्न्यः सीता च ययुर्यानैः पुरं महत् ॥ १७॥

sugrīvo yuvarājaśca hanumāṁśca vibhīṣaṇaḥ ।
snātvā divyāambaradharā divyābharaṇabhūṣitāḥ ॥ 16॥
rāmamanvīyuragre ca rathāśvagajavāhanāḥ ।
sugrīvapatnyaḥ sītā ca yayuryānaih puram mahat ॥ 17॥

16-17. Sugriv, the crown prince (Angad), Hanuman and Vibhishan—all had a bath, adorned themselves with beautiful clothes, robes and ornaments (16), got on board chariots, or rode horses and elephants, and went alongside Sri Ram in the procession that formed. Sugriv's wives and Sita rode shoulder mounted carriages (palanquins). The group went towards the large city (of Ayodhya) from Nandigram¹ (17).

[Note—These preparations were done at Nandigram, the place where Bharat had been living for the last fourteen years. So therefore, when Lord Ram entered the gates of the city of Ayodhya, he did not do so as an exiled prince returning home on foot, tired, weary, haggard and unkempt, but as a great king returning triumphantly after some successful campaign. An uproarious and tumultuous formal form of ceremonial welcome was accorded to this royal procession as it neared and then entered the city gates.]

वज्रपाणिर्यथा देवैर्हरिताश्वरथे स्थितः ।
पूययौ रथमास्थाय तथा रामो महत्पुरम् ॥ १८॥
सारथ्यं भरतश्चक्रे रत्नदण्डं महाद्युतिः ।

श्वेतातपत्रं शत्रुघ्नो लक्ष्मणो व्यजनं दधे ॥ १९॥

vajrapāṇiriyathā devairharitāśvarathe sthitaḥ ।
prayayau rathamāsthāya tathā rāmo mahatpuram ॥ 18॥
sārathyaṃ bharataścakre ratnadaṇḍaṃ mahādyutiḥ ।
śvetātapatram śatrughno lakṣmaṇo vyajanaṃ dadhe ॥ 19॥

18-19. Just like the Lord who holds the Bajra (i.e. Indra, the king of Gods) rides a chariot with green horses and goes somewhere in the company of Gods, Lord Sri Ram too proceeded to his great and renowned city surrounded by his retinue of attendants that constituted his friends, the monkeys and the demon ministers, his own brothers (Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan), the ministers and courtiers of the kingdom, as well his Guru Vasistha) (18).

The most glorious, cheerful and radiant Bharat became his charioteer; Shatrughan held the ceremonial white umbrella with its rod studded with gems and jewels; while Laxman held the hand-held fan¹ (19).

[Note—¹These verses describe the scene wherein Lord Ram is sitting on a high seat on the royal chariot taking him into the city. Bharat assumed the role of the charioteer, Shatrughan held the royal umbrella over the Lord's head, and Laxman waved the fan before the Lord. The last two, the umbrella and the fan, are marks of royalty.

Just as a king is surrounded by his courtiers and knights, the chariot of Lord Ram was flanked by his friends from Lanka and Kishkindha, as well as by ministers, courtiers and the chief priest of his own kingdom.]

चामरं च समीपस्थो न्यवीजयदरिन्दमः ।
शशिपूकाशं त्वपरं जग्राहासुरनायकः ॥ २०॥
दिविजैः सिद्धसङ्घैश्च ऋषिभिर्दिव्यदर्शनैः ।
स्तूयमानस्य रामस्य शुश्रुवे मधुरध्वनिः ॥ २१॥

cāmaraṃ ca samīpastho nyavījayadarindamaḥ ।
śaśiprakāśaṃ tvaparaṃ jagrāhāsuranāyakaḥ ॥ 20॥
divijaiḥ siddhasaṅghaiśca ṛṣibhirdivyadarśanaiḥ ।
stūyamānasya rāmasya śuśruve madhuradhvaniḥ ॥ 21॥

20-21. The vanquisher of enemies (Sugriv) on one side, and the king of demons (Vibhishan) on the other side of Sri Ram, swayed the royal whisk which was beautiful, attractive and radiant like a full magnificent moon (20).

At that time a cacophony of sweet and pleasant voices of the Gods, as well as of the many Siddhas (mystics), sages, seers and hermits who had assembled there, were heard; they were all singing the majestic glories and praising the virtues of Lord Ram aloud in adulatory terms. They had all assembled to have a divine and august view of Sri Ram (as well as to attend his coronation ceremony) (21).

मानुषं रूपमास्थाय वानरा गजवाहनाः ।

भरीशङ्खनिनादैश्च मृदङ्गपणवानकैः ॥ २२॥
 प्रययौ राघवश्रेष्ठस्तां पुरीं समलङ्कृताम् ।
 ददृशुस्ते समायान्तं राघवं पुखासिनः ॥ २३॥

mānuṣaṃ rūpamāsthāya vānarā gajavāhanāḥ ।
 bherīśaṅkhaninādaiśca mṛdaṅgapaṇavānakaiḥ ॥ 22॥
 prayayau rāghavaśreṣṭhastāṃ purīm samalaṅkṛtām ।
 dadṛśuste samāyāntaṃ rāghavaṃ puravāsinaḥ ॥ 23॥

22-23. The monkeys assumed a human form and rode astride elephants. Amidst the clamour of various musical instruments, such as kettledrums, conch shells, drums and tumbrels, and different types of small drums called Panawa¹ etc. (22), Sri Ram—who is the best in the illustrious family of king Raghu of Ayodhya—made his auspicious entry into the city which resonated with thunderous sounds made by these musical instruments played enthusiastically to welcome him.

The denizens of the city watched enthralled and in ecstasy as Raghav (Sri Ram) entered the city triumphantly (23).

[Note—¹A “Panawa” is a two sided oblong drum which is hung from the neck of the singer with light strings and is beaten on both its sides by either the fingers of the player of the drum, or by short, light sticks to play the sound of music.]

दूर्वादलश्यामतनुं महार्हकिरीटरत्नाभरणाञ्चिताङ्गम् ।
 आरक्तकञ्जायतलोचनान्तं दृष्ट्वा ययुर्मोदमतीव पुण्याः ॥ २४॥
 विचित्ररत्नाञ्चितसूत्रनद्धपीताम्बरं पीनभुजान्तरालम् ।
 अनर्घ्यमुक्ताफलदिव्यहारैः विरोचमानं रघुनन्दनं प्रजाः ॥ २५॥
 सुग्रीवमुख्यैर्हरिभिः प्रशान्तैः निषेव्यमाणं रवितुल्यभासम् ।
 कस्तूरिकाचन्दनलिप्तागात्रं निवीतकल्पद्रुमपुष्पमालम् ॥ २६॥

dūrvādalaśyāmatanuṃ mahārhakirīṭaratnābharaṇāñcitāṅgam ।
 āraktakañjāyatalocanāntaṃ drṣṭvā yayurmodamatīva puṇyāḥ ॥ 24॥
 vicitraratnāñcitasūtranaddhapītāmbaraṃ pīnabhujāntarālam ।
 anarghyamuktāphaladivyaḥaraiḥ virocamaṇaṃ raghunandanaṃ prajāḥ ॥ 25॥
 sugrīvamukhyairharibhiḥ praśāntaiḥ niṣevyamāṇaṃ ravitulyabhāsam ।
 kastūrikācandanaliptagātraṃ nivītakalpadrūmapuṣṣamālam ॥ 26॥

24-26. The righteous and noble citizens watched the dark complexion of Lord Sri Ram's body which resembled the colour of Durba (a kind of dark green grass called Agrostis Linearis). The Lord had a very precious crown on his head; he wore ornaments studded with priceless gems; he had broad eyes with a light pink shade that resembled pink-coloured petals of a lotus flower (24).

The Lord was attired in a magnificent Pitambar (a yellow body-wrapping garment made of silk that is worn by Lord Vishnu); this Pitambar was decorated with multi-coloured jewels and gems, and it was embroidered by threads made of gold.

The Lord had a broad chest which was decorated with garlands and necklaces made of beautiful pearls.

He was served by Sugriv and other chief monkeys who were all calm and poised.

The Lord looked as splendid, majestic, radiant and majestic as the sun. His body was rubbed by a fragrant paste made from sandalwood and musk. He wore a magnificent garland made of the flowers of the Kalpa tree (*Nyctanthes Arbortristis*; the Kalpa tree is the celestial tree of the Gods).

The subjects of the kingdom were exceptionally jubilant, exhilarated and euphoric on seeing Raghunandan (Sri Ram) back in Ayodhya (25-26).

श्रुत्वा स्त्रियो राममुपागतं मुदा प्रहर्षवेगोत्कलिताननश्रियः ।
अपास्य सर्वं गृहकार्यमाहितं हर्म्याणि चैवारुरुहुः स्वलङ्कृताः ॥ २७॥

śrutvā striyo rāmamupāgataṁ mudā praharṣavegotkalitānanaśriyaḥ ।
apāsyā sarvaṁ gṛhakāryamāhitaṁ harmyāṇi caivāruruhuḥ svalaṅkṛtāḥ ॥ 27॥

27. When the women folk heard of the arrival of Sri Ram, they were very happy and extremely delighted so much so that their faces lit up with joy. They immediately left their routine household chores, decorated themselves in all their finery, and climbed to the terrace and attics of their homes (to have a glimpse of the Lord as he rode inside the city in the ceremonial procession described herein above) (27).

दृष्ट्वा हरिं सर्वदृगुत्सवाकृतिं पुष्पैः किरन्त्यः स्मितशोभिताननाः ।
दृग्भिः पुनर्नेत्रमनोरसायनं स्वानन्दमूर्तिं मनसाभिरेभिरे ॥ २८॥

dr̥ṣṭvā hariṁ sarvadr̥gutsavākṛtiṁ puṣpaiḥ kirantyaḥ smitaśobhitānanāḥ ।
dṛgbhiḥ punarnetramanorasāyanam svānandamūrtiṁ manasābhirebhire ॥ 28॥

28. Seeing Hari (Sri Ram), who provided happiness, bliss, peace and joy to all those present on the occasion, they (the women folk of the city) showered flowers on him as they smiled cheerfully at the sight of their beloved Lord. Then they took that image (i.e. the magnificently charming, bewitching and elegant view of Sri Ram)—which provided happiness, contentedness and bliss to the eyes and heart of all who saw him—inside their hearts through the path of their eyes, and then repeatedly embraced that image internally in a symbolic manner. [That is, they enshrined the image of Sri Ram in their hearts and worshipped the Lord there as their deity.]¹ (28).

[Note—¹The women folk were so charmed and enthralled by the lovable image of their beloved Lord Ram that though they could not go out on the streets to embrace him as their male counterparts were free to do, yet they did the next best thing—they had their view of the charming image of Lord Ram till their eyes were full of it, and then closing the eyes they etched this magnificent image permanently inside their hearts so that they could view it whenever they wished by simply closing their eyes and shutting out all other images of the external world. If they had their way, they would have rushed out to actually embrace Lord Ram, but since this would be too

immodest a thing to do and impractical also, so this was the best alternative idea they devised to compensate for it.]

रामः स्मितस्निग्धदृशा पूजास्तथा पश्यन् पूजानाथ इवापरः प्रभुः ।
शनैर्जगामाथ पितुः स्वलङ्कृतं गृहं महेन्द्रालयसन्निभं हरिः ॥ २९॥

rāmaḥ smitasnigdhadr̥śā prajāstathā paśyan prajānātha ivāparaḥ prabhuḥ ।
śanairjagāmātha pituḥ svalaṅkṛtaṁ gr̥haṁ mahendrālayasannibhaṁ hariḥ ॥
29॥

29. Sri Ram smiled most sweetly and enchantingly, and watched his subjects with pleasant bewitching glances to extend his grace and charm over all of them, and make them feel happy and joyful that their Lord loves them all, individually and collectively.

Lord Ram now was like an image of Lord Vishnu himself; he resembled the Prajapati (here meaning the Lord who takes care of his subjects, a reference to the Creator Brahma).

He slowly moved towards the palace of his father (king Dasrath) which was like the palace of Indra, and was magnificently decorated for this auspicious occasion (29).

प्रविश्य वेश्मान्तरसंस्थितो मुदा रामो ववन्दे चरणौ स्वमातुः ।
क्रमेण सर्वाः पितृयोषितः प्रभुः ननाम भक्त्या रघुवंशकेतुः ॥ ३०॥

praviśya veśmāntarasamsthito mudā rāmo vavande caraṇau svamātuḥ ।
krameṇa sarvāḥ pitryōṣitaḥ prabhuḥ nanāma bhaktyā raghuvaṁśaketuḥ ॥ 30॥

30. Once inside the palace, Sri Ram showed respect to his own mother (Kaushalya) by bowing at her feet. Then the most exalted of the illustrious family of King Raghu (i.e. Sri Ram) showed similar respects to his other step-mothers (Kaikeyi and Sumitra) with due honour, politeness and humility (30).

ततो भरतमाहेदं रामः सत्यपराक्रमः ।
सर्वसम्पत्समायुक्तं मम मन्दिरमुत्तमम् ॥ ३१॥
मित्राय वानरेन्द्राय सुग्रीवाय प्रदीयताम् ।
सर्वेभ्यः सुखवासार्थं मन्दिराणि प्रकल्पय ॥ ३२॥

tato bharatamāhedam rāmaḥ satyaparākramaḥ ।
sarvasampatsamayuktaṁ mama mandiramuttamam ॥ 31॥
mitrāya vānarendrāya sugrīvāya pradīyatām ।
sarvebhyaḥ sukhavāsārthaṁ mandirāṇi prakalpaya ॥ 32॥

31-32. Then Sri Ram, who was most righteous, truthful, glorious and victorious, said to Bharat, 'Allot my personal palace, which is well furnished and provided for (31), to my friend Sugriv, the king of monkeys.

Likewise, show comfortable palaces to others as well.' (32).

रामेणैवं समादिष्टो भरतश्च तथाकरोत् ।
 उवाच च महातेजाः सुग्रीवं राघवानुजः ॥ ३३॥
 राघवस्याभिषेकार्थं चतुःसिन्धुजलं शुभम् ।
 आनेतुं प्रेषयस्वाशु दूतांस्त्वरितविक्रमान् ॥ ३४॥

rāmeṇaivam samādiṣṭo bharataśca tathākarot ।
 uvāca ca mahātejāḥ sugrīvaṁ rāghavānujaḥ ॥ 33॥
 rāghavasyābhiṣekārthaṁ catuḥsindhujalaṁ śubham ।
 ānetuṁ preṣayasvāśu dūtāṁstvaritavikramān ॥ 34॥

33-34. Bharat did as Sri Ram had instructed him. Then the most glorious and radiant younger brother of Raghav (i.e. Bharat) said to Sugriv (33): 'Send swift messengers to bring the holy, sanctified and auspicious waters from the four oceans for the purpose of coronation ceremony of Raghav (Sri Ram)'¹. (34).

Note—¹Why did Bharat ask Sugriv to send messengers to bring holy waters from far away oceans instead of sending his own messengers of the kingdom for this errand?

Well, the answer is simple and obvious: Bharat knew that the members of the monkey race were very swift and agile as far as going to far away places was concerned, as compared to human beings. These monkeys could traverse through dense forests and climb mountains and hills easily; they could jump, hop, skip and swing across trees, rivers, ravines, valleys and other obstacles with the greatest of ease as they were accustomed to it as forest dwellers, something humans couldn't do.

There were some especially talented members in the group, one obvious example was Hanuman, who could even fly in the sky and perform other formidable deeds that no human would be able to do. Further, by this time Bharat had been acquainted of the way these monkeys and bears had been dispatched by Sugriv to all corners of the world to search for Sita, and how they had managed to successfully find her in the far away island kingdom of Lanka.

Besides this, the monkeys were all well acquainted with far away places and their geography because they lived in forests and the wild spread all over the world, something that would make it easier for them to go and bring water from these rare places, most of them unknown and inaccessible to the messengers of Ayodhya.

All these factors added up in favour of the monkeys, and so Bharat requested Sugriv to dispatch some competent fellow to bring the waters.]

प्रेषयामास सुग्रीवो जाम्बवन्तं मरुत्सुतम् ।
 अङ्गदं च सुषेणं च ते गत्वा वायुवेगतः ॥ ३५॥
 जलपूर्णान् शातकुम्भकलशांश्च समानयन् ।
 आनीतं तीर्थसलिलं शत्रुघ्नो मन्त्रिभिः सह ॥ ३६॥

राघवस्याभिषेकार्थं वसिष्ठाय न्यवेदयत् ।
 ततस्तु प्रयतो वृद्धो वसिष्ठो ब्राह्मणैः सह ॥ ३७॥
 रामं रत्नमये पीठे ससीतं संन्यवेशयत् ।
 वसिष्ठो वामदेवश्च जाबालिर्गौतमस्तथा ॥ ३८॥
 वाल्मीकिश्च तथा चक्रुः सर्वे रामाभिषेचनम् ।
 कुशाग्रतुलसीयुक्तपुण्यगन्धजलैर्मुदा ॥ ३९॥

preṣayāmāsa sugrīvo jāmbavantam marutsutam ।
 aṅgadam ca suṣeṇam ca te gatvā vāyuvegataḥ ॥ 35॥
 jalapūrṇān śātakumbhakalaśāṃśca samānayan ।
 ānītam tīrthasalilam śatrughno mantribhiḥ saha ॥ 36॥
 rāghavasyābhiṣekārtham vasiṣṭhāya nyavedayat ।
 tatastu prayato vṛddho vasiṣṭho brāhmaṇaiḥ saha ॥ 37॥
 rāmaṃ ratnamaye pīṭhe sasītam saṃnyaveśayat ।
 vasiṣṭho vāmadevaśca jābāligautamastathā ॥ 38॥
 vālmīkiśca tathā cakruḥ sarve rāmābhiṣecanam ।
 kuśāgratulasīyuktapūṇyagandhajalairmudā ॥ 39॥

35-39. Then Sugriv sent Jamvant, Maruti (Hanuman), Angad and Sushen for this purpose. They went thither with the speed and great swiftness, like that of the wind (35), and brought the requisitioned water in golden pots.

Shatrughan, accompanied by the ministers, gave that sanctified water brought from different holy places (36) to Vashistha (the royal priest) for the purpose of performance of the ritual for Lord Sri Ram's coronation.

Then, accompanied by Brahmins, the self restrained and aged Vashistha (37) seated Sri Ram and Sita on a gem-studded throne.

Sages Vashistha, Vamdeo, Jabali, Gautam, Valmiki, and all other sages and seers who had assembled on the auspicious occasion, most cheerfully and delightedly anointed Lord Sri Ram on the throne of Ayodhya as its King by sprinkling the sanctified, holy and perfumed water, in which floated the leaves of the holy Tulsi (Basil) plant, on him with the help of a brush made of soft blades of the Kush grass (amid chanting of holy Mantras from the scriptures) (39).

अभ्यषिञ्चन् रघुश्रेष्ठं वासवं वसवो यथा ।
 ऋत्विग्भिर्ब्राह्मणैः श्रेष्ठैः कन्याभिः सह मन्त्रिभिः ॥ ४०॥
 सर्वोषधिरसैश्चैव दैवतैर्नभसि स्थितैः ।
 चतुर्भिर्लोकपालैश्च स्तुवद्भिः सगणैस्तथा ॥ ४१॥

abhyaṣiñcan raghuśreṣṭham vāsavam vasavo yathā ।
 ṛtvigbhirbrāhmaṇaiḥ śreṣṭhaiḥ kanyābhiḥ saha mantribhiḥ ॥ 40॥
 sarvauṣadhirasaiścaiva daivatairnabhasi sthitaiḥ ।
 caturbhirlokapālaiśca stuvadbhiḥ sagaṇaistathā ॥ 41॥

40-41. Then those great sages, accompanied by Ritwiks (who are a special category of Brahmins amongst the priestly class, who are experts in performance of religious sacrifices), other Brahmins (i.e. those Brahmins who are not Ritwiks), the best of damsels, and all the ministers prayed to and paid their obeisance to the different Gods who had assembled in the sky to witness this auspicious occasion.

Likewise, all the senior custodians of the world, called the ‘Lokpals’, and their juniors were also honoured simultaneously.

Thereafter, the sages once again anointed Sri Ram, who was the best in the illustrious family of King Raghu, by sprinkling the essence (juice, extract) of all the medicinal herbs (which are used during religious ceremonies) over him, just like Indra had been anointed by the Vasus¹ at the time of his coronation as the king of gods in heaven (40-41).

[Note—¹The “Vasus” are demi-Gods numbering eight in number. They are equivalent to the Ritwiks of the terrestrial world.]

छत्रं च तस्य जग्राह शत्रुघ्नः पाण्डुरं शुभम् ।
सुग्रीवरक्षसेन्द्रौ तौ दधतुः श्वेतचामरे ॥ ४२॥
मालां च काञ्चनीं वायुर्ददौ वासवचोदितः ।
सर्वरत्नसमायुक्तं मणिकाञ्चनभूषितम् ॥ ४३॥
ददौ हारं नरेन्द्राय स्वयं शक्रस्तु भक्तिः ।
प्रजगुर्देवगन्धर्वा ननृतुश्चाप्सरोगणाः ॥ ४४॥

chatraṃ ca tasya jagrāha śatrughnaḥ pāṇḍuraṃ śubham ।
sugrīvarākṣasendrau tau dadhatuḥ śvetacāmare ॥ 42॥
mālāṃ ca kāñcanīṃ vāyurdadau vāsavacoditaḥ ।
sarvaratnasamāyuktaṃ maṇikāñcanabhūṣitaṃ ॥ 43॥
dadau hāraṃ narendrāya svayaṃ śakrastu bhaktiḥ ।
prajagurdevagandharvā nanṛtuścāpsarogaṇāḥ ॥ 44॥

42-44. At this time, Shatrughan—who is the vanquisher of enemies—installed (held, placed) a most magnificent, auspicious and beautiful light yellow ceremonial umbrella over the head of Lord Sri Ram, while Sugriv and Vibhishan held white whisks in their hands (as they stood on either side of the Lord) (42).

At the request of Indra, the wind-god (Maruti) offered a golden garland to the Lord, while Indra himself devotionally offered him a golden necklace that was richly studded with all the gems and jewels that he could select from the treasury of the gods.

Thereafter, the Gods and Gandharvas (celestial musicians) began singing ceremonial songs of adulation and felicitation in honour of Lord Ram, while the Apsaras (female dancers and singers of heaven) began dancing in merry abundance (43-44).

देवदुन्दुभयो नेदुः पुष्पवृष्टिः पपात खात् ।
नवदूर्वादलश्यामं पद्मपत्रायतेक्षणम् ॥ ४५॥

रविकोटिप्रभायुक्तकिरीटेन विराजितम् ।
 कोटिकन्दर्पलावण्यं पीताम्बरसमावृतम् ॥ ४६॥
 दिव्याभरणसम्पन्नं दिव्यचन्दनलेपनम् ।
 अयुतादित्यसङ्काशं द्विभुजं रघुनन्दनम् ॥ ४७॥

devadundubhayo neduḥ puṣpavrṣṭiḥ papāta khāt ।
 navadūrvādalaśyāmaṁ padmapatrāyatekṣaṇam ॥ 45॥
 ravikoṭiprabhāyuktakirīṭena virājitaṁ ।
 koṭikandarpalāvaṇyaṁ pītāambarasamāvṛtaṁ ॥ 46॥
 divyābharaṇasampannaṁ divyacandanalepanam ।
 ayutādityasaṅkāśaṁ dvibhujaṁ raghunandanam ॥ 47॥

45-47. There was a rapturous cacophony and tumultuous din of kettledrums played by the Gods in the sky, while flowers rained down everywhere.

[The following lines describe the magnificent image of Lord Sri Ram and Sita as they sat on the throne at that time—]

Lord Sri Ram was dark complexioned like the colour of newly plucked Durba grass. He had broad eyes like the petals of a lotus flower (45); he was adorned with a crown which was as splendid, bright and dazzling as millions of suns shining together; he was beautiful, attractive and charming to behold as if millions of Kamdeo-cupids have revealed themselves in his beauteous form.

The Lord wore a Pitambar (46); he was adorned with magnificent ornaments and divine garments and ceremonial robes; he had a paste of sandalwood rubbed all over his body; he was as splendid and radiant as a thousand suns put together.

To wit, Lord Ram, the illustrious son in the great family of King Raghu (Raghunandan), looked most majestic, dignified, honourable and adorable in his two-armed human form¹ (47).

[Note—¹A special mention of the ‘two arms’ of Lord Ram here is to remind the observer, as well as the reader of this magnificent Story, that this form of Lord Ram was a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu who has ‘four arms’. This fact being understood, all other things become easily understandable. It is because Lord Vishnu is the Lord of the world, the Supreme Being, and hence all the glories, virtues and honours that are shown to belong to Lord Ram are natural to him inasmuch as his primary form is that of Lord Vishnu, and not a human being.]

वामभागे समासीनां सीतां काञ्चनसन्निभाम् ।
 सर्वाभरणसम्पन्नां वामाङ्के समुपस्थिताम् ॥ ४८॥
 रक्तोत्पलकराम्भोजां वामेनालिङ्ग्य संस्थिताम् ।
 सर्वातिशयशोभाढ्यं दृष्ट्वा भक्तिसमन्वितः ॥ ४९॥
 उमया सहितो देवः शङ्करो रघुनन्दनम् ।
 सर्वदेवगणैर्युक्तः स्तोतुं समुपचक्रे ॥ ५०॥

vāmabhāge samāsināṁ sītāṁ kāñcanasannibhām ।
 sarvābharaṇasampannāṁ vāmāṅke samupasthitām ॥ 48॥

raktotpalakarāmbhojāṃ vāmenāliṅgya samsthitam ।
 sarvātiśayaśobhāḍhyaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā bhaktisamanvitaḥ ॥ 49॥
 umayā sahito devaḥ śaṅkaro raghunandanam ।
 sarvadevagaṇairyuktaḥ stotuṃ samupacakrame ॥ 50॥

48-50. To the left of him (Sri Ram) was seated Sita; she had a complexion resembling the colour of gold. She was fully decorated with ornaments and ceremonial clothes befitting the occasion (48), and held a red lotus in her lotus-like hands.

Sri Ram had placed his left arm on her shoulders. Seeing them seated in this posture, Lord Shiva, along with Uma (his consort, goddess Parvati), was full of devotion and affection for the Lord.

Then he (Shiva), along with all other Gods, praised Lord Ram and offered his obeisance to him (49-50).

[Note—Verse nos. 9-50 describe the preparation and the actual coronation ceremony of Lord Sri Ram as the King of Ayodhya.]

एवं महोरगाः सिद्धाः किन्नरा मरुतस्तथा ॥ ७०॥
 वसवो मुनयो गावो गुह्यकाश्च पतत्रिणः ।
 अपूजापतयश्चैते तथा चाप्सरसां गणाः ॥ ७१॥
 सर्वे रामं समासाद्य दृष्ट्वा नेत्रमहोत्सवम् ।
 स्तुत्वा पृथक् पृथक् सर्वे राघवेणाभिवन्दिताः ॥ ७२॥

evaṃ mahoragāḥ siddhāḥ kinnarā marutastathā ॥ 70॥
 vasavo munayo gāvo guhyakāśca patattriṇaḥ ।
 saprajāpatayaścaite tathā cāpsarasāṃ gaṇāḥ ॥ 71॥
 sarve rāmaṃ samāsādyā dr̥ṣṭvā netramahotsavam ।
 stutvā pr̥thak pr̥thak sarve rāghaveṇābhivanditāḥ ॥ 72॥

70-72. In a similar manner, the great legendary serpent (Sheshnath), Siddhas (mystics), the Kinnars (celestial dancers and singers), Marut (the wind-god) (70), Vasu (one of the demi-Gods who has eight subordinates under him; see also verse no. 41), sages/seers/hermits, holy cows (representing all the peaceful and docile animals), cave dwellers (such as lions, bears etc., as well as ascetics), birds, Prajapati (the guardians or custodians of the subjects created by Brahma), and groups of Apsaras (celestial courtesans) (71)—all of them came to visit Lord Sri Ram and had an auspicious view of the Lord whose sight is so rewarding that it enhances the pleasures and privileges that a creature has of being able to see with his eyes¹.

They prayed to him collectively as well as individually, and went back to their respective abodes after being duly honoured and shown respect by the Lord (72).

[Note—¹To wit, the Lord's charming and auspicious form delights the beholder so much that he thanks his creator that the latter has given him eyes with which he could enjoy this privilege, because no other organ would enable a creature to derive this pleasure except the eye. Thus, the visitors were extremely ecstatic and thrilled with joy as they viewed Lord Ram sitting on the throne, as this sight was so divine and

sublime to behold, and so ethereal to experience, that it was a virtual treat and literally a feast for the eye of all those who beheld him as they stood mesmerized and enthralled before the Lord. Even while they said their prayers, their eyes were riveted on the bewitchingly beauteous form of Lord Ram, a form that embodied all the beauty and charm of Mother Nature by which she has captivated and enthralled the mind of poets and the heart of painters from time immemorial.]

ययुः स्वं स्वं पदं सर्वे ब्रह्मरुद्रादयस्तथा ।
प्राशंसन्तो मुदा रामं गायन्तस्तस्य चेष्टितम् ॥ ७३॥
ध्यायन्तस्त्वभिषेकार्द्रं सीतालक्ष्मणसंयुतम् ।
सिंहासनस्थं राजेन्द्रं ययुः सर्वे हृदि स्थितम् ॥ ७४॥

yayuh svam svam padam sarve brahmarudrādayastathā ।
praśamsanto mudā rāmaṁ gāyantastasya ceṣṭitam ॥ 73॥
dhyāyantastvabhiṣekārdraṁ sītālakṣmaṇasaṁyutam ।
siṁhāsanasthaṁ rājendraṁ yayuh sarve hṛdi sthitam ॥ 74॥

73-74. After that, Brahma (the creator), Shiva (Rudra; the concluder) and others (including the great sages and seers who had come to attend Lord Ram's coronation ceremony) also went back to their respective abodes, all the while praising the glories of Lord Sri Ram and admiring the Lord's virtues very fondly, cheerfully and happily on their way back home. They cheerfully sang verses in honour of the Lord and the deeds done by him (73), remembering the glorious, divine and majestic view of the Lord, who was a King amongst Kings, as they saw him seated on the throne at the time of his coronation, along with Sita to his left and Laxman to his right.

Having enshrined that stupendously beautiful and enchanting image of the Lord in their hearts, the illustrious guests of honour took leave of the Lord to go their way (74).

खे वाद्येषु ध्वनत्सु प्रमुदितहृदयैर्देववृन्दैः स्तुवद्भिः
वर्षद्भिः पुष्पवृष्टिं दिवि मुनिनिकरैरीड्यमानः समन्तात् ।
रामः श्यामः प्रसन्नस्मितरुचिरमुखः सूर्यकोटिप्रकाशः
सीतासौमित्रिवातात्मजमुनिहरिभिः सेव्यमानो विभाति ॥ ७५॥

इति श्रीमदध्यात्मरामायणे उमामहेश्वरसंवादे युद्धकाण्डे
पञ्चदशः सर्गः ॥ १५॥

khe vādyeṣu dhvanatsu pramuditahṛdayairdevavṛndaiḥ stuvadbhiḥ
varṣadbhiḥ puṣpavṛṣṭiṁ divi muninikarairīḍyamānaḥ samantāt ।
rāmaḥ śyāmaḥ prasannasmitaruciramukhaḥ sūryakoṭiprakāśaḥ
sītāsaumitrivātātmajamuniharibhiḥ sevyamāno vibhāti ॥ 75॥

iti śrīmadadhyātmārāmāyaṇe umāmaheśvarasaṁvāde yuddhakāṇḍe
pañcadaśaḥ sargaḥ ॥ 15॥

75. At the time when there was a rapturous and tumultuous cacophony of various musical instruments in the sky (heavens), the Gods jubilantly showered flowers from the sky as they were overwhelmed with ecstasy and joy; they joined to chant adulatory hymns in honour of Lord Ram with extreme devotion.

Meanwhile on the ground, large groups of learned sages, hermits and seers stood everywhere and sang praises in honour of the Lord.

Lord Sri Ram—who had a dark complexion, smiled pleasantly with a cheerful face, looked as splendid, radiant and glorious as countless of suns shining together—was being served (attended) by Sita (his wife), Laxman (son of Sumitra, his younger brother), Hanuman (the son of the wind-god and his faithful devotee), many sages, seers and hermits, as well as the monkeys (who had come with the Lord on the plane).

The Lord looked most charming and radiant, adorable and magnificent, elegant and stupendous (as he sat on the throne during the coronation ceremony, symbolizing his anointment as the Lord of all his subjects)¹ (75).

[Note—¹The symbolism of Lord Ram’s coronation as the King of Ayodhya is very clearly remarked in this verse—Lord Ram was now not only made a King of Ayodhya and charged with the responsibility of taking care of his subjects in this kingdom, but also as an Emperor of the world at large, both the mortal world on earth as well as the immortal world of the heaven. Nay, not only this, the Lord was anointed as the Supreme Lord of the entire creation of which the heavens and the earth and the nether worlds are the three divisions. Indeed it was so, as Lord Ram was none but Lord Vishnu in a human form, and Lord Vishnu is called the ‘Viraat Purush’, the form of the Supreme Lord that has a cosmic dimension, as his rule extends to the farthest corners of this creation.]

Thus ends Canto 15 of Yuddha / Lanka Kand of Adhyatma Ramayan that narrates the discourse that Lord Shiva gave to his divine consort, goddess Uma.

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Section 21.3: Geetawali Ramayan

Lanka Kand, verse nos. 17-23; Uttar Kand, verse no. 20

This beautiful and concluding episode of the present Book titled ‘The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka’, which narrates Lord Ram’s triumphant return to Ayodhya, his warm and enthusiastic reception by Bharat and all the citizens, the festivities in the city to celebrate this happy occasion, and the Lord’s coronation as the King of Ayodhya, has been wonderfully narrated in Tulsidas’ classic version of the story of the Ramayana, viz. the ‘Geetawali Ramayan’.

As the reader is well acquainted, we have been reading extensively from this classic all throughout our narrative, and so let us wind up this wonderful Story by

reading how these events are narrated in some selected verses of Geetawali Ramayan, for example, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 17-23, and Uttar Kand, verse no. 20.

Sub-section 21.3.1: Geetawali Ramayan, Lanka Kand, verse nos.17-23:

अयोध्यामें प्रतीक्षा
राग आसावरी
(6 / 17)

अवधि आजु किधौं औरो दिन हैहै ।
चढ़ि धौरहर बिलोकि दखिन दिसि, बूझ धौं पथिक कहाँते आये वै हैं ॥ 1 ॥
बहुरि बिचारि हारि हिय सोचति, पुलकि गात लागे लोचन चैहैं ।
निज बासरनि बरष पुरवैगो बिधि, मेरे तहाँ करत कठिन कृत क्यैहैं ॥ 2 ॥
बन रघुबीर, मातु गृह जीवति, निलज प्रान सुनि सुनि सुख स्वैहैं ।
तुलसिदास मो—सी कठोर—चित कुलिस सालभंजनि को है है ॥ 3 ॥

ayōdhyāmēm pratīkṣā
rāga āsāvarī
(6/17)

avadhi āju kidhauṁ aurō dina hvaihai.
caḍhi dhaurahara bilōki dakhina disi, būjha dhauṁ pathika kahāmtē āyē vai
haim..1..
bahuri bicāri hāri hiya sōcati, pulaki gāta lāgē lōcana cvaihaim.
nija bāsarani baraṣa puravaigō bidhi, mērē tahām karata kaṭhina kṛta
vkaihaim.. 2..
bana raghubīra, mātu gr̥ha jīvati, nilaja prāna suni suni sukha svaihaim.
tulasidāsa mō-sī kaṭhōra-cita kulisa sālabhañjani kō hvaihai.. 3..

The Wait in Ayodhya for Lord Ram's return -I

Verse no. 6/17—When the days of exile were almost over, mother Kaushalya became very anxious about Lord Ram's return. She broods and became pensive. She wonders: 'Why, does the period of exile end today, or are some more days left?'

Then going to the roof of her palace and looking southwards, she sights some pedestrians approaching the city. Seeing them, she orders one of her attendants to find out from where those people are coming (1).

Then realising that the last day of the exile period is yet to come, her heart fills with gloom and despair, her body is thrilled, tears roll down her eyes, she feels distraught and speaks poignantly to herself, 'It appears that the Vidhata (the Creator Brahma) shall count those fourteen years according to his own calculations (because, Brahma's days are equivalent to hundreds of thousands of earth days, and so it appears that the

days are getting longer and longer, and the wait for Lord Ram seems not to come to an end).

Verily, it's a very long time for me to wait any longer (2).

Oh, "Ram is in the forest and his mother enjoys the comforts of home"—now this shameless life of mine has to bear this ignominy for the rest of my life! Well, where else can there be a heartless and emotionless statue like that of me?' (3).

(6 / 18)

आली, अब राम—लषन कित है हैं।
चित्रकूट तज्यौ तबतें न लही सुधि, बधू—समेत कुसल सुत द्वै हैं॥ 1॥
बारि बयारि, बिषम हिम—आतप सहि बिनु बसन भूमितल स्वै हैं।
कंद—मूल, फल—फूल असन बन, भोजन समय मिलत कैसे वैहैं॥ 2॥
जिन्हहि बिलोकि सोचिहैं लता—द्रुम, खग—मृग—मुनि लोचन जल चैहैं।
तुलसिदास तिन्हकी जननी हौं, मो—सी निठुर—चित औरो कहूँ हैहैं॥ 3॥

(6/18)

ālī, aba rāma-laṣana kita hvai hairm.
citrakūṭa tajyau tabatēm na lahī sudhi, badhū-samēta kusala suta dvai hairm..
1..
bāri bayāri, biṣama hima-ātapa sahi binu basana bhūmitala svai hairm.
kanda-mūla, phala-phūla asana bana, bhōjana samaya milata kaisē vaihairm..
2..
jinhahi bilōki sōcihairm latā-druma, khaga-mṛga-muni lōcana jala cvaihairm.
tulasidāsa tinhakī janani haurm, mō-sī niṭhura-cita aurō kahum hvaihairm.. 3..

The Wait in Ayodhya for Lord Ram's return -II

Verse no. 6/18—[Kaushalya addresses one of her close confidantes—] 'Oh Friend! Where would Ram and Laxman be at this moment (do you have any idea about it)? Ever since they left Chitrakoot, there is no news or information about them. Are my two sons alright with my daughter-in-law (Sita)'¹? (1).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 2/41—2/42.]

They must be coping (bearing) with the vagaries of Nature: rain, wind, and extremes of cold and heat; they have no proper clothes to wear, and would be compelled to lie down on the bare ground without any cover.

In the forest, only roots, stems, fruits and some varieties of edible flowers are available to eat, and that too are not available at all times (and easily), do they? (2).

Even creepers and trees would be anguished and remorseful seeing their pathetic condition, while the birds, the animals, the sages and the hermits shed tears at their miseries and woes. But the greatest irony is this: I am their mother! Alas! Is there

anyone as stone-hearted as me? [To wit, even trees, animals and birds feel their pain; even sages and hermits shed tears for them. And here I am, their unfortunate mother—my eyes are dry of tears (because all have dried up), and my heart has turned into a stone (as it is benumbed with grief) so much so that I can't even wail and weep).]' (3).

राग सोरठ
(6/19)

बैठी सगुन मनावति माता ।
कब ऐहैं मेरे बाल कुसल घर, कहहु, काग ! फुरि बाता ॥ 1 ॥
दूध-भातकी दोनी दैहौं, सोने चोंच मढ़ैहौं ।
जब सिय-सहित बिलोकि नयन भरि राम-लषन उर लैहौं ॥ 2 ॥
अवधि समीप जानि जननी जिय अति आतुर अकुलानी ।
गनक बोलाइ, पाँय परि पूछति प्रेम मगन मृदु बानी ॥ 3 ॥
तेहि अवसर कोउ भरत निकटतें समाचार लै आयो ।
प्रभु-आगमन सुनत तुलसी मनो मीन मरत जल पायो ॥ 4 ॥

rāga sōraṭha

(6/19)

baiṭhī saguna manāvati mātā.
kaba aihairṁ mērē bāla kusala ghara, kahahu, kāga! phuri bātā.. 1..
dūdha-bhātākī dōnī daihaurṁ, sōnē cōñca maṛhaihaurṁ.
jaba siya-sahita bilōki nayana bhari rāma-laṣana ura laihaurṁ.. 2..
avadhi samīpa jāni janani jiya ati ātura akulānī.
ganaka bōlā'i, pāñya pari pūchatī prēma magana mṛdu bānī.. 3..
tēhi avasara kō'u bharata nikaṭatēm samācāra lai āyō.
prabhu-āgamana sunata tulasī manō mīna marata jala pāyō.. 4..

The Wait in Ayodhya for Lord Ram's return -III

Verse no. 6/19—[Mother Kaushalya sights a crow and talks with it. It is believed that when one eagerly awaits some news about a dear person and a crow comes to call and begins to crow, there is surely some good news coming in. It is an auspicious omen.]

The mother looks for good omens. She says, 'Oh crow! Tell me the truth: when shall my children come back home safely? (1).

When I embrace my beloved Ram-Sita and Laxman and see them till my eyes are satisfied (i.e. see them to my heart's content), I shall feed you milk and rice, and get your beak decorated (plated) with gold.' (2).

Then as the final days of exile draw nearer, she summons a soothsayer (an astrologer), and falling at his feet, overwhelmed as she was with sadness and emotions, she asks him to prophesize when Lord Ram is going to come back (3).

Just at that time a messenger arrived from Bharat's place with the news of Lord Ram's arrival.

Tulsidas says that as soon as she heard about Ram's arrival from his mouth, her condition was like a fish, on the verge of dying, but being restored to water just at the last moment (4).

राग गौरी
(6 / 20)

छेमकरी ! बलि, बोलि सुबानी ।
कुसल छेम सिय राम—लषन कब ऐहैं, अंब ! अवध राजधानी ॥ 1 ॥
ससिमुखि, कुंकुम—बरनि, सुलोचनि, मोचनि सोचनि बेद बखानी ।
देवि ! दया करि देहि दरसफल, जोरि पानि बिनवहिं सब रानी ॥ 2 ॥
सुनि सनेहमय बचन, निकट है, मंजुल मंडल कै मड़रानी ।
सुभ मंगल आनंद गगन—धुनि अकनि—अकनि उर—जरनि जुड़ानी ॥ 3 ॥
फरकन लगे सुअंग बिदिसि दिसि, मन प्रसन्न, दुख—दसा सिरानी ।
करहिं प्रनाम सप्रेम पुलकि तनु, मानि बिबिध बलि सगुन सयानी ॥ 4 ॥
तेहि अवसर हनुमान भरतसों कही सकल कल्याण—कहानी ।
तुलसिदास सोइ चाह सजीवनि बिषम बियोग ब्यथा बड़ि भानी ॥ 5 ॥

rāga gaurī

(6/20)

chēmakarī! bali, bōli subānī.
kusala chēma siya rāma-laṣana kaba aihairī, amba! avadha rājadhānī.. 1..
sasimukhi, kuṅkuma-barani, sulōcani, mōcani sōcani bēda bakhānī.
dēvi! dayā kari dēhi darasaphala, jōri pāni binavahirī saba rānī.. 2..
suni sanēhamaya bacana, nikaṭa hvai, mañjula maṇḍala kai maṛarānī.
subha maṅgala ānanda gagana-dhuni akani-akani ura-jarani juṛānī.. 3..
pharakana lagē su'aṅga bidisi disī, mana prasanna, dukha-dasā sirānī.
karaḥirī pranāma saprēma pulaki tanu, māni bibidha bali saguna sayānī.. 4..
tēhi avasara hanumāna bharatasōm kahī sakala kalyāna-kahānī.
tulasidāsa sō'i cāha sajīvani biṣama biyōga byathā baḍi bhānī.. 5..

The Wait in Ayodhya for Lord Ram's return –IV
(Good Omen of the Red-faced Kite)

Verse no. 6/20—‘Oh Chēmakarī (a red faced kite)! I sacrifice myself on you! Oh mother (“amba”)! Tell me with your auspicious and sweet voice when will Sita, Ram and Laxman come back hale and hearty to their capital city of Ayodhya¹! (1).

[¹Chēmakarī is a bird which when sighted and heard is considered very auspicious, a portender of good fortunes and happy tidings, and its sighting is a good omen.]

Oh Goddess (dēvi)! Your face is like the moon (i.e. beautiful, charming, attractive), your countenance is red like ‘Sindoor’ (red colour put by women on the head between parted hairs and as a dot on the forehead as a sign of auspiciousness), and you have beautiful eyes.

The Vedas have described you as the one who can give relief (freedom, succour) from all sorts of sorrows, agonies, worries and troubles). So please be kind and gracious to give us the benefit of your ‘Darshan’ (auspicious sighting) and its attendant rewards (in the form of our seeing Ram, Sita and Laxman once again).’

All the queens pray to the bird in this manner (2).

Hearing their affectionate prayers (or earnest words), that Kite came nearer and began circulating overhead in an auspicious circle. Hearing its auspicious, joyful voice which portended good omens, the heat of torments and woes in the heart of the queens subsided (3).

Everyone in Ayodhya observed the Kite flying in a circle above the city. This kindled hope and joy amongst all the people. Everywhere, in all the directions, people experienced that parts of their bodies fluttered as an auspicious sign of some good that was about to happen. This filled their hearts and minds with joy and renewed hope, ending their sense of gloom and distress.

Meanwhile, Kaushalya and other clever women like her grabbed on the hope that the auspicious signs provided them, and they made liberal vows and abundant promises of doing meritorious deeds (such as making sacrifices, charities, giving alms and donations etc.) if these signs actually fructify and bear results. They became thrilled, and prayed and bowed their heads to their respective deities and gods. (4).

Just about this time, Hanuman came and conveyed all the good, happy and auspicious news (about Lord Ram’s arrival).

Tulsidas says that this ‘Sanjivani herb’ (in the shape of the good news of arrival of Lord Ram with Laxman and Sita) proved to be the rejuvenator of Bharat, and it destroyed all the terrible agonies, sorrows, anguish and torments caused by his separation from Lord Sri Ram² (5).

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, all the verses that precede Doha no. 3.]

अयोध्यामें आनन्द
राग धनाश्री
(6 / 21)

सुनियत सागर सेतु बँधायो।
कोसलपतिकी कुसल सकल सुधि कोउ इक दूत भरत पहुँ ल्यायो॥ 1॥

बध्यो बिराध, त्रिसिर, खर—दूषन सूर्पनखाको रूप नसायो ।
 हति कबंध, बल—अंध बालि दलि, कृपासिंधु सुग्रीव बसायो ॥ 2 ॥
 सरनागत अपनाइ बिभीषन, रावन सकुल समूल बहायो ।
 बिबुध—समाज निवाजि, बाँह दै, बंदिछोर बर बिरद कहायो ॥ 3 ॥
 एक—एकसौं समाचार सुनि नगर लोग जहँ तहँ सब धायो ।
 घन—धुनि अकनि मुदित मयूर—ज्यों, बूड़त जलधि पार—सो पायो ॥ 4 ॥
 'अवधि आजु' यौ कहत परसपर, बेगि बिमान निकट पुर आयो ।
 उत्तरि अनुज—अनुगनि समेत प्रभु गुर—द्विजगन सिर नायो ॥ 5 ॥
 जो जेहि जोग राम तेहि बिधि मिलि, सबके मन अति मोद बढ़ायो ।
 भेंटी मातु, भरत भरतानुज, क्यों कहौ प्रेम अमित अनमायो ॥ 6 ॥
 तेहि दिन मृनिबुंद अनंदित तुरत तिलकको साज सजायो ।
 महाराज रघुबंस—नाथको सादर तुलसिदास गुन गयो ॥ 7 ॥

ayōdhyāmēm ānanda

rāga dhanāśrī

(6/21)

suniyata sāgara sētu baṁdhāyō.
 kōsalapatikī kusala sakala sudhi kō'u ika dūta bharata pahaṁ lyāyō.. 1..
 badhyō birādha, trisira, khara-dūṣana sūrpanakhākō rūpa nasāyō.
 hati kabandha, bala-andha bāli dali, kṛpāsindhu sugrīva basāyō.. 2..
 saranāgata apanā'i bibhīṣana, rāvana sakula samūla bahāyō.
 bibudha-samāja nivāji, bāṁha dai, bandichōra bara birada kahāyō.. 3..
 ēka-ēkasōṁ samācāra suni nagara lōga jahaṁ tahaṁ saba dhāyō.
 ghana-dhuni akani mudita mayūra-jyōm, būrata jaladhi pāra-sō pāyō.. 4..
 'avadhi āju' yaum kahata parasapara, bēgi bimāna nikaṭa pura āyō.
 utari anuja-anugani samēta prabhu gura-dvijagana sira nāyō.. 5..
 jō jēhi jōga rāma tēhi bidhi mili, sabakē mana ati mōda barhāyō.
 bhēṇṭī mātu, bharata bharatānuja, kyōm kahauṁ prēma amita anamāyō.. 6..
 tēhi dina mṛnibr̥nda anandita turata tilakakō sāja sajāyō.
 mahārāja raghubansa-nāthakō sādara tulasidāsa guna gayō.. 7..

Rejoicing & Celebrations in Ayodhya when Lord Ram returned

Verse no. 6/21—Hearing the various events and stories related to the period of Lord Ram's sojourn in the forest, the citizens of Ayodhya said, 'Why, it is heard that Lord Ram had constructed a bridge across the ocean! Some messenger had brought the news of Lord Ram's safety and welfare to Bharat (1).

It is said that Lord Ram had slayed the demons Viraadh, Khar, Dushan and Trishira; deformed or mutilated Supernakha, killed Kabandh, and subjugating the proud Baali, he has made Sugriv the king of Kiskindha (2).

Then accepting Vibhishan, who had come to seek his refuge and protection, he had destroyed Ravana (the demon king) along with his kinsmen, thereby liberating the Gods from their eternal fear of Ravana, and proved his fame as ‘the liberator and protector of all’ (3).’

This news spread like wildfire, and the citizens ran happily, exhilarated and joyous like a peacock is when it hears the rumbling of the rain-bearing dark clouds, or a drowning man when he find the sea-shore (4).

‘Today is the last day of exile’, they said, and almost as on cue, the plane¹ appeared over the sky near the city.

Disembarking from it, Lord Ram and Laxman bowed their heads to their guru Vasistha and other Brahmins² (5).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4.

The ‘plane’ referred to here was called “Pushpak”. It belonged to Kuber, the Gods’ treasurer. Ravana had snatched it from him and kept it at Lanka. When it was time to come back from Lanka, Lord Ram had requested Vibhishan to bring this air-plane so that they can quickly return to Ayodhya by the path of the sky. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 5.]

Lord Ram met all according to their standing and status and filled their heart with joy³. Then he met Bharat, Shatrughan and mothers⁴.

Tulsidas finds no words to describe the flood of emotions, love, affections and unfathomable joy that flowed at that moment (6).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-75 that precede Doha no. 6.

Here, ‘standing and status in the society’ not only means the hierarchical position of a particular person in society, but also the level of his love and devotion for the Lord as well as the depth of sorrow on separation from Lord Ram that he had experienced. However, the point to note is that the Lord met everyone with affection, and he did not discriminate between them based on their caste, creed or clan. Albeit, he showed a little bit of more affection by exchanging pleasantries with those whom the Lord felt had suffered the agony of his separation more than others.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6 that precede Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 7.]

The community of saints, sages and holy men immediately made arrangement for Lord Ram's coronation.

Tulsidas also sings the song of Lord Ram's glories, and praises him according to his ability (7).

रन जीति राम राउ आए।
 सानुज सदल ससीय कुसल आजु, अवध आनंद-बधाए॥ 1॥
 अरिपुर जारि, उजारि, मारि रिपु, बिबुध सुबास बसाए।
 धरनि-धेनु, महिदेव-साधु, सबके सब सोच नसाए॥ 2॥
 दई लंक, थिर थपे बिभीषन, बचन-पियूष पिआए।
 सुधा सींचि कपि, कृपा नगर-नर-नारि निहारि जिआए॥ 3॥
 मिलि गुर, बंधु, मातु, जन, परिजन, भए सकल मन भाए।
 दरस-हरस दसचारि बरसके दुख पलमें बिसराए॥ 4॥
 बोलि सचिव सुचि, सोधि सुदिन, मुनि मंगल-साज सजाए।
 महाराज-अभिषेक बरषि सुर सुमन निसान बजाए॥ 5॥
 लै लै भेंट नृप-अहिप-लोकपति अति सनेह सिर नाए।
 पूजि, प्रीति पहिचानि राम आदरे अधिक, अपनाए॥ 6॥
 दान मान सनमानि जानि रुचि, जाचक जन पहिराए।
 गए सोक-सर सूखि, मोद-सरिता-समुद्र गड़िराए॥ 7॥
 प्रभु-प्रताप-रबि अहित-अमंगल-अघ-उलूक-तम ताए।
 किये बिसोक हित-कोक-कोकनद लोक सुजस सुभ छाए॥ 8॥
 रामराज कुलकाज सुमंगल, सबनि सबै सुख पाए।
 देहिं असीस भूमिसुर प्रमुदित, प्रजा प्रमोद बढ़ायो॥ 9॥
 आस्रम-धरम-बिभाग बेदपथ पावन लोग चलाए।
 धरम-निरत, सिय-राम-चरन-रत, मनहु राम-सिय-जाए॥ 10॥
 कामधेनु महि, बिटप कामतरु, कोउ बिधि बाम न लाये।
 ते तब, अब तुलसी तेउ जिन्ह हित सहित राम-गुन गाये॥ 11॥

rājyābhiṣēka

rāga jaitaśrī

(6/22)

rana jīti rāmā rā'u ā'ē.
 sānuja sadala sasiya kusala āju, avadha ānanda-badhā'ē.. 1..
 aripura jāri, ujāri, māri ripu, bibudha subāsa basā'ē.
 dharani-dhēnu, mahidēva-sādhu, sabakē saba sōca nasā'ē.. 2..
 da'ī laṅka, thira thapē bibhīṣana, bacana-piyūṣa pi'ā'ē.
 sudhā sīñci kapi, kṛpā nagara-nara-nāri nihāri ji'ā'ē.. 3..
 mili gura, bandhu, mātu, jana, parijana, bha'ē sakala mana bhā'ē.
 darasa-harasa dasacāri barasakē dukha palamēm bisarā'ē.. 4..
 bōli saciva suci, sōdhi sudina, muni maṅgala-sāja sajā'ē.
 mahārāja-abhiṣēka baraṣi sura sumana nisāna bajā'ē.. 5..
 lai lai bhēṇṭa nṛpa-ahipa-lōkapati ati sanēha sira nā'ē.
 pūji, prīti pahicāni rāma ādarē adhika, apanā'ē.. 6..
 dāna māna sanamāni jāni ruci, jācaka jana pahirā'ē.
 ga'ē sōka-sara sūkhi, mōda-sarītā-samudra gaiirā'ē.. 7..
 prabhu-pratāpa-rabi ahita-amaṅgala-agha-ulūka-tama tā'ē.
 kiyē bisōka hita-kōka-kōkanada lōka sujasa subha chā'ē.. 8..

rāmarāja kulakāja suman̄gala, sabani sabai sukha pā'ē.
 dēhim̄ asīsa bhūmisura pramudita, prajā pramōda bar̄hāyō.. 9..
 āsrama-dharama-bibhāga bēdapatha pāvana lōga calā'ē.
 dharama-nirata, siya-rāma-carana-rata, manahu rāma-siya-jā'ē..10..
 kāmādhēnu mahi, biṭapa kāmataru, kō'u bidhi bāma na lāyē.
 tē taba, aba tulasī tē'u jinha hita sahita rāma-guna gāyē..11..

Coronation of Lord Sri Ram as the Monarch of Ayodhya-I

Verse no. 6/22—[Verse nos. 6/22—6/23 describe the celebrations in Ayodhya when Lord Ram returned at the end of his fourteen years of forest exile period and achieving victory in his Lanka campaign. Preparations were made to crown him as the Monarch of the great kingdom of Ayodhya.

The present verse no. 6/22, however, briefly describes these events: of the Lord's victory at Lanka and its effects (stanza nos. 1-3), his warm welcome in Ayodhya, the celebrations that marked his arrival and his coronation as the kingdom's Monarch (stanza nos. 3-8), and the glory of the great kingdom over which he ruled, its prosperity, its lawful citizens, the general happiness and well-being that prevailed on the earth during his time (stanza nos. 9-11).

The same narration has been elaborately done in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, in its Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 20 that describe the Lord's warm welcome at Ayodhya, the celebrations and his coronation; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24 that describe the glory of the kingdom of Ayodhya, its prosperity, the excellent characters of its citizens, and the general sense of happiness and well-being that pervaded on the surface of the earth.]

The Great King Ram has returned to Ayodhya after being victorious in the war (of Lanka). He is accompanied by his brother (Laxman), the army (of monkeys and bears), and Sita. That is why there are celebrations in Ayodhya¹ (1).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/23, stanza no. 1.]

He (Lord Ram) has laid to waste and burnt to the ground the enemy's city (Lanka), thereby rehabilitating the Gods.

All the distress, torments, horrors and agonies of earth (created by the cruelty of the demons), the cows (who represented harmless and docile creatures who were tyrannized by the demons), the Brahmins (the elderly human beings and the wise ones) and Sadhus (pious and saintly people who were the object of cruelty unleashed by the demons) have been dispelled² (2).

[²Refer: (a) Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/16, stanza no. 4; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 103.]

He has given the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan, installing him as a permanent king of that place³, and after reviving the dead monkeys (in the battle-field) by the rain of life-giving divine nectar (Amrit)⁴, he has come and given a new lease of life by glancing lovingly, mercifully and benevolently at the men and women of Ayodhya⁵ (3).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 114.

⁵Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 6.]

Guru (Vasistha) brothers (Bharat, Shatrughan), mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi), servants and kinsman met Lord Ram and all their wishes were fulfilled⁶—they forgot the sufferings of fourteen years of separation on seeing their Lord once again (4).

[⁶Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Doha no. 8 that describe Lord Ram meeting everyone at Ayodhya, viz. his Guru, brothers and mothers; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10 that specifically says that Lord Ram went and met Kaikeyi to remove traces of ill-will and help mutual rapprochement and reconciliation.]

Sage Vasistha summoned Sumantra and other ministers who had wisdom and noble thoughts, and ordered them to find out an auspicious day and time, as well as collect all the needed materials that are required for the auspicious occasion of the coronation ceremony of Lord Ram⁷.

At the time of Lord Ram's coronation, Gods showered flowers and sounded trumpets and other musical instruments to celebrate this happy occasion⁸ (5).

[⁷Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 10 and Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

⁸Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12.]

All the invited kings, knights, land-lords, nobles, grandees and lok-patis (a title similar to a king) had assembled on the auspicious occasion of the coronation of Lord Ram. They offered various gifts on the occasion, and bowed their heads. Lord Ram gave them full due respect, and accepted their offerings⁹ (6).

[⁹Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/23, stanza no. 3 herein below.]

Then he donated liberally and respectfully to alms-seekers and Brahmins according to their wishes and desires, satisfying them to the full¹⁰. This dried up their pond of distress, as it were, (i.e. all their wants and desires were removed), and the river and ocean of happiness became deep (i.e. they all became deeply contented) (7).

[¹⁰Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

The owl of sins, vices and darkness representing malevolence and un-holiness, disappeared. The Chakva-Chakvi (a pair of birds symbolising pure quality of love) and the Lotus (symbolising pureness and detachment) became free of distress.

The fame of Lord Ram spread throughout the world¹¹ (8).

[¹¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22.]

{The following stanzas, nos. 9-11, describe in brief the glory and the majesty of the reign of Lord Ram. Refer also to: (a) Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/1; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

In the reign of Lord Ram, the entire world remained holy and incorrupt. All the living beings enjoyed all possible types of joy, happiness and comfort. And the Brahmins used to give their blessings for the prosperity of the citizens (9).

Lord Ram divided the society according to the sanctions of the Vedas into various 'Ashrams' (segments of life), and made the people follow this sanctified way of life¹². All the people were righteous and noble in their conduct¹³ as if they were all born from Lord Ram himself (10).

[¹²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 20; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 21.

There are four "Ashrams" in Hindu society. The life of a Hindu man is divided into four segments or sections of roughly twenty-five years each. These are called the 'Ashrams'. They are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihasta Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

¹³Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 21.]

The earth became like the mythical Kamdhenu cow¹⁴ (i.e. the earth provided all the necessities of life and there was an abundance of everything), and the trees were like the mythical Kalpa Tree (the all wishful-filling tree of the Gods that gave abundance of fruits, flowers, seeds, vegetables, shade, wood for buildings, and firewood). The Creator was benevolent towards all¹⁵.

Tulsidas says this was (with respect to stanza nos. 7-10) true not only then, but even today—all those who devote themselves selflessly to Lord Ram, get the same happiness as that prevailed in the time of Lord Ram himself (11).

[¹⁴Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/23, stanza no. 5; verse no. 6/23, stanza no. 5; Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/1, stanza no. 3.

¹⁵Refer: (a) Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/1, stanza no. 3; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 23 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.]

राग टोड़ी
(6 / 23)

आजु अवध आनंद-बधावन, रिपु रन जीति राम आए।
सजि सुबिमान निसान बजावत मुदित देव देखन धाए॥ 1॥
घर-घर चारु चौक, चंदन-मनि, मंगल-कलस सबनि साजे।
ध्वज-पताक, तोरन, बितानबर, बिबिध भौंति बाजन बाजे॥ 2॥
राम-तिलक सुनि दीप दीपके नृप आए उपहार लिये।
सीयसहित आसीन सिंहासन निरखि जोहारत हरष हिये॥ 3॥
मंगलगान, बेदधुनि, जयधुनि, मुनि-असीस-धुनि भुवन भरे।
बरषि सुमन सुर-सिद्ध प्रसंसत, सबके सब संताप हरे॥ 4॥
राम-राज भइ कामधेनु महि, सुख संपदा लोक छाए।
जनम जनम जानकीनाथके गुनगन तुलसिदास गाये॥ 5॥

rāga ṭōṛī
(6/23)

āju avadha ānanda-badhāvana, ripu rana jīti rāma ā'ē.
saji subimāna nisāna bajāvata mudita dēva dēkhana dhā'ē.. 1..
ghara-ghara cāru cauka, candana-mani, maṅgala-kalasa sabani sājē.
dhvaja-patāka, tōrana, bitānabara, bibidha bhāṁti bājana bājē.. 2..
rāma-tilaka suni dīpa dīpakē nṛpa ā'ē upahāra liyē.
sīyasahita āsīna sinhāsana nirakhi jōhārata haraṣa hiyē.. 3..
maṅgalagāna, bēdadhuni, jayadhuni, muni-asīsa-dhuni bhuvana bharē.
baraṣi sumana sura-sid'dha prasansata, sabakē saba santāpa harē.. 4..
rāma-rāja bha'i kāmadhēnu mahi, sukha sampadā lōka chā'ē.
janama janama jānakīnāthakē gunagana tulasidāsa gāyē.. 5..

Coronation of Lord Sri Ram as the Monarch of Ayodhya-II

Verse no. 6/23—The Great King Lord Sri Ram has won victory over the enemy and has come back. This is why there is rejoicing, merriment, festivities and celebrations in Ayodhya¹.

The Gods have decorated their beautiful aerial vehicles, and playing their musical instruments, they are rushing forward, happily and cheerfully as they are exhilarated to see him (Sri Ram) back in Ayodhya and become its King-Emperor² (1).

[¹Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/22, stanza no. 1; Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/23.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 11, ga.]

In every household of the city, attractive ritualistic designs shaped like squares and rectangles have been painted on the ground with a paste made out of sandal-wood, and these have been decorated with gems to enhance their beauty.

Everyone has put up auspicious and colourful flags, banners, buntings, arches and other celebratory paraphernalia, while various types of musical instruments are being played here and there, everywhere, in the city³ (2).

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 9.]

Hearing about the coronation of Lord Sri Ram, kings, knights, nobles and grandees from far-off and nearby continents and islands have come, carrying with them gifts for the Lord⁴.

Seeing him (Sri Ram) on throne alongside Sita, they pay their respects to him in a most delightful and cheerful manner. All of them are exhilarated in their hearts upon seeing the Lord on the throne (of Ayodhya) (3).

[⁴Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/22, stanza no. 6.]

All the abodes of the city, and by extension, all the corners of the realm and the world, are reverberating with auspicious and delightful songs, chanting of the Vedic hymns, and the applause and blessings of sages, hermits and seers⁵.

The Gods and Siddhas (mystics, those who possess special powers) shower flowers and praise the Lord⁶.

The Lord, on his part, has removed all the sorrows and miseries of everyone⁷. (4).

[⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 12.

⁶Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12; and (b) Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/22, stanza no. 5.

⁷Lord Ram ensured that everyone was happy and contented. No sorrow or grief of any kind was allowed to survive in Ayodhya once the Lord ascended the throne. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

The earth has become like a Kamdhenu cow⁸ (i.e. it gives all the desired yields in the form of crops, fruits, flowers, rainfall, minerals, gems, wealth and prosperity) in the reign of Sri Ram, and happiness and prosperity has spread over all the Lokas (worlds)⁹.

Tulsidas says that he has been singing the glories, the virtues, the great fame and the great deeds of the Lord of Sita (i.e. Sri Ram) in all the births he has taken (5).

[⁸Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 6/22, stanza no. 11; verse no. 6/23, stanza no. 5; Uttar Kand, stanza no. 3.

⁹Refer: (a) Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 7/1, stanza no. 1; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

Sub-section 21.3.2: Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 20:

दीपमालिका
राग आसावरी
(7 / 20)

साँझ समय रघुबीर—पुरीकी सोभा आजु बनी।
ललित दीपमालिका बिलोकहिं हित करि अवधधनी॥ 1॥
फटिक—भीत—सिखरन—पर राजति कंचन—दीप—अनी।
जनु अहिनाथ मिलन आयो मनि—सोभित सहसफनी॥ 2॥
प्रति मंदिर कलसनिपर भ्राजहिं मनिगन दुति अपनी।
मानहुँ प्रगटि बिपुल लोहितपुर पठइ दिये अवनी॥ 3॥
घर घर मंगलचार एकरस हरषित रंक—गनी।
तुलसिदास कल कीरति गावहिं, जो कलिमल—समनी॥ 4॥

dīpamālikā
rāga āsāvārī
(7/20)

sām̐jha samaya raghubīra-purīkī sōbhā āju banī.
lalita dīpamālikā bilōkahim hita kari avadhadhanī.. 1..
phaṭika-bhīta-sikharana-para rājati kañcana-dīpa-anī.
janu ahinātha milana āyō mani-sōbhita sahasaphanī.. 2..
prati mandira kalasanipara bhrājahim manigana duti apanī.
mānahuṁ pragaṭi bipula lōhitapura paṭha'i diyē avanī.. 3..
ghara ghara maṅgalacāra ēkarasa haraṣita rañka-ganī.
tulasidāsa kala kīrati gāvahim, jō kalimala-samanī.. 4..

Ayodhya Decorated with Lights to Welcome Lord Ram Back Home.

Verse no. 7/20—[It is a generally held traditional view that the festival of Diwali has its origin in Lord Sri Ram's victorious return to Ayodhya. In days when there was no electricity, earthen lamps were used to decorate and lighten up the city. Diwali is held roughly sometimes during late October till November. This current verse no. 7/20 describes the occasion when the city of Ayodhya was brightly illuminate and decorated wonderfully with variety of lamps for the first time after Lord Ram returned to the city at the end of his fourteen years sojourn in the forest during which period he had overcome the cruel demons.

Lord Ram's arrival and the subsequent illumination of Ayodhya in a magnificent way to celebrate this joyous occasion coincided with the time this

“Festival of Diwali” (or the ‘Festival of Lights’) is traditionally observed today, and ever since that time it has become a national festival of India. It signifies that ‘light always overcomes darkness’, for this festival is centered on the lighting of lamps in every home as well as at public places during the night: the ‘darkness of the night’ symbolizes all that is negative and evil, and the cause of fear in the minds of people about imaginary ghosts that stand for spiritual and temporal problems, that albeit have no substance but still seem real, and the ‘bright light of the lamps’ that eliminate this darkness to illuminate each single individual’s home, symbolizing his or her individual inner self, to help remove all fears arising out of evil and sins and gloomy thoughts, and instead infuse hope and cheer and enlightenment in life.

The title of this verse is “Deep-Malika” (dīpamālikā) which means ‘a garland of lighted earthen lamps’. It is because hundreds of lighted lamps are placed on roof-tops and in front of homes and everywhere else in rows that surround any given place, giving the impression of a string of lighted lamps that resemble garlands. In fact, the whole city of Ayodhya looked, from the sky during the night, as if it was draped in uncountable numbers of large and small garlands consisting of beads of glittering gems that illuminated the whole place like hundreds and thousands of glow-worms arranged in systematic rows.]

Today evening, there are lot of grand festivities and joyous celebrations marked with grandeur, pomp, pageantry, magnificence and euphoria in the capital city (Ayodhya) of Raghubir (Lord Sri Ram).

The Lord of Ayodhya (avadhadhanī) is enjoying the sights of Dipawali celebrations (called ‘the Festival of Lights’.] (1).

Golden lamps made of crystal, that have been arranged on walls of individual homes and public buildings, look so majestic and fantastic as if a thousand hooded legendary serpent called Sheshnath, who has a Mani (gem) on each of his hoods, has come to meet Lord Sri Ram (and offer his tributes to the Lord) (2).

Glittering gems on the top of spires (steeple and domes) of every palace (or household) look so radiant and splendid as if many ‘Mars’ (or auspicious worlds) have been created and sent (by the Creator) to the earth (to adorn the city by their magnificence and light to celebrate Lord Ram’s coming back to Ayodhya, and the restoration of peace and happiness in the world after the elimination of the demons and their tyranny) (3).

There are auspicious hymns being sung in every household of the city, while the rich and the poor are equally euphoric and participating in the celebrations.

Tulsidas says that he sings the auspicious and holy deeds, the glories, the great virtues and famed legend of Lord Sri Ram which is capable of destroying (eliminating) all the sins, evils and vices, along with their effects, during the era of Kaliyug (the present times that are rife with these spiritual problems) (4).

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Chapter 22

The Whole Story of the “Ramayana”

Recapitulated and Told Quickly in a ‘Fast Motion’ mode

We have finished our reading of this most marvelous, wonderful and fascinating “Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka”; it’s enchanting as well as enthralling.

Now, before we ring the curtain down on this absorbing and mesmerizing classical Story, let us quickly read the epic, the classical, and the universally acclaimed “Story of the Ramayana”, which actually is the “Story of the Life and Time of Lord Ram”, in its entirety, but here we shall adopt a ‘Brisk’ and a ‘Fast-Forward Mode’ to do so, which would be in sharp contrast with the general ‘Slow Motion’ style adopted while going through our narrative in the main body of this Book.

For this purpose, once again, we shall rely on an authentic book, a reliable source, where we can find a brisk narration of the wonderful Story of Lord Ram, also known as the Story of the Ramayana, and nowhere else has this glorious Story been narrated in a more beautiful and succinct style than in Goswami Tulsidas’ renowned classic “Ram Charit Manas”, the book that we have primarily relied upon in our main Text.

Hence, let us now quote verbatim from Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68 as follows:

प्रथमहिं अति अनुराग भवानी । रामचरित सर कहेसि बखानी ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि नारद कर मोह अपारा । कहेसि बहुरि रावन अवतारा ॥ ८ ॥

prathamahim ati anurāga bhavānī. rāmacarita sara kahēsi bakhānī. 7.
puni nārada kara mōha apārā. kahēsi bahuri rāvana avatārā. 8.

[Lord Shiva, who is the original narrator of this divine story pertaining to sage Kaagbhusund’s narration for the benefit of Garud as indicated earlier from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Doha no. 55, told Parvati, his divine consort who was also known by the name of Uma, as follows:-]

‘Oh Bhavani (one of the many names of Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva)! Kaagbhusund thus began his narration of the sacred story of Lord Ram with great reverence. In the beginning he most affectionately described the symbolic lake that contains the nectar of the divine story of Lord Ram that narrates the Lord’s many deeds and the sportly activities that he undertook during his manifestation as a human being (rāmacarita sara)¹. (7)

Then he described the way Narad was deluded under the influence of the Lord's Maya (delusion-creating powers)², and this was followed by the story of the birth of Ravana (the king of the demon race and the ruler of their capital Lanka)³. (8)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 40.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Narad was very proud of his pedigree as he was the son of the Creator Brahma, was a great, learned and wise saint and sage, was very close to Lord Vishnu, and was one of the most trusted devotees of the Lord. The Lord wished to remove his sense of pride and ego, and make him realise that all the virtues he possesses are due to the Lord's grace upon him. So the Lord spread his maverick Maya, delusion and the funny tricks that it plays, on him. Narad, who had always prided himself for his self-control and restraint over his sensual organs, fell in the trap of loving a girl and deciding to marry her at all costs. Lord Vishnu stage-managed the entire episode in such a way that when Narad could not fulfil his dreams he cursed Lord Vishnu, the very Lord who was his revered God and to whom he had vowed submission and devotion for life. Finally, when the Lord withdrew the shadow of his Maya, Narad realised his horrible mistake and begged the Lord for forgiveness.

³Refer: The story of Ravana and the birth of the demon race have been described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

प्रभु अवतार कथा पुनि गाई । तब सिसु चरित कहेसि मन लाई ॥ ९ ॥

prabhu avatāra kathā puni gāī. taba sisu carita kahēsi mana lāī. 9.

After explaining the cause for the Supreme Lord's decision to assume a human form as Lord Ram (to eliminate the horrors caused to earth and all living beings by the demons led by Ravana)¹, Kaagbhusund sang the story of the Lord's incarnation (descent upon the earth), and then he devoted his mind to recount cheerfully and with great interest the joy and the fun of the time when the Lord was a child, and the many happy events of that period associated with the childhood days in the life of the Lord². (9)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 192—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206.

Ravana spread terror in the entire universe—he spared neither the Gods in heaven nor the creatures on earth. Finally, fed-up and tormented endlessly, Mother Earth and all other Gods prayed to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to provide them help and succour. The Lord promised them that he would come down to earth himself to eliminate this scourage.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 191—to Doha no. 205.

See Doha no. 64 herein below.

Kaagbhusund was deeply absorbed in the narration so much so that his body was thrilled, his heart was filled with joy and affection for the Lord, and his mind was exhilarated.]

दो०. बालचरित कहि बिबिधि बिधि मन महुँ परम उछाह ।
रिषि आगवन कहेसि पुनि श्रीरघुबीर बिबाह ॥ ६४ ॥

dōhā.

bālacarita kahi bibidhi bidhi mana maham̐ parama uchāha.
riṣi āgavana kahēsi puni śrīraghubīra bibāha. 64.

As Kaagbhusund narrated the many events associated with the childhood days of Lord Ram, he was exceedingly ecstatic in his Mana (heart and mind). He narrated the various pranks, joys and episodes during the childhood days of Lord Ram.

Then he narrated the story of sage Vishwamitra's arrival (at Ayodhya and taking Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman with him to his hermitage with the aim of getting rid of the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice)¹.

This was followed by the narration of the events that culminated in Lord Ram's marriage (with Sita at Janakpur)². (Doha no. 64)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice was repeatedly defiled by the demons. Though the sage could have destroyed these demons himself but he desisted from doing so as becoming angry and killing someone during the progress of a fire sacrifice would have disrupted it and nullified its good effects. So he decided to go to Ayodhya and bring Lord Ram and Laxman to protect his rituals and punish the demons.

King Dasrath was initially reluctant, but his chief priest, sage Vashistha, prevailed upon him and advised him to do what sage Vishwamitra wished. At the sage's hermitage, the Lord slayed the army of demons and helped Vishwamitra to successfully complete his sacrifice.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 353.

The sage was very obliged and happy. He wanted to express his thanks to king Dasrath as well as reward Lord Ram and establish his fame in the whole world. So he took the two brothers to Janakpur where a bow-breaking ceremony was being held. It was to be attended by all the mighty kings and princes on earth at that time, and its objective was to marry Sita, the beautiful princess of the kingdom, to anyone who was able to break a 'bow'. This 'bow' was not an ordinary one; it was extremely heavy and strong as it belonged to Lord Shiva some time in the past. So it was not a joke to even lift it from its place in the ground, forget about bending it and breaking it!

All the assembled competitors failed—individually as well as in huge groups—to as much as move the bow by an inch. It was then that Lord Ram, on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra, lifted and broke the bow easily in front of the whole

assembly. He thus became eligible to marry Sita. Later on, all the three brothers of Lord Ram, i.e. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, too were married to other sisters of Sita at the same venue.]

चौ०. बहुरि राम अभिषेक प्रसंगा । पुनि नृप बचन राज रस भंगा ॥ १ ॥
पुरबासिन्ह कर बिरह बिषादा । कहेसि राम लछिमन संबादा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahuri rāma abhiṣēka prasaṅgā. puni nr̥pa bacana rāja rasa bhaṅgā. 1.
purabāsinha kara biraha biṣādā. kahēsi rāma lachimana sambādā. 2.

Then Kaagbhusund narrated the plans for anointing Lord Ram as Prince-Regent of the kingdom of Ayodhya by his father Dasrath, and the sudden interruption of the ceremonies due to his father's pledges given to his step mother Kaikeyi¹. (1)

Then he described the profound sorrows and agonies of the residents of Ayodhya when they learnt that their beloved Lord Ram is being exiled for fourteen years².

This was followed by the conversation between Lord Ram and his brother Laxman (who refused to stay back and insisted that he would accompany the Lord to the forest)³. (2)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Doha no. 40.

King Dasrath of Ayodhya wanted to crown Lord Ram on the throne of the kingdom. But if that happened, the main purpose of the Lord coming down to earth as a human being, viz. to eliminate the cruel demons and to bless the countless sages and hermits who had been doing severe Tapa, i.e. enduring so much hardship in order to attain the Lord, would be in doldrums. Because to achieve this objective it was necessary for Lord Ram to wonder in the forest so that he could go and mingle with the sages and hermits and ascetics who lived isolated lives in secluded places strewn all over the countless forests. Then he had to eliminate Ravana keeping in mind the parameters of the boon that Brahma had granted him—and one implied immunity was that he could not be killed by an army of humans.

As a king of Ayodhya, even if Lord Ram wanted to fight Ravana to eliminate him it would not have been possible for him to do it alone, for he would be obliged to take an army along. That would defeat the very purpose as it would be against Brahma's boon for Ravana, and so the latter would have survived no matter how invincible Lord Ram's army might have been. The Lord must do it single-handedly to comply with the restrictions imposed by Brahma's boon for Ravana's death.

Hence, it was absolutely essential that some sort of obstacle is created and the Lord would be free to go to the forest to bless the many sages, hermits and ascetics who were waiting for him, and to move ahead to eliminate the demons in their own fort. This is the reason why the Lord used his famous Maya to create a situation where he was forced to a fourteen year exile.

Kaikeyi agreed to bear the ignominy for the rest of her life by becoming instrumental in the great Game that the Lord of the World decided to play, if that served the Lord's purpose! So she prevailed upon her husband, king Dasrath, to send the Lord to the forest. No one ever realised the immense personal sacrifice that

Kaikeyi had made in this connection; everyone blamed her, even her own son Bharat never talked with her for the rest of his life. This is clearly said in Tulsidas' book "Geetawali", Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.

Only Lord Ram had known and acknowledged this secret of Kaikeyi's personal sacrifice, and he had always shown her the same respect that he had for her prior to the event of his being sent to the forest exile at her behest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, line no. 4 of Doha no. 6; and Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 244 where the Lord made it a point to especially meet Kaikeyi and show his respect to her.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.

The subjects of Ayodhya loved Lord Ram very dearly. And so when the news spread that he was going to the forest, the whole city plunged in gloom and grief.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76.

When Laxman, the Lord's younger brother, heard about the entire episode, he decided firmly that he would accompany him to the forest. The Lord initially tried to reason with him and persuade him to stay at home, but when he saw his determination he gave his consent.]

बिपिन गवन केवट अनुरागा । सुरसरि उतरि निवास प्रयागा ॥ ३ ॥
बालमीक प्रभु मिलन बखाना । चित्रकूट जिमि बसे भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

bipina gavana kēvaṭa anurāgā. surasari utari nivāsa prayāgā. 3.
bālamīka prabhu milana bakhānā. citrakūṭa jimi basē bhagavānā. 4.

Then Kaagbhusund narrated how Lord Ram departed for the forest (for fourteen years)¹.

This was followed by the narration of the Lord meeting the boatman known as Kevat, and the latter's devotion and honour for the Lord. Then the Lord crossed the river Ganges on a boat rowed by the boatman².

After crossing river Ganges, the Lord stopped at many places till he reached a place called Prayag (which is situated on the confluence of the three holy rivers, Ganges, Jamuna and Saraswati) where he stayed for some time (in the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj) before resuming his journey onwards³. (3)

Thereafter, Kaagbhusund described the meeting between sage Valmiki and Lord Ram⁴, and how the Lord stayed at Chitrakoot⁵. (4)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 79—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100.

King Dasrath sent his chief minister, named Sumantra, with a chariot to pick up Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman as they walked towards the gate of the city to embark on their onwards journey to the forest. The three boarded this chariot in order to make a quick exit, but the grieving and weeping citizens thronged it and ran behind it from all sides, slowing its speed to a slow crawl. The Lord felt extremely pitiful and was

overwhelmed with sadness, but did not know what to do. Eventually he had to tell Sumantra to take him out quietly in the darkness of the night when the tired citizens were sleeping on the ground. When they all woke up the next morning and found that the Lord had gone, they lamented grievously but had no choice except to return home and wait for the Lord's coming back at the end of the exile period.

Later on, Lord Ram asked Sumantra to return as well because they had reached the banks of the river Ganges, and the Lord had to cross it to the other side.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100—to Doha no. 102.

To cross the river Ganges, Lord Ram asked the boatman to bring his boat, but the latter insisted that he be allowed to first wash the holy feet of the Lord before he took him on board his boat. The Lord obliged him, and the most fortunate boatman had the privilege of washing the Lord's holy feet and distributing this sanctified water to his entire clan that would help them all to attain liberation from their humdrum existence.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 104—to Doha no. 109.

Lord Ram reached Prayag, the holy place where three sacred rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet. He bathed there and went to the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj before moving ahead and going to the next hermitage, that of sage Valmiki.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 132.

Sage Valmiki was one of the greatest sages of the time. It was he who would pen the divine story of Lord Ram in his epic known world-wide as the famous "Ramayana". It was at his hermitage that Sita spent her last days and where Lord Ram's twin sons Lava and Kush were born.

During Lord Ram's communion with Valmiki, the sage had described some symbolic places where Lord Ram should reside. These places have immense spiritual significance as they advise a person to know how to attain the Lord in an easy and accessible way. Valmiki then advised Lord Ram to go to Chitrakoot and live there for some time before resuming his onwards journey.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142.

Chitrakoot was the first place where Lord Ram abided for some time in peace with his wife Sita and brother Laxman after leaving his capital Ayodhya. It was here that Bharat would come to try to persuade the Lord to return. This place was very beautiful with green forests and a river with its streams with sparkling clean waters. The place was inhabited by many sages, hermits and ascetics who benefited spiritually by the Lord's residence amidst them.]

सचिवागवन नगर नृप मरना । भरतागवन प्रेम बहु बरना ॥ ५ ॥

करि नृप क्रिया संग पुरबासी । भरत गए जहँ प्रभु सुख रासी ॥ ६ ॥

sacivāgavana nagara nṛpa maranā. bharatāgavana prēma bahu baranā. 5.
kari nṛpa kriyā saṅga purabāsī. bharata ga'e jahaṁ prabhu sukha rāsī. 6.

The chief minister of the kingdom (named Sumantra, who was sent by King Dasrath to accompany Lord Ram on a chariot during his departure from Ayodhya, with a mandate to try to persuade the Lord to return) came back to the capital (empty-handed, after dropping Lord Ram, his wife Sita and brother Laxman in the forest at a place where the borders of the kingdom of Ayodhya ended)¹.

When the King (Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram) heard that the minister has come back alone (which implied that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita hadn't returned), he died out of shock and grief².

Then Kaagbhusund narrated Bharat's arrival back home (as he had been away at his maternal grandfather's place during the entire episode of Lord Ram being sent to exile by his crooked mother Kaikeyi)³, and described in different ways about Bharat's expression of undiluted and abundant feeling of love and affection for Lord Ram⁴. (5)

Bharat performed his father's last rites⁵, and accompanied by the residents of Ayodhya he went to Chitrakoot where Lord Ram resided at that time (to bring him back)⁶. (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 94—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 147.

King Dasrath had sent his most trusted minister named Sumantra on a chariot to pick up the Lord from the outskirts of the city and take him to a far corner of the kingdom so that his words given to Kaikeyi could be fulfilled to some extent. Then, when they reach some far corner of the kingdom or some natural boundary such as a river or a mountain range, Sumantra was instructed to try to persuade the Lord to return home. But it so happened that the Lord refused, and he sent Sumantra back to Ayodhya. He returned with a heavy heart and a shamed face.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 155.

When the king learnt that Sumantra has returned empty-handed, he grieved and died of agony of separation from Lord Ram.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 157—to Doha no. 158.

The throne of Ayodhya now lay vacant. So the chief priest named Vashistha sent a messenger and summoned Bharat and his younger brother Shatrughan who were at their maternal grandfather's place at that time. When the news reached Bharat and he saw the sombre face of the messengers, he became apprehensive that something was surely wrong. He packed up and came back to Ayodhya immediately, only to discover a city plunged in gloom and grieving gravely.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 169; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 184.

Back home, Bharat came to know all about the nasty things that had unfolded in the household: his beloved brothers Ram and Laxman along with his sister-in-law Sita were sent to exile at the behest of his crooked mother Kaikeyi, and his father Dasrath was dead. Stunned and flummoxed beyond measure, he vehemently cursed his mother and wailed and grieved for the loss of Lord Ram, Laxman, Sita and Dasrath.

By all his words and actions Bharat made it amply clear to all that he had no role in this sad development, and that no one should ever question his integrity, and his loyalty and love for Lord Ram.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 170—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 171.

However, many things had to be done now. First was the necessity of performing the last rites of king Dasrath whose body had been embalmed earlier. So Bharat did this ritual himself.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 241.

Then a royal court was held to decide the next course of action: who would sit on the throne? Though everyone felt that Bharat should fill the gap and accept the crown at least as a temporary measure till the time Lord Ram came back at the end of his fourteen years of exile, but he flatly refused, saying that the crown and the throne rightly belonged to Lord Ram and he has nothing to do with it. He declared his intention of going to the forest and bringing the Lord back. This decision by him made him dear of the masses and removed all doubts in the mind of the citizens about Bharat's integrity. A huge party was assembled and the procession went to Chitrakoot in the forest where Lord Ram abided at that time.]

पुनि रघुपति बहुबिधि समुझाए । लै पादुका अवधपुर आए ॥ ७ ॥
भरत रहनि सुरपति सुत करनी । प्रभु अरु अत्रि भेंट पुनि बरनी ॥ ८ ॥

puni raghupati bahubidhi samujhā'ē. lai pādukā avadhapura ā'ē. 7.
bharata rahani surapati suta karani. prabhu aru atri bhēṇṭa puni barani. 8.

Lord Ram consoled Bharat and explained the complexities of the situation to him in all possible ways (and finally managed to convince Bharat that it is in the best of interests of all that the Lord be allowed to complete his term of fourteen years in the forest, and in the meantime Bharat could use Lord Ram's footwear as his symbolic presence in Ayodhya)¹.

Thereafter, Bharat returned to Ayodhya bringing with him Lord Ram's sandals (a wooden footwear)². (7)

Kaagbhusund described the way Bharat lived at Ayodhya. [Bharat had put these sandals on the throne of Ayodhya, and he himself retired to a place on the outskirts of the city to lead an austere life like that of a hermit.]³

He then continued with his narration, describing the episode involving the son of the King of Gods (Indra; the son's name was Jayant)⁴.

He then described the meeting between Lord Ram and sage Atri⁵. (8)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 304—to Doha no. 308; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 313—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 316.

Bharat tried his level best to try to persuade Lord Ram to return. The Lord explained the complexity of the situation and somehow made Bharat relent. Bharat agreed and said that if it is the Lord's wish, so be it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 316—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 322.

As a token of the Lord's return and be crowned on the throne, Bharat brought the Lord's wooden sandals and put them on the throne of Ayodhya.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 323—to Sortha/Doha no. 326.

After that, Bharat retired to a place on the outskirts of the city and lived there an exemplary life of a hermit for the entire duration of the period of fourteen years while Lord Ram stayed in the forest.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

Indra's son, named Jayant, was very crooked, unruly and mischievous like his father, and behaved like a prince of a king who himself is of an evil and jealous mind. He wanted to tease Sita and test the powers of Lord Ram. So he disguised himself as a crow and went and pricked Sita. Lord Ram was angry, but the Lord is so merciful that instead of immediately killing Jayant he shot a reed at him so that he is inflicted some injury as a punishment, but not killed. Jayant ran for his life everywhere in the universe, but this arrow-like reed followed him in hot pursuit. Finally he met sage Narad who advised him to go and ask for forgiveness from the Lord himself, for no one in this creation can give shelter to someone who opposes the Lord.

Jayant came and pleaded for his life with the Lord who obviously excused him, but the Lord decided that such evil persons need to be punished. So he made Jayant 'one-eyed' so that he would be recognised and scorned by everyone for his evil nature.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.

Realising that his presence in Chitrakoot will not serve his purpose any more as this location had been known by all by this time and the Lord could not live incognito any more, he decided to move ahead.

He reached the hermitage of sage Atri who lovingly welcomed the Lord and paid his obeisance to him. It was here that the sage's wife Anusuiya had preached Sita, Lord Ram's wife, about the principles that ought to be followed by a righteous wife. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-19 that precede it.]

दो०. कहि बिराध बध जेहि बिधि देह तजी सरभंग ।

बरनि सुतीछन प्रीति पुनि प्रभु अगस्ति सतसंग ॥ ६५ ॥

dōhā.

kahi birādha badha jēhi bidhi dēha tajī sarabhaṅga.
barani sūtīchana prīti puni prabhu agasti satasaṅga. 65.

After giving an account of the death of Viradha (a demon who was slayed by Lord Ram in the forest)¹ and the way sage Sarbhanga left his mortal coil (i.e. the way the sage left his body by a self-kindled fire of Yoga after meeting the Lord)², he (Kaagbhusund) proceeded to describe the love and devotion of sage Sutikchhan for the Lord³, and then the holy communion sage Agasta had with the Lord⁴. (Doha no. 65)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 7.

Moving ahead from Atri's hermitage, the Lord met a demon named Viradha. He killed the demon, and finding that he was sorrowful the Lord provided him deliverance.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 9.

Sage Sarbhanga was spiritually overwhelmed by his meeting with Lord Ram. He felt ecstatic and lovingly prayed to the Lord before leaving his gross body by burning it in a self-kindled fire of Yoga, thereby attaining emancipation and salvation.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 12.

The next sage the Lord met was Sutikshan. When he heard that his beloved Lord Ram was coming that way where he lived, the sage was totally exhilarated with joy unbound, and he ran thither to meet the Lord in a state of trance, tears spilling from his eyes and body utterly thrilled and beyond his control. He began to dance and sing in ecstasy and jubilation. Then when the climax was reached he went into a 'Samadhi', a trance-like state of meditation and deep reflection, when he sat motionless on the ground, lost in thoughts of the Lord. The Lord thoroughly enjoyed this scene and did not wish to disturb the sage. So for quite some time the Lord hid himself behind a tree, watching Sutikchhan's extremely blissful state of spiritual exultation. Eventually, the Lord woke him up, and the sage fell down at his feet. After praying to the Lord and submitting himself to him, the sage accompanied him to the hermitage of sage Agastya.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 13.

It was sage Agastya who advised Lord Ram to move on in the direction of the 'Dandak' forest and live there at a place called 'Panchavati' where many other sages and hermits abided. It is narrated herein below.]

चौ०. कहि दंडक बन पावनताई । गीध मइत्री पुनि तेहि गाई ॥ १ ॥

पुनि प्रभु पंचवटीं कृत बासा । भंजी सकल मुनिन्ह की त्रासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahi daṇḍaka bana pāvanatā'ī. gīdha ma'itrī puni tēhiṁ gā'ī. 1.
puni prabhu pañcabaṭiṁ kṛta bāsā. bhañjī sakala muninha kī trāsā. 2.

After telling Garud about the purification of Dandak-forest by the Lord by the virtue of his staying there for some time¹, Kaagbhusund narrated the friendship between Lord Ram and the Vulture (known as Jatau)². (1)

Thereafter, he narrated the way the Lord stayed at the Panchavati forest and freed all the sages who abided there from their agonies and torments³# (2).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13.

This forest was earlier cursed, and as a result it was un-inhabited. The Lord's passage through it and his stay at a Panchavati cured this place of the curse and made it vibrant with life once again.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 13.

This vulture would later on sacrifice his life to protect Sita while she was being abducted by the demon king Ravana. To honour his friendship with Jatau who was old like the Lord's own father, the Lord performed his last rite with his own hands. See Chaupai line no. 7 herein below.

Thus, Jatau managed to get that rarest of rare end which not even the greatest of sages and hermits, and not even king Dasrath, the Lord's worldly father, had the privilege to get. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 33.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, 2nd line of Doha no. 13 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 15, 17-18, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow this Doha.

#It ought to be noted that 'Panchavati' was a pleasant place surrounded by greenery in the middle of the dense forest known as 'Dandak' which was uninhabitable in general. The word 'Panchavati' means a cluster of 'five trees'. These trees were on the banks of the river Godavari; they were huge and provided a perfect place for rest. Here, Lord Ram and his wife Sita and brother Laxman lived in a thatched hut under the combined shade of these five trees.

When sage Agastya had advised Lord Ram to go to the Dandak forest and stay at Panchavati, he had told the Lord that many sages who lived there would also benefit by having a rare chance to meet the Lord and find redemption for their souls. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-17 that precede Doha no. 13.]

पुनि लछिमन उपदेस अनूपा । सूपनखा जिमि कीन्हि कुरूपा ॥ ३ ॥

खर दूषन बध बहुरि बखाना । जिमि सब मरमु दसानन जाना ॥ ४ ॥

puni lachimana upadēsa anūpā. sūpanakhā jimi kīnhi kurūpā. 3.

khara dūṣana badha bahuri bakhānā. jimi saba maramu dasānana jānā. 4.

Then, Kaagbhusund described the way Lord Ram taught his brother Laxman on some wonderful metaphysical concepts in a comprehensive but simple way¹. This was followed by the narration of the event when the demoness known as Supernakha (meaning a female demon who had nails and ears extremely large) was mutilated². (3)

He went on to narrate the slaying of the demons known as Khar and Dushan (along with their armies) by the Lord³, and the way the demon king Ravana (of Lanka) came to learn about all these developments⁴. (4)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 17.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Supernakha was a sister of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. She was a very lustful female demon, and when she saw the charming form of Lord Ram she was overcome by passion. She assumed a form of a beautiful damsel and approached the Lord with a proposal of marriage, which obviously the Lord refused. Being spurned and rebuked, Supernakha became violent and wished to kill Sita, the Lord's wife. So he asked Laxman to chop-off her ears and nose as a symbolic warning to other such lascivious ladies to mind their own business and leave upright males alone. This incident was the spark that lit the fire that culminated in the ferocious war of Lanka that finally led to the killing of the cruel demons and their king Ravana.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

Khar and Dushan were the commanders of the demon army and cousins of Supernakha. This army was ordained to look after the interest of the demons in the area where the Dandak forest was situated to ensure that no sage or hermit successfully performed any fire sacrifice that would empower them to kill the demons. When mutilated, Supernakha rushed to these two and complained. Taking this as an open insult and challenge, they rushed to attack the Lord with a vicious blood-thirsty demon army. In the end, all of them were killed by Lord Ram alone.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 21—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 23.

When the entire demon army was decimated, Supernakha dashed to Lanka and reported the events to her brother Ravana. He was stunned and became pensive. He began to wonder who this gentleman was who would be powerful, strong, bold and courageous enough to rebuff Supernakha and provoke the demons. Surely everything was not fine. He had his strong reservations in the beginning and did not want to pick up a fight. But Supernakha applied all her tricks and persuaded Ravana to save the face of the demon race: say, what will the world say, that Ravana could not even protect the dignity and respect of his own sister? This would certainly undermine his fame and authority in the world, and especially in the demon race; it will be a loss of face like no other event. Thus instigated, Ravana decided to face the challenge.]

दसकंधर मारीच बतकही । जेहि बिधि भई सो सब तेहिं कही ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि माया सीता कर हरना । श्रीरघुबीर बिरह कछु बरना ॥ ६ ॥

dasakandhara mārīca batakahī. jēhi bidhi bha'ī sō saba tēhim kahī. 5.
puni māyā sītā kara haranā. śrīraghubīra biraha kachu baranā. 6.

Then, Kaagbhusund described in detail the conversation between Ravana and Marich as it took place¹. (5)

Then he went on to narrate how an illusionary form or a shadowy image of Sita was abducted (by Ravana)², and a little of Lord Ram's grief, desolation and lamentations at her loss was also described by him³. (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 26.

Ravana went to one of his close confidantes, a demon named Marich. He lived on an island in the middle of the ocean ever since he was flung there by Lord Ram with a headless arrow at the time Marich was trying to defile the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. Marich lived in awe of the Lord and repeated his holy name out of fear ever since. But the mystery of this holy name of the Lord is such that though Marich repeated it out of fear but it made him eligible for salvation and emancipation. Ravana using him as a tool to kidnap Sita was merely an excuse whereby Marich would have a second divine glimpse of Lord Ram before leaving his mortal coil to obtain deliverance at the hands of the Lord himself when he would be shot by the latter.

So, as it happened, Marich tried his best to dissuade Ravana from antagonising Lord Ram, but fate had other things planned. Ravana threatened to kill Marich if he did not comply with his request to become a deer with a golden skin so that the former could abduct Sita, Lord Ram's wife, to avenge Supernakha's mutilation. Dangled between the devil and the deep sea, Marich decided that it was better to die at the hands of the Lord than being tortured and killed by this evil fellow Ravana. So he agreed.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 29.

When Sita saw the golden-skinned deer roaming near her hermitage, she asked Lord Ram to bring it to her so that she could keep it in hermitage. The all-knowing Lord knew the Divine Plan: he knew that this was the beginning of the end of the ferocious demon Ravana for which he had descended from the heaven at the request of the Gods. To ensure that the chastity of Sita would not be compromised, the Lord created, out of his Maya, i.e. his delusion creating powers, a shadow-like Sita that was exactly a replica of her original self. The original Sita was hidden in the fiery glow of Yoga, the stupendous dazzling fire that is generated by meditation. In practical terms, it is believed that she assumed a disembodied body as her soul left her gross body and reverted to its original subtle form as the 'pure consciousness' that has no physical identity and is invisible. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

So in effect, what Ravana took away was only a 'shadow' of Sita.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 30.

Lord Ram had to make a great show of ignorance and act like a perfect human being so that Ravana did not get a wind of who actually he was. This is because Ravana was a highly learned soul, and he knew that one day he too would have to die

like all living beings irrespective of the boons he had extracted from Brahma, the creator, that no ordinary person would be able to kill him. Besides this, he had control over the entire universe at that point of time, so it is reasonable to assume that he was also aware of the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the Gods—i.e. that the Lord would himself come down to earth to get rid of the menace of Ravana. This thing—whether or not this man known as Ram is Lord Vishnu himself who has come to kill Ravana—was weighing very heavily on the mind of Ravana, though he was not certain what the reality was. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

Therefore it was the need of the hour for Lord Ram to keep his identity secret and Ravana confused. Otherwise, if Ravana got the wind that Ram is Lord Vishnu, he would either surrender unconditionally before the Lord or flee and hide somewhere to become untraceable. In the former case, i.e. if he surrendered, Lord Ram would be duty-bound to forgive him, as it would be totally dishonourable to kill someone who has surrendered. Should this happen, the very purpose of the Lord's entire journey to earth would be nullified and made void. Who knows that after escaping death and when the Lord goes away, Ravana would not revert back to his old ugly ways? It was not a chance that could be taken by the Lord.

So, Lord Ram decided to act like an ordinary man whose wife was kidnapped by someone in the forest: he wailed and grieved and wept and lamented profusely so that any spy of the demons who was put on watch, would go and report to Ravana that Sita's husband is an ordinary man like any other. And therefore, there was no cause of bother or worry for the demon king on that count.]

पुनि प्रभु गीध क्रिया जिमि कीन्ही । बधि कबंध सबरिहि गति दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
बहुरि बिरह बरनत रघुबीरा । जेहि बिधि गए सरोबर तीरा ॥ ८ ॥

puni prabhu gīdha kriyā jimi kīnhī. badhi kabandha sabarihi gati dīnhī. 7.
bahuri biraha baranata raghubīrā. jēhi bidhi ga'ē sarōbara tīrā. 8.

Thereafter, Kaagbhusund described the way Lord Ram performed the last rites of the Vulture king (Jatau)¹, and then how he slayed the demon named Kabandha³ and went ahead on his way to the hermitage of Sabari (the old tribal woman) where the Lord provided her salvation and emancipation³. (7)

Then Kaagbhusund described the way Lord Ram wailed and grieved for Sita as he wended his way onwards in the forest⁴. The Lord finally went to a pleasant lake called Pampa which abounded in natural beauty, and where he took rest for some time under the shade of a leafy tree⁵. (8)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-26 that precede it, and from Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

As has been said earlier in Chaupai line no. 1 herein above, Jatau, the Vulture, was promised friendship by Lord Ram. Jatau kept his part of the bargain by laying down his life in a valiant attempt to save Sita from being kidnapped by Ravana. When Lord Ram came that way where Jatau lay writhing in pain and murmuring the holy name of the Lord, the Lord showered his love on him by picking him up in his arms, cleaning his wounds with his own hands, and showing great respect and gratitude to

him. But Jatau's wounds were so serious that he could not survive. When he died, Lord Ram performed his last rites in the same way he would have done for his own father. This at once catapulted Jatau to an exalted position and gave him a privilege that not even the greatest of sages and hermits obtained any time in history.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Kabandha was a Gandharva, a sort of demi-God, who was turned into a demon by the curse of sage Durbasa. Lord Ram liberated him from this curse and his soul went to the heaven in accordance with his destiny.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

Sabari was an old tribal woman who had great devotion for Lord Ram. She had been living alone in the forest in the hope that one day she would be able to have a communion with her beloved Lord before discarding her mortal coil. As the word spread in the forest that Lord Ram has arrived and was moving around blessing and interacting with the many sages and hermits who lived there, Sabari's spirit lifted and she longed for the moment when the Lord would come visiting her. So when he did come, Sabari was extremely excited. Her love and devotion for the Lord knew no bounds; she offered him plums she had carefully picked up and stored for this moment. At the time of his departure, Sabari left her mortal coil by burning her gross body in a self-lit fire of Yoga and thereby allowing her soul to find emancipation and salvation. Like in the case of Jatau, Lord Ram performed her last rites with his own hands like the way he would have done for his own mother.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39.

After providing liberation and deliverance to Sabari, Lord Ram moved ahead in the direction of the Pampa lake as advised by her. His mental state of grief and sadness at the loss of his wife Sita has been described in the verses referred to herein above.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41.

By-and-by, the Lord arrived at the lake called Pampa. It was a fascinating place with verdant greenery all around and a fresh-water lake on one side. The tired Lord Ram and his brother Laxman took a bath here and rested under the shade of tree for some time. It was here that sage Narad came to meet the Lord as described herein below.]

दो०. प्रभु नारद संबाद कहि मारुति मिलन प्रसंग ।

पुनि सुग्रीव मिताई बालि प्रान कर भंग ॥ ६६ (क) ॥

dōhā.

prabhu nārada sambāda kahi māruti milana prasaṅga.
puni sugrīva mitā'ī bālī prāna kara bhaṅga. 66 (a).

Then Kaagbhusund narrated Lord Ram's conversation with sage Narad¹, his meeting with Sri Hanuman, son of Wind-God², his friendship with Sugriv (the exiled prince of the monkey kingdom)³, and the slaying of (Sugriv's brother) Bali⁴. (Doha no. 66-a)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

When Lord Ram and Laxman were resting under the shade of a tree on the banks of the Pampa lake, all the Gods came and prayed to the Lord. After all of them went to their respective abodes and the Lord was alone, sage Narad came to meet him. The sage was very sorry that the Lord has had to suffer so much because of his curse. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 136—to Doha no. 137.}

Sage Narad came to Lord Ram, paid his respects and prayed to him, and then asked the Lord to tell him why he had not allowed him (Narad) to marry when he had a desire to do so. After that, the sage asked the Lord to outline the characters and qualities of true saints. The Lord's answer satisfied him and he went his way.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.

Moving ahead in the direction of Lanka, Lord Ram and Laxman arrived near Mt. Rishyamook where Sugriv lived on its summit with his few trusted companions after he was ejected from the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha by his elder brother Baali due to some misunderstanding between the two.

When Sugriv saw two strangers wondering below, he wondered who they were; are they spies sent by Baali? So he sent his trusted friend Hanuman, who was the son of the Wind-God, to go and investigate. Hanuman came to Lord Ram disguised as a Brahmin, and discovered to his joy that the stranger was none else but his true Lord Ram for whose arrival he had been waiting for so long. He fell at the feet of the Lord and the two embraced each other. Later on it would turn out that Hanuman would be the most trusted and dearest of devotees of the Lord in future.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

Hanuman took Lord Ram and Laxman to the top of the mountain and forged a friendship between Sugriv and Lord Ram. Both empathised with each other as both had suffered the same fate: they were exiled from their respective kingdoms, and were suffering the agony of separation from their wives. Sugriv's wife was kept by his brother Baali when he threw him out of the kingdom.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

When Lord Ram heard the story of Sugriv and found that grave injustice was done to him, then like a true friend should do, the Lord decided to help Sugriv by eliminating his jealous brother and restoring his right to the throne of Kishkindha. This eventually led to the killing of Baali. Since Baali had prayed to Lord Ram and asked for mercy and forgiveness at the time of his death, the Lord provided him deliverance and sent him to his own abode in the heaven.]

कपिहि तिलक करि प्रभु कृत सैल प्रबरषन बास ।
बरनन बर्षा सरद अरु राम रोष कपि त्रास ॥ ६६ (ख) ॥

kapihi tilaka kari prabhu kṛta saila prabaraṣana bāsa.
baranana barṣā sarada aru rāma rōṣa kapi trāsa. 66 (b).

Lord Ram anointed Sugriv as King of Kishkindha¹ and himself took up residence on the summit of a mountain known as Prabarshan². Then followed an account of the rainy and autumn seasons during which the Lord lived on this mountain³, and Lord Ram's anger at Sugriv (when the Lord observed that the latter had done nothing to search for the whereabouts of Sita as promised in the beginning of their friendship)⁴. (Doha no. 66-b)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it.

Lord Ram kept his promise and appointed Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it.

After that, the Lord spent the rainy and the autumn seasons on Mt. Prabarshan. He kept his vows of living like a hermit in a forest environment for fourteen years by refusing to enter the city of Kishkindha though Sugriv would have cheerfully hosted him.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.

These verses excellently describe in poetic finery the beauty of Nature during the two seasons: the rainy and the autumn.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 21.

Lord Ram was annoyed that once Sugriv got back his kingdom he had all but forgotten the promises he had made to the Lord—that he would do his best to find where Sita was. So the Lord sent Laxman to reprimand Sugriv and make him come to his senses. Sugriv realised his mistake, said he was sorry, asked for forgiveness, and assembled a huge army of messengers and spies to go and trace Sita. This is narrated below.]

चौ०. जेहि बिधि कपिपति कीस पठाए । सीता खोज सकल दिसि धाए ॥ १ ॥
बिबर प्रबेस कीन्ह जेहि भाँती । कपिन्ह बहोरि मिला संपाती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jēhi bidhi kapipati kīsa paṭhā'ē. sītā khōja sakala disi dhā'ē. 1.
bibara prabēsa kīnha jēhi bhāmtī. kapinha bahōri milā sampātī. 2.

Kaagbhusund then continued his narration, describing how the monkey king sent his messengers or scouts in all directions in search of Sita¹ [1], and how the group sent towards the south entered a cave² and emerged from there to meet Sampati (vulture Jatau's brother)³ [2]. (1-2)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Doha no. 21—to Doha no. 23.

Hundreds of thousands of monkeys and bears assembled for the purpose. They were directed to go in every direction of the earth and search for Sita. It is to be noted here especially that these messengers or scouts were most suitable for the job as the extended forested areas of the earth were a part of their natural habitat and they were well acquainted with the geography and topography of these places. Natural obstacles such as mountains, rivers and forests and their wild animals and intractable paths were no problems for them. Obviously, they were far better qualified in this search than humans would have been.

One such group led by Angad, Hanuman and Jamvant, the bear king, headed towards the south. Eventually, this group would reach the edge of the ocean across which lay the fort of Lanka in the middle of the vast ocean that stretched beyond.

[²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 25.

Exhausted, hungry and thirsty, this latter group was searching for water to drink. Hanuman located a cave from which emerged playful swans, herons and chirping birds with wet wings; many were hovering over the mouth of the cave ready to enter it, and many others were emerging from it.

The thirst group deduced that surely there was a fresh water source inside. So they gingerly picked their way in it and at its end saw a wonderful garden where they met a hermitress who told them the way out of the cave which would take them straight to the shore of the ocean across which lay Lanka. Meanwhile, the group refreshed itself by drinking and bathing in the fresh water-body inside the cave and eating sweet fruits that were there in abundance. The hermitress herself went to Lord Ram, prayed to the Lord, and on his instructions went to the northern mountains to do meditation and austerities at a holy place called Badrinath.

[³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 29.

The hermitress had told the group of monkeys and bears to close their eyes so that she could transport them by her transcendental powers to the edge of the ocean. When the group opened its eyes they found themselves there, with the ocean spreading like a formidable obstacle before them. All of them sat down in dismay and gloom, and an abject sense of hopelessness and failure overcame them. Meanwhile, Sampati, who was an old vulture and the elder brother of Jatau, saw the dejected group of monkeys and bears and thought that when they died he would have a great feast.

The terrified group loudly invoked Jatau's sacrifices for the cause of Lord Ram even as they implored Sampati to spare them as they were also on the Lord's mission. When Sampati heard the full story, he felt sorry for them, and in order to do his bit to help in the Lord's mission, he told them about the location of Sita in Lanka.

This was made possible as vultures have the uncanny ability to see long distances. Then Sampati went his way where the king of birds Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, resided—i.e. to the heaven.]

सुनि सब कथा समीरकुमारा । नाघत भयउ पयोधि अपारा ॥ ३ ॥
लंकाँ कपि प्रबेस जिमि कीन्हा । पुनि सीतहि धीरजु जिमि दीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

sunī saba kathā samīrakumārā. nāghata bhaya'u payōdhi apārā. 3.
laṅkāṁ kapi prabēsa jimi kīnhā. puni sītahi dhīraju jimi dīnhā. 4.

Upon hearing all the news (from Sampati, about Sita's location at Lanka), the son of the Wind God (i.e. Hanuman) jumped over the vast ocean¹. (3)

Kaagbhusund then described how he entered Lanka², and then, how he met and re-assured Sita³. (4)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.

No one in the group of monkeys and bears had the ability to cross the vast gap of the ocean between its northern edge where they were currently seated and the place where the island of Lanka was situated—a distance of roughly 100 Yojans, which means approximately 800 miles. {Refer: Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29.}

Jamvant, the old king of bears, knew who actually Hanuman was, i.e. that he was the son of the Wind-God, and therefore he had, for one, the ability to fly in the air like a bird, and secondly, he possessed an incomparable strength that the powerful forces of wind possess. So Jamvant requested Hanuman to pick up the challenge and do his might to serve the purpose of the Lord. This way he would get unparalleled fame and glory in the world personally, and bring laurels to the group in general.

The brave Hanuman recalled the purpose of his descent on earth, and immediately embarked on this sacred venture by assuming a huge form and launching himself from a high hill like a modern-day missile. He sailed across the sky over the choppy waters of the mighty ocean. On the way to Lanka however, he met and easily overcame some obstacles that were created by the demon commanders who had posted guards in the ocean to prevent any intruder from entering the city of Lanka.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Doha no. 5.

Finally, Hanuman landed on the soil of Lanka. There he met Lankini, a female demon who was tasked to guard the main entrance to the fort. A single blow from Hanuman's clenched fist made her vomit blood. She realised that he was not an ordinary intruder but someone with an extraordinary authority and power to fulfil the mandate of the Creator. So she blessed him and quietly allowed him in.

Then the wise Hanuman assumed a form of a small mosquito to avoid detection, and freely roamed in the city of Lanka, looking at all its nooks and corners to find where Sita might be. It was night time, and everyone was asleep. He peered in all the houses of the demons, and even in the royal palace of Ravana to investigate Sita's whereabouts, but failed.

When it was nearly dawn, he located a small house that bore the name of Lord Ram on its walls, and from inside it he heard someone muttering the holy name. He marvelled at this astonishing sight which was an incongruity in the middle of the city of demons, and determined to explore further. He knocked at the door and to his amazement he discovered that it was the home of a devotee of Lord Ram whose name was Vibhishan, and who happened to be a younger brother of Ravana, the demon king. The two were mutually astonished at this meeting, and thanked the Lord for this coincidence. After preliminary exchange of greetings and pleasantries, Vibhishan asked Hanuman the purpose of his visit, and when he was told about it he disclosed the exact location of Sita to Hanuman: that she was confined to a garden called 'Ashok Van'.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Hanuman took his leave from Vibhishan and went and hid himself on a huge leafy tree under the shade of which sat Sita, forlorn, distressed, emaciated and grieving. She was surrounded by female guards. Just at that time Ravana came and threatened Sita with death if she remained stubborn and refused to surrender herself before him. Hanuman watched silently, seething with anger, and his determination to eliminate the scourge of the demons became all the more firm.

When Ravana left fretting and fuming, Hanuman dropped the signet ring that the Lord had given him as a token for recognition by Sita, that he was a genuine messenger from the Lord himself and not some imposter. Sita was apprehensive in the beginning, but in due course of time she realised that Hanuman was indeed the Lord's faithful devotee, and then she profusely blessed him. Hanuman assured her that the Lord is coming soon with a huge army of monkeys and bears to free her from her captivity. But she would have to have patience and courage, and bear with some more sufferings till the Lord arrives.]

बन उजारि रावनहि प्रबोधी । पुर दहि नाघेउ बहुरि पयोधी ॥ ५ ॥
आए कपि सब जहँ रघुराई । बैदेही की कुसल सुनाई ॥ ६ ॥

bana ujāri rāvanahi prabōdhī. pura dahi nāghē'u bahuri payōdhī. 5.
ā'ē kapi saba jahaṁ raghurā'ī. baidēhī kī kusala sunā'ī. 6.

Then Kaagbhusund narrated how Hanuman ruined and laid to waste the magnificent garden of fruit trees where Sita was confined by Ravana¹, and how he exhorted Ravana to abandon his arrogance and evil wishes, and to ensure his own welfare as well of his clan he should free Sita and make truce with Lord Ram². [But having failed to persuade Ravana to come to his senses—] Then Hanuman burnt the city and reduced it to ashes³, and once again crossed the ocean to reach the other side (where his friends were eagerly waiting for his arrival)⁴. (5)

All the monkeys came back to where Lord Ram was waiting for them⁵, and they told Lord Ram the good news about Sita (that she has been traced and is still alive)⁶. (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Hanuman was very hungry, so he sought Sita's permission to eat the ripe sweet fruits from the trees that were abundant in the garden. Hanuman needed an excuse to punish Ravana and warn him of the fate that stared him in his face now onwards. He also wished to show-case his individual strength and valour to Sita in order to assure her of the combined might of the monkey army in case she had some reservations about the effectiveness of the Lord making a decision of facing a formidable enemy such as the demons with their king Ravana with a rag-tag army of humble monkeys and bears.

Once Sita granted her permission, Hanuman virtually went berserk in the garden and the orchard—uprooting trees, demolishing buildings, littering the place with ruins, and beating the guards black and blue. Terrified and at their wits end, the survivors rushed to report to Ravana about the havoc caused by a strange 'monkey'.

Ravana sent his son Akshakumar with his army of demons who were all killed by Hanuman. Stunned and angry, Ravana sent his other son Meghanad who, after taking a severe beating in the beginning, somehow managed to trap Hanuman in a snare and bring him to the court of Ravana.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.

There in the court of Ravana, Hanuman tried his best to persuade the demon king to abandon his reckless behaviour and to be sensible enough to free Sita and make peace with Lord Ram so that the demon race is saved from annihilation. But Ravana was arrogant and stubborn to the hilt. He would not listen.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 26.

After a heated argument with Hanuman, Ravana ordered that his tail be wrapped in cloth dipped in oil and set on fire.

As the fire flared up, Hanuman made his body so small that it slipped out of the wrappings of cloth but only a tip of his tail remained stuck to one end of the blazing cloth so that he could drag it behind him. Then he leapt across the city, from building to building, market place to market place, from public squares to gardens to surrounding forests etc. that eventually ignited a huge fire across the length and breadth of the great city of Lanka that reduced it to a smouldering heap of blackened rubble.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 28.

Finally, Hanuman jumped into the ocean to douse the remaining part of the wrapped cloth that still clung to the end of his tail, cooled his body, and stood before Sita to take leave of her. Then he jumped over the waters of the roaring ocean with the same zeal and ease with which he had come to Lanka sometimes back, to reach the other side where his friends were anxiously waiting for him.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29.

The ecstatic group had a celebration, and then they came back jubilantly to Kishkindha to report the good news to Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. Then they all went to Mt. Parbarshan where Lord Ram was staying at that time to report to him.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.

The group's leader Jamvant, the bear king, briefed Lord Ram about the grand success of the mission, and that Sita had been found by Hanuman. Then the overwhelmed and grateful Lord thanked them all and affectionately embraced Hanuman, telling him that he would be indebted to him for the rest of his life. Hanuman briefly told him everything he had seen at Lanka and about the precarious condition of Sita, that though she was alive but she is living a life of hell. He urged the Lord not to waste any more time to start the final mission to free her and punish her tormentors.]

सेन समेति जथा रघुबीरा । उतरे जाइ बारिनिधि तीरा ॥ ७ ॥

मिला बिभीषन जेहि बिधि आई । सागर निग्रह कथा सुनाई ॥ ८ ॥

sēna samēti jathā raghubīrā. utarē jā'i bārinidhi tīrā. 7.
milā bibhīṣana jēhi bidhi ā'ī. sāgara nigrāha kathā sunā'ī. 8.

Kaagbhusund then narrated how Lord Ram collected and assembled the huge army (of monkeys and bears)¹ and went to pitch a camp on the ocean's shore². (7)

Then he described why and how Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to take refuge with the Lord³, and then proceeded to narrate why and how Lord Ram subjugated the mighty ocean⁴ (8).

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.

Lord Ram instructed Sugriv to assemble an army so that they can start for Lanka immediately. A huge and formidable army was collected at short notice, and it consisted of fierce monkeys and bears of all denominations from all the corners of the earth. The army was so huge that it stretched till the horizon.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 35 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8.

As the Lord's army moved along the surface of the earth, a huge storm of dust was raised that blanketed the sky. The monkeys and bears roared and yelled defeaningly. The earth shook; the mountains swayed; the ocean swirled; the celestial holders of the earth, such as the Tortoise which is said to hold the earth on its back, the Diggajas (elephants) who hold the earth from its corners, and the Serpent who holds the earth on its hood, all of them squirmed and turned on their backs.

The Lord arrived on the northern edge of the ocean and pitched his camp there. The monkey and bear warriors roamed around eating fruits from the trees that existed anywhere in the vicinity.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Meanwhile at Lanka, there was panic ever since Hanuman had set it on fire and destroyed a substantial part of the demon army. The omens were not good. Amongst those who tried to convince Ravana that the line he had adopted would be ruinous for all of them was his brother Vibhishan. He tried to persuade Ravana to

make peace with Lord Ram and return Sita to him. Ravana got provoked, accused Vibhishan of treachery and sedition, and kicked him out of Lanka. Fearing for his life, Vibhishan fled and came to seek refuge with Lord Ram, which was granted immediately and with a lot of warmth. The Lord went to the extent of symbolically anointing him on the throne of Lanka as its next king. This was a strategic move by the Lord to ensure Vibhishan's loyalty as well as a gesture to reward him for his services to the Lord.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it, and then from Doha no. 57—to Doha no. 59.

The next big hurdle was the ocean: the question was how to cross it and reach Lanka. Lord Ram did not want to insult the 'King of Water' as the ocean was known, and therefore tried to request him to give him passage through it. The Lord offered prayers to the ocean, but the latter was stubborn. So finally the Lord drew his arrow to dry it up forever. The marine creatures panicked and there was a huge turmoil in the waters of the ocean, forcing their Lord, the 'King of the Waters', to gather some gifts as a tribute and pray to Lord Ram to excuse him. Of course the Lord forgave him, and the Lord of the Ocean advised Lord Ram to construct a bridge across the surface of the water to connect to Lanka. He promised to Lord Ram that he would not wipe it away.]

दो०. सेतु बाँधि कपि सेन जिमि उतरी सागर पार।

गयउ बसीठी बीरबर जेहि बिधि बालिकुमार ॥ ६७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sētu bāṁdhi kapi sēna jimi utarī sāgara pāra.

gaya'u basīṭhī bīrabara jēhi bidhi bālikumāra. 67 (a).

Kaagbhusund then narrated how the monkey army built a sturdy bridge and landed on the other side of the mighty ocean¹.

Then he narrated how the heroic son of Baali (i.e. Angad, the crown prince of Kishkindha) went as an envoy to the court of Ravana (because Lord Ram sent him as a last minute attempt to avoid a bloody war)². (Doha no. 67-a)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 60; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

When the King of the Waters, i.e. the ocean in a personified form, appeared before Lord Ram to surrender and pay his tributes, the Lord asked him for a practical solution by which the vast army of monkeys would easily be able to cross the formidable stretch of fathomless and heaving body of water that spread before them. The ocean advised the Lord that there were two monkey brothers named Nal and Neel in the army who were blessed by a boon during their childhood days that even huge boulders as large as entire hills would float on the surface of water if they touched them. This boon should now be used to construct a bridge over the surface of the water of the ocean.

Thereafter, the army of hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears got on the job in right earnest, bringing rocks, boulders and hills of all sizes and contours and throwing them on the surface of the water of the ocean. By the touch of Nal and Neel these rocks and boulders floated on the surface. It is also believed that Hanuman had scribbled the holy name of Lord Ram on each of these pieces of rocks and boulders so that they did not sink—because Hanuman knew about the glory and the stupendous mystical powers of the holy name of the Lord, that it is so powerful that it enables a creature to cross over this huge and most intractable ocean-like world of mundane existence without any effort and provides the creature's with deliverance, so he guessed that it would be no wonder if these inconsequential rocks and boulders too floated and allowed the army to cross over this physical ocean.

By-and-by, the bridge spanning the distance of 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles or so) between the northern shore of the ocean and where it touched the soil of Lanka was established. Then Lord Ram offered his obeisance to Lord Shiva, his revered deity, before the army jubilantly advanced across this bridge. All the marine creatures emerged from the bottom of the ocean to marvel at this spectacle. The army finally landed on the other side and pitched camp on the slopes and summit of a hill by the name of Subel (refer: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11).

As promised, the ocean did not break the bridge.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35.

The always merciful, compassionate and forgiving Lord Ram was not interested in shedding blood unnecessarily. So he wished to explore the chances of avoiding the forthcoming ruinous war. A meeting was called and it was decided to send Angad as an emissary of the Lord to the court of Ravana in a last-ditch attempt to make a workable truce.

When Angad entered the city, the demon citizens of Lanka were scared out of their wits because they had not forgotten their bitter experience of a little while ago when Hanuman had gone berserk and wreaked havoc on them. So Angad got an easy right-of-way to the palace of the demon king Ravana where there was a heated and acrimonious exchange of angry words between him and Ravana. Each used insulting language for each other, and when Angad ultimately found that Ravana is not amenable and is overcome by the shadow of death, he was so enraged that he put his foot firmly down on the ground in the name of Lord Ram with a challenge to Ravana that if he managed to move his leg it would be deemed that the latter has won the war!

One must be in awe of Angad's confidence in the 'self' as well as in the glory and divinity of Lord Ram that he did not think twice before making this vow. One must praise Angad for the fact that since he was on the side of the 'truth and righteousness' he was self-confident and convinced that no evil force would be ever able to as much as move his single hair, what to talk of moving his leg. It surely proves Angad's strong faith and firm belief in the supremacy of Lord Ram, in the power of the Lord's holy name, and in his personal devotion and dedication for the Lord that made him sure that whatever decision he would make would be accepted by the Lord without raising an eyebrow! Such is indeed the power that a devotee and a faithful follower of the Lord possesses that whatever actions and decisions he would take in the name of the Lord would never go wrong, and the Lord would endorse it.

Meanwhile, Ravana failed to move Angad's foot, and as he bowed down to touch Angad's foot, his crown fell on the ground. Angad kicked this crown so fiercely that it flew like a ball and landed at the place Lord Ram was seated. This single

incidence of Ravana not being able to move Angad's foot and his crown falling to the ground was the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back by demoralising the entire demon army and forewarning them of the impending disaster. Refer: Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 32 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-10; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35.

In all sooth and without gainsay, this was a great moral victory for the whole of the monkey and bear army, and the most humiliating experience that the demons and Ravana had ever since they began ruling over the world.]

निसिचर कीस लराई बरनिसि बिबिधि प्रकार ।

कुंभकरन घननाद कर बल पौरुष संघार ॥ ६७ (ख) ॥

nisicara kīsa larā'ī baranisi bibidhi prakāra.

kumbhakarana ghananāda kara bala pauruṣa saṅghāra. 67 (b).

Thereafter the war between the demons (Ravana's army) and monkeys (Ram's army) was described in detail and in different ways¹.

Kumbhakaran (the brother of Ravana)² and Meghnad (his son)³ were eventually killed in battle. (Doha no. 67-b).

[¹The no-holds-barred ferocious and blood-curdling war between the two sides has been extensively described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 103.

²The death of Kumbhakaran has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71.

Kumbhakaran was a younger brother of Ravana, and elder to Vibhishan. When Laxman was revived after being severely wounded by Meghanad, Ravana was alarmed. He went and woke up Kumbhakaran from his slumber and briefed him about the events. It so happened that Kumbhakaran was unaware of the whole thing till that point of time as he was accustomed to eating and drinking heavily and sleeping for long periods at a stretch. When he came to know about the developments, he admonished Ravana and told him that whatever he had done was wrong. However, Kumbhakaran said that he would be loyal to the demon race and fight on its behalf although it was wrong to do so. Then followed a fierce battle between him and Lord Ram and it culminated in his death. At the time of his death, Kumbhakaran's soul emerged from inside his body and entered the body of Lord Ram in the form of a bright shaft of light (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 of Lanka Kand).

The only other demon that had this privilege whereby his soul merged with the Supreme Soul of this creation in a visible way was Ravana himself (refer: Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 of Lanka Kand).

³The death of Meghanad has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 76.

Meghanad was the son of Ravana. He was a valorous and virtually invincible demon warrior who had even captured Indra, the king of gods. He got his name from the fact that when he roared or yelled it was so deafening that it sounded like the clap of thunder. It was he who had shot and wounded Laxman. After the latter was revived he once again challenged Meghanad, and in the ensuing battle that saw Meghanad employing magical tricks, the final victory was won by Laxman who shot and killed his enemy Meghanad.

चौ०. निसिचर निकर मरन बिधि नाना । रघुपति रावन समर बखाना ॥ १ ॥
रावन बध मंदोदरि सोका । राज बिभीषन देव असोका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nisicara nikara marana bidhi nānā. raghupati rāvana samara bakhānā. 1.
rāvana badha mandōdari sōkā. rāja bibhīṣana dēva asōkā. 2.

Continuing with his narration, Kaagbhusund then described the extermination of the army of demons, and the battle between Lord Ram & Ravana¹. (1)

This battle and the war in general ended with the slaying of Ravana². Then he narrated how Mandodari, the queen of the demon race and the wife of Ravana, lamented, wailed and grieved upon learning of the demise of her husband³.

The crown and the throne of Lanka was given to Vibhishan who was made the King (as promised earlier by Lord Ram)⁴, and then Kaagbhusund described the scene of celebration and jubilation that followed the Lord's victory which made the Gods fearless from the terror of their arch enemy Ravana and his kith and kin and army⁵. (2)

[¹The slaying of the demon army is described throughout the narration of the war that spreads across verses in Lanka Kand of the epic Ram Charit Manas. However, since the focus here is on the part of the war that followed Meghanad's death when Ravana directly led the battle himself and died in the end, one can refer specially to Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 101.

²Ravana's death has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103.

As has been noted earlier in regard to Kumbhakaran's death, Ravana's soul emerged from his body and entered Lord Ram's body in a symbolic development that showed that his individual 'self' merged with the Supreme Self to become one with the Supreme Being who was in the form of Lord Ram. The fact that this happened shows that in spite of all the external things that Ravana did and said, internally he was pure at heart, was self-realised and enlightened, and his was a holy soul—because otherwise this supreme form of destiny would not have been possible for him. To be able to become one with the Lord is the ultimate objective of all spiritual endeavours, but rarely one succeeds in attaining it.

It also shows the great purity and spiritual welfare that come automatically to a person by remembering Lord Ram—for even a vile demon such as Ravana found

deliverance and emancipation for his soul by just remembering Lord Ram day and night, though he did it out of enmity and ill-will for the Lord.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede Doha no. 104, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha.

Mandodari was a wise wife; she had on several occasions tried to bring Ravana to his senses, but his arrogance and ego prevented him from heeding her advice. When her husband died, she grieved sorely but acknowledged publicly that Ravana himself is to be blamed for the calamity that befell the clan. She even praised Lord Ram to have provided a glorious death to her evil husband by destroying his gross evil body of a demon and liberating his soul so that it could merge with the Lord's own Supreme Soul (refer: Doha no. 104). All the gods and holy spirits that had assembled on the occasion lauded Mandodari for her wisdom.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

Like in the case of Sugriv, Lord Ram did not himself enter the city of Lanka but sent his brother Laxman to represent him and anoint Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka as its future king. The Lord thus kept his promise to Vibhishan that was made when he had come to seek refuge with him (refer: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 49).

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-11 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 103.

The Gods had been watching the entire proceedings from the sky. When the final victory was Lord Ram's, all of them joined in chorus to pray to the Lord and honour him.]

सीता रघुपति मिलन बहोरी । सुरन्ह कीन्हि अस्तुति कर जोरी ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि पुष्पक चढ़ि कपिन्ह समेता । अवध चले प्रभु कृपा निकेता ॥ ४ ॥

sītā raghupati milana bahōrī. suranha kīnhi astuti kara jōrī. 3.

puni puṣpaka caḍhi kapinha samētā. avadha calē prabhu kṛpā nikētā. 4.

Then he (Kaagbhusund) described the meeting of Sita with Lord Ram¹, and how the Gods sang Lord Ram's glories and praised him with each of them joining the palms of his hands as a gesture of showing reverence and respect to the Lord². (3)

Thereafter, Lord Ram mounted the air-plane called "Pushpak" with other monkeys and proceeded towards his capital of Ayodhya³. (4)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 109.

After the victory in the war and the coronation of Vibhishan as the king of Lanka, Lord Ram sent Hanuman to Lanka to bring Sita back to him. She was escorted with full royal honours by the guards of Vibhishan. When the Lord saw the ceremonial procession, he asked them to bring Sita in an ordinary way and not to show any favour to her. This was in line with the Lord's view that till the exact end of

the fourteen year period, they—the Lord himself, his wife Sita and brother Laxman—were to live like a hermit. No special treatment should be shown to any of them.

The meeting of Sita with Lord Ram, however, was clouded by some bitter moments. The Lord wished to ensure that no aspersions are cast at a later date on his or Sita's purity and immaculacy of character or their integrity by an evil world which is ever eager to jump to scandalous conclusions by explicitly proving to the world that Sita was uncorrupt and as chaste and immaculate as she was prior to her abduction by Ravana. He did not want tongues wagging and suspicions aroused for no rhyme or reason. So it is better to nip the dirty gossiping in the bud right then and there.

Hence, Lord Ram asked Sita to prove her integrity by the 'fire test', which means she was to enter a blazing fire and emerge unscathed to prove that she was not touched by any evil hands, and was pure and chaste. Of course she did this willingly, and the Lord and Sita were united.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116.

All the Gods, including the senior ones amongst them such as Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, Indra the king of Gods, as well as the great sages and seers and mystics, who had been following the war on the ground from their stations in the sky, revealed themselves to offer their obeisance and prayers to Lord Ram.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 118—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119.

Vibhishan filled the air-plane called 'Pushpak' with gems and jewels and brought it to Lord Ram to pay tribute and to gift it to the Lord. The Lord asked him to go to the sky and overturn its contents—i.e. the gems and the jewels—so that the monkeys and bears could take what they wanted.

Then the Lord assembled them and thanked them all for helping him. He asked the monkeys and bears to go back home as their own kith and kin would be waiting for them. The Lord then expressed his desire to return to his own capital of Ayodhya as the time was running out and the period of fourteen years was coming to an end. He was worried about Bharat, that if he delayed for even one day Bharat would lay down his life as he had vowed in Chitrakoot. Taking the land route back home would take a long time; so the only way out was to travel by air on the Pushpak plane.

The chief commanders of the monkey-and-bear army, such as Sugriv, Angad, Nal, Neel, Jamvant and Hanuman, as well as Vibhishan, who was the demon king, requested the Lord to accompany him. They all boarded the air-plane, and it lifted into the sky amidst thunderous applause.]

जेहि बिधि राम नगर निज आए । बायस बिसद चरित सब गाए ॥ ५ ॥

कहेसि बहोरि राम अभिषेका । पुर बरनत नृपनीति अनेका ॥ ६ ॥

jēhi bidhi rāma nagara nija ā'ē. bāyasa bisada carita saba gā'ē. 5.

kahēsi bahōri rāma abhiṣēkā. pura baranata nrpanīti anēkā. 6.

Kaagbhusund then described how Lord Ram reached Ayodhya¹, and sang all other mystical and respectful deeds done by the Lord². (5)

After that he described Lord Ram's coronation as the King of Ayodhya³, and his rules of polity and ideology as he ruled the kingdom with great righteousness, probity and propriety⁴. (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 121; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

As the air-plane moved towards Ayodhya, Lord Ram showed Sita and all his other companions the landmarks on the ground that marked important places during the Lord's journey from Ayodhya to Lanka.

Once he was over the sky of Ayodhya, he asked Hanuman to assume the form of a Brahmin and go to the city to inform Bharat about the Lord's arrival. Meanwhile, as soon as the word spread of the sighting of the plane and the arrival of a messenger of the Lord, celebrations broke out in the city. Every citizen rushed out to the outskirts of the city where the plane landed on the ground.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Doha no. 11.

The Lord met his brothers Bharat and Shatrughan, as well as his teacher and chief priest of the kingdom, sage Vashistha. Then he met each single citizen of the city individually, embraced each one of them and asked for his welfare—which was a wonderous and a miraculous feat because hundreds and thousands of them had assembled to greet the Lord. Then he entered the city and met his mothers and other members of the household. He paid special attention to Kaikeyi and paid his respects to her to assuage her feelings and tell her that he harbours no ill-will against her at all.

The Lord introduced all his companions who had accompanied him from Lanka to his brothers and other family members, to sage Vashistha as well as to all his ministers, emphasising his gratitude for them and telling them all that it was due to them that he had defeated his enemy and come back home alive. This noble gesture of thanks-giving and expression of gratitude for monkeys, bears and demons whom the Lord called his 'dear friends' was appreciated by one and all.

The city was decorated and lighted up. The gloom and despair of the past fourteen years was replaced with joy, merriment, exhilaration, jubilation and celebration in great abundance.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 20.

Lord Ram was crowned as the Sovereign of the vast empire of Ayodhya. All the great sages and seers of the time had assembled there to bless the Lord, as did the Gods including the creator Brahma, the concluder Shiva, and the Vedas, the scriptures, in a personified form, to pay their obeisance and reverence to the Lord.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 31.

Lord Ram ruled the realm in an exemplarily righteous, proper and rightful manner in accordance to the principles of Dharma (the laws and regulations that govern right action, right deed, right behaviour, right thought and right life). There was peace, happiness and prosperity everywhere; no one suffered from diseases or want of any thing. All were given justice, treated alike, and all loved their Lord and led a righteous life like him.]

कथा समस्त भुसुंड बखानी । जो मैं तुम्ह सन कही भवानी ॥ ७ ॥
 सुनि सब राम कथा खगनाहा । कहत बचन मन परम उछाहा ॥ ८ ॥

kathā samasta bhusuṇḍa bakhānī. jō mair̥ tumha sana kahī bhavānī.
 suni saba rāma kathā khaganāhā. kahata bacana mana parama uchāhā. 4.

This is how Kaagbhusund narrated the whole sacred life-story of Lord Ram to Garud, the king of birds.

Then Lord Shiva told his consort Parvati, who was also known by the name of Bhavani, ‘Oh Bhavani! It was the same story that I have told you¹.’ (7)

When the king of birds Garud heard the entire story of Lord Ram, he was filled with exhilaration and felt very ecstatic. He said to the crow-saint Kaagbhusund as follows—(8)

[Note—¹The divine and sacred story of Lord Ram was first conceived in the heart of Lord Shiva, and when his consort Parvati approached him to narrate this story to her then Lord Shiva described it to her from the beginning to the end.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 35, and later on at various other places such as (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Doha no. 111, and (iii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121 where this fact is explicitly mentioned.]

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Appendix

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) Kobo, (iv) Page Foundry, (v) Scribd, (vi) Tolino etc.:-

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi

Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(B) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

1. Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.]

2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (C):

Chaukhamba Publishing House, Delhi. [Sri Neeraj Gupta.]

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Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

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(C) Book under preparation:

A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

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